



Chapter XII

From Media Education to Digital Literacy: A Paradigm Change?

Pier Cesare Rivoltella, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (UCSC), Italy

Abstract

This chapter focuses on the cultural and educational shift from mass media to digital technologies. It is described with the category of the multiscreen society: its main element is the multiplication of the screens in social environment and, with it, the transformation of the modalities and significance of our sight on the things. Watch the reality with other eyes, means also to build knowledge in a different way and, finally, to accept to live in this new environment whose main character is the integration of virtual dimension into real life. This is the reason why a part of the chapter is devoted to defining the new technological devices as social objects able to become subjects of social acts. The conclusion is that traditional forms of media education must upgrade to digital literacy. In doing so, it becomes possible to prepare youngsters to become citizens of this new social environment. In this case, may be that digital literacy will be really the education of our next future.

Introduction

The idea of a “multiscreen society” is borrowed from Manoel Pinto (2005), a colleague working at the University of Minho (Portugal), who, during a recent meeting, suggested with this term a way to explain the changes occurring in reality marked by the presence of mass media. Pinto’s idea— developed by him in the chapter XI of this book—is interesting and functional as it allows grasping three dimensions of this society. First of all, the multiplicity of screens indicates the multiplication of the spaces connected to the act of seeing. Cinema and television screens—by now classical—are accompanied by computer and portable consoles screens (such as Nintendo or PS Mobile videogames), public installations (in airports and railway stations), artistic and business installation as well (projecting images on a multiplicity of side by side plasma screens), DVD portable players, palmtops, and third generation mobile phones.

The multiplication of all these screens involves a clear redefinition of the forms and meanings of the glance. As suggested by Jacques Aumont (1989), the cinema device (and partly the television one), created an audience geometry connoted by a glance which is durable (in the dark room, a movie is followed from the beginning to the end), variable (from a temporal perspective, as the flow of images symbolizes also a temporal course of the events), isolable (what I see at cinema is what the movie allows me to see). This glance drastically changes with the introduction of the new technological screens. It becomes intermittent (the duration of movies is replaced by a mosaic of decontextualized visual stimuli), mobile (as it no longer refers to the representation of time within the work, but to the temporality of sight, moving from screen to screen), interactive (what I see is also what I want to see, through an active relation to different screens).

The new glance, with its qualities, redefines also the forms through which people access to knowledge. Screens multiplication, under this perspective, involves both an exponential increase of accessible information and the fall of central references. We can easily grasp the ambivalence of these aspects.

Figure 1. A multiscreen installation



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