

## Micro-Paper10: *Participatory Literacies*

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### Defining the term

Participatory culture is a term usually segregated to the fields of popular culture and media studies. Recently, however, the concept has entered educational conversations through discussions of how educators can incorporate participatory practices in the classroom to teach both traditional as well as participatory literacies. Participatory literacies refer to a variety of social practices which have evolved around the use of new media technologies in networked cultures.

Participatory environments are collaborative environments which often involve the sharing, archiving, and appropriation of information, the collective construction of knowledge, and informal mentoring processes whereby novice community members receive feedback, guidance, and modeling from more experienced members. Examples of participatory environments include online communities of fans, gamers, bloggers, and many others who use new media tools to create and share.

### Connecting it to LSLP

These new media technologies and the literacies they encourage are changing our concept of what it means to be literate in the twenty-first century and are forcing us to rethink our definitions of reading, writing, literature, knowledge, and learning.

Despite this, education often ignores these emerging literacies, and participatory practices are often regulated to students' out-of-school literacies. These habits of thinking and doing, however, are crucial literacies which,

when incorporated in the classroom, help students engage and learn in a networked culture. Whether in school or out, participatory literacies are an important part of twenty-first century literacies and a large part of the culture of the twenty-first century. As such, their effect on students and learning cannot be ignored for the sake of the traditional classroom.

### Expanding Second Language Research

Participatory literacies affect all areas of educational research, including second language research. Participatory practices affect how, when, and why we use and learn language and can bring a new perspective to research on language acquisition through networked cultures. Even offline, classroom teachers can harness the potential of participatory practices to build strong learning communities which incorporate safe spaces for creation, mentorship, modeling, instant feedback, and collective knowledge building. More research is needed on participatory literacies as we work to conceptualize the social and cultural practices utilized with new media technologies.

### References

- Jenkins, H. (2008, Aug. 12). What is participatory culture? [Video]. Retrieved from: <http://techtv.mit.edu/videos/704-what-is-participatory-culture>
- Jenkins, H., & Kelley, W, (Eds.). (2013). *Reading in a participatory culture: Remixing Moby-Dick in the English classroom*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

This LSP Micro-Paper is part of a series of guest micro-papers by researchers at the Initiative for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacies Research at Florida State University