Title: The New Literacies: Multiple Perspectives on Research and Practice

Editor: Elizabeth A. Baker

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Reviewer: Dr Emese Hall, Lecturer, Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter, UK. (E-Mail: Emese.Hall@exeter.ac.uk).

The New Literacies is of considerable contemporary relevance and would appeal to those with an interest in educational technologies, as well as literacy learning. Baker's aim is to bring together diverse researchers whose work is guided by a broad range of theoretical perspectives. She argues, and I agree, that this eclecticism not only adds richness but also leads to a more holistic understanding of the new literacies, as no single perspective is given more credence than another. It is notable that all of the authors are based at American universities, but this does not limit the book's global significance.

Lev explains in his foreword that the term 'new literacies' means different things to different people, but, in essence, it can be defined as both a way of thinking that centralises the role of digital media in literacy pedagogy. The book features numerous points of theoretical and practical interest and comprehensively demonstrates the vast, and constantly evolving, potential of this area of education.

Although Baker highlights the value of the book for classroom teachers, arguing that the knowledgeable teacher can make informed choices in his or her literacy teaching, much of the writing is theoretically dense and therefore potentially challenging for those without background knowledge about the concepts under discussion. (I make this observation despite some straightforward definitions of key terms and clear practical examples in several of the chapters.) On this basis, I suggest The New Literacies is best suited to an academic audience, especially teacher educators and other professionals involved in literacy education training, who could usefully 'translate' the book's contents for non-academics and uninformed policy makers. Indeed, I argue that this is essential if Baker is to achieve her intended aims and influence classroom practice.

Of the 13 chapters, there are a few which are particularly relevant to early years education. Firstly, Labbo and Ryan (chapter 5) consider the use of computers in the early years and highlight ten research findings from semiotic studies that practitioners will find informative. A summary of a photo essay project, taken from Allen (2007), is an excellent example of how the new literacies can be used to create positive and meaningful home-school relationships. A further chapter of note is Gee's (chapter 8), discussion of 'a situated sociocultural approach to literacy and technology', where he suggests that the development of 'specialist language' is essential for children's reading comprehension. This proposal is illustrated by several examples of informal specialist language learning, including a complex interchange between a 4-year-old boy and his mother on the topic of dinosaurs, taken from Crowley and Jacobs' (2002) research. Finally, Kalantzis, Cope and Cloonan's (chapter 4) writing on

multiliteracies would make worthwhile reading for those who recognise the value of multimodal meaning making and wish to learn more about this fascinating area.

In summary, this book offers much to inspire, whether your theoretical persuasion is behaviourist, semiotic, cognitive, sociocultural, critical or feminist. I initially thought it was slightly ironic that the innovative nature of the majority of the research in *The New Literacies* is communicated in a traditional (book) format. However, the fact that most of the text is available to view on google books provides a perfect example of how technology can be used to support reading; in this case of the book itself.