Lost in Translation: Examining Mark Prensky's Metaphor

Kara, Kiran, Rachelle
2001 Mark Prensky says that...

- two generations have emerged: digital natives and digital immigrants
- information processing has evolved
- experience can change your brain
- natives cannot/will not go back, so we must adapt

2009 Prensky says that...

- Because of digital natives' thinking style and mental organization is different, it is important for digital immigrants to adapt to natives' way of learning.
- internet use enhances the capacity for young people to possess greater working memory and be more adept at perceptual learning
“There aren’t any icons to click. It’s a chalk board.”
2001 Prensky: Natives are young and prefer...

- fast information
- multitasking
- graphics before text
- random access
- networks
- instant gratification
- frequent rewards
- games

2009 Prensky:

- active not passive role
- personalization of activities and services
- collaboration generation
2001 Prensky: Immigrants are old and prefer...

- the Internet as a secondary source
- hard-copy reading and editing
- reading the manual beforehand
- personal/live interaction
- linear learning
The critics say... stop generalizing!

- Lumping everyone into two groups, mostly by age, ignores variants in human habits and personality.
- Generation M (Millennial) is complex! Tech use and interest vary!
- Immigrants aren't cranky dinosaurs! Many gamers are 30+ and many immigrants balance their tech use.
"Digital Immigrants think learning can’t (or shouldn’t) be fun. Why should they – they didn’t spend their formative years learning with Sesame Street." - Mark Prensky

"H" is for "hogwash!"
Why natives think differently:
- neurobiology, social psychology, and studies of learning via games

**Neuroplasticity:** Prensky claims human brain structures change according to the way people think and it goes on on throughout life.

**Social Psychology**...thinking patterns change depending on one’s experiences, environment, and culture

2009 Prensky:
Digital enhancement available for just about everything including cognition. Digital tech. enhance memory, digital data-gathering and decision-making enhance judgement, helping us make complex analyses, increase power to ask “what if” questions.
The critics say... more data, please.

- Dr. Berry is actually Dr. Perry, whose studies of brain change were taken out of context by Prensky to fit his argument
- Perry's work was with trauma, not digital experience
- Perry, in fact, warns us of forgetting the human touch: “We have created an environment where kids are growing up wanting more shiny things and starving for the fundamental core human relational aspects of touch, smile, and a moment spent sitting with someone.”
True profiles or stereotypes?
Are all natives the same?

- Tech use varies by gender, household education, and geography
- In reality many children's engagement with technology is more passive, solitary, sporadic
- Learning is still dependent on engagement, tech or no tech
- Native doesn't mean Master: many kids's knowledge of programs is utilitarian
There is some truth to the metaphor...

"The grandchildren said they Googled us. I didn't feel anything, did you?"
The critics say...

- YES, the world has changed, but stressing a digital gap only further promotes the stereotype.

<<OMG LOL!!!!!!

[Image of a person surrounded by vintage computer equipment and boxes, possibly related to the text about digital gap stereotypes.]
2001 Prensky: Who should change?

- native brains are different and cannot go back
- immigrants can alter & integrate teaching
- video games are best for reaching kids

2009 Prensky:

- Digital wisdom: knowing how to use tech meaningfully
- Trendy tech isn't enough to motivate students
- Parents, teachers, librarians can support by helping navigate past distractions/obstructions online
- They can also initiate and initially govern collaborative structures like Web 2.0 tools.
The critics say... is tech *always* better?

- Prensky does little to evaluate tech learning
- His interest in games as the best vehicle makes sense: he's a gaming consultant

Negative effects of technology:
- at risk - physically, emotionally, sexually
- taking search-engine results as gospel
- cut-and-paste plagiarism
- using Internet for self-expression and self-promotion while ignoring experts and professional journalists
- culture of disrespect - ratemyprofessors.com and posting unauthorized YouTube clips of teachers
- However many articles use informal observations and anecdotes as evidence, rather than scientific studies. And many use this topic to open a moral or ethical discussion about society.
The critics say... are games best?

- Yes, games are fantastic vehicles for learning!
- But Prensky omits studies of the effects of video games on children, touting them as the most effective vehicle for learning.
- He fails to offer learning experiences that use technology but are not dependent on it.
And what we have lost?

The ability for natives to reflect and generalize from experiences.

Other Authors & 2009 Prensky:

● Many resources available
● "wisdom seekers" will look to the past or experiences to reflect on when enhancing to advance in tech. ex: video game players reflect on past games before making new ones.
● Future technology will make people judge and make quick decisions keeping the past experiences in mind
● More sharing and testing with new and old tech.
My Thoughts- Prensky

- Everyone needs digital wisdom
- Humans don't know everything -- technology enhances our minds and supplements our missing knowledge
- We must still evaluate information and consult with others
- Digital tech helps humans become wiser through communication and understand "unspoken motives" of others
- We gain wisdom through alternative perspectives, digital tools, and the mind.
In the end, how valid is the metaphor?

- Yes, the world is changing and everyone should adapt
- But humans are individuals who benefit from all types of learning
- Adopt new tools but keep tried and true
- Beware of a "digital pied piper" with a shiny tech answer to our educational tasks at hand

"The field of educational technology has suffered a surfeit of fools and poseurs claiming to be futurists and visionaries. They are often quick to criticize those who fail to heed their piping or buy their quicksilver. For several decades now they have heralded the arrival of various toys and technologies as if they signal the advent of a Brave New World."

From the article, "Digital Nativism, Digital Delusions, and Digital Deprivation," by Jamie McKenzie [http://fno.org/nov07/nativism.html](http://fno.org/nov07/nativism.html)
Welcome to the Future :) 

*Embrace technology as a great tool, but proceed with caution.* As with anything else, use *moderation, balance, and good judgment* when choosing instructional practices.

Adopt new tools, employ your digital wisdom, and differentiate your teaching. Help your students live well in their world. *Be a lifelong learner and enjoy.*
Resources
