CHAPTER-II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Alton Grizzle, Jordi Torrent and José Manuel Pérez Tornero (2013) in “MIL as a Tool to Reinforce Intercultural Dialogue”, reflect upon the increasing complexities of the world and the need for media and information literacy. Arguing over the fact that the global village will become more complex in the coming decade, the authors have opined that such complexities will further stimulate inequalities, misunderstandings and soft conflicts. This will lead the world to a rapid intercultural exchange. The increasing number of complexities at the same time will increase the possibility of opportunities as under such conditions “our ability to find solutions is greater and better” (Grizzle et.al, 2013, p. 9). As the authors have stated, “the growth, integration and fragmentation of our world may, therefore, be both a challenge and a new opportunity for peace” (Ibid., 2013, p. 11). However, the work does not focus on media literacy per se and its basic elements.

K. M. Johnson (2013) in “Cyberspace and Post-modern Democracy” contends that the Habermasian understanding of the public sphere is essentially modernist in character that relies upon rational consensus. Here, the author postulates for an understanding of the public sphere from contradictory positions of modernity and postmodernity, and opines that cyber activism and cyber participation to some extent lead to the evolution of postmodern democracy relatively free from any external control and domination. Characterising the ideal public sphere as “a domain of non-repressive epistemological and ontological space where rational agents participate in discursive practices” (Johnson, 2013, p. 71), the author argues for a change in conceptualising the condition of the public sphere differentiating it from Hegel’s and Marx’s conceptualisation based on a misguided historicism. In the context of the present study, the relevance of the explanation made by Johnson is useful for understanding the public sphere and engagement in a critical practice that relies on the development of media literacy skills. Opening a critic
on the Habermasian public sphere for its emphasis on modernity and rationalisation, the author argues for a public sphere that enthuse dialogue, argumentative debate and consensus.

K.V. Nagaraj and Vedabhyas Kundu (2013) in an article “The Role of Media and Information Literacy in Promoting Mutual Respect and Sustainable Development in Culturally Diverse India” published in the Media and Information Literacy Year Book, emphasise on the promotion of media and information literacy in culturally diverse India. They opine that media literacy can create a peaceful and tolerant society through promoting intercultural dialogue among different communities irrespective of their differences. Citing examples of The Peace Gong (Children’s Newspaper) reporters and their engagement in peace building, they emphasize on the role of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) for intercultural understanding and resolution of conflicts. They argue for the promotion of Media and Information Literacy “amongst the citizenry that would enable the critical understanding of different cultures and traditions, prepare grounds for mutual respect, and contribute to sustainable progress” (Nagaraj and Kundu, 2013, p. 217).

Ibrahim Saleh (2013) in his article, “Convergence Culture and Youth Activism in Egypt”, analyses the impact of new social media on the youth of Egypt and its repercussions on the Egyptian democracy and public sphere. New media as the author argues have given the youth of Egypt an opportunity to mobilise new social movements for socio-cultural and political transformation and have taken the country for a change from monarchical regime to democracy. New media has changed the way people used to demonstrate and protest against the authoritarian state. Just like in many other parts of the globe, the author argues, media and information literacy in an Egyptian context has “provided a strong platform for young people to contribute to social, political, and economic development, give expression to cultural and religious pluralism, learn about the issues in other environments different from their own, and promote the democratic process” (Saleh, 2013, p. 201). It gives an idea about
the many facets of change that are taking place as a result of new literacy practices, particularly as a result of increased information literacy and its connection with the practices of information sharing and access. Saleh thinks that “the new media environment has provided new spaces and opportunities to transform societies, by offering civil society and social movements impetus that enlightens the decision making process with information, thus empowering individuals to take control of their destinies" (Ibid.). Borrowing the idea of ‘convergence culture’ from Jenkins (2006), Saleh explains that new mode of appropriation among the youth of Egypt has redefined the roles and identities of the public and their opposition to Islamists. Citing examples of ‘Kefya Movement’, April 6 and ‘Black Bloc’, Saleh argues that such revolutionary groups have moved beyond the traditional methods of mobilising demonstrations replaced by anarchism as the common denominator. Easy access to technology and applications such as smart phones and facebook among the Egyptian youths, as Saleh argues, has provided the youth with ample opportunity to share information and coordinate the movement, whereas the mainstream communication systems have been trying to marginalise the movements fought on the line of social justice. The Egyptian youth have “increasingly become dependent on new media platforms to coordinate actions, mobilize and create networks, despite the fact that most of these movements have their origins in deprived communities” (Saleh, 2013, p. 202). Saleh asserts that new forms of communication has not replaced traditional ways of mobilization, but has amplified them.

Thomas Sutherland (2013) in an article “Liquid Networks and the Metaphysics of Flux: Ontologies of Flow in an Age of Speed and Mobility”, contends that the increasing mobility of the world is a result of change in communication practices in the network society. From a Kantian stand point, Sutherland gives a metaphysical account of social ontology with the help of conceptual metaphors like ‘flow’, ‘fluidity’, ‘flux’, and ‘liquidity’. Citing Castells (2010), the author has argued that in the network world ‘society is constructed around flows’ (Sutherland, 2013; p.03). The author terms such an
ontologization as ‘metaphysics of flux’. It gives an exposition of the human condition in a network society which on the part of Sutherland is highly metaphysical that ‘lies beyond all human ability to directly perceive it’ (Ibid., p. 04). Arguing that the notions of ‘flow’ are entirely metaphysical, the author attempts to establish the missing link between philosophy and social ontology. Sutherland has taken a Kantian stance in metaphysical understanding (Ibid.,) of the concept of ‘flow’ in the network society as he argues that the Kantian understanding of the metaphysics is ‘based upon neither outer experience, nor inner, which provides the foundation of empirical psychology’ (Ibid.,).

Further, the author has opined: “The metaphysics of flux brackets out the importance of stasis in understanding our world: on the one hand, that of objects, whose existence is inherently substantial despite the changes that may occur to them over time, and on the other, the human capacity for reason, and our ability to create universal categories in order to rationally assess our life world” (Ibid., p. 05). Arguing with Whitehead (1978), Sutherland asserts to the fact that though it is not entirely possible to return to a pre-Kantian metaphysics where it ‘is believed to be possible to derive universal truths from subjective observations...At the same time this should not preclude us from discussing metaphysics altogether” (Ibid.,). Again, arguing with Rossiter (2006), Sutherland posits that the metaphor of fluidity tends to act as a substitute for more effective methods of discussing the network society. The metaphysics of flux overly abstracts the lived conditions of our existence—in prioritizing mobility, speed and immateriality, it obscures the situated materiality and substantiality of the individual actors (whether human and nonhuman) within the world.

Kristen H. Perry (2012) in “What is Literacy?-A critical Overview of Sociocultural Perspectives”, argues that conceptualising literacy from a sociocultural perspective includes various theories. Reflecting on literacy from three major perspectives: (1) literacy as social practice, (2) multiliteracies, and (3)
critical literacy; Perry emphasises upon a clear understanding of the specific theories that fall under the socio-cultural umbrella for both literacy researchers and literacy practitioners. This however favours a sound theoretical knowledge in one’s part to become a literacy researcher and practitioner. As the socio-cultural sphere in the contemporary world is more diversified and fragmented it necessitates the need for multiple critical literacies to overcome such challenges. Perry, arguing with Gee, 1996; Halliday, 1973; Bakhtin; Bourdieu, 1991, posits that socio-cultural perspectives on literacy are related to sociolinguistic conceptualisations of the ways in which language instantiates culture. This however makes it clear that the concept of literacy can be thought of from various perspectives either taking a linguistic turn (Halliday, 1973) or a cultural turn (Bourdieu, 1991).

Manuel Castells (2010), in his book “The Power of Identity”, reflects upon the construction of collective identity and its implications on social movements in the networked society. Though the literature does not directly relate literacy practices with social change, it gives an interesting account of the transformation of global political, economic and cultural conditions as a result of revolution in new communication technology. It gives a new direction in the study of social change in the information age. For Castells, the construction and assertion of identity is the prime factor behind the social transformation that we are experiencing in the current age of information and communication. In the preface to The Power of Identity, Castells writes: “The rise of the network society and the growing power of identity are the intertwined social processes that jointly define globalization, geopolitics, and social transformation in the early twenty-first century” (Castells 2010, xvii). The author considers that in the networked society our lives are being shaped by conflicting trends of globalisation and identity where we Trans-locate ourselves between global and local. He opines that an interconnected media system in the network age has provided us with a culture of real-virtuality with a new set of ontological categories such as the ‘space of flows’, ‘timeless time’. He argues that in the networked society, a strange pattern of virtual interaction
among people, objects and cultural products, has altered the ways and means of constructing and negotiating identity. Altogether, as the author opines, the network society has given us an opportunity which was unthinkable in the earlier phases of the civilization.

Jose Manuel Parez Tornero and Tapio Varis (2010) in "Media Literacy and New Humanism" conceptualise media literacy as a “new humanism” and argue for the promotion of media literacy education for building a culture of peace and social harmony. They emphasise the understanding of the impact of technological innovations, especially in the field of media and communication on human civilisations from a technological deterministic point of view. They characterise the present civilisation as: 1. “technological civilisation based on the digitalisation of information”; 2. “a media culture organised around the media and its convergence”; 3. an extremely rapid process of civilising evolution. The digital revolution, as argued by Tornero and Varis, has constructed a “hyper technological manmade environment in which almost all people and objects have been endowed with a kind of digital interface, so we work, live and interact in a digitally enriched environment, in a kind of digital bubble” (Tornero and Varis, 2010, p. 8). The concept of ‘digital bubble’ as explained by the authors is interesting here as it is similar to the concept of ‘fluidity’, ‘flows’ or ‘liquidity’ of the contemporary condition of human identity. They also argue that “the concept and reality of communication has changed profoundly. We are faced with a new kind of communication” (Ibid., p.10). The explosion of information and communication has profoundly altered our system of life as the hyper technological environment has changed the ‘cultural chemistry’ of the present civilisation. Culture as a concept, has become more fluid and transient, as Tornero and Tapio Varis opine: “It has stopped being a fixed, structured reference and instead become unstable and moving, with a consequent impact on the processes of constructing personal identities” (Ibid., p.13). Arguing with Zygmunt Bauman, Tornero and Tapio Varis say that we are living in a ‘liquid world’ that has led to the evolution of “new subjects and new social personalities” (Ibid., p. 14). This has changed the
demographic structure of the world of civilisations with the “rapid configuration of huge, changing publics connected via flexible mobile networks” (Ibid.,).

The transformation that is taking place in the civilising process is both ‘exterior’ and ‘interior’, as Tomero and Varis declare that the transformation is taking place both in the “manmade environment around human beings and their interior, that is, their intellectual capacities and mental skills” (Ibid., p. 15). They argue that the humanity is building itself in a complex environment of information and communication where “communicative devices and new media are increasingly taking on the physical and social personality of humans, creating artificial prosthetics that extend, amplify and specialise our senses and mental capacities and their driving activities” (Ibid., p. 16). Considering the hyper-technological environment of the world and its application in the process of communication and mediation, the authors support for gaining awareness of the meaning of technological progress and being able to properly succeed it are crucial.

Debating over the need for a new curriculum, they assert:

The new curriculum must develop its own meta-knowledge and meta-language; that is, it must turn to itself and analyse itself. It must know whether or not its propositions and concepts respond to changes in the environment; whether or not its terms and practices are operative in view of these changes; and finally whether or not it has enough resources to propose critical analyses foster alternatives and new worlds. (Ibid., p. 99)

Though such an understanding does not help the researcher in constructing curriculum as it is not an objective of the study, it gives a direction to the researcher for developing a meta-critique of the very concept of media literacy to explore its different dimensions which has been considered essential.

Mike Baynham and Mastin Prinsloo (2009) in “The Future of Literacy Studies” have focused on the study of literacy as a social practice. In so doing, they explore the issue related with [literacy] ‘practice’ in literacy studies. It
delves into the challenges faced by the researchers in the field of literacy study. Based on the idea of Brian Street, the authors have argued that literacy is a social practice and it varies for one social context to others. Drawing upon the idea of ‘habitus’ as explained by Bourdieu, the authors give a reflective account of ‘practice’ in context to literacy “where a specific structure or order is given to social institutions or social fields by the ways in which people think, act and interact” (Bourdieu, 1991; Baynham & Prinsloo, 2009, p. 07). This however, contends that from a structuralist perspective, literacy gives order to social and cultural institutions.

Esperançã Bielsa and Susan Bassnett (2009) in a book, “Translation in Global News,” take an interdisciplinary approach in analysing news production as a translational activity and reflect its impact on global dynamics. Though it is not directly related to the study and concept of media literacy, it has its relevance in the context of news translation that demands a specific category of literacy, and its impact on global culture, language, power, identity, space like many other determining features that dominate the contemporary media and academic debate. They argue over the increasing dominance of English language and decreasing local spaces, a result of ideological dominance of certain languages. Such an explanation uncovers the implicit relation among language, literacy and space. Bielsa and Sussan Bassnett virtually speak in support of Raymond Williams when they consider ‘cultural practices as material production’.

Diana Mansy (2009) in “Literacies as Becoming: A Child’s Conceptualisations of Writing Systems,” has argued that “literacy is often considered as the ability to read and write” (Mansy, 2009, p. 13). Multiple Literacies Theory as the author opines involves creativity and invention in the Deleuzean sense. Creativity is manifest in an event that produces novel connections, different assemblages, and becoming. Arguing with Deleuze and Guattari, Mansy contends that Multiple Literacies is a theory constantly becoming, indeterminate and not fixed as it continuously.
Diana Mansy and David R. Cole (2009) in “Introduction to Multiple Literacy Theory: A Deleuzian Perspective,” have taken a philosophical position in analysing literacy practices that combines data with a theoretical frame. The authors opine that, such a way of analysing literacy is based on phenomenology as applied by Cope and Kalantzis (2000). It has been termed as Multiple Literacies Theory (MLT), grounded on the philosophical work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Through MLT, Mansy and David R. Cole underpin the concept of literacy from multiple perspectives. They opine that the idea of literacy has expanded with the evolution of new categories, such as media literacy, information literacy, critical literacy, affective literacy, statistical literacy, technological literacy. They argue that MLT posits literacy to be understood from a multiple perspective rather than its understanding from a conventional frame. As the authors argue, literacy has been understood from a “philosophical position that designates multiplicity as an operating principle for the practices included in literate communication” (Mansy and David R. Cole, 2009, p. 2). They also argue that Deleuzian multiplicities are both numerical and qualitative. It has been asserted by the authors that the harder one analyses the concept, idea, or notion- the further one is able to differentiate between different aspects of that ‘unity’. In the process “dualisms dissolve in transversality. Dichotomies become assemblages-dialogue is thought of as a symphony of voices, most of which are not usually heard or are suppressed due to power concerns” (Ibid., p.2). As Mansy and David R. Cole argue, Deleuzian multiplicities also more closely conform to the processes of change. As argued, Multiple Literacies Theory was conceived “to incorporate the ways in which literacy is changing in contemporary society with the need for social justice in pluralistic multicultural contexts” (Ibid., p. 4). Diana Mansy and David R. Cole opine, “Multiliteracies framework is a concern for design, and a specific focus on designing social futures that are equitable and inclusive. This central conception of design in multiliteracies may be built upon and makes up the multimodality of textual use—that includes gestural, spatial, audio, visual and linguistic meaning” (Ibid.,). Arguing with Cope and Kalantzis (2000), Mansy
and David R. Cole argue that multiliteracies are philosophically based on phenomenology.

Fredric Jameson ([1998] 2009) in “The Cultural Turn” gives an interesting account of the postmodern cultural phenomenon which is the consequence of a distinct mode of thought. It is associated with “the condition of thinking a new reality and articulating a new paradigm for it therefore seems to demand a peculiar conjecture and a certain strategic distance from that new reality, which tends to overwhelm those immersed in it this would be something like an epistemological variant of the well known ‘outsider’ principle in scientific discovery” (Jameson, 2009, p.43). Such an analysis by the authour leads the researcher in a new direction for conducting research, and look for an alternative paradigm of conducting research which has been reflected in Chapter-III of the present study from a postmodern perspective.

Harvey J. Graff (2009) in “Introduction to Historical Studies of Literacy,” gives an interesting account of the growth of literacy study. It has been stated here that new literacy studies that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s questioned the received wisdom that tied literacy directly to individual and societal development, from social mobility (+) and criminal acts (-) to revolutions in industry (+), fertility (-) and democracy (+) (positive and negative relationship). Thus, the nature and scope of literacy studies as described by the authour points to the fact that there is enough scope for further exploring the concept and its impact on the socio-cultural aspect of the society.

Goran Therborn (2008) in “From Marxism to Post-Marxism?” situates the left and Marxist social theory within the broader cultural framework of modernity. Later, the author gives a contrasting analysis to Marxist modernity from a postmodern perspective using dialectic as the principle of interpretation. Modernity, to Therborn “should be seen as a temporal orientation. Modernity is a culture claiming to be modern, in the sense of turning its back on the past—the old, the traditional the passé. Modern man/woman, society, civilization have a direction: ‘forward’, or, it was phrased in the old GDR and

Douglas Kellner and Jeff Share (2005) in “Toward Critical Media Literacy: Core concepts, debates, organizations, and policy”, take a critical stand in defining and analysing media literacy. They relate literacy practices to the acquisition of necessary skills and the critical capabilities to analyse texts and artefacts. They argue that literacy is a social construct and it is interpellated through institutional discourses and practices. Literacy is not a static condition as it is always in the process of change along with the change in social and cultural condition. Though the authors opine that new media revolution demands new literacy practices, they do not even completely reject the traditional practices of literacy in the era of book and print. As they write “Although there are new media and literacies in the current constellation of books, reading and print literacy continue to be of utmost significance. Indeed, in the current information/communication technology environment traditional print literacy takes on increasing importance in the computer mediated cyber world as people need to critically scrutinize and scroll tremendous amounts of information, putting new emphasis on developing reading and writing abilities” (Kellner and Share, 2008, p. 370). The authors also feel that critical literacy gives individuals power over their culture and thus enables people to create their own meanings and identities and to shape and transform the material and social conditions of their culture and society.

Saul Newman (2005) in his book “Power and Politics in Poststructural Thought,” drawing upon the works of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, George Lacan, Giles Deleuze, and Max Stirner, suggests new ways of thinking about politics from a poststructuralist perspective. Newman predicts a change in the mainstream politics as a result of the emergence of post-structural thoughts. As one part of this study deals with a discussion on social dynamics contextualising the current political situation, as has been done by Newman, the work proves to be of great value for the study. It guides the researcher to a
post-structural reading of political conditions and gives a direction for radical engagement with political situations. Newman opines that “poststructuralist theoretical perspectives allow an interrogation of the discursive and conceptual limits of these ideas, revealing their heterogeneities, paradoxes and contradictions, and thus showing how they might be reinterpreted” (Newman, 2005, p.01). Arguably, Newman prescribes for a multiperspectival reading of politics and political conditions based on post-structural theory, for instance deconstruction. In a broader context such practice is related with the growth of multiculturalism. Poststructuralist thoughts especially deconstruction has its own importance in the context of media literacy if we consider it as a means of political engagement and strengthening democracy. It can lead us to deconstruct the political space questioning their dominant narratives or discourses. Newman approaches the condition of power and politics associated with the dominant narratives from a postmodern perspective. He takes a deconstructionist stance in with line with Derrida in “critique of the authoritarian structures inherent in philosophy, in particular ‘logocentrism’, which refers to philosophy’s subordination, throughout its history, of writing to speech” (Ibid., p. 85), what Derrida terms as ‘metaphysics of presence’. From a theoretical perspective poststructuralist tendency as literacy practice also questions the liberalist principles and their implicit relation with ideology. It is arguably on this ground that Newman compares the functions of liberalism with a kind of ‘meta-ideology’ or ‘meta-narrative’. What Newman argues on this note is interesting when he writes: “A poststructuralist approach might be more interested in interrogating or deconstructing the discourse of liberalism itself, questioning its assumed ‘neutrality’ and universality, and unveiling the moral and rational assumptions and particular modes of subjectivity that it is based on” (Ibid., p. 2). In the Indian context such a perspective leads us to question the liberalist ideas such as ‘secularism’ as a religious or whether a political principle often a confusing states of affair. Its application can also be valid in questioning the liberal ideology of ‘free market’ as a principle of
economic management or ‘policy inclusiveness’ as the principle of social inclusion which has been highly elitist and hierarchical nature.

Martin Jay (1996) in “Dialectical Imagination”, has stated that Hegel’s philosophy was applied to social and political phenomena of Germany which was setting out on a course of rapid modernization. They were basically left Hegelians, later eclipsed by Karl Marx. Further the philosophical project was superseded by a rigorous and more ‘scientific’ and positivistic approach to social reality. Basically the work done by Jay is a historical analysis of the critical traditions starting from ancient philosophy to its viability and applications among the Frankfurt scholars. It reflects upon the existing dialogue among the philosophers over the positivistic and post-positivistic trend in thinking and analysis. The work is a critical analysis of the principle of dialectic analysed in different contexts by different philosophers of the time.

Rosalind Thomas (1992) in “Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece” opines that “we use the descriptions ‘literate’ and ‘illiterate’ today to denote a whole range of meanings, for both the ability to read and write, or the degree of refinement or culture” (Thomas, 1992, p. 1). He argues, “In western modern society illiteracy is considered as a handicap” (Ibid., p.2), as “the modern world is inconceivable without the written word” (Ibid.,). The value of literacy in modern society is more likely to be defended by contrasting it vaguely with illiteracy, but this evades the most interesting issues. Thomas gives a contrasting account of the concept of orality-literacy equation and considers ‘literacy’ as a very complex phenomenon. Writing as a literate practice is the fundamental agent of change. Thomas argues that literacy studies can be seen from two perspectives. The first one seeks the psychological and cultural implications of literacy and the second one deal with practice of literacy.

David R. Olson (1991) in “Literacy as metalinguistic activity” opines that writing as a literate practice has been historically responsible for the new forms of discourse. As argued by many others, Olson also argues that literacy is partly responsible for new forms of “social organisation” (Olson, 1991, p.
251) and asserts that literacy is a “route to modernity” (Ibid.), which has been exported to developing countries that aspired to modernity. The celebration for the growth of literacy, Olson opines, was to mark “nonliteracy or orality inferior” (Ibid.). Though literacy refers to an individual’s ability to read and write, literacy hypothesis is considerably general which consists of general competence to participate in a literate tradition. As Olson says, “literacy like orality is a means to a variety of ends, not an end in itself” (Ibid., p. 252). Literacy has varied contexts both for its culture and practice. The author contends that four conditions are necessary for the development of literacy. They are: (i) device for fixing or articulating texts, such as a script or oral means; (ii) institutions for using texts, the government, the academy, the church, the court; (iii) institutions for inducting learners into those institutions such as family, church, and in literate societies the school; and (iv) evolution of a meta-language for talking and thinking about the structures and meanings of those accumulated texts and the intentions of their authors and their interpretations in particular contexts (Ibid., p. 253-54). This, however, makes it clear that literacy and institutions are mutually dependent on each other for their growth and development. While new literacy practices led to the establishment of new institutions, new institutions also brought changes in the condition and practice of literacy. Olson conceptualises literacy from a broader perspective in a sense the ability to participate in literate tradition. Further, Olson has provided four hypotheses for linking literacy and thought. (i) The modality hypothesis is based on McLuhan’s view (1962) that “literacy called into play a highly spatialising sensory modality, the eye, which came to substitute for the ear” (Ibid., p. 254). Olson argues that the mode of accessing text has a significant bearing on the cognitive processes, but he also contrasts to McLuhan as he contends that it is not the modality itself but the various other discourses developed around speech or writing that have a significant impact on the human thought.

Eric A. Havelock (1991) in “The Oral Literate Equation” opines that literacy is both a ‘social condition and state of mind with its own level of
language and cognition expressible in writing’ (Havelock, 1991, p.11). It suffices to the fact that literacy is both material and ideal condition or it is both objective and subjective in character. The author also argues that both orality and literacy are sharpened and focussed on each other, substantiating to the fact that there a dialogue takes place between oral tradition and literate culture, establishing the dialectical relationship between orality and literacy. Havelock also posits that their relationship (the relationship between orality and literacy) is one of ‘mutual’, ‘creative tension’ having both a historical and a contemporary dimension. The historical dimension, as the author contends, emphasises on the fact that ‘literate societies have emerged out of oral ones’; the contemporary dimension of literacy seeks a ‘deeper understanding’ of the term literacy. Drawing upon the works of Inis (1962) The Bias of Communication, McLuhan’s (1962) The Gutenburg Galaxy, Levi Strauss’s (1962) The Savage Mind, Goody’s (1963) The consequences of literacy, Parry’s (1971) The selected papers of Milman Parry and many others, Havelock provides an interesting account of the contrasts and resemblances between oral-literate traditions.

C. F. Feldman (1991) in “Oral Meta Language” takes a contrasting position to the views of Olson, McLuhan, Goody, Watt, Havelock and Ong on the ground of writing’s effect on mind and the reciprocal relationship between writing and consciousness. Feldman argues that “writing may not be strictly necessary for consciousness” (Feldman, 1991, p. 47) rather, as David R. Olson argues it “provides the means for splitting [text from interpretation by] fixing part of its meaning as text and permitting interpretations to be seen for the first time as interpretations” (Olson, 1986, p. 114). On this ground Feldman argues in line with Olson’s views on the fundamental impact of literacy on the social and cognitive change. Arguing with Ludwig Wittgenstein (1953), Feldman claims that language and literacy are “forms of life” which has a definite form of existence such as reporting an event, forming and testing hypothesis, making up a story, and guessing riddles as “language games” in order “to bring into
prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or a form of life” (Wittgenstein, 1953, p.11).

Peter J. Denny (1991) in an article, “Rational thought in oral culture and literate decontextualisation”, argues that though there is a large impact of literacy on human thought, it is often misconstrued and exaggerated. To Denny, the argument over the fact that thoughts of literate societies or western thoughts are more complex and abstract than the thoughts of the agricultural and hunter gatherer societies, however, seems incorrect, as the only characteristic that separates the western thoughts from the thoughts of traditional societies is of decontextualisation. Literacy from a western perspective made the cross-cultural cognition possible by decontextualising thoughts from its place of origin or social-cultural settings. It is the literate culture that made decontextualisation and differentiation possible paving the way for a cross-cultural or multicultural society to develop on the world scene with the coming of industrial civilisation. However, decontextualisation has a broader perspective in its application when applied to the construction of human identity and consciousness, which in today’s context is more fragmented and fractured most notably as a result of new literacy practices. It is the very process of decontextualisation; the outcome of literacy practices, we argue, that led to the birth of new socio, cultural, political and ethnic categories. Denny also argues that the process of thinking has gradually undergone a change in societies predominated by hunting to agriculture then to industrial, as the degree of contextualisation in human thinking has diminished giving rise to the presence of differences/decontextualisations in human thoughts and actions. Denny contends that it is literacy and decontextualisation that have brought changes in the ‘everyday experience of the subjects’ (Denny, 1991, p. 69). It is literacy practice that has brought changes in the subject positions of individuals affecting the knowledge structure and its flow which in today’s context more democratic and participatory.
Harvey J. Graff (1991) in “The Legacies of Literacies: Continuities and Contradictions in Western Culture and Society” opines that the subject of literacy is immense and complex. He connects literacy practices to social and cultural hegemony. He considers literacy “as a means of creating and maintaining hegemony at and among various social hierarchy makes sense not only interpretively and empirically, but also in escaping dichotomies” (Graff, 1991, p.11) that makes literacy practice ideological. Graff argues that the varied roles of literacy and its meaning require a sophisticated approach of study. Most arguably, drawing upon Gramsci’s notion of hegemony, Graff equates literacy discourse with social control, modernization and enlightenment as alternative modes of social and cultural hegemony.

Brian V. Street (1984) in his book “Literacy in Theory and Practice” has made a contextual study of literacy practices. The author argues that literacy varies from one social context to another social context. Literacy, as opined by Street is a social practice related with the conceptions of reading and writing. Such practices are always ideological as the author opines that literacy “in a given society depends upon the context; that they are already embedded in an ideology and cannot be isolated and treated as ‘neutral’ or merely ‘technical’” (Street, 1984, p.1). The ideological dimension of literacy is often related to literacy as a functional category within a social, economic, political, and cultural context.

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