

Position Paper 1: Responses to Readings for Histories of Literacy (Part 1)

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*Instruction: In 250-500 words, **argue a position** related to the readings for the week. Arguing a position requires that you synthesize the readings, analyzing a point of view. This is an especially important skill as you develop your CT and research papers, and serve as practice in this area of development. Citations are not required.*

Literacy is here and there, not necessarily everywhere, but nonetheless a part of human civilizations that is organic and mostly essential. It “wraps around” us: as the second article suggests, there are multiple facets of human life that involve forms of literacy accordingly including but not limited to societal lives with our families as primates, fully-fledged languages, arts, and technologies (Collins, James, & Richard Bolt, 2003). On the “proactive” front-end, literacy enriches humans, and other the bottom it “backs it up” by making us more civilized, as phrased quite accurately by cognitive developmental psychologist David Olson back in the 1970s.

When I was on a recent train trip to some southern American state over the winter holiday, I still noticed on occasions passengers did not read or follow (or perhaps ignore) the “Push” sign on those between-cart, automatic doors – all you needed to do is to push the button to open the door, which was easy by textual instruction, while for some folks it looked like they did not read it and pulled the door manually by hand. Other equivalently crucial components may include agriculture and domestication, as people observe and work iteratively to refine and build their homes and communities, likely with literacy as media.

The development in the 1990s in American literacy teaching would be a signature example for the philosophical debates within this context of pedagogy, upon dichotomies like the “whole language” versus narrow or more descriptive views. Sociocultural and relativist “models” of *literacies* that take on a *relational* approach in the analyses of the underlying underpinnings had promoted consequential “technology of the intellect”, whereas on an other perspective literacies are focused on diversity and their influence as both perspectives and as texts.

As much as it is a praxis as it is a foundation as a means to other end goals, the theme of literacy may be appropriately (or approximately) summarized as the fundamental framing of *intellectual inquiry*; literally it suggests that it should be what enhances or encourages us to think, grow intellectually toward knowledge and the making of inferences and generalizations, etc. Throughout this process there were lenses that were historical, anthropological, sociological, political, philosophical, and theological (Bloome and Green, 2015), which confoundedly formed the social turn of literacy study and development. The autonomous and ideological models formulated by Brian Street are an important set of two models which are contrast to each other.

References

David Bloome, Judith Green. 26 May 2015. *The Social and Linguistic Turns in Studying Language and Literacy from*: The Routledge Handbook of Literacy Studies Routledge

Collins, James, and Richard Blot. 2003. *Literacy and Literacies: Texts, Power, and Identity*, Cambridge University Press