

# Multiliteracies in Motion

Current Theory and Practice

Edited by

**David R. Cole**

*University of Technology, Sydney*

**Darren L. Pullen**

*University of Tasmania*



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“The contributors to this inspiring book (they include some of the most well-known and innovative thinkers in the field) provide a range of reflections, speculations, investigations, and practical applications all centering on the uneasy relation between schools, in many ways still bastions of mono-literacy, and the new multiliteracies.”

(Theo van Leeuwen and Gunther Kress, From the Foreword)

The realities of new technological and social conditions since the 1990s demand a new approach to literacy teaching. Looking onward from the original statement of aims of the multiliteracies movement in 1996, this volume brings together top-quality scholarship and research that has embraced the notion and features new contributions by many of the originators of this approach to literacy.

Drawing on large research projects and empirical evidence, the authors explore practical and educational issues that relate to multiliteracies, such as assessment, pedagogy and curriculum. The viewpoint taken is that multiliteracies is a complementary socio-cultural approach to the new literacies that includes pedagogy and learning. The differences are addressed from a multiliteracies perspective—one that does not discount or undermine the new literacies, but shows new ways in which they are complementary.

Computers and the Internet are transforming the way we work and communicate and the very notion of literacy itself. This volume offers frontline information and a vital update for those wishing to understand the evolution and the current state of literacy theory in relation to multiliteracies.

**David R. Cole** is Senior Lecturer in English and Pedagogy at the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia.

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# Foreword

*Theo van Leeuwen, University of Technology, Sydney,  
and Gunther Kress, Institute of Education, London*

Perhaps some 10 years ago, a Swedish PhD student showed us an “educational CD-ROM” she was working on—a Swedish localization of a Microsoft product, in fact. It had an “environmental” interface of the kind that was popular then—rooms or landscapes in which users could click on various objects. In this case it was a classroom with various teaching aids on tables and on the walls—books, pictures, tape recorders (it *was* 10 years ago), and of course computers. And then, in a corner at the back, there was a teacher, sitting behind a table with a vase containing a single flower. All those teaching aids could be clicked on, leading the user to a range of learning activities, often in game-like formats—all, that is, except one. You guessed it, the teacher.

This book, *Multiliteracies in Motion: Current Theory and Practice*, deals with all the issues called up by that interface: the need for schools to engage with multiple literacies and multiple technologies; to know more about the informal ways children learn outside school; to bring aspects of the child’s lifeworld into the school; to replace instructional pedagogies with open-ended learning processes aimed not at transmitting knowledge, but at creating new kinds of subjects for new social futures that can incorporate all the diversities and divergences of today’s globalized world.

Taking their cue from the influential 1996 article, “A pedagogy of multiliteracies: designing social futures,” by the New London Group, the writers who have contributed to this inspiring book (they include some of the most well-known and innovative thinkers in the field) agree that the premises of that intervention are still valid, however much may have changed since then—there were no multi-level Internet games in 1996, for instance—and they provide a range of reflections, speculations, investigations, and practical applications all centering on the uneasy relation between schools, in many ways still bastions of mono-literacy, and the new multiliteracies.

In the midst of it all, there is the teacher, surrounded by technologies which may be new to them, but are already second nature to their pupils and by injunctions to bring the outside world into the school—as though school itself no longer has anything to offer. Teachers are caught between the tides of government interventions, which at one time seek to steer them back to

“basics,” and then at others open doors to new directions, and called upon to “change” and to have their “beliefs disrupted” by experts, while working in an institution which has not changed its basic premises for more than a century, despite opening its doors to new technology.

We hope this book will inspire them, and help them understand how to continue their important work in this ever-changing, multi-everything world.



# Preface

This collection is, in our view, a selection of the highest quality work that is currently being undertaken around the globe in the field of multiliteracies and technology-enhanced education. The contributors include some of the most important figures presently involved with moving this area of inquiry forwards.

We truly hope that this volume will inspire, inform and intrigue teachers, educational researchers, trainee teachers and university lecturers. It is designed to be an inclusive publication that points to the benefits of multidisciplinary work in education while retaining strong knowledge fields.

The book is organized into four parts. Part I discusses multiliteracies and classrooms, and includes chapters on science education, Chinese early-years education and multimodal ESL teaching. Part II contains work on multiliteracy theory that covers the new media and new learning, agency in computer-mediated education, and the politics of desire that surrounds the contemporary teacher's body. Part III looks at the pedagogy of multiliteracies, with chapters that examine a professional change program for teachers, the disruption of teachers' beliefs through digital technology, and how to use culturally relevant curriculum through multiliteracies. Part IV focuses on multiliteracies and practice, with chapters that cover assessment, reading habits, English teaching with multimedia and the construction of a virtual school for teacher training.

This volume is distinctive in that it provides coverage of the ways in which multiliteracies permeate educational practice around the world. This is a continuing and important story that looks to align pedagogy, knowledge fields and the social/cultural factors involved with learning.

Darren and I would like to acknowledge Naomi Silverman for her help in bringing this volume to publication. We would also like to mention Geoff Riordan, Andrew Jakubowicz (UTS) and Ian Hay (University of Tasmania) for giving us dedicated time to work on this significant volume.



# 1 Introduction to Multiliteracies in Motion

## Current Theory and Practice

*David R. Cole, University of Technology,  
Sydney and Darren L. Pullen, University of  
Tasmania*

### Introduction

Western civilization stands at a turning point. On one side of this point are the structures and forms that have upheld its institutions and systems in the past. On the other stands possible ways forward that address the complicated situation of the present, where global economic fluctuations dominate social life in ever more powerful ways, and the purposes and through-lines for educational practice are increasingly more obscure given these tremendous fluctuations. One might legitimately ask the question: Why turn back the clock and re-examine the notion of “multiliteracies,” that was positioned by the New London Group in 1996 as a useful term to give sense to the ways in which literacy practice is colliding with new technological modes of representation and shifting heterogeneous demographics? To answer this question one must consider the changes that are taking place in the educational world, and the ways in which literacy practice has dealt with these changes through classroom innovation, research into best practice, and theorizations of the critical factors that are animating change and making change more than a rhetorical call to arms for politicians or system managers intent on improving efficiency or introducing new technology due to commercial concerns. Change has become closely aligned with all aspects of literacy through the ways in which education has necessarily evolved under pressure from oscillating financial circumstances, and the adaptive and flexible elements inherent within multiliteracies make it a well-designated fit to keep on explaining continual literacy morphology. In this first section, we will explain the elastic connection between multiliteracies and changing literacies.

### *Multiliteracies in Motion*

The first element that has determined that the notion of multiliteracies has survived beyond its initial conception is the multiple part of the idea. Multiple doesn't mean infinite, nor does it mean a vague number more than one. Multiple means a definite number of factors that converge on one point of literate

behavior. For example, literacy instruction has been dominated by the reading and writing of printed text for a number of years. Students are asked to read a printed text and write out answers that explain their understanding of the text. This type of activity—called reading comprehension—has also come to dominate literacy examinations of basic skills. In terms of multiliteracies, the questions inherent within reading comprehension exercises are expanded beyond a dualistic notion of reading and writing, and include aspects such as visual literacy if images are involved in the source material, and critical literacy, that is the purposeful questioning of text for prejudice or silences and that might determine the political or social usage of the text in question. Multiliteracies is therefore a platform for the multiple elements that converge in educational practice as it is performed in formal and informal situations.

The second element of design that has allowed multiliteracies to remain in motion beyond its conception concerns the potential division between formal and informal learning situations. Research in this field has established that learning can happen in groups, and can be associated with informal, social and any loosely connected activity between participants (Hager & Smith, 2004). For example, many youths all over the world now learn a plethora of skills through multi-level gaming activity played on the Internet. They learn by competing together in virtual worlds practically unimaginable in 1996, which are rapidly being transformed by participant demand for new challenges and different ways to meet online via sophisticated role-play and imaginative scenarios. The technology that accompanies these games is being developed at a rapid speed, and is an area of learning driven by demand and the new ways in which digital technology offers rapid virtual interconnection on multiple simultaneous levels (Cole, 2007, 2005a). Multiliteracies incorporates this dramatic development in learning potential through the notion that social futures are being decided in the playing out of multiple literate behaviors. This idea of the New London Group accompanies the more recent development of the “new literacies” (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear & Leu, 2008), which aim to map this new terrain of technologically mediated social connections, yet remains beyond the new literacies in that the map that may be produced by the accumulation of many new literacies still counts for something according to multiliteracies: i.e., a social future.

The notion of multiliteracies therefore contains a subtle yet important idea of power that has also allowed it to remain in motion. At the time of the conception of multiliteracies, the Internet was the new power broker, and theorists gave it dramatic and unqualified affordances—summed up through terms such as “global village” or “online communities” (Cole, 2005b). As the technology of the Internet moved out of purely academic and high-level commercial use, and became a familiar node of access for all offices, schools and homes, social scientists tried to track this movement and give it names that reflected the new societal groupings that were emerging. This process became embroiled within what became known as the “rhetoric of the technological sublime” (Jones-Kavalier & Flannigan, 2006), where new social terminology

and modes of explanation were interwoven with new types of interactivity and communication sparked by digitized technological development. At base, the naming and understanding of all new Internet communities and modes of socialization are offshoots of this “entanglement.” In contrast, established forms of power have been strikingly untouched by whatever new digitally augmented forms of socializing have emerged. For example, the power structures and hierarchical formations that are apparent through schooling have not changed due to the emergence of the global Internet. Universities have diversified and expanded to a certain extent via modes of distance learning, where students can complete degrees by using virtual portals, online material, and taking part in academic chat forums. However, even this activity is strangely reminiscent of the types of learning that were already apparent in universities before the Internet came into being. Assignments are still marked in the same ways, and academic careers are guided by highly structured and enforced types of criteria for advancement. So how does this relate to multiliteracies and the type of power that it entails?

Multiliteracies does not use the metaphors and analogies of online connectivity to hypothesize new societal tendencies. If one takes the virtual world that is represented by the Internet as a starting point, it could be said that it is complete in itself, as everything about it works through the way in which the connection has been established. Online dating works through the age-old processes of attraction and repulsion. Finding work on the Internet still requires a follow-up interview, a well-designed CV, and positive body language and appearance once contact between employers and potential employees has been established. Complete power relationships are therefore outside of the sphere of influence of the new literacies. Yet the new literacies are immanent to the power relationships that occur due to connectivity that one might discover online and by degrees in the ways in which society as a whole is changing. So there is a latent form of power inherent in the literacies that occur due to the net, and this has had an impact on social life. Multiliteracies sums this type of latency up by positing positive steps towards a better social life, rather than by establishing idealistic revolution due to digital innovation. For example, multiliteracies are concerned with the establishment of civil and pluralistic society, and this will happen through strengthening educational mores. The method for doing this is exemplified by the way in which the initial argument was constructed, and this is another element that has made multiliteracies endure and has put it into motion.

This element is the fact that the New London Group (1996) were comprised of an aggregate of 10 multidisciplinary individuals. Academics came together from the fields of linguistics, education, literary analysis, the sociology of education, and cultural studies. This richness has colored the argument from the start, and given depth and a broad perspective that could be added to in the future. Multiliteracies is in motion because it may be applied to other fields of interest such as diversity studies or organizational theory. This makes multiliteracies by its very nature expansionary and emergent.

The coming together of diverse intellectual concerns has not become stuck in a dead end of redundant thought. This is also a function of the fact that there is much detail to add to the construction of the multiliteracies argument. This has happened over time, and in particular by the series of essays contained in *Multiliteracies: Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures* (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). This current volume fills in more of the gaps in the argument, as the authors of this collection are also interdisciplinary and concerned with similar aspects of emergent literacy practice. This parallel focus brings to the fore the last element of change that has cast multiliteracies into motion, and has to a certain extent defined one of its central concerns. That is the way in which meaning can be made through literate behavior.

There is a particular tension in Western literacy teaching that the New London Group successfully characterized. It could be argued that children are sheltered from the realities of the learning that takes place in literacy through fairy stories, phonics and set-piece skills exercises that are designed to enhance their use of language. Progressive educationalists have updated this picture, and pointed out that the use of language corresponds to context and social correspondences in terms of being meaningful (Kress, 2006). The notion of multiliteracies builds upon the progressivist perspective of education by deciding upon the design of social futures as giving literate behavior the most cogent meaning. Students should, according to this perspective, be engaged in actively designing their social futures when “doing literacy.” The multiliteracies movement therefore has consequences in terms of text choice, text analysis, and textual synthesis and representation. All of this work has to be integrated into the design of social futures, which are continually rushing into the fields of knowledge of students and teachers as society progresses, and new social conditions become apparent. Literacy is, according to multiliteracies, deeply dependent on social-cultural factors that are always in motion, and often have unknown trajectories, especially given the current dramatic economic fluctuations that are presently starting to determine new models of work and communication.

### **Current Theory and Practice**

The notion of multiliteracies has endured and it is in motion due to the elements listed and explained above, but what makes it particularly pertinent to be included in a collection of chapters about current literacy theory and practice such as this volume? The attribute that perhaps best suits multiliteracies to the contemporary educational scene is its ability to absorb and integrate with other theories of education that are crowding in on practice in terms of having commonly understood explicatory power. One such theory is “affect theory.” Affect theory has a long history in Western thought, dating back at least to the work of Baruch Spinoza (1677/1993). It looks to explain the ways in which emotions work in human cognition by making connections between the mind, desire, rationality, language, and the unconscious. Affects have been

theorized as possessing a charge or relative power above their position as connective devices between operative points in human communicative functioning (Fiumara, 2001). This potential has allowed affects to be positioned as points of intensity in various fields of inquiry such as literary analysis (Holland, 1968), social cognition (Forgas, 2001), psychoanalysis (Freud, 1953) and human geography (Thrift, 2004). The multidisciplinary nature of affect theory also makes it suitable for education in terms of lending explicative power to a teacher's work.

This is where one might discern a connection between multiliteracies and affect theory. Multiliteracies is also about the work of teachers, but addresses it through the ways in which pedagogical mores may be understood as being in motion from “overt instruction” to “transformed practice.” Transformed practice is when a teacher is able to switch between available curricula designs and assimilate their teaching style with the social–cultural factors that are determining the behavior of the cohort in any particular context (including the use of digital technology). Affect theory is also about change, but acts as a vital connection between the internal state of the teacher (how they are feeling) and the social–cultural consequences of their actions (Hargreaves, 1994). For example, a teacher that is feeling overwhelmed and drowning in the behavioral issues of a particular class will have less impact in terms of making knowledge work to the benefit of that cohort. Both affect theory and multiliteracies are therefore critically determined by issues of power and shifting social–cultural factors. This important relationship in current literacy theory and practice is represented below:

Figure 1.1 shows how multiliteracies and affect theory may be conjoined through a concern for power in education, and this conjunction is played out in literacy classrooms. This perspective on current literacy theory and practice is further updated by adding the development of Multiple Literacies Theory (MLT) (Masny & Cole, 2009) to the fold. The forward motion of

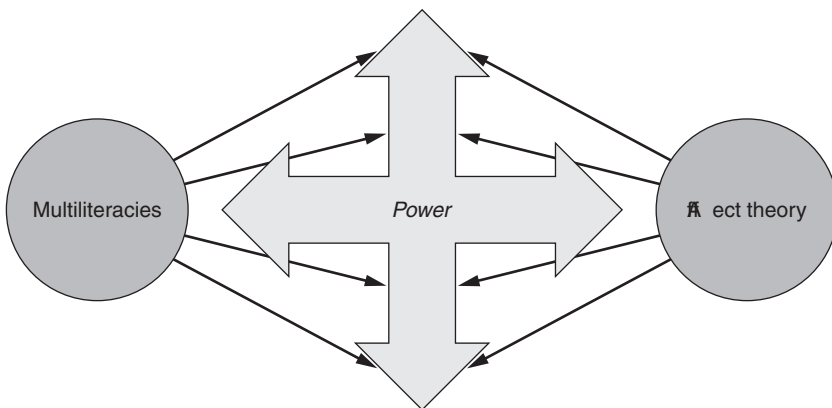


Figure 1.1 The Relationship between Multiliteracies and Affect Theory.

multiliteracies is hindered somewhat by the possible homogenizing effects of stipulating that the multiple aspects of literacy are tied to literacy in terms of multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Multimodality is the switching potential inherent in different modes of literate progression, and owes its heritage to genre theory and systemic functional linguistics. This part of multiliteracies is potentially homogenizing as there is something posited behind the switching mechanism, such as experience, agency, or identity. In contrast, MLT has multiplicities at the center of its construction of literacy and the different modes of literate behavior that may pass through any teaching and learning situation defined as “life.” MLT also employs affect theory to help with the construction and representation of literacy as a fully multiple development. Investigations into writing systems for young literacy learners have shown that the emotional impact of environmental circumstances is a major component of becoming literate (Masny, 2006). Multiliteracies benefits from such insights taken from MLT as current theory and practice in the field of literacy continues to uncover how the multiplicity of literacies that are presently being named and explicated may be deployed in education, and what the consequences are in terms of becoming truly “multiply literate” today.

### **The Chapters of the Book**

This book is a collective collaboration of authors taken from the United States, Australia, China, and the United Kingdom. It is certainly dominated by academics working in English-speaking universities, though this domination should not be seen to be an empire-building enterprise. The focus and point of updating the multiliteracies project is to chart the relationship between changing conditions in the world of literacy representation and what we understand as educational practice. Far from excluding other theories and explanatory mechanisms for understanding changes in literacy, this collection of chapters, with a focus on multiliteracies, is designed to open up the field. This is because the scope of such a collection is ambitious, global and inclusive. The authors include some who were involved in the first essay that appeared in the *Harvard Educational Review*, and others who have been involved in literacy and education research for many years. The focus of this book is multidisciplinary, and includes work that is taken from the sociology of education, social semiotics, the history of communications, linguistics, the philosophy of education, educational and action research, literary analysis, and ICT education studies.

### **Part I: Classrooms and Multiliteracies in Motion**

The first part of this collection is about classrooms, and the initial chapter of this part, by Beryl Exley and Allan Luke, is called, “Uncritical Framing: Lesson and Knowledge Structure in School Science.” The authors take us into the world of science education, and the issues that surround this practice in con-

temporary education. They compare a traditional science curriculum with one based on the multiliteracies framework. This comparison is not to place one type of science training over another, but to see how both construct central notions of science through practice. This chapter employs Bernstein's knowledge classification and pedagogical framing in order to open up relevant sociological questions for the comparison. The authors look at primary science education and a popular Australian program that links science with literacy. The results of this study show how multiliteracies pedagogy could be applied to science classrooms, and the benefits for teachers and learners that would ensue. The authors do not, however, dismiss the traditional modes of science education, but analyze in detail the connections and points of contact of each model of education through sociological investigation and description of classroom practice.

The next chapter, "Image, Voice, and the Making of the School-Literate Child: Lessons from Multiliterate Teaching in China," shifts the focus of inquiry to China. The authors, Bette Zhang Bin and Peter Freebody, investigate the ways in which young children are acculturated in Chinese classrooms through multiliterate practice. This detailed and culturally specific study analyzes the mixture of text, image, genre and voice that permeate the early-years experiences of school children in China. Children in China are introduced to the notion of schooling and being schooled through textbooks that contain cultural and social messages. This chapter picks apart these messages, and shows how multiliteracies can be used to understand the ways in which the socialization of schooling is effected in different parts of the world. In particular, the authors highlight the use of the term *yuwen* in Chinese educational practice. It refers to the teaching of reading literature, though is a difficult term to precisely translate as it simultaneously makes reference to social, political, cultural and disciplinary ideas that are hard to understand outside of the Chinese context. The authors show how all the different elements of *yuwen* come together in the chapter, as well as examining several typical textbooks. In so doing, they build a picture of multiliterate practice in Chinese early-years education. This is a moving and close reading of Chinese textual practice that belies specific cultural and social directives that have a long history in Chinese society and that are realized in particular ways through the construction of school-age texts.

Chapter 4 of this volume, "Introducing Multimodal Literacy to Young Children Learning English as a Second Language (ESL)" is by Len Unsworth and Robyn Bush. The authors have taken the teaching experiences of the second author as the starting point for this chapter. Robyn teaches in an area of Sydney where 92% of the children have a language background other than English. This could be a hindrance to the usual running of the classroom, but the authors show how deploying multimodal text within a systemic functional linguistic framework can turn this situation around. They argue that multiliteracies is a development from functional systemic linguistics in the way in which multimodality underpins meaning-making with text, and the

consequent switching between different modes or genre approach to speaking, reading, and writing. This chapter includes detailed textual suggestions for teachers to use in the classroom, as well as information and mechanisms for the use of these texts. The authors cover the oceans and sea creatures, environmental issues, and caring for pets through this highly structured and detailed approach to ESL literacy teaching and learning. The chapter concludes with a suggestion that teachers may use these ideas as a blueprint for action research about their own practice involving ESL teaching and multimodal text.

## **Part II: Multiliteracies Theory in Motion**

The next part of the book examines the theoretical aspects of multiliteracies. Chapter 5, “New Media: New Learning,” has been written by Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis. The authors argue that the global spread of the new media has fundamentally changed the ways in which people learn. New media are defined by the digital applications of a range of information and communications devices. The problem that the authors point out in this theoretical approach to multiliteracies is that these devices are usually not used in schools to the benefit of the new learning. The authors take evidence from the history of communications that suggests how the “newness” of the new media is constructed. For example, they argue that hypertext is an extension of what books have always done (i.e., cross-reference and point the reader to different parts of the text). Virtual reality is another example of how different media have brought to the fore questions of verisimilitude. In contrast, the authors offer four dimensions of the new media that are new: (1) agency; (2) divergence; (3) multimodality; and (4) conceptualization. The chapter juxtaposes these four dimensions with four dimensions of the new learning: (1) designers; (2) learners differences; (3) synaesthesia and; (4) metacognition. This important chapter is an updated account of multiliteracies theory; the authors argue that contemporary education practice will advance once the four dimensions of the new media are reconciled with the four dimensions of the new learning.

In Chapter 6, “Multiliteracies and the Agency Involved with Computer Operations in Education,” David R. Cole and Darren L. Pullen have constructed their theoretical approach to multiliteracies by examining the ways in which students learn in contemporary society. They take the fictional idea of cyberpunk and the socio-cultural notion of techno-tribalism as a basis for understanding the agency of computer operations in education. Cyberpunk is a useful way to figure computer-mediated agency, as it gives the user a landscape to live in where movement is global and power concerns are immanent to everything that happens. The authors take the example of global capital movements to demonstrate the argument on cyberpunk and agency. Global capital and the ways that it is moved provide a connection between our lives and the ways that they are being changed due to the use of computers. Students may change their identities on the net in their pursuit of different social,

political, and cultural options, and this chapter deals with these radical possibilities in terms of multiliteracies and viable ways in which these unstable aspects of contemporary social life may be incorporated into education. The authors include an individual story from qualitative research to illustrate the consequences of seriously considering cyberpunk and computer operations in education. Techno-tribalism acts as a collective and sociological platform for computer-mediated agency, and broadens the argument of this multiliteracies chapter from the more individualized concerns of cyberpunk. The authors include the example of free-party organization in the UK to show how techno-tribal agency may be actualized in practice.

The last chapter of the theoretical section focuses on multiliteracies and the politics of desire, and was written by David R. Cole. The author argues that the contemporary educational scene has been affected by a new moral perception of a teacher's work by the intrusion of media systems into the classroom. Multiliteracies theory is added to in this chapter by the construction of a new "teacher's body" that is able to deal with the morphology of the new media by being absolutely open to change. David R. Cole uses ideas taken from Elizabeth Grosz and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to make a new body that is synthetic and flexible, communicable through the digital medium and able to connect internal desire with the external surveillance of desire. This chapter takes multiliteracies theory in a new direction, and gives teachers different options when considering their lives and the ways in which they are described, especially through media reports. The "teacher's body" of this chapter projects sexuality as a partial object, and shows how this could help to alleviate some of the suffocating moral discourse on sexuality and pedagogy that potentially demonizes teacher's desires.

### **Part III: The Pedagogy of Multiliteracies in Motion**

Part III of this collection looks at the pedagogy of multiliteracies, which has always been central to the framework. Chapter 8, "Using the Principles of Multiliteracies to Inform Pedagogical Change," was written by Geoff Bull and Michèle Anstey. The authors have developed a professional development program for teachers in schools that engages them in action-learning to change their literacy pedagogy. This program has been successfully implemented in the state of Queensland, Australia, where multiliteracies has perhaps been most extensively used for teaching and learning in schools. The authors of the chapter are also facilitators of this process of change, and point to the multiliteracies framework as being pertinent to today's educational situation, in that it ties pedagogy with literacy practice. They therefore give the participants in their program an understanding of multiliteracies and the ways in which its usage may change their literacy teaching. Teachers are, importantly, constructed as learners in this chapter. The authors include in this work their construction of what it means to become multiliterate, as well as a multiliterate matrix that gives the teachers engaged with the action-learning

program the opportunity to monitor their progress and to reflect on what in their practice might still need attention. Examples of this reflective attitude are interspersed throughout the chapter. The authors reflect upon what happened during the teacher sessions, and give the reader a practical means for changing teaching practice based on the principles of multiliteracies.

The next chapter of this book is called, “Disrupting Traditions: Teachers Negotiating Multiliteracies and Digital Technologies,” and is written by Elizabeth Petroelje Stolle and Gustavo E. Fischman. The authors of this chapter have taken Prensky’s notions of digital natives and digital immigrants as a starting point to investigate current changes in pedagogy. The issues at stake in this chapter are the power relationships that are established through pedagogy, and how teachers might be dealing with a potential loss of control due to the introduction of digital technology. The writers have used educational research methods to look at how teachers conceptualize literacy and pedagogy, with particular attention to the realities of working with digital technology in education. The researchers found that digital technology was disruptive to the usual running of the classroom, and they have developed an entertaining analysis of this disruption to draw out the consequences for pedagogical purposes. They conclude that teachers now have to navigate and negotiate their way around any power relationships that might be established in the classroom due to digital technology, and the application of the multiliteracies framework (i.e., transformed practice) is one such method to achieve this.

Chapter 10 completes the pedagogy section of the book. “Using Multiliteracies to Facilitate Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in the Classroom,” by Louanne Ione Smolin and Kimberly Lawless, examines the multiple parts of multiliteracies with respect to making connections between cultural diversity and pedagogical choice. This can be a challenging aspect of a teacher’s job, and the authors show how it may be achieved through and alongside the use of technology. The authors argue that much of the lives of contemporary students are spent online and in digital environments, and this now represents a significant part of their cultural makeup. Teachers should be aware of these digitally cultural forms and acculturations, and may use the multiliteracies framework as an effective means of incorporating them into their social practice of teaching. This means constructing educationally enriching situations that show the students how to use the knowledge and skills that they have learnt on their electronic adventures. The authors give two examples to illustrate their argument: the first involves bilingualism, the second a community learning center. Students from different contexts are asked to research and represent their findings on these topics, which help them to make connections with their local communities. This chapter shows teachers how to be culturally inclusive and how to use technology in their curriculum planning to break down pedagogical barriers such as the transmission model of knowledge.

**Part IV: Multiliteracies in Practice**

The ultimate part of the book concerns multiliteracies in practice. Chapter 11, “Multiliteracies and Assessment Practice” was written by Ian Brown, Lori Lockyer and Peter Caputi. Assessment is a vital part of educational practice, and this chapter looks at the different assessment options that one might apply to the multiliteracies framework. The team looked at new developments in curriculum construction in New South Wales (NSW) and Queensland, Australia that have included multiliterate ways of working, and ask the question as to whether the concomitant assessment practices that are currently being used have kept up with the pace of change encapsulated by new digital curriculum content. The answer is inevitably “no,” especially as standardized literacy testing does not assess the broad range of skills that are involved with the multiliteracies framework. This testing has become the norm set against a political background of conservative ideology that positions literacy as a skill-based grouping of cognitive qualities such as spelling, reading, and writing of printed text. The team gives a different way to assess multiliterate practice that has been taken from ICT education studies. This alternative is an evidence-centered assessment design that has three parts: the student model, the task model, and the evidence model. The authors show how this model works in practice by applying it to a case study of using news media in NSW. However, the results of the project point to the ambiguous nature of assessment practice in the light of complex multimodality.

Chapter 12 is about young Australians reading in a digital world, and was written by Jennifer Rennie and Annette Patterson. The authors have surveyed over 600 14-year-old children in an Australian city. The focus of the survey was children’s out-of-school reading habits, and the definition of “reading” that the researchers used included the social practices involved with any type of electronic or mobile media. The study also looked to ascertain the level of pleasure that the readers were achieving with respect to the different reading options that are now available in a multiliterate digital world. The analysis of the data includes a focus on the gender divide in teenage reading habits, as well as defining the shifts and tendencies in the ways in which young people are reading today. This is a lively and informative chapter that leaves the reader with a vivid and detailed picture of the ways that children are reading out of school when they have access to emerging digital technology. It will also help educators construct new reading curricula, given new electronic trends and multiliterate options.

The next chapter is called “Multiliteracies: Resources for Meaning-making in the Secondary English Classroom.” Douglas McClenaghan and Brenton Doecke have written about the teaching experiences of Douglas as a secondary English teacher, and have drawn out the implications for the purposes of multiliteracies practice. This chapter pays close attention the ways in which educators ask their students to write. This gesture in educational practice is now potentially transformed, given the fact that there are many new multimedia

representational options. This chapter charts several of these options through examples of student work where they are using multimedia to express themselves. The examples that the authors have chosen show how intense and complicated multimedia student representation can be when handled by a sensitive educationalist. This chapter points out the subtle ways that text represents life and vice versa, and how pedagogy may interpret and reinvent text in the classroom. This writing shows how students may be inspired by the use of multimedia to tell their stories, and how a teacher may balance creativity with direction to achieve substantial multiliterate outcomes.

The last chapter of this collection is called, “A Virtual School for Rethinking Learning,” and was composed by Julie Faulkner and Gloria Latham. The authors have focused on a pedagogic experiment that looks to disrupt some of the norms of teaching. They have used a virtual construct of a school to encourage pre-service student teachers to think about what it means to become a teacher, and what potential challenges they might face in the profession. This fascinating approach to learning opens up many questions about technology and teacher training, as the researchers are using virtual reality to explore pre-conceptions about teaching. To get to this level of serious thought about the social stereotypes and normative functions of teaching in our society is not an easy task, as anyone involved with teacher training would know. This important virtual experiment therefore has broad implications outside of the training course in which it is embedded, and it is a fitting finale to finish off this collection of chapters on the future of education and multiliteracies.

## **Conclusion**

This collection goes from current classroom literacy practice to the future of education. It includes evidence and theory taken from a range of sources, spread between four continents. The basic message of the book is that literacy teaching and learning—even though in a potential state of digitally inspired flux and economic variation, can still be a singular and joyous activity. Even if the outside, interconnected, and globally mediated world seems to be irrevocably oscillating and potentially dangerous to established norms, literacy seems to hold some sort of shelter. Perhaps this is because deep inside literacy practice there are ways of doing things that have changed little. This is why the ultimate point of this collection is to touch the inner lives of literacy educators, not to distract them from their purpose, but to add to them in order to strengthen the ways in which education functions, and to potentially make their lives better:

This intensive way of reading, in contact with what’s outside the book, as a flow meeting other flows, one machine, among others, as a series of experiments for each reader *in the midst of events that have nothing to do with books.*

(Deleuze, 1990/1995, pp. 8–9 (emphasis added))

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**Part I**

**Classrooms and  
Multiliteracies in Motion**

