

THE REPRESENTATION OF LITERACY IN KOREAN DRAMA *TWENTY-FIVE TWENTY-ONE* (2022)

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ABSTRACT

Literacy is no longer understood merely as the ability to read and write, but rather as a social practice embedded in social, cultural, and historical contexts. This perspective is reflected in the Korean drama *Twenty-Five Twenty-One* (2022), which portrays various literacy practices as part of everyday life and character development. This study aims to analyze the representation of literacy in the drama through the concepts of literacy as power, literacy as danger, and literacy as individualism, as well as to examine how these literacy practices contribute to the character development of Na Hee-do. This study employs a qualitative approach using textual analysis. The data source for this study is the television drama *Twenty-Five Twenty-One*, consisting of sixteen episodes, while the research data consists of scenes, dialogues, monologues, written texts, visual symbols, and digital communication, all of which were purposively selected in accordance with the research focus. The analysis was conducted using the New Literacy Studies framework by Barton and Hamilton (1998) as well as the concept of literacy representation by Williams and Zenger (2007). The results indicate that literacy as power is represented through written texts that regulate behavior and shape social relationships; literacy as danger arises from the interpretation of texts and symbols not supported by an adequate social context; and literacy as individualism is reflected in the practice of keeping a diary as a means of self-reflection, emotional expression, and identity formation. Furthermore, literacy practices contribute to Na Hee-do's character development, both personally and professionally, through processes of self-reflection, emotional regulation, increased discipline, resilience, and identity formation. Thus, this study concludes that literacy in *Twenty-Five Twenty-One* functions not only as the ability to read and write but also as a social practice that enables individuals to construct meaning, negotiate relationships, and shape their identities in everyday life.

Keywords: New Literacy Studies, literacy as power, literacy as danger, literacy as individualism, character development, *Twenty-Five Twenty-One*.

INTRODUCTION

Literacy has traditionally been understood as the individual ability to read and write. However, contemporary literacy studies argue that literacy extends beyond technical competence and should be understood as a social practice embedded within particular social, cultural, and historical contexts. From this perspective, reading and writing are not merely cognitive skills but meaningful activities through which individuals construct identities, negotiate relationships, interpret experiences, and participate in society. This view is central to the New Literacy Studies (NLS) framework proposed by Barton & Hamilton (1998), who argue that literacy practices are socially

situated and cannot be separated from the contexts in which they occur. Similarly, Street's (1984) ideological model challenges the autonomous view of literacy by emphasizing that literacy is always shaped by ideology, culture, and power relations.

The social dimension of literacy has increasingly been represented in popular culture, where literacy functions not only as a means of communication but also as a narrative device that shapes characters and their experiences. Williams & Zenger (2007) explain that popular culture frequently represents literacy through recurring concepts such as literacy as power, literacy as danger, and literacy as individualism. These representations demonstrate that literacy can empower individuals to make decisions and negotiate social relationships, create misunderstanding through the misinterpretation of texts and symbols, and provide a space for self-expression, reflection, and identity construction. Consequently, literacy in popular culture should be understood as a socially situated practice rather than merely an individual skill.

Korean dramas are among the various forms of popular culture that highlight reading as a social practice. In addition to being a form of entertainment, Korean dramas are popular cultural products with widespread influence. Through their storylines, these dramas can depict social realities, emotional experiences, and the process of individual identity formation. Literacy practices are often portrayed in this context as a component of character development and as a way for characters to interpret their life experiences.

One Korean drama that significantly portrays literacy practices is *Twenty-Five Twenty-One* by Kwon Do-eun, released in 2022. Following her debut in *Search: WWW* in 2019, Kwon Do-eun once again garnered widespread attention through this drama. *Twenty-Five Twenty-One* successfully captured the attention of both local and global audiences by presenting an emotional coming-of-age story that closely mirrors the social realities of the younger generation. The drama is set in 1998, when South Korea was experiencing an economic crisis triggered by the intervention of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The crisis caused significant economic instability, marked by rising unemployment, declining household incomes, and the bankruptcy of several major companies due to high foreign debt. The impact of the crisis was not limited to the economic sector but also affected various social institutions, including education and the lives of the younger generation.

Social conditions are depicted through the experiences of the main character, Na Hee-do, a high school student and fencer who struggles to realize her dream of becoming a national athlete amid a crisis. The story begins when Na Hee-do's daughter, Kim Min-chae, discovers her diary in 2021, which then serves as the starting point for a series of flashbacks to Na Hee-do's life in 1998. In her daily life, Na Hee-do made a habit of writing in her diary as a way to express her feelings, reflect on her life experiences, and make sense of the various events she encountered—whether related to school, friendships, fencing competitions, or personal relationships. In addition to writing, reading comics was also an important part of her daily life. These habits show that the acts of reading

and writing in this drama serve not only as technical skills but also as ways for individuals to make sense of their life experiences.

Previous studies have demonstrated that literacy functions as a social practice across various contexts. Andaresta (2023), in an article entitled *Maverick's Literacy Practice and Self-Esteem in The Hate U Gave Me (2018)*, found that family literacy practices contribute to self-esteem, identity formation, and emotional security. Putri (2025) showed that literacy functions as a transformative force that enables individuals to develop critical awareness and resist oppression in an article entitled *Literacy as Social Practice in Lakshmi's Journey from Exploitation to Independence in Sold by Patricia McCormick*. Seftyn Marshanda (2023) emphasized literacy as a means of self-development and social mobility. These studies confirm that literacy performs diverse social functions beyond reading and writing. Nevertheless, research integrating Barton and Hamilton's New Literacy Studies framework with Williams and Zenger's representations of literacy remains limited, particularly in the context of Korean drama. Existing studies on *Twenty-Five Twenty-One* primarily examine themes such as romance, emotional engagement, or character growth, leaving the representation of literacy and its contribution to character development largely unexplored.

Addressing this gap, the present study integrates the New Literacy Studies framework proposed by Barton & Hamilton (1998) with Williams & Zenger (2007) concepts of literacy representation to examine literacy practices in *Twenty-Five Twenty-One*. By combining these complementary perspectives, this study analyzes how literacy is represented as power, danger, and individualism, while simultaneously examining how these literacy practices contribute to Na Hee-do's personal and professional character development. This integrated approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of literacy as both a social practice and a narrative mechanism within contemporary visual media.

Accordingly, this study aims to (1) analyze how literacy is represented in the Korean drama *Twenty-Five Twenty-One* through the concepts of literacy as power, literacy as danger, and literacy as individualism, and (2) examine how literacy practices contribute to Na Hee-do's personal and professional character development. Theoretically, this study extends the application of New Literacy Studies to Korean popular culture by integrating it with Williams and Zenger's framework of literacy representation. In practical terms, the findings are expected to contribute to broader discussions of literacy in popular culture by demonstrating that literacy practices function not only as acts of reading and writing but also as socially situated processes through which individuals construct identity, negotiate relationships, and make meaning from lived experience.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using textual analysis to examine the representation of literacy in the Korean drama *Twenty-Five Twenty-One* (2022) and its

contribution to Na Hee-do's character development. The primary data source was the sixteen-episode drama written by Kwon Do-eun. However, the analysis focused only on purposively selected scenes, dialogues, monologues, written texts, visual symbols, and digital communication that represented literacy practices relevant to the research objectives. The verbal data were obtained from the official English subtitles provided by Netflix to ensure consistency in textual interpretation.

The data were collected by repeatedly watching the drama, identifying literacy-related scenes, and selecting data based on the concepts of literacy as power, literacy as danger, and literacy as individualism proposed by Williams & Zenger (2007). The collected data were then analyzed through an interpretative qualitative process using Barton & Hamilton (1998) New Literacy Studies (NLS) framework, which views literacy as a social practice. The analysis involved identifying and categorizing the selected data according to the three literacy concepts, and interpreting how these literacy practices function within the drama's social and cultural contexts and contribute to Na Hee-do's personal and professional character development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the study to answer the two research questions concerning the representation of literacy in the Korean drama *Twenty-Five Twenty-One* and its contribution to Na Hee-do's character development. The analysis is based on selected dialogues, monologues, visual texts, symbols, and narrative scenes, which are interpreted through the perspective of New Literacy Studies (NLS) proposed by Barton & Hamilton (1998). Within this framework, the concepts of literacy as power, literacy as danger, and literacy as individualism proposed by Williams & Zenger (2007) serve as the analytical categories for examining how literacy practices function within the drama. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the representation of literacy, while the second examines how literacy practices contribute to Na Hee-do's personal and professional character development.

Literacy in Korean Drama *Twenty-Five Twenty-One*

To answer the first research question, this section examines how literacy is represented through the characters, events, and interactions in *Twenty-Five Twenty-One*. Drawing on the perspective of New Literacy Studies Barton & Hamilton, (1998), literacy is understood as a social practice embedded in particular social and cultural contexts rather than merely an individual technical skill. The analysis identifies three recurring representations of literacy in the drama—literacy as power, literacy as danger, and literacy as individualism—based on the analytical concepts proposed by Williams & Zenger (2007). Each representation is discussed through selected scenes to demonstrate how literacy functions within the narrative and how it shapes the characters' relationships, identities, and everyday experiences.

1) Literacy as Power

Williams & Zenger describe literacy as power as the capacity of literacy practices to provide individuals with access to information, authority, and opportunities to influence social situations. From the perspective of Barton & Hamilton, this power

emerges because literacy is embedded within social practices rather than functioning solely as an individual technical skill. Therefore, literacy becomes meaningful when written texts are interpreted and used within particular social and institutional contexts. The following findings illustrate how literacy operates as power in *Twenty-Five Twenty-One*.

**“DOOR LOCK QUESTION
SOLVE THE QUIZ TO GET THE CODE”**

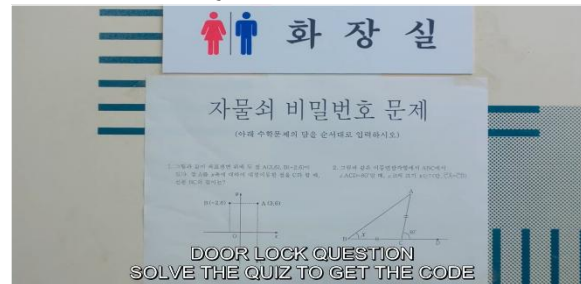


Figure 1. The text was posted on the door of the mathematics academy's restroom. (*Episode 2, timecodes 00:31:00-00:31:09*)

In this context, literacy operates as a social practice rather than merely the ability to read words. Na Hee-do must understand the purpose of the written instruction and respond appropriately to gain access to the restroom. As Barton & Hamilton (1998) argue, literacy practices are shaped by particular social purposes and institutional contexts. In this scene, the written notice regulates access to a facility, demonstrating that literacy is embedded in everyday social activities rather than functioning solely as an individual cognitive skill.

From Williams & Zenger (2007) perspective, this scene represents literacy as power because the written text controls behavior and determines access to resources. The authority does not lie in the mathematical formula itself but in the institution that establishes literacy as the condition for entering the restroom. Consequently, literacy functions as a mechanism through which institutional rules are communicated and enforced, illustrating that the power of literacy extends beyond reading ability to include participation in socially organized practices.

A further analysis of literacy as power can be seen in the scene below:

“TAE YANG HIGH SCHOOL BROADCASTING CLUB TYBS 20TH CLASS”



Figure 2. Text on Baek Yi-jin's T-shirt. (*Episode 3, timecode 00:05:27*)

By reading and understanding the text, Ji Seung-wan learned that Baek Yi-jin was a senior and a former student of her school's broadcasting club. The information he gained from the text then changed the way Ji Seung-wan treated Baek Yi-jin. Ji Seung-wan showed respect by introducing herself as a member of the 24th class of TYBS.

Ji Seung-wan: *Hello, senior! I'm Ji Seung-wan, TYBS producer, 24th class
(Episode 3, timecodes 00:05:46-00:05:51)*

Viewed through Barton & Hamilton (1998) framework, the written text represents a literacy practice situated within an institutional community. The meaning of the words depends not only on their linguistic content but also on the shared social knowledge of TYBS members. Without understanding this institutional context, the text would simply identify a school club. However, because Ji Seung-wan recognizes its social significance, the text reorganizes the interpersonal relationship between the characters.

This finding reflects Williams & Zenger (2007) concept of literacy as power because literacy enables individuals to recognize authority and negotiate social relationships. Baek Yi-jin's position changes not through physical force or verbal persuasion but through the interpretation of written language that signals organizational status. Therefore, literacy becomes a symbolic resource that constructs hierarchy and influences social interaction.

These findings are consistent with Novianti (2023) study, which argues that literacy functions as a form of power by influencing an individual's social position and identity through literacy practices. In *The Queen's Gambit*, literacy empowers Beth Harmon by enabling her to acquire knowledge, gain recognition, and challenge traditional gender roles. Similarly, the present study demonstrates that literacy in *Twenty-Five Twenty-One* extends beyond technical reading and writing skills to influence authority and interpersonal relationships. However, unlike Novianti's study, which focuses on literacy practices in a literary text, the present study shows that literacy as power is represented in an audiovisual narrative through written notices, institutional symbols, and everyday interactions. These findings further support Barton & Hamilton (1998) view that literacy is a social practice embedded within specific social and cultural contexts, while reinforcing Williams & Zenger Hamilton's (2007) concept of literacy as power.

2) Literacy as Danger

Williams & Zenger (2007) describe literacy as danger as situations in which literacy practices lead to misunderstanding or negative consequences because texts, symbols, or information are interpreted without sufficient contextual understanding. Rather than resulting from an inability to read, the danger emerges from incomplete interpretation of literacy practices within particular social contexts. The following scenes illustrate how this concept is represented in *Twenty-Five Twenty-One*.

One representation of literacy as danger is shown when Na Hee-do mistakenly identifies Baek Yi-jin as *Injeolmi*. Using the username *Ryder37*, Na Hee-do develops an anonymous online friendship with another user, *Injeolmi*, through digital communication. Their relationship is built through written messages, usernames, and agreed symbols, demonstrating literacy practices that enable individuals to communicate

and construct identities in online spaces. Eventually, they agree to meet in person, each carrying a yellow tulip as a recognition symbol. However, before Na Hee-do arrives, Ko Yu-rim, the real *Injeolmi*, unexpectedly hands her yellow tulip to Baek Yi-jin to conceal her identity before leaving the meeting place. As a result, when Na Hee-do sees Baek Yi-jin holding the agreed symbol, she immediately assumes that he is *Injeolmi*. The misunderstanding is reflected in the following dialogue:

Na Hee-do: *How are you Injeolmi?*
Baek Yi-jin: *Is Injeolmi a username?*
Na Hee-do: *(Silently)*
Baek Yi-jin: *I guess so, but I'm not Injeolmi*
Na Hee-do: *Are you disappointed that I'm Ryder37?*
Baek Yi-jin: *No, that's not. I'm not Injeolmi*
(Episode 9, timecodes 00:01:10)

This scene demonstrates that Na Hee-do correctly interprets the available literacy resources, including the username, previous online conversations, and the yellow tulip as an agreed symbol. However, her interpretation remains incomplete because she lacks the social context explaining why Baek Yi-jin is holding the flower. Consequently, the misunderstanding does not result from an inability to read or understand information but from constructing meaning based on limited contextual knowledge.

Barton & Hamilton's perspective, this scene illustrates that literacy practices cannot be separated from the social contexts in which they occur. The yellow tulip functions as a socially constructed symbol whose meaning depends entirely on the shared agreement between *Ryder37* and *Injeolmi*. Once the surrounding context changes, the same symbol produces a different interpretation. This finding also reflects Williams & Zenger concept of literacy as danger, which argues that literacy may generate misunderstanding when texts and symbols are interpreted without sufficient contextual understanding. Thus, the danger lies not in literacy itself but in the incomplete interpretation of literacy practices.

Another representation of literacy as danger appears in Episode 3 through the conflict between Na Hee-do and her mother, Shin Jae-kyung, over the comic book *Full House*. Unlike the previous scene, where danger emerges from incomplete interpretation, this scene demonstrates how different social values attached to the same text may generate interpersonal conflict. During an argument, Shin Jae-kyung tears apart Na Hee-do's comic book while criticizing her reading habits.

Shin Jae-kyung: *And you read stupid comic books. How dare you whine about fencing and transferring.*
(Episode 3, 00:56:17)

After tearing it, Shin Jae-kyung throws the comic away. Na Hee-do responds emotionally.



Figure 3. The comic is torn

Na Hee-do: *Who are you to rip up Full House? Do you think you're any better than that comic book? You never once came to watch me compete. Whenever I came home alone upset after losing a match, you weren't the one who comforted me. It was that comic book. So, what right do you have to rip that up? What gives you the right?*
(Episode 3, timecode 00:56:17)

In response, Na Hee-do expresses the emotional significance of the comic book by explaining that *Full House* had always comforted her whenever she returned home after losing a fencing competition. While Shin Jae-kyung considers comic books to be meaningless distractions that interfere with academic and athletic responsibilities, Na Hee-do regards the same text as a source of emotional support and personal encouragement. These contrasting interpretations transform the comic book from a reading material into the center of an emotional conflict between mother and daughter.

This finding demonstrates that the danger of literacy does not originate from the comic book itself but from the different social meanings attached to it. Williams & Zenger argue that literacy becomes dangerous when texts are assigned meanings that generate conflict or negative consequences within particular social contexts. In this scene, Shin Jae-kyung's belief that comic books are *stupid* reflects a hierarchical understanding of literacy in which certain reading materials are considered valuable while others are dismissed as unproductive. Conversely, Hee-do assigns emotional value to the comic because it represents companionship and psychological support during difficult moments. As Barton & Hamilton explain, literacy practices are socially and culturally situated; therefore, the meaning of a text depends on the experiences, beliefs, and relationships of those who engage with it rather than on the text alone.

These findings are consistent with previous studies that view literacy as a socially situated practice rather than merely a technical ability to read and write. Similar to Williams and Zenger's perspective, previous research suggests that misunderstanding and conflict emerge not because individuals lack literacy skills but because literacy practices are interpreted differently across social contexts. However, while many previous studies primarily examine literacy through literary texts, the present study demonstrates that audiovisual narratives also represent literacy as a danger through digital communication, symbolic objects, and everyday interpersonal interactions. This finding further supports Barton and Hamilton's

(1998) argument that literacy practices are inseparable from the social contexts in which they are performed.

3) Literacy as Individualism

According to Williams & Zenger (2007), literacy as individualism is a perspective that views writing as a personal activity, originating from an individual's thoughts and feelings, and serving as a means to express one's identity and experiences. In this representation, writing is not understood as a social practice aimed at communicating with others, but rather as an internal reflection process that helps a person understand themselves. Literacy is positioned as an activity born of an individual's inner world and as a means of expressing subjective experiences.

Among the various literacy practices represented in the drama, diary writing appears most consistently throughout Na Hee-do's life. From the perspective of New Literacy Studies, this activity represents a literacy practice because it is embedded in her everyday experiences and functions within particular emotional and social contexts. Rather than serving only as a written record, the diary becomes a meaningful social practice through which Na Hee-do interprets her experiences and negotiates her identity. This literacy practice is further understood through Williams & Zenger's concept of literacy as individualism, which views writing as a medium for self-expression and personal reflection. The concept of literacy as individualism is seen in the scene when Na Hee-do writes in her diary,

It feels like I've found all the missing pieces in my world. I feel like I can befriend anything unfamiliar and overcome difficulties that will come my way. I feel stronger. Suddenly, I'm not afraid of anything. I think I can do anything if I'm with Yi-jin.
(Episode 10, timecode 00:05:18)

Rather than communicating with others, the diary serves as an internal dialogue through which Na Hee-do interprets her own experiences. This illustrates Williams and Zenger's argument that literacy as individualism positions writing primarily as a means of self-construction rather than interpersonal communication. The diary becomes a personal space for Hee-do to express her feelings, hopes, and interpretations of the relationship she's building with Baek Yi-jin.

Furthermore, the concept of literacy as individualism is seen when Na Hee-do writes in her diary,

I feel humiliated. How could he dodge like that?... I can't stand Yi-jin. I hate him, I loathe him! I like him! Damn it. I like him!
(Episode 13, timecode 00:30:50 - 00:31:15)

Through her writing, Na Hee-do reflects on the emotional conflict she experiences after interacting with Yi-jin. The diary becomes a personal space that allows her to express her shame, frustration, and confusion, ultimately leading to a realization of her own feelings.

Na Hee-do's Character Development

This section addresses the second research question by examining how literacy practices contribute to Na Hee-do's character development throughout *Twenty-Five Twenty-One*. Building upon the previous analysis, the study demonstrates that literacy functions not only as a social practice but also as a means through which Na Hee-do reflects on her experiences, understands her emotions, and gradually constructs her identity. Rather than serving merely as acts of reading and writing, these literacy practices become integral to her personal growth and influence the way she responds to challenges, relationships, and professional aspirations.

According to Zarawaki et al. (2022), character development refers to significant changes in a character's personality, attitudes, or outlook that occur throughout a story's progression. In *Twenty-Five Twenty-One*, these changes are closely connected to Na Hee-do's literacy practices, particularly her diary writing, which provides a space for reflection, emotional expression, and self-evaluation. Through documenting her experiences, Na Hee-do can make sense of important events in her life, evaluate her personal growth, and develop a deeper understanding of herself.

Therefore, this section examines Na Hee-do's character development from two perspectives. The first discusses personal character development, focusing on how literacy practices help her process emotions, navigate interpersonal relationships, and construct her identity. The second examines professional character development, illustrating how literacy supports her growth as a fencer through self-reflection, learning from experience, and developing resilience in pursuing her athletic goals.

1) Personal

The first aspect of Na Hee-do's character development is reflected in her personal growth through diary writing. Throughout *Twenty-Five Twenty-One*, the diary functions not merely as a record of daily events but as a literacy practice that enables Hee-do to reflect on her experiences, express her emotions, and construct a deeper understanding of herself and those around her. From the perspective of New Literacy Studies Barton & Hamilton (1998), this literacy practice is socially situated because it allows Hee-do to interpret her experiences and negotiate her relationships within particular social contexts. Consequently, diary writing becomes an important medium through which her personal development is shaped.

At the beginning of the drama, Na Hee-do is portrayed as an impulsive teenager who often struggles to communicate her emotions directly. Instead of expressing her disappointment, frustration, and hopes to others, she records them in her diary. Through this literacy practice, Na Hee-do can organize her thoughts, process difficult experiences, and become more aware of her emotional responses. This finding also reflects the concept of literacy as individualism discussed in the previous section, in which writing serves as a means of self-expression and identity construction rather than merely documenting events.

As the narrative progresses, the diary also becomes a space for Hee-do to reflect on her relationships with the people around her. By revisiting her experiences with her mother, Ko Yu-rim, and Baek Yi-jin, she gradually recognizes that every individual has different perspectives, emotions, and personal struggles. This process of reflection

enables her to evaluate not only her own actions but also the motivations underlying the behavior of others. Consequently, literacy functions as a means through which Hee-do develops empathy, emotional maturity, and greater self-awareness.

These findings indicate that diary writing contributes significantly to Na Hee-do's personal character development. Rather than functioning solely as a private record, the diary becomes a reflective space in which she continuously interprets her experiences, reassesses her relationships, and constructs a more mature understanding of herself and the people around her. This finding supports Zarawaki et al. (2022), who argue that character development is reflected through changes in a character's personality, attitudes, and outlook throughout the narrative. In *Twenty-Five Twenty-One*, these changes are facilitated by literacy practices that encourage reflection and emotional growth, demonstrating that literacy contributes not only to communication but also to personal transformation.

2) Professional

In addition to shaping her personal growth, literacy practices also play a role in Na Hee-do's professional development as a fencer. In this regard, her diary serves not only as a place to record personal experiences but also as a tool for self-evaluation, helping Na Hee-do understand her training process, address her weaknesses, and maintain her motivation in achieving her professional goals. Through her notes on training and competitions, Na Hee-do documents her efforts and reflects on her progress as an athlete. This is evident in a scene featuring a monologue by Kim Min-chae, Na Hee-do's daughter, who discovers Na Hee-do's diary and realizes that most of its contents consist of notes on training and Na Hee-do's self-reflections as a fencer.

At the bottom of every single page of her diary were records of her practice that day and her self-reflection. Not a single day was missed. What shocked me wasn't Mom's love story but her efforts. The efforts that only she knew about. I saw how hard she worked rather than glamor for the first time.
(Episode 05, timecodes 00:07:17–00:07:48)

This statement provides evidence that the diary serves as a record of Na Hee-do's professional journey, documenting her process, efforts, and self-evaluation, rather than merely a chronicle of events in her life.

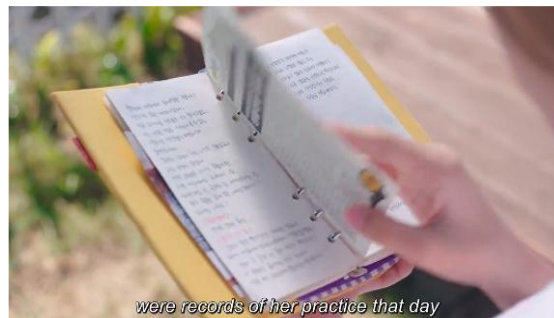


Figure 4. Na Hee-do's fencing practice evaluation. (Episode 05, timecode 00:07:30)

Through these literacy practices, Na Hee-do was able to view her development as an athlete in a more systematic way. The training notes she wrote demonstrate a process of continuous reflection, in which she not only focused on match results but also understood the importance of the process and the effort required to achieve success. Thus, her diary became an integral part of her literacy practice that supported Na Hee do's professional development by helping her build discipline, self-awareness, and mental resilience in facing the challenges of being a fencer.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis, this study found that *Twenty-Five Twenty-One* represents literacy through three main forms: literacy as power, literacy as danger, and literacy as individualism. Literacy as power demonstrates how written texts regulate behavior and shape social relationships. Literacy as danger illustrates that misunderstanding arises not from an inability to read but from interpreting texts and symbols without sufficient social context. Meanwhile, literacy as individualism highlights diary writing as a literacy practice through which Na Hee-do expresses her experiences, reflects on her emotions, and constructs her identity.

The findings also demonstrate that literacy plays a significant role in shaping Na Hee-do's character development. Through diary writing, literacy functions as a reflective practice that enables her to understand her experiences, manage her emotions, and evaluate her personal growth. This process contributes to her personal development by fostering greater self-awareness, emotional maturity, and stronger interpersonal relationships. Professionally, diary writing supports her development as a fencer by encouraging self-evaluation, discipline, and resilience in pursuing her goals.

Overall, this study concludes that literacy in *Twenty-Five Twenty-One* extends beyond the technical ability to read and write. Consistent with the perspective of New Literacy Studies, literacy is represented as a socially situated practice through which individuals construct meaning, negotiate relationships, and shape both their personal and professional identities.

Based on the results of this study, several suggestions can be offered for future research. First, future research could explore the representation of literacy in drama or other popular media by employing different perspectives within literacy theory to examine how literacy practices are constructed in various social and cultural contexts. Second, future research could explore the literacy practices of other characters in *Twenty-Five Twenty-One*, given that each character has different experiences, backgrounds, and social relationships that shape their understanding of literacy. An analysis of these other characters could provide a broader understanding of how literacy shapes identity and character development in the drama. Third, future research could examine the relationship between literacy and other aspects such as gender, social class, education, or the representation of young people in popular media. Such an approach could broaden our understanding of how literacy is not only related to individual abilities but is also influenced by the social and cultural conditions that shape a person's experiences.

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