Psychological aspects of literacy

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1. Problem of *definition* and of *lack of word* in some languages.

2. Literacy is the ability to understand and use the complex symbol system of a language.
Literacy events (Kucer, S.B., 2009)

- cognitive dimension
- linguistic dimension
- sociocultural dimension
- developmental dimension
- educational dimension
- literacy events
Cognitive dimension (1)

- **cognitive activity** in literacy is related to mental processes and strategies activated to discover the meaning.

- **perception** is not a one-way process, it is a constant interaction between visual and non-visual areas of information.
Cognitive dimension (2)

visual information (stimulus)  

non visual information (knowledge)  

MEANING
Cognitive dimension (3)

The impact of knowledge

- knowledge on literacy (in general)
- previous knowledge of author and reader
- knowledge is not static and constant (fluid)
- assimilation (new) & accommodation (additional)
- structure of knowledge
- metacognition
- reflection, criticism

The result of reading is different for different readers: it is a product of basic message and personal response.
Cognitive dimension (4)

Comparison of reading and writing

**similar**: looking for meaning, active use of linguistic and cognitive abilities, use of previous knowledge, aim & intention

**different**: passive-active, less-more use of cognitive ability, discover-create meaning, decoding-coding
Linguistic dimension (1)

• language is fundamental instrument for the construction of meaning of a message or written text
• a message can be communicate in a non linguistic multimodal way: picture, symbol,..
• literacy is not the transformation of oral in written form
Linguistic dimension (2)

System of language

• pragmatics: function, use, intention
• semantic: meaning of words and interrelations
• syntax: grammar rules to achieve meaning and orthography
Linguistic dimension (3)

**ORAL**
- here and now
- face-to-face (nonverbal communication)
- immediate feed-back
- message is not registered

**WRITTEN**
- delay in communication
- distance (author-reader)
- “adaptation” to potential readers
- message is registered “for ever”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORAL</th>
<th>WRITTEN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• conceptual thin</td>
<td>• conceptual compact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• short, simple sentences</td>
<td>• longer grammatically complex sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• more repetitions, no adjectives, professional terms</td>
<td>• use of different terms, professional and precise terminology</td>
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<tr>
<td>• feed-back</td>
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• auditive stimulus

• visual stimulus
Sociocultural dimension (1)

Literacy as social act:

• more individual included (A→B,C,D,...)
• social character of literacy is reflected in literacy praxis of social groups
• social group are determinated by their culture, social status, education, sex, age,..
• an individual is member of different social group
Sociocultural dimension (2)

Act of literacy is any activity connected with printed material.

Praxis of literacy are acts, which are repeated in a community.

Effect of literacy is the result of acts or praxis and of membership of a group.

Literacy level of an individual is not the result of his/her cognitive and linguistic abilities; it includes the influence of the group an individual belong to.
Developmental dimension (1)

Learning to read and write means to develop abilities and effective connection of linguistic, cognitive, social and cultural dimensions in a broader context.

The development can go on for the whole life or until individual stays in contact with new technologies.
Developmental dimension (2)

Literacy development starts with speech development.
The child recognizes very early the importance of speech and language for communication with others.
The need, motivation and learning are all present on literacy learning and all literacy activities.
Use in everyday life (use it or loose it). Literacy have to be upgraded.
Developmental dimension (3)

Principles in language and literacy acquisition:

• active approach
• imitation of adults
• analytical approach (“research”) in the study of literacy: hypothesis on meaning, system of transformation of oral to written.
Educational dimension

• Literacy is a skill, teaching is necessary.
• The results of research on different fields (cognitive, linguistic, social and cultural) should be implemented in educational program to improve the literacy level of all.
• Educational level and literacy level are comparable.
Literature:
