

TEACHING MEDIA THROUGH MEDIA IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

The media in the English Language development establishes a link between the human resources and the non-human resources. They are the different kinds of things which the teachers and the students use in the teaching learning process. This study will report on an attempt to integrate media literacy education into the language classroom—a Media English course offered in an English department. The paper will start with a review of the literature on media literacy education. It will then describe the course and the classroom activities adopted.

Keywords: Effective learning, Instructional resources, Social media, media influence, media images

Media use in the language classroom can often be limited to the aspects of teaching through and with media. Nevertheless, teaching about media and guiding students to recognize media operations can certainly be practiced in the language classroom, as shown in the following classroom activities. Quinlisk (2003) suggested a range of activities to enhance media literacy in a US postsecondary ESL classroom. To introduce the concept of media influence, teachers can ask students to name things associated with a distant region, such as Africa. After students offer stereotypical images such as jungle, tribes, lions, safari, war, starvation, and disease, they can be guided to recognize that, having never visited Africa, they most likely glean these images from various forms of media (e.g., movies, news broadcasts, TV cable channels) for these images. This brief exercise should alert students to the power of media images and portrayals in our lives particularly when we have no firsthand experiences to draw upon. After this initial exercise, three instructional activities can be used to integrate media literacy into language learning environments: rhetorical analysis of advertisements, content analysis of people in TV and film, and broader social analysis of powerful cultural stories

The human resources include the teachers and other supporting persons in the process of communication; whereas the non-human resources are the Instructional Technology Resources (ITR) or Information Communication Technology materials (ICTM), which the New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language (2004) has clearly defined as "the role of the media", serving as

means of dissemination of information entertainment etc. These constitute such materials as books, newspapers, radio, television, motion pictures and magazines. To these are added such means of communication that carry advertisements like the billboards, direct mails, catalogues, the radio etc.

The most traditional form of media used in the language classroom is print media such as newspapers and magazines. Furthermore, newspapers are perhaps the most popular because of their immediacy and availability. In a teacher resource book (Grundy, 1993), for example, the author advocated Boundary Crossing three purposes of using newspapers in the ESL classroom:

- To develop various language competencies
- To focus on aspects of the target society and its culture
- To stimulate discussion of issues raised by the articles

According to Mezieobi (1997), instructional resources refer to all those materials, places and persons, otherwise known as information conveyors, which constitute an integral and vital component of the teaching learning situation that enhance teaching and learning of the English language. Kegan (1989) also viewed instructional resources as an array of materials, people, equipment etc; which can be used by the teacher to promote teaching and facilitate learning. Arisi and Umudhe (1998) stated that instructional resources refer to different materials and tools that teachers and students use in the teaching and learning activity in order to make the process more meaningful and productive. They opined that they are real things and representation of real things which stimulate one or more of the senses and which enrich the teaching and learning of English process.

As implied in these stated purposes, media use in the language classroom can often be limited to the aspects of teaching through and with media. Nevertheless, teaching about media and guiding students to recognize media operations can certainly be practiced in the language classroom, as shown in the following classroom activities. Quinlisk (2003) suggested a range of activities to enhance media literacy in a US postsecondary ESL classroom. To introduce the concept of media influence, teachers can ask students to name things associated with a distant region, such as Africa. After students offer stereotypical images such as jungle, tribes, lions, safari, war, starvation, and disease, they can be guided to recognize that, having never visited Africa, they most likely glean these images from various forms of media (e.g., movies, news broadcasts, TV cable channels) for these images. This brief exercise should alert students to the power of media images and portrayals in our lives particularly when we have no firsthand experiences to draw upon. After this initial exercise, three instructional activities can be used to integrate media literacy into language learning environments: rhetorical analysis of advertisements, content analysis of people in TV and film, and broader

social analysis of powerful cultural stories. The first activity focuses on the analysis of language, imagery, and cultural appeal in advertisements from popular magazines. The second activity asks students to examine verbal and nonverbal behaviors of a group of people by collecting and analyzing data from multiple sources such as TV dramas, advertisements, and movies. This activity shall help students uncover the sources of their own stereotypes and prejudices. The third activity invites students to investigate cultural stories constructed in the media such as the so-called American Dream. In telling this cultural story, the media portrays success as resulting purely from personal motivation and commitment, while socioeconomic factors such as power, social status, gender, and ethnicity do not pose as barriers. A discussion of this apparent incongruity with reality can help students develop skills of inquiry and recognize the media's influence in constructing and perpetrating Media English particular cultural stories.

The maximum utilization of available instructional resources depends on how they are selected and employed by English language teachers and learners. In today's language classroom, it has become a common practice for teachers to use resources from the mass media to provide language input. On the other hand, media consumption has also become an everyday experience for students. It therefore should be desirable or even imperative for teachers to incorporate this huge resource into their syllabus.

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