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IRLS 550

### Language & Literacy Reflection

It's peculiar when we are left trying to define the idea of language and literacy, I believe that most of the time, we break it down to who can read and write in the English language or as the Navajos like to say Bilaganna Bizaad or 'the white word'. We come to the conclusion that if you cannot do either, you're left out in the dark or will not be able to prosper. In the general media, those are ideas are constantly stamped into the minds of the general population.

Some may argue that when you turn on your television, you can easily hit the 'SAP' button and off you go! From there you can enjoy how diverse American televisions are and the programming streaming into our minds. Yet the differences between individuals jump the widest of canyons because of how each person is exposed, their ability to interpret and how they use it to their own understanding.

As Gee stated, "It is sometimes helpful to say that individuals do not speak & act, but that historically & socially defined discourses speak to each through individuals." When we look at bilingual programs and when we look at the previous generations who are trying to pass on different languages and the literacies behind them, we are baffled. Baffled because of the varied structures of the words and how a few words can mean so much. Yet we are able to pick it up and run with the torch as runners to relay those ideas on.

In Ashburn's article certainly hits a high note for me, because of the need to preserve all Native American cultures, as Asburn stated, "documenting Indian Languages is as much about preserving cultures as it is about saving words." In my own case, when I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, I took

a Navajo Studies class where in one of the projects we had to write out our clans and be able to rehearse the clans in Navajo. The easy part was being able to write but the difficulty was saying the words and getting to know the stories of why each came to be.

My only source was my dad who is a fluent speaker was very happy to see my try to learn the words in Navajo and learn the story. For the whole week he had me rehearse, over and over again. Until the point I did not want to say my clans anymore, but I still did. Knowing your clans he said, is a way to connect with people, connect with the holy ones and it will take you far in life. He stated that the importance lies in the language to understand the culture.

The articles altogether have helped in change my notion on language and literacy only because of how we are able to interpret, guide ourselves through misunderstandings, and be conscious of the languages that help us appreciate other ideas, languages and cultures.