

Leadership Letter for Global MIL

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ESL and Media Literacy

Bringing Media Literacy Education to ESL Classrooms

While teaching English as a second language isn't often a focus of discussions for media literacy, the number of ESL students alone should argue for more emphasis and visibility for this educational imperative.

Globally, the governments of Rwanda, South Sudan, Turkey, the Russian Federation, South Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Vietnam, China, Thailand, Brazil, Chile and Argentina – among others -- have all instituted broad-ranging federal programs to increase English proficiency, with some programs beginning as early as kindergarten. Today, English continues as the fastest-spreading language in human history, and is the world's lingua franca: English is spoken by 1.75 billion people, a quarter of the world's population, and the British Council forecasts that 2 billion people will be speaking or learning English by 2020.

More and more, the international business world sees English as essential, and studies have shown that countries with better English have better incomes. ESL speakers outnumber native English speakers 2-1 worldwide, and China is the largest English speaking country in the world, with 300 million English speakers, and counting. English speakers are younger and younger, and technology continues to disrupt and provide innovation for English language teaching strategies, with mobile learning being a prime platform.

Perhaps the importance of this educational imperative has been taken for granted in the U.S. because English *is* the U.S. lingua franca – and the need for learning other languages has consequently not been prevalent. Roughly 18% of Americans report speaking a foreign language versus 26% of Canadian and 54% of Europeans. However, within the U.S., immigration has created an enormous and essential demand for ESL.

Overall, *U.S. News and World Report* reported in 2016 that the number of immigrant children in the U.S. grew by 51 percent between 1995 and 2014, to 18.7 million (one-quarter of all U.S. children). The National Center for Education Statistics reports that demand for ESL has grown in the U.S. over the years: In school year 2014-15, 9.4 percent (an estimated 4.6 million students) were reported, compared with 9.1 percent (an estimated 4.63 million students) in 2004-2005. In 2014-15, the percentage of public school students who were ELLs (English Language Learners) was 10 percent or more in the District of Columbia and seven states: Alaska, California, Colorado, Illinois, Nevada, New Mexico, and Texas.

The U.S. is not the only North American country experiencing this impact from immigration. Nearly half the population in Canada will likely consist of first-generation immigrants by the year 2031 (Statistics Canada). On average, 36 percent of immigrants to Canada with Permanent Resident status are young people under 24, with an approximately 4 in every 5 of these young people hailing from countries where English is not the first language of the majority of residents.

At a March 2017 international conference, "Media Literacy in Foreign Language Education: Digital and Multimodal Perspectives," integrating media literacy as an essential underpinning for foreign language instruction was explored from many viewpoints: "English language

teaching goes beyond a good command of linguistic structures to equipping learners with competencies to perceive and understand cross-cultural differences, and collaborate and negotiate meaning. Nowadays it is unarguable that communications is increasingly digitally mediated and for students to be competent communicators and get ahead in the workplace, they need digital skills. The challenge is to develop these digital and media literacies parallel with teaching English by promoting collaborative problem solving...,” stated presenters Regina Brautlacht, Maria Lurdes Martins, and Franca Poppi.

This is no easy task, however. “Developing students’ media literacy through integrating English and American mass media resources into the English classroom is a challenging, demanding task for the language teacher who must possess interdisciplinary knowledge and keep developing it alongside with the students,” advised Olga S. Dvorghets and Yelena A. Shaturnaya, who have developed ESL models. But no doubt, media literacy has an important role to play in both assimilating new citizens and also challenging cultural assumptions. Elizabeth Thoman, the Center for Media Literacy’s (CML) Founder, said, “Since people use the media to learn a language, they can also swallow the value system.”

It is with value systems in mind that critical media literacy is called for – “...media literacy that transforms literacy education into an exploration of the role of language and communication to define relations of power and domination...” according to Douglas Kellner and Jeff Share. Certainly, media literacy has a crucial role to play in improving all citizens’ skills in processing media, whether as consumers or as producers, but media literacy addresses ways to challenge power constructs as well, even in the classroom. As Len Masterman, who first articulated media literacy pedagogy in a systematic way, said:

“My own objectives were to liberate pupils from the expertise of the teacher, and to challenge the dominant hierarchical transmission of knowledge which takes place in most classrooms. In media studies information is transmitted laterally, to both students and teachers alike. The teacher’s role is not to advocate a particular view but to promote reflection upon media texts, and develop the kind of questioning and analytical skills, which will help students to clarify their own views.”

Renowned educators such as Paulo Freire and Henry Giroux, among others, have introduced pedagogical ideas and frameworks that help provide a path for examining critical pedagogy, and these pathways are highly compatible with the bottoms-up – rather than top-down – models of education that media literacy approaches support. As Clara R. Madrenas wrote in her December 2014 thesis, when it comes to “newcomer youth literacy,” cultural studies offers a vital space to widen and deepen our understandings of pedagogical problems related to critical literacy.” This examination is particularly pertinent when contemplating issues related to helping often marginalized, racialized and perhaps even radicalized youth to make meaning and integrate in a new cultural context. “To earnestly study media literacy engagement in the ESL/ELD classroom, then, there must be some acknowledgement of racist and colonialist tensions still at play in contemporary North America,” Madrenas said.

English language instruction that incorporates media literacy works, according to research reported by Dvorghets and Shaturnaya: “The research has indicated significant enhancement of the students’ critical thinking ability and media literacy...dramatic progress concerning their knowledge of various media format specificity of the English-speaking and Russian environment as well as deep insight into the discussed issues and problems. They showed

their growing ability to make inferences, demonstrated higher levels of critical judgment, interpretation skills as media viewers taking part in the debates...”

Certainly, CML’s classroom experience shows that ESL learning and media literacy are highly compatible. In its three-year Project SmartArt, the Center for Media Literacy, partnering with the Music Center of Los Angeles County’s Education Division, worked within Leo Politi Elementary School in Los Angeles Unified School District to combine media literacy, visual and performing arts, English language arts, and English as a Second Language (ESL). A complete case study detailing findings of the project are contained at

<http://www.medialit.org/cml-medialit-kit/project-smartart/executive-summary>

By the end of the program, trained teachers were able to integrate these disciplines and design a lesson plan incorporating standards for each discipline in less than one-half hour.

In this issue of *Connections*, we explore the classroom experiences of two teachers – both of whom are from Colombia – to illustrate ideas about ESL and media literacy. Colombia, a country which is enjoying increased political stability, a large young population and an optimistic economic growth outlook, has prioritized English language learning as a pathway to further economic growth, and its strong historical connections to the U.S. provides another incentive for learning English.

Raul Alberto Mora, Ph.D., emphasizes language learning and critical media literacy in his work with university students and preservice teachers in Medellin, Colombia. Camilo Dominguez-Cruz, a native of Colombia, now teaches ESL in a North Carolina primary school, Sallie B. Howard School for the Arts and Education. Our MediaLit Moments activity asks students to create and analyze tweets for community service purposes.

All references can be found on page 12, Resources.

Interview Highlights

Raúl Alberto Mora, Ph.D., Teaches Critical Media Literacy as a Foundational Component of ESL



Raúl Alberto Mora, Ph.D., Associate Professor in the School of Education and Pedagogy Graduate Program at Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana (UPB), in Medellín, Colombia. Please see [Dr. Mora's website](#) for more details about his teaching and research endeavors.

CML: Raúl, you are a pioneer in utilizing critical media literacy as a foundation of language learning. Why is it so important for language students to have media literacy skills?

RM: Well, the government in Colombia has policies that make foreign-language learning mandatory, likely for economic reasons. But it's not good enough to simply tell students that they must learn a second language. If we want them to be engaged, we have to enable them to find their own reasons why to learn. The same goes for teachers. Are teachers being asked why they are teaching a second language? What is the deeper reason? As an educator, I don't believe we are doing a good enough job at that. After all, learning a second language is a long-term process. It takes an investment of time and effort, and rewards are not immediate. It takes a lot of study and practice before people can communicate fluently, so there has to be a reason to keep working at proficiency. For example: Imagine you take out a loan to buy a house. You don't want to wait to move into the house until the loan is paid, correct? Well, when you learn another language, the way we sometimes frame the process, it may take a long time before you can "move in." That's where critical media literacy comes in. Students learn to evaluate why they are learning a new language. Is it to travel? To teach? To work abroad? To be able to have experiences in other places and within other cultures? Critical media literacy helps students think and talk about what is important to them here and now.

CML: It's interesting that you see teachers as students of media literacy. That's really where it has to start, isn't it?

RM: Absolutely! I teach preservice language courses and graduate-level seminars on research and literacies in second language contexts, as well as advising masters and I hope doctoral students very soon. So, my focus is on teaching those who will pass knowledge on to others. Most teachers are overdependent on text books. I say, use them, but don't be obsessed with them. There is much more to life than what is in the text books! Yes, students must learn grammar and vocabulary. But it's crucial that they also see the bigger picture. They need to question -- Who is saying this? Whose interests are being served by saying this? How does it affect me and those around me? All those questions are addressed in critical media literacy. Teachers have the power to stimulate those questions when they are interacting with their students. And, that is especially true when teaching ESL and other languages by extension, because to make a language yours, you have to know what is going on. When it

comes to language learning, teachers need to advocate for this. Language and words have power. They can either lift you up or destroy you. Humans have been using words for 10,000 years to empower people, or bring people down. We have a responsibility in how we use our words. Sometimes words seem innocuous, but critical media literacy looks deeper.

CML: Please tell us more about how you relate that to teaching ESL?

RM: In English, there is a heavy emphasis on the Northern model – British English and American English determine the discourse. Well, what about Australian English? What about English spoken in South Africa? How about the Caribbean, or Belize? Even within the United States, how English is spoken in California vs. Florida is different. Think about how different English is in Alabama or Appalachia. What about the African American Vernacular? So, including critical media literacy gets students to consider what dialects are included when the English language is taught, and why. What and who is left out? What and who is included? Of course, this is true for most language curriculums. But it is a fact that is usually overlooked by students and teachers alike. Without media literacy, teaching ESL is oversimplified.

CML: Can you describe a method you use to make that point in your classroom?

RM: Well, the best way to make the point is to use something that catches students' interest. So, many of my media literacy exercises use popular culture. For example, the first time I included a media literacy exercise (and this was back in 2000), I was teaching a class of advanced English learners. We deconstructed the song "Stan" by Eminem:

"Dear Slim, I wrote you, but you still ain't callin'
I left my cell, my pager and my home phone at the bottom
I sent two letters back in autumn
You must not've got 'em
There probably was a problem at the post office or somethin'
Sometimes I scribble addresses too sloppy when I jot 'em
But anyways, fuck it, what's been up, man?
How's your daughter?
My girlfriend's pregnant too, I'm 'bout to be a father
If I have a daughter, guess what I'ma call her?
I'ma name her Bonnie
I read about your Uncle Ronnie too, I'm sorry ..."

The song is about someone who is criminally insane, but it's also a song about what it means to be a fan or a fanatic. That is not at all what the students originally thought. So we talked, using a critical mindset, about the true meaning of the words.

These days I use the example of songs to discuss critical media literacy in my methods class to help students go beyond the traditional uses of song as mere listening exercises. There are many examples in music -- "Time of Your Life" by Green Day is used at graduations all the time. But it's a song written to someone's ex. "One Way or Another" by Blondie is about a stalker, and Sting's "Don't Stand so Close to Me" is inspired by the novel "Lolita." And there are also really interesting songs that provide entry to issues of social justice, such as "Talkin' About a Revolution" by Tracy Chapman, to discuss historical events, as is the case of Billy Joel's "We Didn't Start the Fire."

CML: You are also the Chair of The Literacies in Second Languages Project (LSLP), a research initiative at Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana in Medellín, Colombia. That is a very important initiative. Tell us about it.

RM: LSLP is an expansion of what was first called the Student Research Group on Second Languages. For the past five years, we have become active participants in the field of literacies research, and we share what is happening in this field in our city and our country. I agree that it is a very important initiative, because literacies skills – including media literacy – need to be improved globally. Right now, LSLP has international affiliates in the US, Canada, Brazil, Poland, UK, Australia, Russia and Finland.

CML: What is LSLP's main goal?

RM: The goal is to create international partnerships to inquire and discover how teachers and people are playing with English (and other languages) both inside and outside of school settings, the kinds of new messages that emerge as the consequence of such interplay, and how we can use our research to inform teachers' classroom literacy practices. Ultimately, we are interested in becoming active participants in the field of literacies research and sharing what is happening in this field in our city, our country, and the world.

CML: It's so important for nations to share this knowledge in today's world.

RM: Yes, it is. We need to work together to make sure that media literacy and critical deconstruction translates to today's "post-truth" media environment. We used to have to seek out information. Today we are exposed to too much information. That is true in nearly every country. Today, we have to think of ourselves as information curators. But, right now, most educational systems do not teach how to curate. That is the importance of media literacy and critical thinking. It's what teachers need to teach. Students need to learn how to think critically -- even about headlines. Often, people click on a headline because it's shocking. But once we read the story – there's nothing there! So often people share without reading the article. That's dangerous. We need to teach students to be more discriminating. We need to curate – to sift out what is real, fake, bias, etc. Don't just respond viscerally. That is a new habit that has to be developed, and it takes practice.

CML: And, teachers need to practice that new habit in order to pass it on to students, correct?

RM: Yes. You cannot be the teacher your parents had. Today, we have different moral obligations. What type of world do you want to teach English in? Because access to information is now more than newspapers, radio and TV. It's 24/7. It's hard to just turn everything off. Teaching for the sake of teaching is not good enough anymore. There is so much at stake –language teachers need to fight the good fight from the classroom. Inaction is simply not an option.

CML: Thank you, Raúl. We applaud your commitment to media literacy and its applications in language learning.

RM: I didn't get my Ph.D. just to help myself. I want educators to be the best they can be in Colombia and the world. So, thank you for this opportunity.

Camilo Dominguez-Cruz Combines English Second Language and Media Literacy Education for North Carolina Students



Camilo Dominguez-Cruz began his career teaching preservice teachers in a foreign-language teacher education program in Colombia. He now teaches ESL and media literacy to children and teens at Sallie B. Howard School for the Arts and Education in North Carolina.

CML: Camilo, with so many school districts in the United States considering media literacy curriculums for the first time, you are ahead of the curve! We are fortunate to have you here from Colombia and bringing media literacy into our school classrooms. Would you please tell us about your teaching background?

CD: My pleasure! I am an educator. For most of my career, I worked with preservice teachers in a foreign-language teacher education program in Colombia. It was an exceptional opportunity because I taught teachers during their very first semesters of their careers, and also in their final stages in school, when they completed high-level practicums, conducted research and wrote their theses prior to graduation. I taught language acquisition their first semesters. But, while they were working on their practicums at the end, I introduced the preservice teachers to critical pedagogy and critical approaches to language education. I put a focus on media literacy. Now that I am teaching children and teenagers here in the U.S., I have a wonderful opportunity to continue integrating critical pedagogy and media literacy into the education of English learners who are just starting out in the education system. I see it as a welcome chance to make a real difference for the next generation.

CML: So you've gone from teaching adult teachers to teaching primary and middle school children?

CD: It had been a while since I taught children. This work opens many doors for me to explore new teaching methods and offer children the very best. At the Sallie B. Howard School for the Arts and Education, where I teach, the administration is very willing to consider new proposals, so there is so much potential to expand students' experiences. Our curriculum is heavily influenced by art, so I can easily integrate critical media literacy education into our ESL program.

CML: Please tell us more about your research and what it is aiming to achieve?

CD: I have written a paper about a qualitative research study, conducted through an English teacher education program at a Colombian public University, aimed at developing critical awareness of publicly displayed media. In this study, I used ideas from different scholars and organizations, including the Center for Media Literacy's Empowerment Spiral – Awareness, Analysis, Reflection, and Action. Then I organized them into a framework to teach how to read media texts from a critical perspective as a way to prepare English pre-service teachers for civic engagement and social transformation, and the article is about that process.

CML: And what did that process include?

CD: I taught a reading and writing course for one year in a cohort taking place in one of this university's rural campuses. I was very interested in offering a different approach to reading and writing within this program. So, I incorporated critical media literacy principles and ideas to move from reading print to the reading and analysis of texts in the community's public spaces. My students went into their communities and started taking pictures of the texts that they saw in their environments – advertising, graffiti, political propaganda, etc. It was a very contentious time politically, because there was an election coming up. They came to class with pictures of texts, and we analyzed. I started with the CML Empowerment Spiral's awareness stage, because the students had never done anything like this before. I started helping them to gain awareness about the different types of texts from the pictures they brought to class. They ultimately chose to do the analysis phase on advertisements. They collected pictures of ads about food, fashion, real estate, or political causes. We analyzed the "hidden" messages in the ads and found ties to social issues -- what was included, and what was not included explicitly in terms of the messages that the authors wanted to send. These messages connect to real community issues. For example, when analyzing fashion ads, students immediately connected them to how women see themselves, and increases in demand for plastic surgery. It is a cultural phenomenon that is influenced by media.

CML: And, what did you do for the reflection stage?

CD: They reflected upon the messages they had analyzed and discussed how, as citizens and educators, they could become agents of change in their communities. They actually went beyond the classroom and brought up talking to friends and families about what they were doing in class. Some even participated in political change activities – went to rallies and the like.

CML: Can you tell us about one ad that really made the point in your classroom?

CD: Some students analyzed real estate advertisements. Gentrification was affecting the area at the time, and these ads were everywhere. Many families had been forced to move or sell their houses at a low price because everything was getting more expensive – including utilities and even food. They analyzed how real state advertisements reflected or promoted community issues. They unveiled and questioned ideas and values sold in these ads. For instance, they saw how many of these ads would portray stereotypical representations of a family, usually a white couple with a boy and a girl. Not everyone in Colombia comes from nuclear families like this. There are many other types of families. Many kids are raised by their grandparents, because their parents have to work. That is very common in our country. We also have very big families -- many people living together, not just mom, dad and two kids. Besides, most of our population is not necessarily white. These ads did not represent the diversity of the families and the people in the area where my students lived.

CML: How did the students react to that?

CD: They were shocked. They said they had never thought about it before. Those types of depictions were normal for them, because they see them all the time. It was true of fashion ads, too. They mostly show white women that meet stereotyped standards of beauty.

CML: Why do you believe that is important to consider? That people sometimes don't see people who look like themselves in advertisements?

CD: Because those ads normalize and promote stereotypical versions of our reality. As teachers, especially, we have the power to further embed those stereotypes, or break them down. We can do something that leads to more respect for other human beings. That is where the action phase of the CML empowerment spiral takes place.

CML: Yes, and that's really the crucial step.

CD: Yes, it is – the part where critical media literacy moves from analysis and reflection to some kind of transformation. Many people say that transformation has to be external and on a large scale -- like let's create this political project, or let's transform things that are not working at a societal level. There are other people who believe that transformation starts from within us. Ideas like that contribute to bettering people's lives, both inside and outside the classroom. As Ghandi says, "You have to be the change you want to see in the world." Also, some people focus only on the cognitive part of critical media literacy -- the skills to deconstruct an advertisement, analyze the messages and, for example, construct a counter ad. But there is more. In my class I say, "Okay, let's reflect about these issues. Let's reflect how they relate to our lives and how we can transform them." Then I ask "How does this transform you as an individual? How does this help you to better relate to others?"

CML: You are a trend setter in terms of bringing media literacy education to young students in a school where it didn't exist before. Where do you want to go from here?

CD: I want to contribute to the broader field of media literacy from what I am doing here. I also want to demonstrate that students with lower English-language proficiency levels CAN gain media literacy skills and become agents of transformation.

CML: Thank you, Camilo -- for this interview and for bringing media literacy and critical pedagogy to young people. You have so much to contribute to our field, and we wish you all the best.

CD: Thank you. As educators, we truly have the power to transform lives. I start with my own. That's where the change begins!

***Pediatrics*, Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics** Supplement 2 (Nov. 2017) includes several excellent research articles on children and screens:

http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/140/Supplement_2

This Supplement includes an article making policy and research recommendations, called "[Developing Digital and Media Literacies in Children and Adolescents](#)," by Kristen Hawley Turner, Tessa Jolls, Michelle Schira Hagerman, William O'Byrne, Troy Hicks, Bobbie Eisenstock and Kristine E. Pytash, ***Pediatrics* 2017**.

Survey Participation Requested

Please participate in a survey *Teaching Literacies with Technology*. Digitally Literate Research Project:

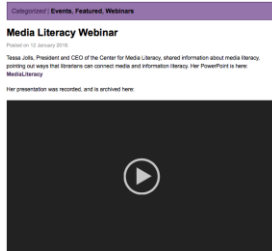
<http://digitallyliterate.net/tltsurvey/>

The survey is currently available in English, to be followed by Spanish, French and Chinese in coming months.

Tessa Jolls Presents to Librarians via Webinar

Tessa Jolls met with Special Libraries Association (SLA) attendees via webinar January 12, 2018 to share ideas for connecting media and information literacy. Her presentation "Powershift: Why Media and Information Literacy Are Essential in Today's Global Media Culture" can be found

here: <http://education.sla.org/media-literacy-webinar/>



CONSORTIUM
for **MEDIA LITERACY**

Uniting for Development

About Us...

The Consortium for Media Literacy addresses the role of global media through the advocacy, research and design of media literacy education for youth, educators and parents.

The Consortium focuses on K-12 grade youth and their parents and communities. The research efforts include nutrition and health education, body image/sexuality, safety and responsibility in media by consumers and creators of products. The Consortium is building a body of research, interventions and communication that demonstrate scientifically that media literacy is an effective intervention strategy in addressing critical issues for youth.

<http://www.consortiumformedia literacy.org>

Resources for Media Literacy

Resources for ESL and Media Literacy

“The global English language job market is changing: what this means for ESL teachers,” by Christie Van Tol, [University of Toronto TEFL Online: https://medium.com/accelerated/the-global-english-language-job-market-is-changing-what-this-means-for-esl-teachers-92c8d87cf8eb](https://medium.com/accelerated/the-global-english-language-job-market-is-changing-what-this-means-for-esl-teachers-92c8d87cf8eb)

“Global Trends in Foreign Language Demand and Proficiency, Student Travel (2014): <http://studenttravelplanningguide.com/global-trends-in-foreign-language-demand-and-proficiency/>

“Fast Facts: English Language Learners,” National Center for Education Statistics: <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=96>

“The Increase of Immigrant Students Tests Tolerance,” by Lauren Camera, U.S. News and World Report (Jan. 5, 2016: <https://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/data-mine/articles/2016-01-05/number-of-immigrant-students-is-growing>

“Media Literacy in Foreign Language Education: Digital and Multimodal Perspectives,” International Association of Applied Linguistics, Conference, (March 12-15, 2017): <http://aila.info/en/15-front-news/212-media-literacy-in-foreign-language-education-digital-and-multimodal-perspectives.html>

“Teaching Media Literacy in the ESL Classroom,” by Arnie Cooper, Center for Media Literacy (April 2002): <http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/teaching-media-literacy-esl-classroom>

“Critical Media Literacy is Not an Option,” by Douglas Kellner and Jeff Share, Learning Inquiry, Volume 1, Issue 1, pp. 59-69 (April 2007): <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11519-007-0004-2>

“Media Literacy and the English as a Second Language Curriculum: A Curricular Critique and Dreams for the Future,” by Clara R. Madrenas, the University of Western Ontario (2014): <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=4025&context=etd>

“Developing Students’ Media Literacy in the English Language Teaching Context,” by Olga S. Dvorghets and Yelena A. Shaturnaya, Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences [Volume 200](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042815046996), pp.192-198 (Aug. 22, 2015): <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042815046996>

“English in Colombia: An examination of policy, perceptions and influencing factors,” British Council: Education Intelligence, May 1, 2015, http://obiret-iesalc.udg.mx/sites/default/files/publicaciones/45._english_in_colombia_-_british_council.pdf

Project SmartArt, Center for Media Literacy, by Arleta Quesada, 2005, <http://www.medialit.org/cml-medialit-kit/project-smartart/executive-summary>

Voices of Media Literacy: International Pioneers Speak, Len Masterman Interview, Center for Media Literacy, Nov. 2010, <http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/voices-media-literacy-international-pioneers-speak-len-masterman-interview-transcript>

Med!aLit Moments

Counting Characters

We have been living in a media world driven by sound bites for many years now, but Twitter has taken that trend to a whole new level. A sound bite is a quick clip or phrase that media outlets use to (supposedly) sum up a whole story or issue in one quick simple statement. A sound bite is essentially an audio version of a tweet. Like a sound bite, when we are communicating with tweets of 140-280 characters, we are not necessarily getting or telling the full story since the message lacks context. This is a problem. But, given that millions of tweets are sent each day it behooves us to train students to use the platform in a positive way.

Have your students generate a tweet as a community service message.

AHA! Different formats impact my message and creativity!

Grade: 8-12

This is a production activity. The following Key Questions are aimed at the producer of the message. To see consumer questions, please go to our website www.medialit.com.

Key Question #1: What am I authoring?

Core Concept #1: All media messages are constructed.

Key Question #2: Does my message reflect understanding in format, creativity, technology?

Core Concept #2: Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.

Key Question #3: Is my message engaging and compelling for my audience?

Core Concept #3: Different people experience the same message differently.

Key Concept #4: Have I clearly and consistently framed values, lifestyles and points of view?

Core Concept #4: Media have embedded values and points of view.

Key Question #5: Have I communicated my purpose?

Core Concept #5: Most media messages are sent to gain profit and/or power (influence).

Materials: School twitter feed (#) for this project. Smartphones and projection screen.

Activity: In pairs, ask students to decide on a community service message they want to share with their classmates. Examples might be: reminder about a clothes drive for disaster victims, register to vote, driver safety, recycling... and have them create a tweet (only one tweet) to get the message out. Display the twitter feed on a large screen and discuss as the tweets come in.

Ask students: Was this difficult? Do they wish they could tell a fuller story? Or offer more details? How did they decide what to include or omit? Why did they choose this particular issue for their classmates (audience)? Is there enough information in a tweet to ensure understanding? Do they like this mode of communication for important subjects or would they prefer a different way to share the information? Is the character limit a plus or minus? Use the Key Questions to analyze the tweets.

Additional resources: Article from NPR [teaching students to use social media the right way](#).

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