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Imagining the Enculturation of Online Education

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Participation in popular sub-cultures developed through new technologies involves learning rules and protocols for participation that are cross-cultural and cross-lingual. New multimedia games create and incorporate international rituals or protocols for a group of consumers. The development of communication technology has seen increasing numbers of these multi-media games emerging. These multi-media games involve full immersion into a created world.

This paper discusses the ways in which learning is seen as active not passive absorption of information. As Combs (2002) states with the internationalisation and decline of a common religion and culture students need to communicate in ritualistic and symbolic acts with one another. In order to participate in the popular cultures children must learn social skills and develop a common culture, building their social and communicative competencies. According to Tobin (2003) university programmes have potential to piggyback on the phenomena providing a 'common culture' for students to learn in.

Keywords: multi-media games, world building, tertiary education

Introduction

This paper examines children's and young adult's multi-media subcultures and ways these elements could be transferred to the tertiary sector for improved and more relevant learning for students. Firstly looking at the way in which these sub-cultures have developed as both technology and the marketing to children as consumers has increased. Secondly, discussing the narrative scripts that are used to develop the multimedia subcultures for children. Then discussing the use of narrative as the shared understanding that gives all participants from all cultures and languages the ability to participate with one another. Finally considering the rituals, value sets and shared language embedded within these scripts and how the narrative allows glocalisation (Jenkins, 2006) of multimedia subculture. This means that it is portable and can be participated in locally as well as globally which is ideal for a university environment.

Narrative scripts of sub-cultures

According to Nielsen (2009) children in the 'tween age group are engrossed in activities enabled by the use of digital media. It is not the digital tools that they use, as throughout the literature (Papert, 2003; West, 2006) boys within this age group demonstrate consistent lack of interest in using computers for educational activities at school but rather the worlds they are becoming involved in that fascinate them. Allison (2008) discusses the participation within the development of the narrative as they play as being appealing to children, in particular this age group. She asserts that these environments allow them to become involved, take on a character and be part of the story as it unfolds. From ancient times stories were the main form of education. Storytelling for education purposes lost popularity as education took a more Protestant philosophy and became based learning on scientific principles. However as knowledge bases have increased and technology explosion, globalism and the multiple literacies needed to participate within this world the use of storytelling as an educational tool is becoming accepted once again.

The evolution of the viewer being seen as audience to public in media has seen the viewer take on a larger role in the development of the product. Vygotsy's (1987) theory of social constructivism is now popular in both media studies and education. Viewing and learning are now both seen as an activity not passive absorption of information as demonstrated by Buckingham and Sefton-Green (2001). For learning to be effective children must also learn social skills and develop a common culture, building their social and communicative competencies. These competencies include skills in negotiation, self-confidence and tolerance for others. According to Tobin (2003) programmes such as Pokemon encourage these skills, both by modelling and providing a 'common culture' for children to rehearse in. Combs (2002) stated that with the internationalisation and decline of a common religion and culture it is necessary for children to communicate in ritualistic and symbolic acts with one another.

Identity is a way in which a product, person or group can be identified as belonging to a certain group, use or value. Identity is both internal and external. The internal identity is often subversive and subconscious and the external identity is often developed in a purposeful way so as others perceive the intended message and values. Corrigan states about the way in which fashion has been used to identify people throughout history:
 "Young people are very adept at the symbolic work of developing their own styles and reading off and decoding the dress styles of others and relating them to the musical, political and social orientations"(1997:28). This can be seen in the development of tween's online social networking sites and the ways in which they trial and develop personal identity through the use of multimedia (Jenkins, 2013).

Brown (1995:138) discusses how post-modern identities reflect a preoccupation with hyper reality, pastiche, liminality, carnivalesque, heterogeneity, spectacle, ambiguity, nostalgia, hybridity and fragmentation. This can be seen as the reversal of traditional identity development or a reversal of the control of the state over a person's identity. In traditional societies these places were outside of the normal roles and functions of the society, some taboo and others as normal rituals of the society. However they were places where people were able to create their own identity and try out different identities. Brown suggests that this has become the norm- people are living in these places as part of everyday life. Technology development, in particular television (Kline; 1993), has been blamed for the mediatisation of consumption, which has in turn enabled the market to develop this environment.

Cultural knowledge/learning

The knowledge of a culture was traditionally handed down from one generation to another through artefacts, learned ceremonies, language and shared narratives that gave demonstrations of the values underpinning the culture (Besley, 2003). The consumption patterns of the culture were often tied to ritual and narrative, with particular members of the cultures having set roles. Kenway and Bullen (2001) discuss the ways in which consumption has always had a role in culture and has been taught to following generations. Consumption rituals and practices have been used frequently in anthropology to give an insight into the shared values of the culture

The views of what constitutes culture and the geographical spaces of culture differ between eras and philosophies. The development of communications technologies has allowed new spaces and tools for developing culture as well as fears for and of other cultures. For the purpose of this paper culture is viewed *as a conceptual space in which the notion of "the learner" is constructed, experienced and struggled over*. As Giroux states with regards to children "culture is the primary terrain that adults exercise power over children in and that it is only by questioning the specific cultural formations and contexts in which childhood is organised, learned and lived that educators can understand and challenge the way in which cultural practices establish social relations that shape children's experiences" (2000: 4). This view of culture is powerful and revealing as it can be applied to the many conceptualisations of culture as well as the international nature and transference of culture and cultural artefacts.

Goldstein-Gidoni (2005) discusses the research she has done on the transference of Japanese culture to Israel. She looks from a critical theorist point of view at the way in which a culture, in this case the Japanese culture, can be packaged and transported in a 'global' world. She identifies with 'globalisation' as not being about Americanising the world but allowing cultures to define themselves and make themselves transportable to other areas. Goldstein-Gidoni (2005) uses her case study to exemplify the process of 'global cosmopolitanism'. In order to demonstrate this process she traces the history of how and why Japan have packaged their culture. Japan has identified the differences they have from Western culture and associated their culture with aspects of the Western culture that they found tasteful. The Japanese have then purposely and strategically perpetuated this stereotype to the world, although it does not match the reality of living in modern Japan. The author then

discusses the arts they have chosen to represent their traditional culture (flower arranging, painting, calligraphy, cooking, paper folding). By representing Japan in this way they are able to develop and pass on their cultural arts by having people from foreign countries learning and teaching in their own countries. The traditional Japanese arts may have died out had they not been taught to other cultures.

Jansson (2002) discusses post-modern culture in its most basic elements; products, communities and practices and discusses that through hermeneutic signification and interpretation meaning is created. This leads to the importance of symbolism in culture and he argues that consuming requires media to make it symbolic. Jansson also illustrates the emergence of image culture through three complimentary processes: culturalisation, mediatisation and simulation. He argues that material objects actually have a greater non-material component than material component in   post-modern culture and therefore consumers need to have an understanding of the meaning of things before they will purchase them. He also describes the process by which people create their own worlds through their patterns of consumption these worlds give people a sense of time and place and this he believes is defined by the media. He links this mediatisation of people's 'worlds' to Anderson's 'imagined communities' theory and explains how in post-modern society people can belong to a number of communities.

The development of communication media has enabled mediatised cultural learning (Jansson, 2002). This means that a person can develop an understanding of aspects of their culture without engaging in dialogue with other members of the culture but through engaging with the communications tools. Cultures can be developed without face-to-face contact. Values can be learned through commercial companies using advertisements or developing dominant narratives in movies and television series (Martens, Southerton and Scott, 2004). Shared cultural knowledge is created through the use of newspapers and news broadcasts on radio and television. Certain views are given credence and dominance by their ability to have their comments and interests broadcast. Giroux (2000) examines in detail specific cases where mediatised cultural learning allows different groups to have the power to shape the views of the culture.

Jansson (2002) discusses how the relationship between encoder (the person or group that creates the information/entertainment) and decoder (the person who reads or views the information or entertainment) is blurred in modern communications technologies using specific examples *The Runner, Canadian Urban Juice and Soda company, Swedish TV channel TV3 and Walt Disney*. He applies the theory of image culture to these companies and explains how the semiotics of consumption are utilised by these corporations. Using these examples he builds a picture of how image culture is developed and what works when applied to global cultures. He discusses this with specific reference to the links between the interrelated texts of advertising and products and the public and how the interpretations of texts are changed to fit social actors.

Conclusion

So how can these theories be applied to tertiary education? Universities are increasingly attracting a global cohort of student and staff. Universities are required to appeal to students from different cultures and backgrounds and classes are therefore becoming more culturally diverse. This creates the need for a "shared space and group identity" so that learning is owned by and more relevant to all students. Courses of study are increasingly building online components and these components are increasingly becoming multi-modal. Jansson's theory of image culture can be applied to courses of study using the three complimentary processes: culturalisation, mediatisation and simulation. This would extend the reach of universities to attract a more diverse student base. Through applying image culture theory make the courses relevant to a more diverse students base and enable them to feel part of a community of like-minded people. To do this it is important to observe how we are placing and viewing "the learner" in the university community- are they an empty vessel absorbing knowledge or are they given agency to construct and develop their own understandings of the course? Finally before we can attract an international student base and really develop their learning we need to look at, as Japan have, what are we packaging as "Australian" to a global audience and whether this enabling Australian universities to be transportable to other cultures as an educational product.

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