

Chapter 10

Using Technology to Bridge the Intercultural Gap in the Classrooms of K–8 ENL Students

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ABSTRACT

The transformation of today's classrooms' demographics and the demand for instructional technology has created a challenge for many teachers. While teachers must comply with Common Core Standards and infuse technology throughout the curriculum, they must also differentiate instruction for their diverse student populations. Therefore, the success of all students requires teachers to bridge the intercultural gap in the classrooms of ENL students. This imperative task encompasses the orchestration of teachers' pedagogical expertise of culturally responsive teaching, literacy instruction, technological engagement, and parental partnership. This chapter will discuss the enhancement of the educational opportunities of linguistically diverse students, while emphasizing the importance of these elements. The authors will disseminate the theoretical framework for understanding the integral aspects of the teachers' dilemma, and provide practical instructional ideas and resources for educators to feasibly implement to improve their use of technology in their respective classrooms.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7918-2.ch010

INTRODUCTION

The rapid diversification of American school systems is altering the teacher-student dynamics in the classrooms. Teachers are expected to appropriately address the needs of their culturally and linguistically diverse students. Unfortunately, an intercultural gap may persist due to the cultural discontinuity between students and teachers, and the teachers' limited intercultural experiences and ill preparedness for culturally responsive teaching (Jones-Goods, 2015). According to a National Center of Educational Statistics, forty-one percent (41%) of 3 million teachers surveyed reported that they teach ENL students, while only less than 12.5% received special ELL training of more than eight hours (Brantley, 2008). Clearly, classroom instruction becomes even more complex for teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Educators must now deliver an effective balanced literacy curriculum in conjunction with meeting the arduous Common Core Standards, while simultaneously differentiating instruction for their English is a New Language (ENL) students without ESL certification. Teachers must attempt to develop adaptations for students who may not be proficient in the English language and/or have limited formal educational experiences, and/or lack background knowledge necessary for literacy instruction.

Technology can serve as a means of bridging this intercultural gap in the classrooms of K-8 ENL students. It can solidify the link to integrate cultural understanding, instruction and the necessary skill sets to closing the disparity. Technology has been identified as an asset for English language learners (ELLs) to learn English and content, if used appropriately. Often classroom teachers will assign students work (especially newcomer ELLs) on a computer because they don't know how to effectively differentiate instruction for them otherwise. According to Hutchison and Reinking (2010), eighty-two percent (82%) of literacy and language arts teachers believed that they lacked teacher education and professional development of curricular technological integration. Similarly, Kajder (2005) found that 66% of teachers feel underprepared to use technology. Unfortunately, "We all can fall into the trap of using technology for technology's sake. It's worth asking: Is it edutainment or effective technology-integrated instruction?" (Boyle, 2015, p. 29). Teachers must not utilize technology in a haphazard fashion in their classrooms, but efficiently infuse technology throughout their curriculum and instruction in an authentic and meaningful way to enhance their teaching effectiveness. The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSO) confirm that educators must, "make strategic use of digital media and digital displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations" (2010, p. 48).

Teachers are also faced with many challenges of integrating technology while also meeting the demands of the Common Core State Standards. Educators are struggling with unprecedented literacy demands of meeting the multiple needs of their students as they comply with the CCSS, the evolution of technology and the new literacies it requires (Garcia, 2015). The International Reading Association (2008) holds the position that teacher must integrate technology in their instruction to better prepare literate students for the multimodal literacies of the future. Educators must prepare and equip their 21st-century learners to participate in global conversations that embrace new media forms (Shelby-Caffey, Ubeda, & Jenkins, 2014). Simply, "being literate no longer only involves being able to read and write. The literate of the twenty-first century must be able to download, upload, rip, burn, chat, save, blog, Skype, IM, and share" (Mullen & Wedwick, 2008, p. 66). According to Dalton (2012), being literate encompasses technological skills. The CCSS requires the integration of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in teaching and learning experiences. For example, sixth grade students are expected to gather relevant information from a selection of print and digital sources, compose an argument, think

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