Susannah Olsonday

Literacy Self Study

Everyday there's a flood of information that we, as individuals, interact with. In the form of posts, essays, songs, advertisements, signs, you name it, there is a constant dialogue between an individual and the rest of the world. Is there a distinction between academic literary objects and non-academic ones? Does the interaction between an individual and these two distinct types of literacy differ? The relationship is more similar than one might think at face value. It is important to note the variance in both academic and nonacademic literacy. There are facets of academia devoted to analyzing songs. There are nonacademic works that are formal and rely heavily on the linguistic mode of communication. So what differentiates processing academic literacy objects from nonacademic ones? In genre and multimodality, the two differ very little, but in audience there's a stark difference. There are some hallmarks of a quintessential academic literacy process that I argue also apply to the non academic literacy process. Formal language and analysis apply to all sorts of literacy, so the main difference between the two lies in purpose and thus audience too.

When consuming academic work, analysis occurs. The level of analysis depends on the assignment. I read *The Analysis of Knowledge* for inspiration for my upcoming philosophy essay. The passage wasn't assigned, so the goal of this reading was to become familiar with a previously foreign genre: 'philosophy writing.' I was mostly interested in structure, so I wrote down in my notebook the purpose of each paragraph and how it allowed the argument to progress. Since I had the particular goal in mind of using *The Analysis of Knowledge* as a jumping off point for my own essay, I made notes that I could refer back to when the time comes. This is where the intent that blankets all academic literacy comes into effect: my goal is sharp and specific. It is not simply for enjoyment. Any analysis I do, I'll need to remember; it is to help me later.

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  With academic reading, it's *required* to look beyond the surface, to pay attention to specific choices, to analyze the text and form a deeper understanding. Although there's no one assigning an in-depth analysis of the song you're listening to, the more honed your analytical skills are, the more natural–and dare I say fun–it will feel to do so. There's a certain level of analysis taking place within most people as they casually consume media. Analysis is required to truly see and enjoy any literary object. What exactly makes this song enjoyable for me to listen to? Is it the chord progression? Is it the baseline? Is it this one specific lyric? This is a factor present in all literacy that makes academic and non academic processes more similar than different.

  I remember listening to the song *Portal*, by Pinegrove and thinking about the individual rhetorical choices in the lyrics. Before looking into the lyrics, I knew I liked the song, but why did I like it? Noticing the rhetorical choices like repetition and parallelism makes the audience more appreciative of the work. Pinegrove juxtaposes the lyric in the first chorus "Isn't it lovely? I'll never hold you to all you held me to," with the second wherein they replace the word 'lovely' with 'lonely' and explains that "I'll never hold [you] the way you held me up." They do this to show the duality in the relationship in the song. While casually listening to this song, I automatically did some analysis that helped me enjoy it more. The literacy process that I went through while listening to this song is very similar to academic literacy processes that I've gone through in the past. If, when you think of academic literacy, you think only of your STEM classes, the differences between it and non academic literacy will seem vast. But, the actual literacy processes are strikingly similar when comparing corresponding objects on either side of the academic-non academic divide.

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You can find all modes of communication in both academic and non academic literacies. While the song *Portal* uses mostly linguistic and aural modes, you can find non academic essays that rely heavily on the linguistic mode. The main genre of literacy object that I personally generate are lecture notes. In my notes I used visual, linguistic, and spatial modes. The purpose is again narrow and specific: to help comprehend the material and to create something to look back on. Although purely academic, these notes are anything but formal: many words are shortened, no attention is given to phrasing, and offhand jokes are included to make myself laugh. Referring to a constant as "arbitrary af," doesn't fit the bill for formal writing, but it does pertain to my one goal: comprehension, by rephrasing the material into something more memorable to me. Academic literacy often has a clear purpose like this.

Although all writing has a purpose, unlike academic writing, non-academic writing doesn't always have such rigid guidelines and the purpose isn't necessarily pre-set. The writing I choose to do in my free time often parallels classes that I'm enrolled in. If I'm learning about the meaning of 'self' in philosophy and about how to structure an argument in my literacy class, when I plop down on my couch to journal, a structured and argumentative entry like "the Cell-Phone as an Extension of Self: Are We Already Cyborgs?!" might slip out. In this respect, as academic literacy progresses, so does non-academic literacy. As I learn to use evidence in academic writing, my journal entries will provide evidence to back up my argument. In my journal entry about cell phones I am making a sub-argument about what 'self' is and cite both philosophy ideas and "Venom"(the MCU character.) Again style and formality have very little to do with whether a text is academic or not.

Any differences in academic writing are not found in small linguistic and stylistic choices, but in intended audience and function. Academic literacy has a narrow context in which

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to inform and teach. This narrow context leads to an equally narrow intended audience, limited to students and professors/instructors. The difference between academic and non-academic literacy lies less in the individual attributes found in each and more in the difference in purpose and intent. Literacy skills are universal, the more they are honed the more they apply to all literacy topics, whether or not they are academic.