

### Book Review

# A New Paradigm of Literacy

## A Book Review of *Literacy and Education*

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### Introduction

The industrial revolution is a term to label industrial development from era to era. The first phase started in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century and has now entered the fourth phase, or 4.0. Davies (2015) stated that the 1.0 industrial revolution began with the use of steam engines and machines to replace human force. In the 2.0 industrial revolution, steam engines were replaced by electrical production machines as mass production engines. The 3.0 industrial phase was characterized by the emergence of computers in the 1970s. Finally, the rapid development of interconnected technology, sensor, and data analysis became the signs of the 4.0 industrial revolution emergence. The development has impacted conventional industries in the form of digitalization. Online transportation mode is one of the most prominent impacts of the fourth industrial revolution. This phase also creates massive shifts in many sectors, such as the use of video calls, fingerprints, and face scanners as security locks, social media to connect people from all around the world, and the digitalization of books, magazines, and journals.

The literacy sector also experiences many changes during the fourth phase of the industrial revolution, one of which is the use of a paperless mode of writing. The writing process currently involves less paper because it is digital-based. This trend is inseparable from the habit of the millennials (popularly known as the *micin* generation in Indonesia), who heavily rely on their smartphones to execute many tasks. The conventional publishers in Indonesia, Nova, Jawa Pos and Surya have also been demanded to digitalize their magazines, newspapers, books, and other conventional literacy media. With such ease of access to

### ARTICLE INFO

Received: August 16, 2022  
Received in revised form: August 24, 2022  
Accepted: August 31, 2022  
doi: [10.46456/jisdep.v3i2.327](https://doi.org/10.46456/jisdep.v3i2.327)



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### THE JOURNAL OF INDONESIA SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Published by Centre for Planners'  
Development, Education, and Training  
(Pusbindiklatren),  
Ministry of National Development  
Planning/ National Development Planning  
Agency (Bappenas), Republic of Indonesia

Address: Jalan Proklamasi 70,  
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[journal.pusbindiklatren@bappenas.go.id](mailto:journal.pusbindiklatren@bappenas.go.id)  
Supported by Indonesian Development Planners  
Association (PPPI)

any kind of reading on smartphones, reading and writing activities should be easier. Idris (2016), in a short story entitled *Buku Kusam untuk Damha*, wrote 'I want to make a literary work because if I die, it is merely my body not my name'. The quotation shows the priceless meaning of writing. Also, (Toer, 2011) emphasized that writing is a step to eternity. Everybody will experience death, but writing will remain a legacy despite the declining life force.

Obviously, the 4.0 industry contributes to the improvement of literacy habits because it allows all people to read everywhere. This new paradigm of literacy study is a novel idea that Kate Pahl and Jennifer Rowsell explored in their work, *Literacy and Education*. This book was first published in 2005. It was claimed that literacy is not a mere ability but also a social practice where contexts, identities, and practices are the keys (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005). The assumption originates from the fact that literacy activities can be performed everywhere because it is not place-limited activity. This new paradigm brought by Pahl and Rowsell is expected to bring new insight into the world of education and literacy.

Literacy activities can take place when a person is in a market, texting someone, playing games, and doing other social activities. Moreover, the assumption of literacy as a social practice can help students improve their literacy skills as it regards a text as a controlled medium by the writer and context.

### The Literacy Concept in the 4.0 Industrial Era

Initially, the literacy process was understood as an activity related to books and writing (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005). It was then stigmatized as an activity learnt at schools. However, in the 4.0 industrial revolution, the literacy status has shifted from school-exclusive to more moderate. It means that the literacy process has turned into a more common activity, which is doable at any place and time.

The concept is becoming more general. The research of Idris (2016) on moral literacy showed that the literacy meaning had shifted from an exclusive to a more moderate context. It undergoes a generalization process from a school-specific activity to a popular social activity. In regard to this phenomenon, Djajasudarma (1999) explained that this meaning shift occurred due to the developing language in accordance with humans' understanding. In other words, the 4.0 industrial revolution, finally, has expanded its meaning.

### Multimodal Texts as the Literacy Revolution in the 4.0 Industrial Era

In the fifth edition of KBBI (the Indonesian national standard dictionary), the word 'writing' is described as letter-making activities (numbers, characters, symbols, etc.) using a ballpoint (pencil, pen, board marker, etc.). The 4.0 industrial revolution has shifted the meaning of writing into a wider context. However, it does not change its essential meaning in the dictionary. Writing is no longer seen as an activity that exclusively utilizes a pencil, pen, ballpoint, and any other conventional writing equipment, but rather an activity that can also be done by using fingers on smartphones and other smartphone-like devices. Though Pahl and Rowsell (2005) stated that texts are artefacts, mostly, in this era, people have started to write without using pens and paper.

Texts are a human's life record that allows every phase of a human's life to be traced down. Thus, Pahl and Rowsell (2005) used the word 'multimodal' to explain a new way to produce a text.

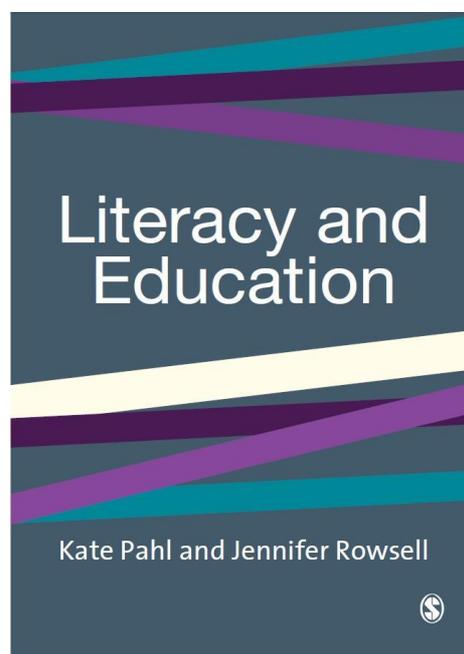
A multimodal text is a text produced using a variety of modes. It is related to the physical form of a text. The word 'multimodal' derives from the words 'multi' and 'mode'. Pahl & Rowsell (2005) stated that modes or various sorts of a multimodal text could be in the forms of visual, kinetic, three-dimension and gesture modes. The use of multimodal texts is a breakthrough in revolutionizing the literacy sector in the 4.0 industrial era.

In the 4.0 industrial era, the produced texts do not have to be in the forms of books or written papers but also in the forms of audio, visual presentations (graphs, tables, charts), pictures, and even social media

status. A wider and bigger interaction scale helps in the distribution of multimodal texts. Motivational quotes on Twitter or Instagram are one example of multimodal texts. The quotes are generally presented with audio and calming back sound. They comprise wise words but are only displayed in different forms. These are prime examples of multimodal texts. Another example is a caption that typically accompanies the photos posted on Facebook or WhatsApp status. A story caption from a certain event, a simple quote, paraphrased or plagiarized quote from famous figures or poetry-like prosodic words are also some examples of multimodal texts. Based on these, it can thus be claimed that everyone can now be a writer using different modes and styles based on their personal interests.

Overall, *Literacy and Education* provides a new understanding of literacy in education. If rated on a scale of 1 to 10, I would give this book a 9. This assessment was based on the topics and discussions relevant to the current time and on a language easy to understand.

In the end, the question is, are all the writers eager to be good writers or just common writers?



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