

Media Awareness for Pedagogical Evolutions

Marvin Wacnag Lidawan

Jubail Training Institute ,Royal Commission of Jubail
Saudi Arabia

Abstract

The breakthroughs of the media nowadays create prolific outputs which are possibly utilized as springboards for learning in all academic disciplines which include the English language learning especially in non-native-speaking countries. In this regard, the media awareness of educators in the academe should be triggered to link their instructions with the emerging media forms which could effectively intervene in classroom knowledge depending on how resourceful their mentors are. The media forms brought about by technological fruitions revolutionize classroom teaching whether these are print or broadcast media. Language acquisition through teaching language skills (reading, listening, speaking, writing and even the viewing skills) could be promising if these forms emanating from the media are creatively employed regularly in the teaching-learning interactions. This paper seeks to promote media awareness where media literacy is attained by educators as effective vehicles in the construction of instructional materials for the development of language teaching and learning through the wise selection of these media components as inputs to interplay in the pedagogical process.

Keywords: Media and Language Learning, Media Literacy, Instructional Materials, Teaching Springboards

Introduction

The 21st century, education has reached a moment of complex changes on all Asian societies and all academic areas are positively affected. These changes are brought about by the entrance of modern technologies which are considered much updated and interestingly valuable elements in the instructional programs of most Asian nations, particularly in their English language curricular programs for second language acquisitions. The mass media whether broadcast or print play important roles in the learning of English as a Second Language (ESL) with the involvement of metamorphosing technology formally and informally.

One underlying factors that makes instructional innovations is the proliferations of mass media outputs that promote varied strategies among language educators, through the empowerment of the media as tools for language acquisition for academic development in the attainment of communicative language skills through language educator's innovative communicative language-teaching techniques.

The Media Interventions in Language Learning

This important role of the mass media has been earlier supported by Ladrido (1993) in the editorial of the English Journal, Reading Association of the Philippines (RAP) which expressed that the most glaring failure of all schools in this last decade in the 20th century is the failure to situate learning in its cultural text. English teachers still teach language and literature as if the forms of mass media are not invented. Titles have changed; schools of literary critics have come and gone; lectures and recitations have given way to group discussions.

Among the language skills, reading is one that the print media can develop. To yield learning among language students, a teacher must adapt to the changes and complexities of these learning instruments by dealing with the media as instructional materials in designing tasks for reading. The school is a formal place to learn; hence educational materials like mass media outputs should be available to the students by employing these varied types of instructional materials. In this case, the students will not only understand the language but will also be informed about situations yielded by the passages of the newspapers, magazines and even the website contents using the English language.

The urgent role of the language teachers is to attune their teaching styles with these changes to systematically eradicate traditional teaching styles. The print media should be incorporated in language textbooks and in testing learners' comprehensions. Advantages of media education have been discovered in the development of reading comprehension among learners as well as other macro skills which accordingly brought the students a high level of media awareness and have made them realize their pervasive effects Mingoa(1993).The media focus on the development of critical thinking. This could be implemented in various ways depending upon the teacher's resourcefulness, initiative and creativity. According to Mingoa; media expose the learners' visual awareness and enhance their language skills.

Many known writers agree with this idea through their concepts of media literacy. Media literate people seek alternative sources of information and entertainment through print and broadcast as Kipling(2007) stated when learners consider pop music radio, newspapers, magazines, computers and video games –in addition to TV. They are expose to more mass media messages in one day. Aside from that, Kipling went on emphasizing that for hundreds of years, society has valued literacy –the reading and understanding of texts. In today's society, visual images are more arguably important than the printed word; yet there has been no corresponding focus on reading and the meaning of visual images, Masterman (1985).

The findings of the project by the National Capital Language Resource Center (2003-2007) claimed that there is a need to teach the language in a learner - centered instruction where focus is on the language use in typical situations on how students use the language which basically requires appropriate real-world materials to maneuver the learning process of the language . If this is so, it is a fact that students are exposed to real world as results of language educators' innovation by bringing varied media forms as instructional materials in the classrooms. At this point, since the media remarkably play a vital role, educators should integrate the value of media literacy yielding students' ability to interpret and create personal meanings from hundreds ,even thousands of verbal and visual symbols that we take in everyday through television, radio ,computers newspapers and magazines and of advertising as mentioned by Thoman (2002). It is one's ability to choose, the ability to challenge and question and the ability to be conscious about what is going on in the environment Cooper (2010) reiterated referring to Gary Ferington, Director of Media Literacy Online Project who emphasized the fact that it was in the 70's when media literacy began as an educational practice where educators recognized that the non-print media employed unique visual and aural language frameworks to encode information. The ability to read the text of a motion picture, program, advertisement or photograph becomes an expanding definition of media literacy.

It is the expanding media in learners' environment that motivated the writer's innovation to perceive media forms as effective toolkits for teachers to teach the English language. And since advertising is a contributory component of the media, advertisements are greatly seen as an element of media literacy that promotes the learner's visual literacy which highly improves the reading skill in order to comprehend the contexts of any printed medium that delivers a message. These ideas spring from Reisland (2009). Since technology brings out multi- media or new media, it is changing the way society communicates in the real world. This transition is a wakeup call for educators to bring the timely needs of language learners in the formal classroom depending on their intellectual ability to integrate, initiate, innovate, impose, and diffuse these widespread breakthroughs of media outputs.

This writer believes that with the forms of media introduced in the real world, no bit of it can be ignored as tools to yield communicative competence among learners especially among learners of non- English speaking countries.

Due to the advent of media forms brought about by emerging technology, language educators were able discover methods in which these are use as authentic instructional materials revolutionizing language teaching processes from traditional to contemporary methodologies. Many countries have evolved in their educational reforms. To cite an example, Canada's curricular framework stipulated its innovation in the Ontario Curriculum Grades 1-8 Language (2006) prepared for the Atlantic provinces of the country. This curricular framework showed that the following components are learned by grades 1-8: media literacy, critical literacy and visual literacy. As essential components of the English Language Arts, students are made to understand the mass media forms , how mass media produce meanings, to understand how mass media elucidate significant impact to their educational, cultural, social knowledge and how the mass media images are organize to yield meanings.

The Crucial Role of Media Literacy

Media Literacy as an innovative concept have paved its way among dynamic Muslim educators in the Middle East to integrate media education in the Gulf's classroom curricula. This

concept has been brought out during the UNESCO Regional Conferences in Support of Global Literacy, Qatar Foundation: Innovations in Education Symposium 3 held on March 12-14, 2007 in Doha, Qatar. The conference sought media evolutionary frameworks in the Gulf. Fadil (2007) has pointed out that “In the Arab World, media literacy has been long neglected. Media literacy as a subject is rarely taught in schools in any organized way and is often couched in a vague terminology within university courses that fail to address the *raison d’être* of mass communication tools.” Fadil continued stating that the onset of media literacy with the English language being used as medium of instruction has been contradicted by majority of Arabs. Kamal (2007) agrees to Fadil when she stated that they look at the media seemingly as a weapon for the extinction of a culture.’ The effect of the growing media basically triggered controversy as adverse effects according to her findings. Kamal went on emphasizing, ‘It is paralleled by vast majority of Arab universities who teach their students on what to think instead of how to think. Unless this mentality changes fast, little hope of progress will be seen on the horizon.’ To solve the dilemma rising and to find solutions, she urged Arab countries to incorporate media literacy into higher education in their strategic planning and create partnership between the private sectors and educators. She was specific in informing that, “education through media knowledge is a best investment for future progress because oil in the Arab world won’t last.” The Daily Star (2007) www.dailystar.com. This is an indication that the media literacy to be incorporated in the classroom with the powerful international language must be seriously dealt with as one of the detrimental frameworks of Arab countries’ educational goals.

The influence of media, such as TV, film, videos, magazines, computer games-and popular music is pervasive in the lives of students today. It is important therefore, that beginning in the primary grades, students learn to use media resources critically and thoughtfully. Furthermore, today’s students live in an information and entertainment culture that is dominated by images, both moving and static. Information, visual, and media literacy have a significant role to play in helping students to select, assimilate, evaluate, and control the immense amount of information and the diverse messages produced every day in a complex information and entertainment culture as reiterated by the Foundation for English Language Arts for Atlantic Canada (2006).

Media literacy is introduced when media outputs are used. In this real world situation taking place in the classroom, the target language is being processed through the enhancement of visual skills such as reading when this type of media are presented as tool-kits for learning. Comprehension is needed to understand the message presented by the media forms and when learners utilize their level of language to relay the message to a given springboard, communicative competence is triggered and enhanced depending on the frequency of use in teaching and the level of exposures the learners have on the media. At this point, the students are not only given the knowledge on how to use the target language but will obtain knowledge about the media forms. For many centuries, the forms of media have evolved dramatically through technology.

Mass Media Interplaying in Pedagogy.

In conjunction with these dramatic changes taking place, dedicated language educators have their shares of coping with the trends of time in the language educative process with the joint- efforts of organizational bodies from the government or non-government entities . These scholars took part in the transformation of learning processes with hopes to generate desirable outcomes. These scholars have presented their contributions through research papers, academic papers, books and

other related- innovations. In this case, there are reasons to believe that the following equation becomes possible: *Media Literacy plus Language Skills is equal to communicative competence.*

Wood (1995) found out that film communication offers links between classrooms and society. Motion pictures can help explore cultural context, may be integrated easily into the curriculum, are entertaining, and allow flexibility of materials and teaching techniques. Motion pictures can also be related to students' personal experiences, act as a focus for teacher-student interaction, and can be used to promote awareness of the interrelationship between modes that includes: picture, movement, language, sound, and captions.

According to the study of School Uses of Television and Video (1997), TV and video are also highly valuable as teaching tools, and seen as especially effective for reaching visual learners and special populations. According to its findings, TV and video are being used more deliberately than ever before and are being more fully integrated into the curricula. Teachers look for quality programming, programs of appropriate structure and length, and advance information to allow them to preview and tape.

As an answer to these natural demands of learners to effectively acquire the language as naturally as they can, the forms of media become instruments for language acquisitions. It is through the appropriate choice of real world materials that a teacher should take into account to promote effective English language learning. Teachers should attempt to change such curriculum gradually as roles to portray in the curriculum task designs. They should be creative, eclectic and adaptive in terms of producing educational materials. Educational authorities on the other hand should take into consideration that aspects of learning and communicative learning strategies are to be incorporated in each and every syllabus or curriculum.

Conclusion

At this juncture, the English language as a medium for global communication is a necessity. With the dire need of any nation to improve its educational system through the serious integration of the English language, there is need to revolutionize the curriculum to parallel with the dramatic changes of time. One distinctive change that surrounds the world of learners and language educators is the outbreak of technology. Technology alters the print and broadcast media forms. These forms yield audio and visual materials which are ideal for English language learning and teaching. With the utilization of these media outputs as tools for communicative language teaching skills, these could be developed to enhance interactive process. By these ways, the importance of the language could be realized in a society that craves for favorable learning results of its people in order to continuously prosper.

About the Author

Marvin Wacnag Lidawan –Bachelor's degree in English with a minor in Teacher Education from Lyceum Northwestern University in the Philippines (1991), Master's degree in English Language Education from Baguio Central University (2011) and is presently a PhD student in Educational Management at Pangasinan State University. He is an English Language lecturer since 1988 in different countries: The Philippines, South Korea, Sultanate of Oman and in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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