

10 Glossary

Alternative discourse—A mix of discursive forms no longer affiliated with given homeplaces or public institutions. As inventive hybrids, alternative discourses lace together discourses of the street and school, policy talk and political activism. It is helpful to think of discourse not as a monolithic entity, but as a constellation of related practices that bear a family resemblance and that invoke different kinds of strategies and habits of mind that distinguish them from other families of practice. Though discourses associated with formal institutions are often the most rigorously enforced, the inventive capacity of rhetoric makes alternative discourse possible—though always in relation to contextual conditions and constraints.

Autonomous model of literacy—An understanding of literacy prominent through the 1970s that took reading and writing to be generalizable skills that foster levels of abstract thinking and critical analysis unavailable to the oral mind. The model assumed that literacy could be packaged and transported from one setting to another for equal effect. The model pinned the hope of a developing country's institutional and economic autonomy on its general population attaining a certain rate of literacy.

Collaborative planning—A technique for rhetorical invention that structures the rhetorical thinking typical of experienced writers. The supporter prompts the writer not only to consider content or topic knowledge (the point at which inexperienced writers typically start and stop), but also to construct a more rhetorically astute plan by actively thinking about key points and purpose, the needs and anticipated responses of readers, and alternative text conventions that might support this increasingly elaborated network of

goals, plans, and ideas. Developed by Flower and her colleagues, the strategy has been used in a number of academic and community settings to teach writing, to support classroom inquiry by teachers and students, and to conduct research into students' rhetorical strategies. Because this process of articulating a plan makes thinking "more visible," collaborative planning is a useful research tool that captures something of the social cognitive interaction at play when people engage in rhetorical planning.

Critical-rational discourse—See *rational-critical discourse*.

Communicative democracy—A model for public deliberation that attempts to correct for the exclusionary features of rational-critical discourse. Associated with Iris Young's political philosophy, communicative democracy values not only argument, but also narrative and the broader range of communicative styles that disenfranchised people may prefer to use to interpret their own, and their communities', lived experiences and to advocate for change.

Community organizing—A grassroots political practice that leverages connections and resources for the good of local neighborhoods. Based on the practical theory of Alinsky, co-founder of Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council, community-organizing efforts typically organize large groups of people to execute subversive tactics against big business and stagnant government agencies and have sponsors who provide an institutional base as well as systematic training.

Community think tank—A forum designed to support intercultural inquiry into complex social issues. A permutation of the problem-solving dialogue at Pittsburgh's Community Literacy Center (CLC), the community think tank deliberately reorganizes community, academic, professional, and vernacular discourses to ask how people can use their differences to construct realistically complex understandings of pressing social issues in order to support expanded sets of options in their own spheres of influence.

Counterpublic—A subaltern public that shelters oppositional identities and interests. A counterpublic deliberately circulates discourse outside the counterpublic in attempt to persuade others to think differently about its members.

Cultural agency—The capacity of institutions to circulate resources to bring about social change by endorsing specific literate practices and incentives for using them. Compare to *linguistic agency* and *rhetorical agency*.

Cultural appropriation—The means by which a subaltern makes new meaning by taking symbols from the dominant culture and ascribing to them new significance that reinforces the internal integrity of the subaltern. The process of appropriation renders the original symbol unrecognizable to the dominant culture.

Cultural imaginary—Postmodern terminology referring to the ideological landscape that links cultural forms and the political unconscious to specific material conditions.

Deliberation—The public practice of decision-making associated with rational-critical discourse, for instance, the jurisprudential practice of securing warranted assent or the give-and-take of a well-functioning committee. Conventional deliberation strives for consensus and dictates rules for participation.

Design literacies—Theory-driven rhetorical interventions that structure local public discourse to achieve aims not readily accomplished in other forums.

Discourse—The whole discursive kit and caboodle that distinguishes one set of social practices from another; includes not only habits of reading and writing but also social roles, values, and body language—or what John Paul Gee calls “writing-doing-being-valuing-believing combinations” (6). Discourse is associated with Gee’s notion of an “identity kit” and the distinction between primary, capital-D Discourse into which one is born and secondary discourses into which one is socialized over a lifetime.

Domains—A sociolinguistic term referring to distinct terrains that structure the social purposes that literacy serves and how it is learned. Domains are affiliated with a society's institutions. The domain of the home, for instance, is largely structured by the social institution of the family; likewise, the domains of schools, hospitals, and courtrooms are affiliated with educational, medical, and legal institutions, respectively.

Dominant discourse—Prestige literacies that carry out the purposes of social institutions. Dominant discourse is affiliated with mainstream culture. It helps to circulate a system of rewards to those who abide by its codes and conventions and, thus, who serve the system's interests. Contrast with *vernacular literacy*.

Economy of efficiency—A context for literacy learning characterized by a dearth of readily accessible resources. An economy of efficiency demands that learners resourcefully transform familiar practices in order to respond to new rhetorical exigencies. The distinction between economies of *efficiency* and *excess* is central to Brandt's account of the increase of literacy rates among African Americans in times of political and economic duress.

Economy of excess—a context for literacy learning characterized by a plentitude of resources. In such a context, learners benefit readily from a host of sponsors who offer incentives for learning to read and write.

Formal public—A discursive entity that exists in relation to texts and their circulation. Warner stipulates seven features of a formal public, emphasizing, for instance, stranger relationality and mere awareness as criteria for public-making. (The complete list is included under Warner's entry in the annotated bibliography that follows. See also *local public*.)

Gatekeeping encounter—A discursive site within an institutional setting where an institutional worker and a community resident negotiate the resident's access to limited resources. Typically, a

gatekeeping encounter is a site of political struggle where a resident strives to preserve personal dignity while also securing resources for herself and her family.

Great divide—A gulf said to distinguish literate and oral minds, the former believed to be more intellectually agile, better able to separate fact from myth, and better able to glean abstract principles from concrete experience. Early literacy studies such as the Via Literacy Project (1973–1978) established empirical methods for testing such assumptions. Scribner and Cole found that claims of a great divide are not so much wrong as overstated. A more accurate understanding considers that specific discursive practices carry with them specific cognitive consequences (whether for memorizing, quantitative reasoning, or constructing arguments) based on the social purposes for which literacy is organized, rather than the linguistic system used to encode such practices.

Hidden logic—Often unspoken motives, values, and assumptions that people use to interpret complex situations. People's hidden logic is an important resource for building realistically complex representations of complex social issues.

Hidden transcript—An unarticulated running commentary that indirectly opposes and critiques racist and classist assumptions of the institutional worker's public transcript.

Ideological model of literacy—A view of literacy associated with New Literacy Studies that works from the premise that literacy is always already a contested site of meaning making, not a neutral cognitive tool. The ideological model emphasizes that the institutional practices that structure and reward (or discourage) literacy's use in specific social and cultural contexts determine its meaning and social value.

Inspired context—A context for literacy learning that cultivates people's capacity to transform their literate repertoires to address new exigencies under conditions of scarcity and stress. It compensates for the toll that poverty and other forms of social neglect—in in-

cluding diminished opportunities for literacy learning—take on people's lives.

Institution—An organization that holds the power to make and to enforce policies. An institution perpetuates processes for producing and distributing knowledge. Within studies of community literacy, *public institution* often refers to the wide range of social service agencies that distribute resources within a society, such as regional branches of the Department of Social Services, the Housing Authority, and the criminal justice system.

Institutional workers—Gatekeepers who operate and represent the interests of public institutions by determining who accesses the limited resources they oversee.

Intercultural inquiry—A willingness, a capacity, and a rhetorical method for exchanging perspectives and seeking out commonalities, differences, and gaps in interpretations. Intercultural inquiry helps participants critically assess and expand their knowledge of a problem in personally and socially significant ways. It includes rhetorical tools for understanding one's own situated knowledge in terms of the larger social landscape—for recognizing that the starting point from which others join a conversation is different from one's own. Intercultural inquiry seeks not consensus among disparate parties, but makes difference a resource for personal and public transformed understanding.

Knowledge activism—The means by which a writing program administrator facilitates the collaborative process that community partners use to determine the shape of a shared project and to craft the documents that articulate this project and move it toward fruition. The knowledge activist takes his or her cues from Alinsky's practical theory of community organizing.

Linguistic agency—The rhetorical decisions that community residents make to navigate encounters with institutional workers. Includes the resident's capacity for critical analysis, particularly the ability

to evaluate the effectiveness of her decisions within a gatekeeping encounter and to retool accordingly. Since such encounters are co-constructed in the language of both parties, however, a community resident can not control for the institutional worker's response but rather can only hope to improve the likelihood that the institutional representative will respond in a desired manner. Thus, linguistic agency also acknowledges that a resident's agency is limited by situational constraints and how a given encounter unfolds.

Literate act—Since the late 1970s, literacy scholars have worked to distinguish the study of literacy from literary scholarship that associates writing with textual product. Readers interested in these initial efforts will find useful the references that Heath provides in footnote #2 on page 386 of *Ways with Words*. This and the next four entries highlight key distinctions in this effort—distinctions that not only prioritize certain aspects of literacy but also evoke different conceptual frameworks for its study. Within this discussion, then, *literate act* is a unit of analysis within Flower's socio-cognitive theory of writing, a perspective that is especially attuned to the constructive process through which writers actively and intentionally transform what they know and adapt discourse conventions to carry out personally meaningful, goal-directed uses of literacy. The concept of a literate act calls into question descriptions of literacy predicated on discrete and stable practices and highlights instead the dynamic process through which writers often negotiate complex, even contradictory, rhetorical goals.

Literacy event—A unit of analysis associated with sociolinguistic studies of literacy, often in educational settings. As an object of study, the literacy event focuses attention on those occasions where one or more persons engage a text, whether to comprehend an existing text or to compose a new one. Literacy events carry with them rules of engagement that regulate how people talk about the text at hand. As evident in Heath's *Ways with Words*, the study of literacy events has documented the interdependent nature of literacy and orality.

Literate (rhetorical) performance—Literate action situated in decidedly public arenas where rhetors speak with others for values and ideas. Associated with Flower's rhetorical theory of social engagement, literate performances are relational in that rhetors actively engage with others and respond to the intended and unintended consequences of their discursive decisions. Literate performances include strategic inquiry, deliberative engagement, and reflective decision making.

Literate practice (Scribner and Cole)—A unit of analysis associated with anthropological studies of literacy. The literate practice focuses attention on the social purposes that organize patterns of literacy use. Scribner and Cole emphasize four features of a literate practice: as an activity, it is recurrent and goal-driven; it makes use of a particular technology and operates within a particular system of knowledge.

Literate practice (Street)—The ideological model of literacy also describes literacy in terms of practices but now pitched to a higher level of abstraction than Scribner and Cole's definition focused on goals, technology, knowledge and skills. A leader of NLS, Street focuses on the ways that literacy participates in overlapping systems that distribute institutional power. In this framework, *literate practice* refers to activities that are embedded in institutional contexts and, thus, implicated in wider social, economic, and political processes.

Local public—The community in community literacy. At once discursive and material, local publics are the sites that people devise to address distinct rhetorical agendas that range from socializing children into appropriate uses of language to drawing upon stakeholders' differences as a resource for addressing shared problems to demanding respect under conditions that yield little of it. Local publics are often the form of public life that ordinary people access most readily; thus, they are sites where ordinary people tend to develop their voices and repertoires for going public.

Local public framework—A five-point heuristic for comparing accounts of how ordinary people go public. Focuses attention on the

researcher's *guiding metaphor* for describing the discursive space, especially the metaphor's distinctive features; *context*, including issues of location, as well as other context-specific factors that give public literacies their meaning; the *tenor of the discourse*, or register, that makes for the distinctive affective quality of the discourse; the *literacies* people use to organize and carry out their purposes for going public; and *rhetorical invention*, the generative process by which people respond to the exigencies that call them together as a local public. The local public framework highlights implications that follow from alternative accounts of local public life, particularly how rhetorical invention translates into choices, practices, and actions for educators, learners, community partners, activists, and researchers.

Materialist rhetoric—an inventional technique aimed at identifying the fragments of argument—or ideographs—most likely to secure agreement among diverse constituencies.

Mestiza public—An image of an inclusive local public inspired by Gloria Anzaldúa's descriptions of mestiza consciousness. In the name of social justice, this public borderland creates a community-based intercultural dialogue that extends across borders of race, class, status, power, and discourse to accommodate multiple discursive codes.

Negotiation—The process through which the writer provisionally resolves the conflict among competing rhetorical goals in order to construct inventive and purposeful literate action. An observation-based account of literate action grounded in Flower's socio-cognitive approach to rhetorical inquiry, negotiation theory offers a plausible explanation of how socially situated individuals make difficult decisions in the face of multiple, internalized competing public voices. Negotiation lets people build more robust working theories of the problem and, thereby, draw on these revised, enhanced working theories to respond to similar versions of the problem when it arises for them in the future.

Network—Social relations within and among domains through which people carry out shared literate activity. Nodes of a network

represent different stakeholders who come together around a social problem to protect their own interests.

New Ghost Dance—A contemporary version of the Native American practice that exercises and celebrates communal integrity at the same time that it invites cultural difference and supports inquiry. A performative public rhetoric, the New Ghost Dance is at once a right, a theory, a practice, and a kind of poetry. Lyons urges other educators to engage students in this practice by teaching treaties and federal laws as rhetorical texts and by situating classroom inquiry in relation to larger historical trends relevant to their educational context.

New Literacy Group (NLG)—Sponsors of the ideological model of literacy and situated studies of literacy. The NLG launched numerous cross-cultural comparisons and similar studies of minority-group practices here in the United States.

New Literacy Studies (NLS)—An approach to the study of literacy grounded in a broad understanding based not on reading and its purported psychological consequences but on the study of literate practices in their social and cultural contexts. NLS defines literacy as a constellation of local, situated practices that are shaped by institutional power and responsive to changes across time and place. This body of scholarship demonstrates how literacy participates in the construction of ethnicity, gender, and religious identities by structuring and sustaining power dynamics within institutional relationships.

Prophetic pragmatism—An intellectual stance affiliated with the moral philosophy of West. Prophetic pragmatism calls people to recognize and to work to dismantle the causes of social misery. It informs the strong rival-hypothesis stance as the basis for intercultural inquiry within the CLC's rhetorical model of community literacy.

Public—see *formal public*.

Public transcript—The language the institutional worker uses to carry out the business at hand. The public transcript typically follows the grand narrative of mainstream ideology, enshrining the authority of the gatekeeper as the morally upright helper and community resident as the quite possibly shifty seeker-of-services.

Rational-critical discourse (also appears in scholarship as *critical-rational discourse*)—A model for public deliberation based on formal argumentation, particularly that which privileges general *truth* over particular *experience*, authoritative *facts* over *emotion*, and reasoned *positions* over *narrative*. Rhetoricians further distinguish *rationality*, which assumes the merit of a claim to be self evident given the internal logic of its appeal from *reasonableness*, which recognizes that what counts as a compelling argument must be negotiated with other members of the discourse community. On the one hand, rational-critical discourse is often portrayed as the enemy of inclusive democratic practice because of its tendency to disguise social privilege in the rules it embodies for what counts as rigorous thought and valued social contribution. But as West argues in *Democracy Matters*, when it comes to complex social issues (such as those that drive community literacy) there is a place for disciplined, “rational” contributions and respectful civil exchange. The point is that in the effort to foster inclusive democratic practices, users of rational-critical discourse should not get to determine the rules of the game and who gets to play but, instead, expect to find their place along side the other perspectives and communicative styles at the table.

Rhetorical agency—A capacity of the non-authoritative writer to take meaningful rhetorical action by actively engaging with contested issues and ideas in order to conduct inquiry, to seek rivals, and to construct a more expansive and shared intercultural understanding. A visible feature of rhetorical agency is public performance—the act of engaging others in actual dialogue in effort to broaden one another’s understandings of the issue at hand. Rhetorical agency is the basis of Flower’s rhetoric of engagement.

Rhetorical intervention—Any one of a number of action-research methodologies (often expressed as design literacies) that activist

rhetoricians use to work with community partners to shape the discursive space in which they work together on a shared problem.

Rhetorical invention—The generative aspect of discourse through which people discover how to respond to new exigencies. Accounts of ordinary people's inventive processes reflect researchers' working theories, such as Cushman's description of the *evaluative process* by which community residents assess and refine the institutional literacies they use to navigate gatekeeping encounters; Flower's theory of *negotiation* by which people turn some level of attention to those voices that complicate their initial understandings of a pressing social issue; and Cintron's understanding of *appropriation* by which gang members mimic mainstream cultural codes, making them unrecognizable to mainstream culture and a display of identity for members of street culture.

Rhetorical sovereignty—The right and ability of minority cultures to represent themselves, their needs, desires, and interests in public and to use their own communicative styles in order to do so. Rhetorical sovereignty underscores the important function that writing plays in acts of self-definition and -determinism for minority cultures.

Rhetorics of sustainability—Working theories of local publics and their future trajectories. Competing rhetorics of sustainability turn on different understandings of conflict and its relationship to rhetorical intervention, the discursive engine that lets ordinary people go public. These rhetorics also nominate alternative sets of priorities and practices for maintaining a given local public and its distinctive activities.

Sponsor—The institutional relationship that provides cultural and material support to literacy learners, including explicit instruction, technological support, and social incentives. Sponsorship is associated with Brandt's study of how ordinary Americans born between 1895 and 1985 responded to changes in the meaning and methods of literacy learning.

Sustainability—Expressed in the maxim, “Without margin, there is no mission.” In community work, sustainability is the capacity of a community organization to keep life and limb together, to maintain a strong sense of purpose and to secure the requisite funding and personnel needed to flourish.

Techne—A technique or strategy used to chart deliberate rhetorical action. In *Rhetoric Reclaimed*, Atwill observes that this special class of productive knowledge is “stable enough” that people can grasp them as specific strategies and transfer them to new contexts but “flexible enough” to be useful in specific situations and for particular purposes (48).

Topoi—In the postmodern parlance of Cintron’s rhetoric of everyday life, these are the commonplace binaries through which ideology structures the interpretative landscape. Topoi comprise the fund of cultural meanings from which a shadow system manufactures its own subterranean and esoteric meanings. The power of a topos is its capacity to invoke its opposite—for example, tame vs. wild, respect vs. disrespect, and rationality and order vs. madness and disorder.

Transformed understanding—Grounded in Flower’s social cognitive rhetoric and research documenting that people build mental representations of problems as a first phase in rhetorical problem solving. These flexible, mutable multi-modal mental networks can direct people’s decisions and actions and, thus, inform the kind of wise judgment that takes into account multiple (and often competing) accounts of lived experience.

Vernacular literacy—Ways with words affiliated with the home and neighborhood. Vernacular literacies tend to be informal and flexible in contrast to the uniform and inflexible literacies that structure institutional practices. Also referred to as *hidden literacies* or *nondominant discourse*.

Working theory—From Flower’s social cognitive rhetoric, the internal representation that a person constructs to interpret and to carry

out complex rhetorical activity—whether teaching a course as a classroom teacher or navigating police presence as an urban teenager. Different from both informal lore that circulate in support of alternative practices and from formal theories that exist as propositions in published text, a working theory is a social-cognitive interpretative scheme that mediates, interprets, and guides activity.