Chapter 4
Educating English Language Learners for Success in the 21ˢᵗ Century:
Facilitating Their Acquisition of Multiliteracies

Jennifer J. Chen
Kean University, USA

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is threefold: (a) to highlight the importance of teaching and learning multiliteracies for today's students to succeed in the 21ˢᵗ century, (b) to discuss the literature about multiliteracies and new technologies for teaching and student learning, and (c) to provide strategies for integrating technology effectively in teaching multiliteracies to English language learners (ELLs), the fastest growing segment of public student population in the USA. In this digital age, it is imperative that today's students acquire multiliteracies needed to succeed in school, in life, and in the global economy. Situated within this context, the chapter seeks to address this central inquiry: How can teachers of ELLs infuse technology effectively to facilitate these students' acquisition of multiliteracies? As educators continue to seek new and better approaches to optimizing ELLs' educational success, this chapter represents a contribution to this quest.

INTRODUCTION

It is no longer enough simply to read and write. Students must also become literate in the understanding of visual images. Our children must learn how to spot a stereotype, isolate a social cliché, and distinguish facts from propaganda, analysis from banter, and important news from coverage.

- Ernest Boyer, Past President, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Former U.S. Commissioner of Education

Boyer highlights the importance and reality of what today's students must know to succeed in this rapidly changing global world saturated with multimedia. Today, information reaches us far beyond

the written form, and increasingly via powerful images and sounds that are characteristic of our multimedia culture in the 21st century (Thoman & Jolls, 2004). Traditional literacy, referred to simply as the ability to read and write (understand, interpret, and produce written texts for the conveyance of meaning), is no longer sufficient for students to survive and thrive today and in the future (Thoman & Jolls, 2004). Instead, students will not only need to be able to read and produce printed words, but also be literate of multimedia including digital media. Recognizing that the global world is imbued with multimedia that offer multiple avenues of communication, and the local context is increasingly diverse culturally and linguistically, the New London Group (1996) offered the idea of "multiliteracies" as a broader conceptualization of literacy than what has been traditionally portrayed. This new perspective essentially accounts for "increasing local diversity and global connectedness" (the New London Group, 1996, p. 64). According to Kasper (2000), "to be considered multiliterate, students today must acquire a battery of skills that will enable them to take advantage of the diverse modes of communication made possible by new technologies and to participate in global learning communities" (p. 106). Similarly, Beach and Baker (2011) asserted that: "Being media- and digital-literate means having the ability to access and assess online information, share knowledge, connect texts, collaborate with others, build networks, create and remix multimodal texts, and participate in online simulations or games" (n.p.). Clearly, the need to develop proficiency in multiliteracies yields important educational implications.

In the educational process, teaching with technology is as challenging as it is necessary as the 21st century has ushered us ever more vigorously into the digital age, offering multimedia for interpreting the world. Research has found that technology plays a significant role in students' development of multiliteracies (Kasper, 2000; Labbo & Reinking, 1999). This chapter examines the effective integration of technology as a means to facilitate ELLs' successful acquisition of multiliteracies. Special attention is on media literacy, which builds on traditional literacy and school curriculum to include multimedia (Silverblatt, 2000). In this day and age, in addition to teaching literacy, more than ever, educators are now shouldered with an even more daunting responsibility of preparing students to meet the shifted academic demands of the 21st century. Specifically, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills advocates for a transformed fusion of the traditional three R's (*r*eading, w*r*iting and a*r*ithmetic), academic content that is emphasized in school and on standardized tests, with four C's (*c*ritical thinking, *c*reativity, *c*ommunication, and *c*ollaboration), skills that are highly demanded in this globally competitive 21st century.

English Language Learners in the U.S. Public Schools

Not only is our world changing rapidly, our classrooms are also transformed by the increased cultural and linguistic diversity. In the U.S., recent decades have witnessed significant demographic shifts due to the massive influx of immigrants from all around the globe. This phenomenon has in turn impacted all U.S. sectors, especially the public education system where English language learners (ELLs) from immigrant backgrounds represent the fastest growing segment of the student population. ELLs are referred generally to those who come from a non-English speaking home and are learning English as their second language. According to the data by the U.S. Department of Education (2014), over a period of almost 10 years from 2002-03 to 2011-12, ELLs grew from an estimated 4.1 million (or 8.7 percent of the total public school population) to an estimated 4.4 million (or 9.1 percent of the total public school population), resulting in nearly one in 10 public school students being an ELL. ELLs are further projected to comprise 40 percent of the total public student population by 2030 (Thomas

Related Content

Toward Culturally-Inclusive Educational Technology in a Globalized World
Ademola Alabi Akinrinola, Seun Bunmi Adebayo, Lulu Uriri. Onakpoyaand Ucheoma C. Nwaozuru (2020).
The Roles of Technology and Globalization in Educational Transformation (pp. 177-194).
www.irma-international.org/chapter/toward-culturally-inclusive-educational-technology-in-a-globalized-world/235819

Benefits and Risks of Social Networking Sites: Should they also be Used to Harness Communication in a College or University Setting
Angelina I. T. Kiser (2011). *International Journal of Digital Literacy and Digital Competence (pp. 1-13).*
www.irma-international.org/article/benefits-risks-social-networking-sites/62837

Technology-Infused Instruction: A New Paradigm for Literacy
Rose M. Mautinoand Stefan L. Biancaniello (2005). *Technology Literacy Applications in Learning Environments (pp. 49-63).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/technology-infused-instruction/30205

Bridging the Political Gap?: The Adoption of ICTs for the Improvement of Latin American Parliamentary Democracy
Yanina Welp (2013). *Digital Literacy: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 1658-1677).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/bridging-political-gap/68528

Hybrid Wireless Networks for E-Learning and Digital Literacy: Testing and Evaluation
Munir Abbasiand Lampros K. Stergioulas (2011). *International Journal of Digital Literacy and Digital Competence (pp. 40-52).*
www.irma-international.org/article/hybrid-wireless-networks-learning-digital/55115