Micro-Paper 34: *Social Media Literacy*

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Defining the Term

Social Media Literacy (SML) is the capacity to communicate in an appropriate and responsible way within social networks and technologies. It entails three dimensions: First, navigating privacy and personal marking, in order to make communication more suitable and conscientious for a virtual audience (Reputation management); second, being critical towards the information that is published and assessing the credibility of materials, posts, and resources online (Critical thinking; and recognizing networks, discovering new contacts, and joining in conversations taking place in online social environments (Network awareness).

Social Media Literacy has five key concepts that explain how it fits in today's in the new media and literacy landscapes:

1. People display carefully and consciously predesigned constructions that might or might not reflect who and what people are or who they truly are.
2. People build their own comprehension and understanding of the world and their context, based on preconceived observations and ideas perceived in the media.
3. Media offers information upon individuals to build an image of the reality, negotiating meaning that depends, at the same time, on their personal traits and personality factors such as: genre, sexual perspectives, racial opinions and family and cultural background.
4. Media are always influenced by commercial contemplations and thoughts, which as a business want to control what people see, hear and read in the media itself.
5. Media products are always ideological, promoting and proclaiming (explicitly and implicitly) principles, values and lifestyles related to different issues, from politics to religion, nature and authority.   .

Connecting it to LSLP

In this new digital era, it is a priority to acquire and learn the skills to operate in an efficient and effective way the technologies people have at hand and should use daily. For our research at LSLP, SML provides a space to expand on traditional literacies that deal with reading and writing, but which have not been taught or used in education properly. It also generates questions about the critical, appropriate and extensive use of Social Media in daily life, which we can also connect to some of our ongoing research on video games and gaming and 21st century literacies. In this sense, SML would both generate a new field of study and open doors for future researches and studies on the matter.

Expanding Second Language Research

As English learning expands in second-language contexts, the need for Social Media Literacy and studies and researches about this topic is urgent. We need to propose more studies and curricular proposals that discuss how to incorporate critical discussions of digital era and media in our classes. It also opens the space to study and research more on the 5 Social Media Literacy key concepts, which need to be expanded and treated more deeply to generate new process and analysis of the use of Social Media in the society and in the education.

References

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