

The Literacy of Facebook:

SNS Literacy Practices and Learning Transfer in FYC

Ryan P. Shepherd, Ohio University

Ten FYC students were interviewed about their literacy practices on Facebook and their perceptions of them. The interviewees made ample use of multimodal communication, but they had a limited view of connections between literacy practices on Facebook and in their composition classes. Exploring literacy practices on Facebook and other SNSs with students may facilitate learning transfer and help students understand the complex rhetorical choice they make online and offline. Connecting these literacy contexts may allow learning in one context to be used in others.

Keywords: digital literacies, first-year composition (FYC), learning transfer, Facebook, multimodality

“Literacy” is more complex than simply understanding alphabetic text. It is a social act embedded in a specific context (Street, 1984; Gee, 2008) as well as a practice that involves multiple media in addition to words on a page. Digital media and traditional print media are both “a delivery system for language” (Gee and Hayes, 2011, p. 2), but digital media offer additional avenues through which meaning can be delivered (Jewitt, 2008; Kress, 2003; Selber, 2004), such as images, links, videos, and even the simple act of clicking “like” on a post. These modes of meaning are important to the literacy practices of social media (see Figure 1). If images, links, or videos were separated from alphabetic text on Facebook or other social media platforms, the methods for making meaning would be dramatically limited.

This article focuses on literacy practices within the context of Facebook

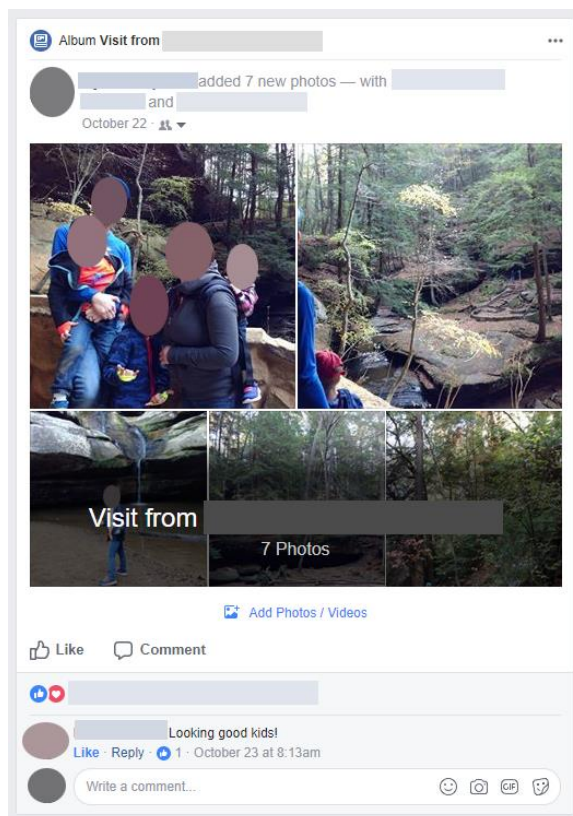


Figure 1: The image above is a representative post from Facebook. Meaning is conveyed through alphabetic text, through images, through likes and other reactions, and through tags to other users.

and how they are perceived by students. The importance of Facebook and other SNSs (social networking sites) has become more evident in composition scholarship over the past decade. Many articles have focused on Facebook in classroom practice (Balzhiser et al., 2011; Fife, 2010), others have focused on more general Facebook literacies (Shepherd, 2015; Shepherd, 2016; Amicucci, 2017), and even a few have focused on Facebook for research purposes (Sheffield and Kimme Hae, 2016). This previous research demonstrates how Facebook and other SNSs serve as a robust resource for scholars of literacy and composition. However, one approach in the research that has been rarely used is to examine specific literacy practices within the context in which they are being practiced. Building on the situated exploration of Facebook literacies from authors such as Amber Buck (2012), Kevin Eric DePew (2011), and Kevin Eric DePew and Susan Miller-Cochran (2010)—all of whom focus on case studies with individual social media users—this article seeks to create a more robust picture of the practices that take place on Facebook by exploring not only literacy practices on Facebook but also how those practices were perceived by the users.

To understand our students' literacy practices and perceptions of them, I interviewed ten first-year composition students about their Facebook use. I found that the literacy practices of FYC students on Facebook have clear connections to practices commonly engaged in as part of composition classes. Students have a deep

understanding of how to make meaning across multiple modes and can see a connection between these literacies and those taking place in their composition classes when asked directly about how these spaces might connect. But because students may not initially perceive Facebook and FYC as being connected, they may face significant obstacles in learning transfer and may struggle to connect these two contexts in meaningful ways. By looking to the growing literature on learning transfer in composition studies (i.e., Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak, 2014; Beaufort, 2007; DePalma, 2015; Wardle, 2007), composition teachers can make these literacy practices more accessible to students beyond the context of Facebook. This may give students a more expansive view of literacy and allow them to use critical literacy knowledge in a variety of literacy contexts both in and out of school.

The Interviewees

Interviews were conducted with 10 FYC students to understand both how they were using Facebook and how they perceived that use. The interviewees were enrolled at a large urban university and were concurrently taking FYC at the time of the interviews. In Table 1, some basic demographic information about the interviewees is presented. Of course, these ten students cannot represent all literacy practices across FYC students in the U.S. Instead, they can serve as a starting point for discussions about composition and Facebook literacy. My hope is that the diversity of the students

Table 1*Interviewee Basic Demographic Information*

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Race/Ethnicity	First Language	Semesters of Composition
Baozhai	Female	20	Chinese	Mandarin	2 ¹
Carrie	Female	19	Asian-American	English	2
Chelsea	Female	18	Hispanic	Spanish ²	2
Connor	Male	19	Asian-American/Caucasian	English	1 ³
Gabriel	Male	19	Caucasian	English	2
Jason	Male	18	Asian-American	English	1
Matthew	Male	19	Caucasian	English	2
Melanie	Female	19	Hispanic	English	2
Ray	Male	18	Caucasian	English	2
Scott	Male	18	Hispanic	English	2

selected and the large student body from which they were drawn may offer insights into student populations beyond the immediate context.

The 10 participants were asked a series of 22 questions about themselves, their Facebook activity, and connections between Facebook and composition (see Appendix). The questions were designed to examine specific literacy practices and look for connections between practices and other writing contexts, particularly their writing for FYC. Then, participants

were asked to engage in a regular Facebook session, talking aloud about what they were doing as they did it in order to “capture what it is people actually do in the moment of composing the products of literate interaction” (Takayoshi, 2016, p. 16).

Table 2 shows the participants’ basic Facebook usage habits. Usage varied greatly among the 10 participants in terms of how long they had had a profile, how often they logged in, and how long they stayed on during each long in.

¹ Baozhai was the only student who took first-year composition for non-native English speakers.

² Chelsea identified her first language as Spanish but stated that she primarily uses English now, even at home.

³ Connor and Jason were enrolled in a special accelerated honors section of first-year composition.

Table 2*Interviewee Basic Facebook Usage*

Pseudonym	Duration of Facebook Profile	Number of Facebook Logins	Reported Duration of Each Login	Actual Duration of Observed Session
Baozhai	1 year	1 per week	Less than 30 minutes	8:49
Carrie	5 years	4-5 per day	5 minutes	7:23
Chelsea	3 years	20 per day	3 minutes	3:22
Connor	4 years	15-20 per day	10-15 minutes	2:27
Gabriel	3 years	2 per day	5-15 minutes	6:25
Jason	6 years	6 per day	5-10 minutes	2:09
Matthew	1.5 years	1 per day	1-20 minutes	3:04
Melanie	5 years	30 per day	20 seconds	1:21
Ray	3 years	5-6 per day	10 minutes	2:13
Scott	5 years	1 per day	20-30 minutes	6:40

Literacy Practices on Facebook

Based on the interview data from these students, literacy practices on Facebook varied significantly between participants. What they consumed and posted and how they did so was diverse. Below, I will divide the interviewees literacy practices into four main categories: Reading, Posting Images, Writing, and Liking.

READING

“Reading” in the context of Facebook involved a great deal more than decoding alphabetic text. In fact, the primary way that students “read” Facebook was simply scrolling through their feeds, scanning

content, and stopping to view images. While it was certainly part of their literacy practices, reading of alphabetic text was less common than other types of receptive literacies. Most often, students “read” by viewing photos. This was discussed by 8 of the 10 interviewees and was by far the most common receptive literacy practice.

The interviewees rarely mentioned reading alphabetic text during the interviews. Six of the interviewees did mention text while being observed using Facebook, but only two read a full post. The remaining four interviewees didn’t mention alphabetic text at all as I observed their sessions. They focused on images

primarily or occasionally discussed viewing videos or links. “Reading” and interpreting images seemed to be the primary way that people received meaning when using Facebook.

POSTING IMAGES

Images were the most discussed method of producing content for Facebook. When I asked them to describe their posting processes on Facebook, three of the ten talked specifically about posting photos with no prompting from me. While these three interviewees focused specifically on posting photos, all ten mentioned the importance of photos to their Facebook use at some point during their interviews. Discussion of images, particularly when discussing productive literacies instead of receptive literacies, was far more common than discussion of traditional alphabetic text.

WRITING

Posting public written content was rarely mentioned by the participants. This is not to say that written content on Facebook was not important, but the ways that interviewees were writing on Facebook may be different than what might be expected. The most common type of written content was captioning. Several interview participants noted the importance of adding captions to images, videos, or links when these things were posted to Facebook—a literacy practice that showcases the multimodal nature of composing on Facebook. All ten interviewees mentioned at least one of these kinds of posts at some point during

the interview. Six of the ten mentioned captioning posts as part of their regular Facebook activity. Based on this discussion, it seems that captions may be the most popular type of written public content on Facebook—more so than status updates or comments—for the interviewees.

Text-based status updates and comments were not mentioned as a regular activity of most of the interviewees, but they were mentioned on a few occasions. For example, Carrie mentioned feeling “obligated” to comment on a post when she had been tagged in it. Nearly all of the participants noted that they rarely commented on posts when I asked about this directly. Gabriel was the only participant to detail writing a status update as his main posting process. No other interviewee talked in depth about posting text-based status updates.

Interviewees were far more likely to send private chat messages through Facebook Messenger than they were to post status updates or comments. Chat messages were mentioned by six participants as an activity that they engaged in on Facebook regularly.

LIKING

Most of what interviewees said about their activity was verified when I observed their Facebook sessions at the end of the interviews. However, there was one notable difference in reported behavior and observed behavior. Only two mentioned “liking” content as part of their regular activities on Facebook, but six “liked” at least one thing during their

observed Facebook session—often doing so with no verbal indication that they had done anything.

The interviewees saw “liking” as a complex rhetorical activity. They often felt pressured to like certain content (especially if they were tagged). Gabriel noted that it was “weird” to like content that was not posted by one of his own Facebook friends (but was posted by a friend of a friend) even if he enjoyed what was posted. Ray mentioned a similar practice, stating that his likelihood of liking content “usually depends how close I am with the person” and not on the content of the post. He stated that he won’t like content if he didn’t consider the poster close. In his interview, Connor noted that liking something didn’t necessarily mean that he supported or agreed with it: “I like a lot of things on Facebook, more as a sign of support or appreciation for what they’re doing or whatever effort they’re putting in rather than a sense of agreement. I don’t have to agree with your post to like it.” He stated that he viewed liking as a demonstration that the content was “worth my time” or “meaningful.” This meant that he may “like” something he disagreed with.

“Liking” in the context of Facebook meant something slightly different to all of these participants than that they simply *like* something. The fact that no one mentioned liking as part of activities on Facebook during their interviews may be due to the invisibility of this practice: it is so “normal” and commonplace that interviewees did not even think about it as they did it. Like with the interviewees in

Daniel Keller’s (2014) study, my interviewees “were making complex rhetorical decisions that only seemed simple because they have internalized the discourse rules for the website” (p. 93). Exploring liking with students may allow for a more critical reflection on the meaning of these practices: what does it mean to “like” and when is it appropriate?

Perception of Facebook Literacies

To better understand how participants perceived their literacy practices on Facebook, they were first asked if they connected Facebook to writing and then were asked if they connected it to composition specifically. Regardless of their answers, they were asked to try to make a connection between Facebook and composition to see if connections could be made.

IS FACEBOOK WRITING?

Seven interviewees said their Facebook activity was related to writing, but the connections that they saw between Facebook and writing were limited. Carrie saw the only connection to writing on Facebook was grammatical correctness or posting writing from elsewhere. She mentioned posting poems or raps to “test out” with friends. Matthew only hesitantly stated that Facebook was connected to writing. He stated that it was only connected to writing when he was asking for help with writing for school on his Facebook groups. Scott was also hesitant, stating that Facebook was writing, but it was “not related to the skill of writing.”

When asked to clarify, he said “you are not trying to make poetry in your posts” and went on to identify posts as a simple relaying of facts. This is particularly interesting given that Carrie specifically *was* writing poetry in her posts but also did see this activity as writing. The perception of whether or not Facebook is writing may be partially based simply on what the interviewees primarily used Facebook for: was it for poetry or was it not?

One of the interviewees was more confident in his assertion that Facebook had a connection to writing. Gabriel stated that Facebook was connected to writing because “I’m conveying [...] a good message. I do put some thought into it.” Many of the interviewees often seemed to equate the idea of “thought” or even simply length with the idea of “writing.” If there was more thought put into the post or if the post was simply longer than a few words, it was more likely to qualify as “writing” to the interviewees. This seems to connect specifically with Gabriel’s experience. He was the only interviewee to detail writing status updates as his main posting process on Facebook. These were written text only (and did not include images or links), and he explained a very detailed and thoughtful posting process. Perhaps it is because of this that Gabriel was the most confident in his assert that Facebook was connected to “writing.”

The remaining two interviewees stated Facebook wasn’t writing. Jason stated that Facebook couldn’t be writing because it didn’t have a “formal format.” Ray said that it was related to conversation and was

similar to “small talk” that people engage in when meeting in person.

Connections between Facebook and writing were tenuous. Interviewees focused on lower-level grammatical concerns or correctness in most of their responses. None of them mentioned anything about the process of writing, and none of them mentioned multimodal elements of writing, such as using images, in the answers to these questions.

CONNECTIONS TO COMPOSITION

After asking interviewees what categories Facebook activity might fall into, they were then asked if they saw a relationship between Facebook and composition. Six stated that they thought there was a connection, two said there was not, and one said there might be. The final respondent did not offer an answer either way. The most common connections between Facebook activity and composition were “writing” (3 interviewees) and “thought” (3 interviewees). Additionally, participants saw a connection with “debate,” “audience,” and “expression.” As part of this line of questioning, I asked participants to define the word “composition” in their own words. Two of the three respondents who said that Facebook was not related to composition or were unsure if there was a connection mentioned length as being part of the definition of composition. Scott stated that composition was “a large piece of writing,” and Chelsea said composition had to be “something long, not just three words.” Melanie said that composition was “written work.” None of the others

mentioned length or work in their definitions of composition. This is related to an earlier point: many of the interviewees seemed to believe that an activity can only be writing if it is longer than a status update.

Most of the interviewees who stated that there was a connection between Facebook and composition mentioned some kind of expression when asked why they saw a connection. Baozhai stated that on Facebook she was able to “express my feelings,” and Carrie also noted the importance of “expression.” Connor noted that he could “freely share thoughts” on Facebook. Gabriel said that Facebook was “saying something about” him and was a “reflection of my character.” This connection with expression may also be what Carrie was referring to when she referenced the “raw conversation” of Facebook. Carrie’s later comments support this when she defines composition as “a mix of your own style of writing and conversation.” Carrie’s comments seem to suggest that writing and conversation might not be two separate things to her but instead are parts of the same activity.

The participants’ answers are somewhat surprising. The institution that these students attended does not have a set curriculum for FYC, but teachers are encouraged to focus on critical thinking, rhetoric, and argumentation. The word “express” (in any form) is mentioned very rarely in class descriptions or outcomes and is always in the context of “express ideas” and never in the context of “express” emotions or character. Of course, individual teachers may impart

this definition to students in their individual classes.

Composition Pedagogy, Facebook Literacy, and Learning Transfer

The interviewees were engaging in a variety of literacy practices on Facebook. Some of these practices were engaged in regularly, but few of the practices were engaged in with critical awareness. Because of this, it was difficult for students to connect literacy practices on Facebook with literacy practices in FYC or other college writing. Helping students to make those connections may allow them to make use of knowledge they’ve learned from social media in other contexts as well. By using what we know about learning transfer, composition teachers may be able to help students make stronger connections more quickly.

TRANSFER

When we discuss learning transfer, it is often unclear what specifically is being discussed. At the most basic level, learning has “transferred” when the learner can use knowledge outside of the context in which it was learned. However, it’s helpful to think of this as something other than “transfer” in the sense that people transfer money or credits. It’s more helpful to think of learning transfer as making connections inside the mind (Shepherd, 2018). In fact, when people make connections between contexts—especially contexts that they perceive as dissimilar—they require

what's called "mindful abstraction" (Salomon and Perkins, 1989, p. 2). The learner needs to intentionally try to abstract knowledge beyond the situation in which it was learned—to think of how prior knowledge might be used in a current situation or to think forward to possible uses of current learning. Knowledge only "transfers" when we have connected two learning contexts in our minds.

In the case of the Facebook activity above, the participants have learning knowledge from social media use that would be useful to writing generally and composition specifically—attention to audience, rhetorical context, and multimodality to name a few things they may have learned. However, if the students haven't connected writing and Facebook robustly inside their minds, they're not likely to use Facebook knowledge when they encounter a writing challenge. The Facebook knowledge would have to be mindfully abstracted to fit a situation beyond Facebook.

To demonstrate what I mean, let's imagine that students are given a new writing assignment that calls on them to analyze an image. The participants in the interviews analyzed images regularly on Facebook: they "read" images to get meaning not conveyed through alphabetic text. If the students are conscious that this has happened in their Facebook use and see how the image analysis assignment is similar to their Facebook activity, then they will be able to use what they learned on Facebook to help with the assignment. They have transferred the knowledge. But

if they don't perceive the two situations as similar, they're not likely to call up that same knowledge. The learning is still there—they still know a lot about image analysis from Facebook—but because they have not perceived the situations as similar, they're not likely to call on that knowledge when doing the assignment. Because they don't perceive the two situations as similar, it simply doesn't occur to them to draw from that knowledge to complete the assignment. They have not transferred the knowledge.

As writing teachers, we should help students connect these past experiences to their current writing practices. By helping them make those connections, we can facilitate transfer of learning between the context of social media and other writing contexts. To do this requires that we help students make connections between literacy contexts in their minds and help them broaden their definitions of literacy.

WHY TRANSFER MATTERS

The interviews have shed light on several things about Facebook literacy—and perhaps other social media literacies as well. Students read images quickly and efficiently, they use images and other multimodal texts to create meaning, and they use writing in complicated and nuanced ways. Some literacy practices are invisible to them—such as liking—and some literacy practices are connected to writing and composition for them even if the connection is only superficial. Connecting literacy learning across multiple contexts can help students to create a stronger sense of literacy and may

allow students to draw on multiple literacy contexts when new contexts are encountered.

Helping students make stronger connections between literacy practices on social media and those in the composition classroom may have several benefits. Because the students may perceive these two literacy contexts as especially dissimilar, connecting those contexts may be a strong starting point in broadening students' definitions of literacy beyond school literacies and alphabetic texts. Daniel Keller (2014) found that students tended not to perceive out-of-school literacies as "valid." Keller believes that this may "block the transfer of out-of-school practices to classroom literacy situations" (p. 40). The interviews here seem to suggest the same thing: connections between school literacies and social media literacies were weak. Keller goes on to state that "[f]inding ways to help students draw on the literate, rhetorical resources they possess may bolster not only what they do with reading and writing in college but in other domains as well, allowing them to realize, appreciate, and capitalize on the potential in their everyday literacies" (p. 152). Students who can make these connections might be able to improve their understanding of school literacies by drawing on these out-of-school literacies, but they also be able to extend this into "other domains" as well. Ideally, helping students expand how they view literacy may have the side effect of helping them understand any new literacy context they encounter, both in and out of school.

While not the explicit subject of this article, expanding definitions of literacy may also help students to validate personal literacy practices that may be part of their everyday lives and communities. Students may be able to draw more deeply on learning from their "multimodal home places," which are the "complex of personal ties, cultural and communal values, and linguistic conventions" as well as the modes and technologies used (Cedillo, 2017, p. 3). In particular, Adam J. Banks (2011) calls on students of color to become "digital griots" (p. 24). He encourages people to understand the deep and complex nature of digital literacy to expand their own understandings of the world—and to use that understanding to shape others' perceptions of culture and society. Facilitating transfer may be a critical first step in validating students multimodal home places, which may allow them to draw on these important literacy practices in the classroom.

FACILITATING TRANSFER

Facilitating transfer between digital literacies and school literacies is not as simple as telling students that the spaces are connected. Instead, facilitating transfer is a rhetorical act. It requires active persuasion on the part of the teacher to help convince students that literacy can be defined more broadly, that connections between literacy contexts exist, and that those connections can be helpful to future learning.

A good first step to defining literacy more broadly is to encourage students to explore how meaning is made. Teachers

can ask students to analyze how symbols, such as numbers, punctuation marks, emojis, icons, and images, enhance meaning in alphabetic text. Parallels can be drawn between how students read and write both traditional text and symbols. In my experience, students often are energized by discussing how emojis convey meaning. In a recent class, I asked students to write sentences using only emojis and asked other students to read the sentences. Students read each other's sentences with ease: they already understood the literacy practices involved in reading emojis from text messaging and social media.

The step from reading emojis to reading images, GIFs, and videos is a small one. Students can often see the meaning made in advertisements, pieces of art, and logos easily. As a class, it's helpful to discuss how this is also a part of literacy. Students can even begin to find visual arguments, such as those described by Anthony J. Blair (2004), and look for visuals that help them to construct "a verbal argument that is consistent with the visual presentation" (p. 49). Comparing how arguments are made visually to how they are made textually allows for connections to be built between these literacy practices.

With an expanded view of literacy, students can begin to connect social media and composition literacies. Many students are already experts at the functional literacies (Selber, 2004) of social media spaces such as Facebook: they can read, post, comment, and like without much

difficulty. They may understand the social conventions and basic genres of multiple spaces. However, many of these same students may not have reflected on these practices critically or rhetorically. This may be why the interviewees only connected Facebook and composition literacies in superficial ways. Helping students to consider social media spaces in a critical way can help to facilitate transfer. Doing so involves encouraging students to break down and think critically about how meaning is made on social media. For example, when a picture is posted to Facebook, in what ways are the picture and related caption making meaning? How is meaning made through the image alone? How does the meaning of the image change when the caption is read? Steven Fraiberg (2010) calls this interaction of various modes in making meaning "knotworking" (p. 105) and states that "[r]emixing composition for the twenty-first century requires a shift toward conceptualizing writers as 'knotworkers' negotiating complex arrays of languages, texts, tools, objects, symbols, and tropes" (p. 107). If the interviews are any indication, students are engaging in this process regularly as they scroll through social media feeds. Reflecting on the meaning-making process can allow students to critique whether the meaning is conveyed effectively. Students can analyze multiple social media posts and try to explore how each is making meaning. They can even use this knowledge to build maps of conventions within the space: What are the unstated

rules of literacy within the space? What are the genre conventions of various types of posts?

Fraiberg and others (such as Alexander, 2008; Selfe, 2009; and Yancey, 2004) note the importance of demonstrating these complex rhetorical and literate interactions to composition students. Exploring the complex interaction of modes in students' own literacy practices on social media can lead to broader discussions of available means of persuasion both on social media and in other literacy contexts as well. This can be a critical step in helping them to "expand the scope of what [their] definition of 'available means' can entail" (Davis, Brock, and McElroy, 2012). When they post on social media, they consider images, links, video, audio, and so on when considering what to post. We can encourage them to mindfully make similar choices in other contexts as well by considering both how and why those choices are made on social media.

Encouraging mindful connections between these spaces is important to the process of facilitating transfer. Many articles have shown that the perception of connection between learning contexts is vital for learners to use knowledge from one context in another context (for example, James, 2008; DePalma and Poe Alexander, 2015). If we hope to encourage our students to use knowledge they have about literacy outside of the context in which it was learned, it is very important to get students to engage in "mindful abstraction" (Salomon and Perkins, 1989, p. 126), or reflection on

how one context connects to another. This can help to make transfer easier, to keep it from becoming "welded" to classroom practice (Haskell, 2001), and to encourage knowledge to stay connected in students' minds as they move forward.

Drawing from the teaching for transfer model of composition pedagogy (Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak, 2014) can help encourage these connections to remain. Composition teachers can ask students to create new definitions for the words "writing" and "literacy" that will include both the types of literacy they encounter in the classroom and the types of literacy they have been discussing on social media. This new definition of literacy will allow them to connect the two literacy contexts more easily in their minds and will help it to remain connected in the future. The effectiveness of this type of reflection is evident in the interviews. When I asked about the connection between Facebook and composition, six of the students immediately saw the connection, but the other four students did not make this connection easily. However, all of the students were able to make specific connections to composition when asked to consider more deeply what the connections may be.

Conclusion

Social media literacies are complex and meaningful to composition students. They include traditional written content and other modes of communication: photos, videos, links, "liking," and so on. By looking at these specific literacy practices in context, composition teachers can learn

a great deal about the everyday literacy practices that our students are engaged in. For students to make use of the available means that they have learned from digital spaces, it is important to demonstrate to students the importance of their experiences online. As Cynthia Selfe (2009) puts it, "Composition classrooms can provide a context not only for talking about different literacies, but also for practicing different literacies, learning to create texts that combine a range of modalities as communicative resources: exploring their affordances, the special capabilities they offer to authors; identifying what audiences expect of texts that deploy different modalities and how they respond to such texts" (p. 643).

Digital literacies are part of the literacies of everyday life. They are part of our students' multimodal home places, and they are increasingly important to composition studies. As they become more important, researchers must endeavor to understand these literacy practices better and adapt composition classes to include what we have learned. This does not mean simply "grafting" digital literacies onto our assignments (Froehlich & Froehlich, 2013). Researchers must observe and attempt to understand literacy practices as they take place in real writing situations and help students to understand these practices and how they can be used to prepare for other composing contexts. Here, we have looked at the literacy practices of Facebook, which are widespread and especially common among social media users. The interviewees have helped to

showcase what is important about the literacy practices on Facebook: visual literacies, written literacies, and various other literacy practices in which they take part. Many of the participants saw a connection between these literacy practices on Facebook and composition, but this connection was limited.

Composition teachers can take this opportunity to engage students with literacy practices that are important and meaningful to them, but beyond this, we are also introducing students to a shifting definition of literacy in the 21st century (Alexander, 2009).

Moving forward, composition scholars need to do more to both study and validate the everyday literacy practices of our students. As Daniel Keller (2014) puts it, "Finding ways to help students draw on the literate, rhetorical resources they possess may bolster not only what they do with reading and writing in college but in other domains as well, allowing them to realize, appreciate, and capitalize on the potential in their everyday literacies" (p. 152). We need to learn the ways that they read and write outside of school, and we need to help them connect those practices to both school and non-school literacies. Future research may help to explore additional literacy contexts and understand how students practice literacy on spaces such as Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Pinterest, and other spaces that may not have even been invented yet. As literacy shifts, so must we. Our job as composition teachers should be to help students understand the literacy contexts they encounter and will encounter.

References

- Alexander, J. (2009). Gaming, student literacies, and the composition classroom: Some possibilities for transformation, *College Composition and Communication*, 61(1), 35-63.
- Amicucci, A. N. (2017). Rhetorical choices in Facebook discourse: Constructing voice and persona. *Computers and Composition*, 44, 36-51.
- Balzhiser, D., Polk, J. D., Grover, M., Lauer, E., McNeely, S., & Zmikly, J. (2011). The Facebook papers. *Kairos*, 16(1).
- Banks, A. J. (2011). *Digital griots: African American rhetoric in a multimedia age* [e-book edition]. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Beaufort, A. (2007). *College writing and beyond: A new framework for university writing instruction*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.
- Blair, A. J. (2004). The rhetoric of visual arguments. In C. A. Hill & M. Helmers (Eds.), *Defining Visual Rhetorics* (pp. 41-61). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Buck, A. (2012). Examining digital literacy practices on social network sites. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 47(1), 9-38.
- Cedillo, C. V. (2017). Diversity, technology, and composition: Honoring students' multimodal home places. *Present Tense*, 6(2), 1-9.
- Davis, M., Brock, K., & McElroy, S. J. (2012). Expanding the available means of composing: Three sites of inquiry. *Enculturation*, 14.
- DePalma, M. (2015). Tracing transfer across media: Investigating writers' perceptions of cross-contextual and rhetorical reshaping in processes of remediation. *College Composition and Communication*, 66(4), 615-642.
- DePalma, M., & Alexander, K. P. (2015). A bag full of snakes: Negotiating the challenges of multimodal composition. *Computers and Composition*, 37, 182-200.
- DePew, K. E. (2011). Social media at academia's periphery: Studying multilingual developmental writers' Facebook composing strategies. *The Reading Matrix*, 11(1), 54-75.
- DePew, K. E., & Miller-Cochran, S. (2010). Social networking in a second language: Engaging multiple literate practices through identity composition. In M. Cox, J. Jordan, C. Ortmeier-Hooper, & G. Grey Schwartz (Eds.), *Reinventing identities in second language writing* (pp. 273-295). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Fife, J. M. (2010). Using Facebook to teach rhetorical analysis. *Pedagogy*, 10(3), 555-562. doi: 10.1215/15314200-2010-007
- Fraiberg, S. (2010). Composition 2.0: Toward a multilingual and multimodal framework. *College Composition and Communication*, 62(1), 100-126.
- Froehlich, M. G., & Froehlich, P. A. (2013). Implementing 21st century literacies in first-year composition. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 40(3), 289-300.

- Gee, J. P. (2008). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses*. (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Gee, J. P., & Hayes, E. R. (2011). *Language and learning in the digital age*. New York: Routledge.
- Haskell, R. E. (2001). *Transfer of learning: Cognition, instruction, and reasoning*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Hunter, R. (2014). Hypersocial-interactive writing: An audience of readers as writers." *Literacy in Composition Studies*, 2(2), 17-43.
- James, M. A. (2008). The influence of perceptions of task similarity/difference on learning transfer in second language writing. *Written Communication*, 25(1), 76-103.
- Jewitt, C. (2008) *Technology, literacy, learning: A multimodality approach*. London: Routledge.
- Junco, R. (2012). The relationship between frequency of Facebook use, participation in Facebook activities, and student engagement. *Computers & Education*, 58(1), 162-171. doi: 10.1016/j.compedu.2011.08.004
- Kress, G. (2003). *Literacy in the new media age*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Robertson, L., Taczak, K., & Yancey, K. B. (2012). Notes toward a theory of prior knowledge and its role in college composers' transfer of knowledge and practice. *Composition Forum*, 26.
- Salomon, G., & Perkins, D. N. (1989). Rocky roads to transfer: Rethinking mechanism of a neglected phenomenon. *Educational Psychologist*, 24(2), 113-142.
- Selber, S. (2004). *Multiliteracies for a digital age*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Selfe, C. L. (2009). The movement of air, the breath of meaning: Aurality and multimodal composing. *College Composition and Communication*, 60(4), 616-663.
- Selfe, C. L. (2010). Response to Doug Hesse. *College Composition and Communication* 61(3), 606-610.
- Sheffield, J. P., & Kimme Hae, A. C. (2016). Leveraging the methodological affordances of Facebook: Social networking strategies in longitudinal writing research. *Composition Forum*, 33.
- Shepherd, R. P. (2015). FB in FYC: Facebook use among first-year composition students. *Computers and Composition*, 35, 86-107.
- Shepherd, R. P. (2016). Men, women, and web 2.0 writing: Gender difference in Facebook composing. *Computers and Composition*, 39, 14-26.
- Shepherd, R. P. (2018). Digital writing, multimodality, and learning transfer: Crafting connections between composition and online composing. *Computers and Composition*, 48, 103-114.
- Street, B. V. (1984). *Literacy in theory and practice*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Takayoshi, P. (2016). Methodological challenges to researching composing processes in a new literacy context. *Literacy in Composition Studies*, 4(1), 1-23.
- Wardle, E. (2007). Understanding 'transfer' from FYC: Preliminary results of a longitudinal study. *WPA:*

Writing Program Administration, 31(1-2), 65-85.

Yancey, K. B. (2004). Made not only in words: Composition in a new key. *College Composition and Communication*, 56(2), 297-328.

Yancey, K. B., Robertson, L., & Taczak, K. (2014). *Writing across contexts: Transfer, composition, and sites of writing*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.



Ryan P. Shepherd is an Assistant Professor of Digital Rhetorics in the English Department at Ohio University. His research focuses on intersections of digital literacies, composition studies, and learning transfer. His work has appeared in *Computers and Composition*, *Composition Studies*, and *The Journal of Response to Writing*. More information about Ryan and his research can be found [here](#).

Appendix

The following are the 22 initial questions asked to all 10 interview participants.

1. How old are you?
2. How would you describe your gender?
3. How would you describe your race?
4. Which first-year composition class(es) have you attended or are you attending?
5. How many semesters have you been enrolled in ASU?
6. Have you been enrolled in another university before ASU?
7. Do you consider English to be your first or primary language? If not, what do you consider to be your first or primary language?
8. How long have you had your Facebook profile?
9. How active are you on Facebook?
10. Please describe the type of activities you generally engage in on Facebook. Try to be as detailed as possible.
11. Do you see each of these activities as being related to writing, conversation, or something else? Please explain your answer.
12. How would you define “composition”?
13. Do you think that your activity on Facebook is a type of composition? Please explain why or why not.
14. What features might Facebook use and composition have in common?
15. Please explain your posting process on Facebook. Consider how you think about posts before posting, how you make a post, and how you gauge whether it was a good or bad post.
16. How does your posting process differ for different kinds of media: a status update, a comment, posting a link, posting an image, and so on?
17. Who do you think views your Facebook activity most often?
18. Do you consider those people when deciding whether or not to post information?
19. What are your purposes in posting information on Facebook?
20. How do you try to achieve these purposes?
21. What device(s) do you normally use to access Facebook?
22. Why do you prefer this device (these devices)?