

## Stumbling blocks for instructors utilizing electronic resources in literacy classrooms

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### Abstract

There are assertions that young people's familiarity with electronic texts (ICTs) might give instructors possibilities to develop engaging and novel activities for classroom literacy teaching and learning. The integration of ICTs into education does not appear to be pervasive, despite years of intensive study and outstanding practices. This study involved instructors debating, debating, and thinking about how they use digital materials in their classrooms. It sheds some light on the rationale behind why literacy instructors do not often use digital texts in their instruction. It also demonstrates how teachers are overcoming barriers to integrating new technologies into their literacy classrooms by using institutional and communal flows about the importance of students' home experiences to their education, the creation of digital texts for the presentation of print-based work, and the significance of proficiency about computers as well as new technologies.

**Key words:** Instructors, digital texts, literacy classrooms, students, ICTs in classrooms

### Introduction

Rich analyses of the social and cultural settings in which literacy practises take place have been provided by the area of new literacy studies (Street, 2005). Recent research on the circumstances in which young people interact with language via digital spaces including social networking sites, mobile devices, and websites have focused on electronic literacies (Dowdall, 2006). A growing divide between the circumstances in which young people use digital technology in their daily lives and the practises of education has been noted in several of these studies (Gee, 2003). The varied "ways with words" (Heath, 1983) in families and schools have grown more troublesome, and their relationships are more complicated, as a result of the penetration of digital technology into young people's daily lives.

Contrasting perspectives on what constitutes meaningful and valuable literacy teaching & learning practises in the classroom have recently made this complicated relationship between home as well as school literacy practises even more challenging. These come from discourses that are inconsistent and in disagreement regarding what constitutes education (Rowan and Honan, 2005). Government-sponsored investigations in the UK, Australia, and the USA have resulted in recommendations about particular approaches to teaching literacy that are constrictive, formulaic, and prescriptive (Rose, 2006).

Government programmes and legislation have, however, also pushed instructors to interact with their pupils' online lives. Although curriculum items are sold to educational institutions with the assurance that teachers don't need any specialised knowledge to deliver them, media analysts call for "back to basics" skills-based approaches, while schools are held responsible for the outcomes of high-stakes national assessment on the book along with paper-based assessments.

## Objectives of the Study

1. To Study at how digital literacy is taught in one School of Mahaboob Nagar District of Telangana State.
2. The Four Resources Literacy Framework (Freebody and Luke, 2003) will be used as a mapping tool to investigate the types of resources that teachers are encouraging in their literacy teaching practices around digital texts.
3. To examine how well teachers will also be encouraged to engage in self-reflective work to help improve the use of digital texts in their literacy classes.

This study was a part of a long-running programme (Honan, 2007) in which the researcher collaborated with instructors who served as co-researchers and provided critical reflections on their own practices (Kincheloe, 2003).

## The 4 Components Framework for Literacy

### 1. Decoding the text-based code

Here, the focus is on text encoding and decoding.

#### Several instances include:

Alphabetic knowledge

Letter-sound connections are recognized Creating and altering words with sound elements spelling

Recognizing the mechanics or norms of texts

### 2. Using texts in a useful way

Here, knowing the function of various texts is stressed.

#### Several instances include:

Using texts in many ways both within and outside of the classroom being aware of school expectations

For realistic uses, reading, writing, speaking, and listening

Judicious use of a range of texts

### 3. Taking part in how texts are interpreted

Making sense of the text is the main focus of this essay.

#### Several instances include:

Active involvement in understanding texts and illustrations

Using past knowledge and personal experience personal experiences with those described in the book comparing encounters with writings that are similar knowing how a text functions

### 4. Evaluating and altering texts in a critical manner

Here, knowing how texts are created within social settings is prioritized.

#### Several instances include:

Recognizing that writings don't reflect impartial ideas, but rather certain voices, interests, and viewpoints, and mute others

Questioning/challenging texts and seeing that their designs and ideologies may be criticized and redesigned in fresh ways helps one to comprehend how texts are created to the writer's interests and views.

The methodological guidelines followed called for paying instructors to take time out of the classroom so they could focus on the research topic and encouraging the formation of collegial relationships rather than the customary expert/novice binary antagonism (Grundy et al., 2001).

The aim is to engage with teachers who are not especially innovative or at the vanguard of new techniques, as opposed to focusing on the outstanding teachers and schools who are frequently (justly) hailed in stories of incorporating digital tools into literacy class-rooms.

## Sample Selection

The Staff, from the District Education Office in Mahaboob Nagar are helping this inquiry choose a school. In response to my concerns, the DEO discovered a school in Mahaboob Nagar, Telangana State

that they deemed to be "average," with enough facilities and equipment. It was a modest elementary school that had been operating for a while. At the time of the research, it had 200 students enrolled in classes 1 through 5, and by 2022, it will serve children in Years 1 through 7.

Four instructors from the staff were chosen to take part in the study by the curriculum coordinator, who had a special interest in employing digital technology. Two out of four instructors were instructing class 2 courses, one class 3, and the other class 3/4 at the moment of the research. The professors' selected aliases serve as identification. Both of the grade two teachers, Lily and Anne, were in their mid-30s, and Anne had just started teaching again after a maternity break. Four instructors from the staff were chosen to take part in the study by the curriculum coordinator, who had a special interest in employing digital technology. Two out of four instructors were instructing class 2 courses, one class 3, and the other class 3/4 at the moment of the research. The teachers selected aliases serve as identification. Both of the grade two teachers, are in their mid-30s, and Anne had just started teaching again after a maternity break. The transcriptions of the conversations that took place throughout the all-day sessions served as the source of my data and the main subject of the analysis covered in this research.

Compared to a typical research interview, these discussions were considerably different (Silverman, 2001). At each meeting, the researcher and the instructors took turns turning the tape recorder on and off and quickly deciding what was important to capture. The tape recorder was positioned in the middle of the table. Therefore, in addition to the more common reporting and question-and-answer exchanges, the recorder also recorded some of the discussions, debates, and conflicts. The examination of these transcriptions showed that there was an unanticipated focus in the teachers' conversation, despite the fact that the project's original goal was to investigate the link between the 4 Resources Framework and instructors' work with digital texts. Instead of discussing the creation of literacy practices around these texts, they discussed why they did not utilise any electronic materials at all in their courses. In this essay, I discuss the struggles these instructors have in finding methods to get past cultural and institutional boundaries and advance in their everyday practice. I contend that the circumstances of these teachers are representative of the larger teaching-as-usual context, where, despite extensive research and exemplary practices over the past 20 years, digital technologies have not permeated the routine activities of education (Walsh et al., 2007).

This paper has given some background information regarding this literacy paradigm and its relationship to the usage of electronic texts in classrooms because the teachers' vocabulary when discussing these hurdles is based on the Four Resources Framework.

#### **Electronic texts and the Framework for the Four Resources**

The Four Resources Literacy Framework was created by Peter Freebody and Allan Luke in Australia (Freebody and Luke, 2003) and has been utilised extensively in curriculum and policy, particularly in Queensland.

The framework is built on the knowledge that being a good user of literacy necessitates a growth of four practise repertoires: deciphering texts, partaking in their meaning, utilising texts practically, and critically examining and transforming texts. It was created by utilising the body of knowledge already available on effective literacy instruction, and it "shifts the focus from exploring to find the appropriate approach to whether the spectrum of practices emphasised in one's reading programme is really covering and combining a broad view of textual practices that are needed in emerging economies and cultures." (Luke and Freebody, 1999).

Teachers who have used this framework have expressed their appreciation for the acknowledgment and affirmation of their present teaching methods as well as the opportunities to explore new techniques (Honan, 2004) (Table 1).

There is general agreement that the literacy requirements of print-based and digital texts are different, even though investigations into the use of digital literacies in schools employ a variety of approaches, including Kress' visual grammar (Unsworth, 2006) and critical literacy (Lankshear and Knobel, 2003).

The Four Resources Literacy Framework might be used as a mapping tool to examine these various literacy requirements, which was one of the research's objectives. A version of the Four Resources Framework that featured questions especially pertinent to digital texts was created using previously existing versions of the framework, including unpublished, versions used in undergraduate instruction, and versions used by other scholars (Deakin University, 2001). The code-breaking resource, represented by Table 1, lists the many inquiries that might be posed of both digital and print texts.

At the start of the project, the framework was circulated with the instructors, and many discussions centered on its significance. However, it was evident that instructors had a very difficult time even considering participating in any form of literacy practice centered on digital texts. Our subsequent effort was centered on figuring out how to get over these challenges. The obstacles in particular included a teacher's ignorance of students' usage of digital texts at home, a classroom concentration on new technology technical expertise, and a heavy focus on the creation of electronic texts as the culmination of a unit of work. Below, each of these topics is covered in further detail.

**Utilising digital texts at home**

What do our pupils comprehend about digital texts? Was the initial question that the instructors asked in order to set the stage for examining their use in the classroom? They had class discussions as a whole and invited students to illustrate and write concerning the kind of digital devices they were used to outside of the classroom. The outcomes of these exercises astounded the professors, who had no idea how thoroughly the pupils knew various digital formats. Two teachers shared what they have discovered:

**Table 1: Code-breaking practices with print and digital texts**

<i>Digital-based texts</i>	<i>Print-based texts</i>
What do I need to know about how the text is constructed to make sense of it?	Are there any words in the text that I do not know the meaning of?
Which typographical conventions are familiar? Which are new?	Are there any words in the text that I do not know the meaning of?
How does the use of sound, colour, moving images and different design programs help me interpret or make meaning of this text? (How do I crack this?)	Are there any symbols in the text that I do not know the meaning of?
If this text has conventions new to me (flash, .mwf files, etc.) how will I work them out?	How will I find out what they mean? Why are different fonts/colours used?
How does the use of sound, colour, moving images and different design programs help me interpret or make meaning of this text? (How do I crack this?)	What kinds of sentence structures are used in the text? How will my knowledge of spelling conventions help me to decode the text?

**X:** The mobile games sparked a lively conversation and dispute that might have lasted for a half-hour about, "No, that's not the double spring one, that's the one, you know, the information they knew about those games."

**Y:** "I was also impressed by the variety of games kids could play. They thus have CD games. They got access to internet games, which were supplied to them by email from a relative. Additionally, they play another online game where they may even talk with one another."

The teachers had underestimated their students' access to computers, just as others (Warschauer et al., 2004), which was indicative of their ignorance of the students' stores of information (Comber and Kamler, 2004).

**X:** Each pupil in my classroom has a chance to use a computer at home, as we discussed when we discussed about it. Every single pupil had access to a computer at home.

**Y:** "My class, too. They all have access, and some even have their own".

The teachers all appeared to be operating from a place where their pupils were unfamiliar with the technology that was being utilised, and this lack of knowledge of their students' access to digital tools had a direct influence on classroom practices. Here, Lily alludes to one of the causes of this contradiction:

**X:** I was generally rather amazed at the things that they can achieve. But I felt that the technology they use at home and what we use at school was completely different.

For many instructors, information and abilities acquired at home were of limited use in a classroom setting. This is similar to the "discourses of deficit" that instructors employ to characterise students' at-home literacy practices (Comber and Kamler, 2004), and it exemplifies how these discourses are applied to minimise and discredit the wealth of digital technology knowledge that students bring to class (Honan, 2006).

These discourses had an effect on the instructors' choices about the kinds of electronic texts they utilised in their classes even as they experimented with new techniques as a consequence of the investigation. Although they had found a richness of variation in the homes of their pupils, they chose to concentrate their literacy courses on texts from websites and "educational" software. I questioned the instructors about this discrepancy, and they spoke about access. Because there were five computers available to each teacher, organising lessons for the entire class or just a few students was not too difficult.

Computers in classrooms are a given (particularly in elementary schools), as is the lack of other digital tools like mobile phones and portable games. However, it is how computers are utilised that is problematic.

The emergence of blogging and wiki tools, as well as the growth of social networking sites like Youtube have had little effect on the instructional methods used by this particular set of teachers. This isn't an age problem, despite worries about "digital immigrants" (Prensky, 2001). Computers and other modern technology might be used with ease by all of the professors. However, it wasn't just their pupils' usage of digital texts at home that was disregarded in their classroom practices; it also appeared that the instructors' own competence and knowledge were disregarded in their settings. When I mentioned that they could possibly draw on their own regular usage of digital tools, they were astonished.

### **Operational tasks in classrooms**

The instructors' ignorance about the pupils' proficiency with digital tools also had an influence on the literacy practices used in the classroom. Others have noticed a recurring theme in how teachers have described their current classroom practices involving digital texts: a focus on instructing students the technological or operational skills required to use the technology rather than the literacy tools required to create or interpret the content (Lankshear et al., 2000). These technological abilities included, for instance, proficiency with word processing programmes and keyboarding:

**X:** "To get their task, they are required to type, choose various fonts, forward a piece of clip art, open files, and shut files. So they practice keyboard skills to become accustomed with the layout and functionalities, then they must store their work into their own folder. It's keyboard slash handwriting.

Here, rather than emphasizing the literacy resources required to play the game, Y places an emphasis on the skills kids need to operate the technology:

**Y:** "Accordingly, so as to play the games, the kids need to be able to switch on the computer, sign in as a class 2 learner, and identify the games or the internet—whatever they're doing—on the desktop. Some games demand that you know who you are, therefore if playing from a server, the kids must check in with their username and password. Not all of them, however, carry out that action. And while playing games online, kids need to discover them under the "favorites" area.

These snippets show how X and Y conducted their classes prior to the investigation. However, even after exploring the 4 Resources Literacy Framework, the teachers concentrated on teaching students how to

utilise the system when they created new activities to enable students to apply these resources for literacy with digital texts. Here's how Y portrays her trial, for instance:

**Y:** We did the entire "how do I get into the internet to start with," so we turned on the computer. Then, can you identify the icon, alright which one, e, and what does the e mean for? Because I have year 2 students and some of them aren't very experienced with using a computer, I found myself using stuff like code-breaker. I then clicked on it, asking, "Okay, now that I'm there, what do I do?" Additionally, we discussed how we perused the website URL, arrived at our site, and what went wrong. They said, "Well, they have www." What does that mean then? Naturally, no one knew, either.

### **Findings**

These teachers encountered obstacles when trying to find spaces to integrate digital content into their literacy classrooms because of institutional and societal talks about the importance of students' home experiences to their education, the creation of digital texts for the presentation of print-based work, and the significance of technical expertise in computers and new technologies. However, at the end of the investigation, the study's instructors had discovered fresh approaches to comprehending how digital texts may be included into their literacy instruction and learning.

The difficulties that could arise from implementing these new methods into their teaching practises were discussed in order to offset each helpful recommendation that was offered. The English curriculum's aims, for instance, were brought to light by the teachers' research of the 4 Literacy Framework, as well as by the attainment of these aims through reading activities based on electronic texts. Austin reveals his fresh insight:

**X:** "I believe that if you go to the syllabus materials, it will be broken down and precisely state what we want you to cover, such as if it was a narrative framework, paragraphing, noun groups, verbs, and things of that nature. Digital texts allow you to achieve all of those objectives without ensuring it an add-on. If you treat electronic texts like any other text, you will approach them in the same way you would approach any other text. For example, if I needed to go teach how to write a sentence, I wouldn't pick up a book or something similar; instead, I would choose something else, like a digital text, and I would approach it in the same way. This is a regular part of my daily practice. I didn't have to spend any more time preparing it.

It is important for instructors to consider how to include digital texts into their literacy courses on a daily basis (for instance, during literacy rotations) as a result of their newfound awareness of the relationships between curricular objectives and their usage. However, Y was eager to highlight her issues with these concepts:

**Y:** "But I believe that also relates to the resource problems. We always have textbooks and print texts available to us, offering a variety of examples and materials. I realise that digital texts also offer the same materials, but having 24 students in a classroom limits your options. I do believe that exploring digital technology may need more time than conventional approaches.

The panel acknowledged that these were valid worries, but in their subsequent conversations, they highlighted Austin's point that "you treat electronic literature the same way you would handle conventional texts." In one of the group tasks for a literacy rotation, for instance, the group noticed that students may utilise digital texts rather than print-based books. This could seem like a little modification, but the distinction between it and the more typical "add-on" practices seen in many classrooms is what gives it its significance. Another important change in the group's thinking was the inclusion of digital texts in their regular literacy routines. They started to create fresh methods for a "literacy of fusion" in this way (Millard, 2003).

The cultural and institutional limitations highlighted in this research must be taken into consideration when interpreting these modest advances in the instructors' views about adopting electronic texts in their

classrooms. The institutions and organisations around teachers must also alter before they can advance with educational innovations. In primary schools, for instance, it is more usual to see computers in hubs, laboratories, or retreat areas. Although cabling and networking may be effective in these strategic places, they hinder instructors' efforts to integrate digital technologies into their routine lessons.

Teachers are encouraged to view digital texts as the culmination of a unit of work rather than as texts to be utilised in their everyday instruction by policies and curriculum that place a strong emphasis on the development of digital texts. In fact, this type of production work is frequently praised and exalted as excellent work. For instance, the recently launched SmartClassrooms project in Queensland (<http://education.qld.gov.au/smartclassrooms/>) suggests that examples of this work be included in a teacher's digital portfolio when applying for a "ICT Pedagogical Licence."

The growing divide between the kinds of digital texts that children use at home and those that they engage with during school activities is another cause for concern. Any educational system doesn't seem to be able to adapt fast to the needs of new technology (Lewis and Fabos, 2005; Millard, 2003).

Although systems do find it challenging to stay up with the current developments due to the quick pace of technological change, it is not always necessary to update the equipment. It is the consideration of pedagogical practices when utilising digital texts that ensures that school-based interactions with new technologies are not limited to the depressingly accustomed activities of creating slide presentations, publishing paper-based 'stories' using word processing software, or repeatedly learning fundamental technical skills.

### Summary

Examining the connection across the Four Resources Model and teachers' use of digital texts was one of the objectives of this study. However, a review of the conversations surrounding this investigation showed that instructors focused more on the difficulties in using digital texts than on how they may enhance literacy instruction and learning. Despite these obstacles, the instructors did make a few baby steps towards developing new educational practices in their minds. Only until institutional and structural alterations are made will these improvements be possible.

In order to give instructors with places to interact with these texts and create activities that are really engaging and rewarding for their literacy learners, education institutions must adapt to these novel applications of digital texts in more productive and innovative ways.

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