PLAYING THE VIDEOTEXT: A MEDIA LITERACY PERSPECTIVE ON VIDEO-MEDIATED L2 LISTENING

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ABSTRACT

Adopting a literacy perspective towards student interactions with digital media can extend and develop views of second language (L2) listening comprehension. In this case study, variations in *play* are grounded in a media literacy perspective as a way to frame student work with authentic videotext. Twenty-two Australian students of Japanese watched three digitized news clips as they talked aloud. Qualitative analysis of their immediately retrospective verbal reports showed that learners do indeed *play* and *replay* the media texts as they, for example, perform, fool around, and establish signposts. The article concludes with a discussion urging language teachers and researchers to adopt media literacy perspectives in their use of electronic media.

INTRODUCTION

As we increasingly make use of materials that are non-linear, context-bound, recursive, and constructivist (Kramsch, 1993), a key challenge in our work as educators is to help students navigate new media and text types (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003). Investigating the ways students navigate and make sense of texts is the basis for second language (L2) listening strategies research (e.g., Chamot, 1995; Goh, 2002; Graham, 2003; Gruba, 2004; Vandergrift, 2003a, 2003b). Narrow development of such work, however, may distance it from current trends in second language acquisition that emphasize computer-mediated ("electronic") L2 literacies that highlight authenticity, integrative approaches, social aspects, and media texts (Kern & Schultz, 2005; Kramsch, A'Ness, & Lam, 2000). Here, I argue that a media literacy perspective offers a basis to see interactions with videotexts as a form of *play* (Mackey, 2002) and brings work in L2 listening strategies new perspectives, fresh insights, and greater relevance.

To develop this argument, I first review L2 video-mediated listening, central aspects of media literacy, and a framework for play. Within a descriptive case study, I then use play as a central metaphor to describe learner interactions with digitized videotexts. The study concludes with a discussion of the implications of the results for teaching and research.

Differing conceptualizations of videotext interactions

To date, no single definition of video-mediated listening comprehension has become established; more importantly, no widely accepted model of listening comprehension has been developed (Lynch, 1998; Vandergrift, 2004). One key conceptual issue in defining the skill revolves around the role of visual elements. Riley (1981) suggested that "listening with the eye" best described learner use of video. Willis (1983) argued that "viewing comprehension" was the most accurate term. Tudor and Tuffs (1991) regard video comprehension as a "skill in its own right" (p. 80). Many prominent listening theorists, however, minimize the role of visual elements in comprehension (Kellerman, 1992) Many prominent listening theorists, however, minimize the role of visual elements in comprehension (Kellerman, 1992). Indeed, most theorists define the skill as a "process of receiving, attending to, and assigning meaning to aural stimuli" (Wolvin & Croakly, 1985, p. 74). In an important departure, Rubin (1995) embeds an awareness of video to define the skill as "an active process in which listeners select and interpret information which comes from auditory and visual cues in order to define what is going on and what the speakers are trying

to express" (p. 7). Other researchers offer views that include "listening and viewing comprehension" (Hoven, 1999), "video comprehension" (Coniam, 2000), or "DVD video comprehension" (Markham, Peter, & McCarthy, 2003). If nothing else, researchers recognize there is a broad range of skills required to make sense of video. In line with Kramsch and Andersen (1999, p. 34) perhaps it is best to see the competent decoding of authentic digitized videotexts as part of "textual literacy." If we continue down this path and follow Livingstone (2003, p. 7) so as to reject the ahistorical position that "real" literacy refers to the acts of reading and writing, then videotext comprehension fits the definition of literacy as the "interpretation of any and all mediated symbolic texts." By arriving at a literacy perspective towards learning with electronic media, we open ourselves up to a wide range of possibilities (Table 1).

Table 1. Views of Literacy Related to CALL

Type	Representative works
Computer literacy	Corbel, 1997
Cyberliteracy	Gurak, 2001
Electronic literacies	Warschauer, 1999
ICT literacy (Information & Communication Technology)	Educational Testing Service, 2005
Literacy online	Tuman, 1996
Media literacy	Kubey, 1997; Livingstone, 2003; Potter, 2004
Multiliteracies	Cope and Kalantzis, 2000; Unsworth, 2001
New literacies	Lankshear & Knobel, 2003
Silicon literacies	Synder, 2002
Technoliteracy	Lankshear and Synder, 2000; Luke, 1997
Visual literacy	Curtis, 2004; Moore & Dwyer, 1994

Now aware of these diverse possibilities, an investigation of videotext interactions could focus on images (visual literacy), on the role of technology in learning (computer literacy, technoliteracy), on educational policy and practice (technoliteracy, multiliteracies, ICT literacy), or on the widespread social implications of using online media (digital literacy, electronic literacies, cyberliteracy). By adopting a media literacy perspective, however, we could maintain our focus on "textual literacy" as well as on an ability to move across technologies, formats, and genres. Taking on this perspective would also land us in the midst of a large, diverse, and contested form of literacy (Hobbs, 1998).

Key concepts in media literacy

Though definitions of media literacy have been widely debated (Christ & Potter, 1998), perhaps the most commonly agreed view is that "media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate messages in a variety of forms" (Aufderheide, 1993, p. xx). Further, it is usually agreed that "a media literate person . . . can decode, evaluate, analyze, and produce both print and electronic media" (Aufderheide, 1997, p. 79). Livingstone (2003, pp. 6-14) explains these concepts. Issues of access touch on the digital divide and, as such, bring in an awareness of political and social processes. An ability to analyze lies at the heart of textual decoding, pleasure, and intellectual stimulation. Evaluation involves judgment and engages critical thinking. The knowledge of content creation provides students with insights into precisely how messages communicate effectively.

Media literacy scholars have also generally agreed that (a) media both are constructed and construct reality; (b) texts carry commercial, ideological, and political implications; (c) formats each have unique aesthetics, codes, and conventions; and (d) receivers negotiate meaning (Aufderheide, 1997, p. 80). Potter (2004) develops a theory of media literacy with an emphasis on cognitive approaches. The ability to effectively negotiate meaning, according to Potter, depends on the breadth and depth of knowledge

structures. At the lower levels of proficiency, weaker structures are small, superficial, poorly organized and, as such, impose limits on the interpretation of meaning (Kintsch, 1998). Visual media may foster macrostructure development by illustrating abstract concepts in a concrete way, assisting in the construction of mental models and thus "may offer some benefits to learners with lesser skills, abilities, or prior knowledge" (Wetzel, Radtke & Stern, 1994, p. 62). So how do literacy specialists conceptualize learner negotiations of meaning and the construction of knowledge structures?

Playing the (video)text

In *Literacies Across Media*, Mackey (2002) reports on a longitudinal investigation of learner interactions with a variety of texts. Over an eighteen-month period in the late 1990s, Mackey audio- and video-taped Canadian Grade 5 and Grade 8 student (10 and 13 year olds) responses to novels, picture books, short stories, video-based and digitized movies, computer games, electronic books, an encyclopedia, and a picture book on a CD ROM. At times, Mackey introduced novel media, formats, and texts that were new to the participants. As some of the 20 original participants left the study, more were recruited. Transcripts of semi-structured discussions and textual encounters as well as student diaries formed the core data set.

Early in the study Mackey signals her frustration with how to define engagement with contemporary texts. After describing the rich modalities of interaction that are offered by electronic media, Mackey (2002) disappointedly points out that "we still very often call it reading" (p. 3). Near the conclusion to her study, she abandons attempts to stretch the word *read* and adopts *play* as a "generic verb for text processing activities":

> The prismatic, multi-faceted qualities of the concept of *playing* mean that we are already familiar with the idea of this verb shifting meanings as it acquires new subjects and objects and fits into new sentences. Such a protean verb meets the specialized needs of a study that sets out to explore what is common and what is distinctive about the ways in which we approach different kinds of text and media. (Mackey, 2002, p. 188)

Mackey proposes a nascent framework for "playing the text" across a range of media (Table 2).

Table 2. Aspects of Play Based on Mackey (2002)

Aspects of playing	Key concepts
Pretending or imagining	Shifting into the *as if* world to distinguish between fiction and non-fiction
Performing	Associating information from different parts of the text and assembling a useful working repertoire to make sense of setting and context
Engaging with the rules of the game	Accepting and working the rules and conventions in some way or other
Strategizing	Imagining 'how to' do something 'enables the performance of the story as an engageable if not necessarily believable world?'
Orchestrating	Managing attention and automatic behaviors to maximize complexity; often unrecognised; no longer attending directly and consciously to every single element at once
Interpreting	At the end of the reading, checking any loose ends and sorting out an interpretation that allows for balance and pattern as well as specific plot tidiness
Fooling around	Exploring ideas without commitment
Not working	Trying things out, working through our feelings about an idea in an arena where the results are often unimportant

Mackey (2002) provides a link between media literacy perspectives and video-mediated L2 listening comprehension strategies. With that possibility in mind, I began to review previous work (Gruba, 2004)

that I had done with L2 learners of Japanese attending to videotext. This time, I decided to approach the dataset not as listening comprehension research but rather using the frame of "playful media literacy."

Rationale and research questions

Three research questions guide this investigation of L2 student interactions with videotexts:

1) What aspects of Mackey's (2002) play appear during L2 learner interactions with videotexts?

2) Are other aspects of play present in L2 learner interactions that extend Mackey's framework?

3) When reflecting, do L2 students note a sense of play as they recall attempts to make sense of the videotexts?

METHODOLOGY

Aspects of the present study have been discussed elsewhere (Gruba, 1999, 2004). Here, rather than use a listening perspective based on reading theory (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995), my perspective is grounded in media literacy theory (Potter, 2004) with a view of textual interactions as play (Mackey, 2002).

Site of the investigation

This study was situated in the Japanese department of a large Australian research university. In the beginning levels, the focus of instruction is on the acquisition of Japanese syntax and vocabulary and the rote learning of three Japanese syllabaries (*hiragana*, *katakana,* and *kanji*). At the more advanced levels, cultural sensitivity and production skills are emphasized.

Computers are used by beginning and lower intermediate students to practice Japanese syllabaries and grammar. Students at the upper intermediate and advanced levels utilize computers to interact with native speakers through online chat groups, video conferencing, and website construction. Digitized Japanese television news broadcasts (NHK Japan) are a mainstay of computer-based listening instruction.

Materials

Born out of the word *to see* in Latin, video is perhaps best understood as a "whole message unit" that "communicates through orchestration and compounding within symbol systems and multiple-symbol-system episodes" (Salomon, 1979, p. 52) through the combination of dynamic visual and audio elements in close temporal sequence (Wetzel et al., 1994, p. 40). Of note, however, the way news broadcasts are constructed often results in visual and verbal mismatches that may cause their content to be poorly understood and/or retained (Graddol, 1994; Gunter, 1987). Using criteria found in Joiner (1990), I selected three short news clips out of 90 minutes of recorded satellite broadcasts.

Authentic Japanese news broadcasts contain an extensive amount of superimposed (*non-diegetic*) and embedded (*diegetic*) written print in three formats:

1) *Headline (HD):* On-screen print, in large white font at the centre bottom of a shot, is overlaid on images to highlight the main topic.

2) *Caption (CPT):* On-screen print, in small white font, is overlaid on images to detail names of people and locations.

3) *Embedded (EMB):* Readable print and symbols that occur within scenes that include traffic signs, books, advertising posters, product names, and logos.

To map each videotext, a series of three-column tables were created that each consisted of (a) a screen shot captured at two-second intervals, (b) a transcription of the spoken Japanese, and (c) an English translation. (Table 3 provides an example; full maps of the videotexts are available in Gruba, 1999).

Table 3. Example Map of a Videotext (Segment M2, Videotext 2)

Segment: Image M2 (From seconds 2-4 of Videotext 2)	Japanese (*romanji*) with literal translation	English translation
	…*centa de atsumeta gomi no naka* ... (center in being collected rubbish of inside)	… in the inside of a rubbish collection site …
	HD: Gomi no naka kara yon hyaku man en (HD: Rubbish in middle from four hundred thousand yen)	Four million yen found in the middle of a rubbish site

Participants

In the pilot study, four L2 learners of Japanese ranging from beginning to bilingual proficiency participated. The purpose of the original pilot study was to check the appropriateness of the news clips, refine data collection techniques, and create a preliminary framework of learner interactions (Gruba, 1999).

In the main study, 18 volunteer students from an upper-intermediate class participated. This level was chosen because participants at lower proficiency levels find it difficult to provide insights due to high cognitive processing demands; conversely, learners at the higher proficiency levels find verbalization difficult because their comprehension tends to be fairly automatic and unconscious (Ericsson & Simon, 1984/1993). The Australian participants had a range of profiles: although most were students in their early 20s, one student was 41 years old; 15 of the 18 students were female, and three were non-native speakers of English.

Data collection

In each session, participants were prompted to talk aloud as much as possible in accord with current practices for immediately retrospective verbal reports (Cohen, 1994; Ericsson & Simon, 1984/1993; Kim, 2002; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). Before the start of each audio-taped session, each participant attended to a trial videotext and was trained to manipulate the computer controls.

Sessions were completed in two stages for each of the three videotexts. In Stage One, participants verbalized throughout a single 'front-to-back' move through a videotext. That is, they were instructed to stop a clip whenever they wished but could only go forward to the end. Participants concluded Stage One for a videotext by providing a summary of their understanding.

At the start of Stage Two, participants were given a set of tasks and were allowed to stop, move, or replay a videotext as they completed their answers. Task design was based on categories proposed by Dunkel, Henning, and Chaudron (1993). The first category, orientation, is intended to highlight relationships, stated or implied settings of events, and the topic of the text. Details of simple lexical meanings or single propositions form a second category. A third category, main ideas, covers principal propositions. Implications derived from textual elements that draw upon a listener's background knowledge and inferences form a fourth category.

Table 4. Example Short Answer Questions (Tasks for Stage Two, Videotext Two)

Task (Short answer question)	Focal goal
Briefly, what is the news story about?	Main
What happened?	Orientation
What time did it happen?	Detail
Where did it happen?	Detail
How often do the club members meet?	Detail
What did the witness say?	Orientation
How did it happen?	Implication
How will the investigation proceed?	Implication

Each participant attended to three videotexts and completed each set of tasks. Once finished, they reflected on their interactions during a post-session, semi-structured interview (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Gillham, 2005).

Table 5. Sample of Semi-Structured Post-Session Interview Questions

Questions
Did you find these clips interesting?
What do you think of learning Japanese through videoclips? What's the best thing? The worst?
Of these three clips, which one did you find most difficult? Easiest? Why?
How do you think seeing images affects your overall understanding?
What do you think of this 'think aloud' process?

In a review of audiotapes, I eliminated six of the 18 participants from further study because they talked very little. I was able to align each transcribed comment to a specific segment of a clip using the printed videotext maps as a guide.

Data analysis

In line with Miles and Huberman (1994), I decided to create an analytical matrix that would be efficient yet allow for breath (comments on all videotexts by several participants) and depth (multiple perspectives on a single incident). Accordingly, I transcribed the entire set of recordings for the three most articulate participants; for the other nine students, I set down only the comments related to the second videotext and their post-session interviews. My subsequent analysis was built upon established qualitative research guidelines (Richards, 2005; Flick, 2002). After constraining Mackey's full set of aspects of play to a more manageable set, I used a provisional set of codes to begin analyzing the data (Table 6).

Table 6: Preliminary Analysis Codes Based on Mackey (2002)

Aspects of play	Code	Central characteristics
Performing	PRF	Information taken from different parts of the text to make sense of setting and context
Orchestrating	ORC	Automatic, unconscious behaviors; no longer attending directly and consciously to every single element at once
Interpreting	INT	Macrostructure development is elaborated
Fooling around	FOL	Explore ideas without commitment
Not working	NWK	Within a zone of reduced consequences, a chance to try out ideas, work through feelings, and not expect a direct utility

In actual practice, the initial set of seemingly tidy codes soon became unwieldy. Unlike my previous experiences of working with a relatively precise set of "constructively responsive" comprehension activities (Pressley & Afflerbach 1995), I found that working with Mackey's set of aspects required that I continually sharpen boundaries amongst key concepts. For example, differences between *performing* and *interpreting* were difficult to ascertain as they both describe pathways to the construction of knowledge structures? During analysis, I differentiated the activities by focusing either on a learner's pursuit of ideas (performing) or a learner's pause to reflect on what was learned from a specific engagement (interpreting). Further conceptual difficulties arose between *fooling around* and *not working*. Here, I differentiated them by concentrating on the notion of risk rather than 'not making a commitment.'

RESULTS

Not surprisingly, perhaps because the concept of play is so broadly conceived by Mackey (2002), each variant that I had selected from her framework was present in the dataset. Performing came through as a central aspect of play. Working effectively with the digital media, learners were able to move quickly across the electronic texts from one scene to another to build comprehension. Other prominent aspects of play included orchestrating, interpreting, and fooling around (Table 7).

Table 7. Examples of Play Based on Initial Categories Established by Mackey (2002)

Aspect	Representative comment
Performing	"Oh, okay! Righty-o! We have a car! That's good actually, I knew that they had a car involved because of the first—the very first heading had a car in it. And now I can figure out why they were first showing pictures of trees and so on." (Abby)
Orchestrating	"Well I guess — I mean I still understand what's going on so I don't — I'm not conscious of having to do anything to make myself understand it better or anything." (Catherine)
Interpreting	"Uhm ... the ... so the money was found in the garbage which was actually raised from the conveyor belt at this center and I'm not actually sure what that center is in English so I can't say and judging from the building even I don't know what kind of building — what kind of place it was …" (Brenda)
Fooling around	"I just picked up words like 'kabu' and 'taiho' and I didn't understand the pictures what all these people were doing around here but it showed a bit of a road and maybe that was the curving road and a lot of that was kind of guesswork from, you know, sort of practical stuff." (Sandra)

In essence, much of the early stages of analysis confirmed the viability of Mackey's concepts. At this point, it is worth noting her wide-open literacy perspective on textual engagement allowed for a much less precise analysis of the transcripts than what is afforded in the work of Pressly and Afflerbach (1995). Having said that, however, the playful conceptualization of learner activities fostered insights into learner behaviors. Two new categories of play emerged during my continued analysis (Table 8).

Table 8: Codes for Emergent Categories of Play

Aspects of play	Code	Central characteristics
Without advance preparation	WAP	No pre-teaching of vocabulary, culture, or context causes frustration
Joyfulness	JOY	Engagement with the videotext excited students if they understood elements or felt as if they were truly experiencing the culture

Playing without advance preparation

In this study, the students were not given an opportunity ahead of the sessions to gain from the pre-teaching of vocabulary, cultural orientation, or the establishment of a wider context. Here the videotexts were just played without warm-up activities. The lack of preparation caused some frustration, as noted by Li-Ping, a Chinese native speaker learning Japanese:

> "[If] … you just play it to me I wouldn't have any idea what's going on whatsoever, I think. Just by listening to it, it is very hard."

The implication here, of course, is that pre-teaching is important. Students need to have some orientation to the videotext, know some of the ground rules, and have time to become familiar with the challenging symbolic environment.

Playing as joyfulness

In its purest form, play ignites feelings of joy, excitement, and liveliness. At some stage, successful L2 speakers come to realize that being understood, or understanding, is a sublime pleasure that often encourages them to keep trying to master the other tongue. Li-Ping expresses how she really likes interacting with the news clips:

> It's much more fun than studying books, I'll say, or just reading an article. Because uh . . . I mean if you just study books, you can actually do it everywhere, right? But when you just study video clips, you just get the feeling that you are in Japan and are part of the society and . . . it's more lively, I like it.

Not all students, however, found joy in understanding. Many thought the tasks were burdensome, somewhat tiring, or tedious. Because I sat through participant sessions for each of the three videotexts, I had a clear sense of when the joy would leave the activity, and it would sour. On such occasions it struck me that comprehension, or the pursuit of meaning, would not be so much a matter of language proficiency but one of maintaining a positive attitude.

For those who found joy in understanding a second language, they reveled in the journey of the narrative. Some pursued vocabulary items with the skill and patience of practiced hunters. They maintained forward movement in the face of challenge and found thrill in the chase itself. They stayed on task regardless of the difficulties that lay ahead, and it was this determination that made them more successful than those who were easily dismayed. Pleasure and joy motivate playfulness.

Replay

In Stage Two of the verbal reporting sessions, participants were instructed to manipulate the videotexts any way they wished. During these extended viewings, they completed a series of small comprehension tasks (see Table 4). Three aspects of *replay* emerged in the analysis of repeated reviews of the videotexts.

Table 9. Codes for Emergent Categories of Replay

Aspects of replay	Code	Central characteristics
Recover from comprehension failure	RCF	Review a section, often repeatedly in increasingly narrow segments, to correct an earlier deficit in understanding
Stall decision making	STL	Put off deciding about the significance or place of an element in the overall narrative
Establishing signposts and boundary lines	ESB	Use both aural and visual elements to pinpoint particular areas that require clarification

Replaying to recover from comprehension failure

At its simplest, *to replay*, means to repeat a text or activity. If we do this successfully, we ignore what we have already learned and focus our attention on what we still need to know. We replay texts to examine specific points and thus recover from a flawed initial understanding. Several learners commented on aspects of recovery afforded by the digital media:

> It helps you to improve your listening skill … I mean after you see a video clip if you don't understand it, you just replay it and replay it. (Li-Ping)

> It's good to do on the computer and to be able to replay the same thing over and over again until you understand it. (Sandra)

> Well, like I said, I just sort of listen to it once and then just go back and replay things and pause especially on things like where they show *kanji* and things like that. (Sandra)

> By looking at the clips I can pick up which problem I encounter and probably after listening a few times I can refer back and say "Oh, now I understand this part." Previously I don't understand it and now I understand this. (Chin)

Oftentimes, learners would go over and over a particular word or phrase to spark a helpful association either in the context of the videotext itself or from personal background knowledge. Replay was a directed, goal-oriented activity often initiated to "hone in" on a very specific element. Replay contributes to eventual success.

Replaying to stall the need to make a decision

On occasion, learners replayed segments to stall the eventual need to make a decision. Here, failure would be first set in motion from the inability to set a clear goal. Or, perhaps, they would encounter something in the videotext (e.g., a dialect that was difficult to understand) that would require more advanced skills to understand.

> I can't get it. I can't get any of it. I can't pick up any of the main nouns or verbs, but the story I mean that's an idea. They found the car and it had the fencing, well the meshing either the mesh which was protecting something or a fence I can't work out whether it was protecting … I can't work out why all the people are walking around trying to find something. (Denise)

Subsequently, failure would develop when the learner was unable to pinpoint elements that were needed to build a fuller understanding of the videotext. Clearly, they became frustrated as they were unable to form a coherent view of events but they would not move on. They would simply repeat. During replays, neither a focus on visual nor verbal elements would assist comprehension. In these instances, replay did not contribute to success; rather, it was one way to delay the need to make a decision or face up to a failure.

Replaying to establish signposts and boundary lines

A case study of Abby, perhaps the most proficient strategist of the group, illustrates how learners can use tasks and visual elements to establish signposts and boundary lines. Overall, Abby's success with the listening tasks is the result of being able to be both flexible yet remain focused. Although she adjusts her strategies to fit new challenges, she remains clear about what needs to be accomplished before moving on. When confronted by the difficulty of a videotext, for example, she markedly increased the length of segmentation and the number of times she non-sequentially accessed scenes containing relevant information. Despite this potentially confusing style of search, she rarely lost sight of immediate task demands. In post-session comments, Abby explains how task focus and the ability to replay the digital medium formed a powerful combination for her:

> [The tasks were] fine because I could keep going back, back and forth through the video. I would have had quite a bit of trouble answering them if I would not have been able to do that ... [The tasks] picked up details that I hadn't particularly kept in my head ... They were sufficiently narrowed down, sort of narrow so that you could say "I know exactly where that person said that" and go on and find it then listen to it again and write it down.

In these comments, note that Abby meets task demands through use of the technology at hand: the questions are "fine" because she is able to repeatedly replay the videotext until she is able to formulate an answer. Without this capability, she admits the task would have been much more difficult if a non-recursive medium was used as a mode of presentation.

Further, she points out how the tasks themselves highlighted aspects of detail that she may have well missed. Abby utilized the tasks to narrow searches and make her replayed searches more efficient. She is aware that visual elements do not necesarily correspond to aural elements. When they do not match, Abby makes use of key visual elements to signpost that task-relevant information is at hand. Once the signposts are established, they are then used as boundary markers to demarcate task-relevant sections that, in turn, make her searches more efficient. With these she remains on-task.

Another aspect of Abby's success can be attributed to her ability to differentiate between the role of visual elements as content (what they portray) and as signposts or boundary markers (their use in segmenting videotext). For instances in which the visual and aural elements matched, Abby was able to link them to achieve greater comprehension. At times elements did not match, however, Abby tended to ignore the visual elements during the replays and focused her attention on the aural elements. Importantly, during replay, elements in the aural track were used as key markers in the narrative. Visual elements took on the role of signposts, or boundary markers, to assist in search efficiency.

Student Reflections

As they reflected after a session, what did students think about their own sense of play with the videotexts? Importantly, many students were aware of the game of working with authentic media within the context of the research study. A post-session comment by Catherine illustrates the point that she would have selected videotexts differently if she would have been outside of the classroom:

> And also my overall impression is that it is a very typical "throw away" news article … one of those amusing little things that you have in the news that sort of fills up a nice thirty second gap sort of thing. But you know it doesn't matter if you don't understand it that much.

Catherine's point reminds us of the fragile nature of authenticity. Once a media text moves from its original purpose to a pedagogical one, it can lose luster. Nonetheless, many students remarked that that allowed them to pretend they were in Japan. Transported to the as if world allows students to have fuller experiences of the text (Mackey, 2002). Catherine articulates the feeling:

> … this particular scene is a sort of full of very typical Japanese scenes like people sort of wearing things that I am happy to see Japanese people wearing and stuff like that. And the sort of general tone of the NHK broadcasts is such that I'm very familiar with it so that sort of sets me back into Japan and so I'm like in a Japan frame as it starts so I think that brings up a lot of background knowledge to start with like we are in Japan and so everything — we can pretend we are there and then sort of go on from there.

Finally, as Sandra reflects, many students reported that the visual medium reduced anxiety, increased motivation, and encouraged a connection with the culture:

> I would have panicked just listening to it on a [audio]tape hearing all these hard words but then seeing it there sort of — you know, you can relate to what they are talking about …

In summary, analysis of the qualitative data confirm the presence of Mackey's (2002) key categories of play in L2 video-mediated listening. Other categories emerged that related specifically to playing videotexts, particularly during repeated viewings of segments that were marked by the use of elements such as signposts. In general, the use of a media literacy perspective operationalized through Mackey's notion of play informs work on L2 listening strategies. Implications of the results are discussed in the next section.

DISCUSSION

What does adopting a media literacy perspective, based in a sense of play, offer to the teaching and research of L2 listening strategies? Alternatively, what does L2 listening theory offer literacy? Combined, they offer us a way to extend our work with videotexts into the wider world of literacy studies. Discussion of the implications of the study can inform teaching, assessment, and research.

Implications for L2 teaching

Adopting a media literacy perspective can inform the way we teach environments. In addition to a focus on the *content* of videotext (that is, what it contains in terms of images, words, and sounds), a media literate L2 instructor would also draw attention to aspects of videotext production (who made it for which audience) and construction (why and how it generates meaning). Alongside listening skill development, the media literacy skills of analysis, evaluation, and communication would be promoted.

Those of us familiar with teaching reading and writing are at an advantage. Our skills in deconstructing printed texts, for example by showing how headlines signal topic and sentences make up paragraphs, can be transferred to working with digitized videotexts. With this framing, telling students that visual elements simply support aural comprehension would diminish an opportunity to encourage critical thinking amongst our students; a better presentation would inform students that visual elements offer *potential opportunities* for developing understanding in tandem with verbal elements. An ideal lesson would draw student attention to verbal and visual elements that have a particularly significant cultural meaning in context (Kramsch & Anderson, 1999). Extended discussion and activities would then draw out analysis and evaluation of the social, historical, and political implications of key elements. Pedagogical handbooks (e.g., Gruba, 2005; Potter, 2005; Silverblat, 2001) can be used to inform classroom practices.

Explicit strategy instruction no doubt has a role in our classrooms (Vandergrift, 2003a; 2003b). As Buck (1995) suggests, however, using our time in the classroom to motivate listening practice may be more effective with our students than trying to explain cognitive processes. By introducing media literacy concepts throughout our syllabus, we can encourage our students to play with videotexts and undertake a journey of discovery. As they come to develop understanding in a supported environment, they arrive at a place that is not overly inscribed with our own suggestions of what to do and how to do it.

As Mackey (2002, pp. 195-196), argues the most obvious place to consider the idea of playing the text is in the language classroom. Announcing that "we are going to play with this text today," Mackey points out, allows for opportunities to shift the boundaries of classroom discussions. The terms of engagement with the videotexts are less restricted. In my role as a teacher, whether I mean to or not, I sometimes imply that one meaning of the text is more correct than others. By introducing an element of play as I start a lesson, I highlight the very flexibility that is needed when handling dynamic, polysemous media from another culture. As Mackey observes, the idea of playing offers a sense of relative freedom for students.

Implications for CALL research

A change in perspective allows for a fresh look at data sets. Reinvigorated analysis leads to further insights and possibilities. By re-examining a dataset, my research skills grew by experiencing first hand how perspective influences the focus of interpretation and its results (Flick, 2002). Perhaps expected and

trivial at one level, nonetheless the experience highlights the potential conflict between cognitive and literacy approaches to the study of L2 listening comprehension. Admittedly, cognitive views are more developed and precise but they run the risk of being divorced from notions of *ecologies of text* now being widely taken up in applied linguists (Kern & Schultz, 2005). Work by Potter (2004), particularly in regards to task development, sheds light on ways to bridge the gaps between perspectives.

Situating L2 listening within a media literacy framework allows for the outcomes of research to be placed in a much wider context. Nascent work in social semiotics, for instance, can be explored particularly in the areas of genre, discourse, and modality (van Leeuwen, 2005); Machin and van Leeuwen (2003) show ways to work across multi-national texts; and Piller (2003) shows how advertising can be a rich site of language contact. Accessible sources of textual analysis techniques include work by Berger (1998), Hoey (2001), McKee (2003), and Stokes (2003).

CONCLUSION

In this article, we have seen how adopting a 'playful' approach to making sense of L2 digitized videotext can be informed by adopting a media literacy perspective. Perspective frames pedagogy. If we see students as listeners, then we need to expand our definition of the construct (skills perspective?) and yet stay in dialogue with concepts used in formal language assessment. If we see students' behaviors as strategic, we must look for ways to guide, direct, and nurture their actions so that they grow into effective users of these texts. Finally, if we take a media literacy view and see learner interactions as multi-layered aspects of play, then we are in a frame of mind to promote students' intuitive and creative use of the complex medium. Each of these perspectives varies slightly, yet differences in their primary characteristics are significant: we see what we want to see, and from that view, we teach. Bringing in a literacy perspective (or, indeed, literacies) to our classrooms opens up refreshing possibilities for teaching and research with video-mediated L2 listening.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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