

REVIEW OF *TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY*

Teaching English Language Learners through Technology

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Teaching English Language Learners through Technology is contextualized in the U.S. American educational system, but as will be discussed in this review, many of the concepts can easily be used beyond these geographical boundaries. The authors themselves state in the introduction that the book is intended for practitioners in all content areas, and the book includes explicit links among theoretical background information, recent research, and case studies to illustrate how the pedagogical implications can extend beyond just the U.S. context.

An early indication of the U.S. context is in the use of the term English Language Learner (ELL), which is frequently used in discussions among educators at the elementary and secondary levels in the United States. The term is often viewed as interchangeable with English as a Second Language, in that it refers to learners who are geographically located in a place where English is the dominant language, in contrast to English as a Foreign Language. However, the omission of “second” indicates an acknowledgement that English may well be a second, third or new language for immigrant students. A second indication that the U.S. context is the primary audience for the book is in the intended audience of pre-service and in-service elementary and secondary (Kindergarten through grade 12) teachers. These teachers often do not have formal training as language teachers, but they must learn to teach language as part of their profession as their classrooms become more linguistically diverse.

This reader-friendly book is divided into three parts. Part 1 presents an overview of ELL teaching and learning in order to provide “guidance for the informed use of instructional strategies in the teaching of ELLs” (p. 7); part 2 provides empirical evidence for the use of technology in differentiated instruction while also emphasizing the role of social constructivism; and part 3 addresses the use of technology inside and outside the classroom through examples and also suggests strategies and exercise plans for the use of technology in differentiated instruction.

Part 1 is divided into eight chapters preceded by a general introduction, which explains ethical values, the aim of the book, the target audience, and an extensive description of five principles for integrating technology. These principles focus on creating effective second language learning environments around which learning should happen: (a) ELLs must be given many and varied opportunities to read, write, listen to and discuss oral and written English; (b) attention should be drawn to English language structural

patterns; (c) students should be given classroom time to practice their English usage productively; (d) opportunities need to be offered for ELLs to notice their errors and correct their English; and (e) maximum opportunities should be provided for ELLs to interact with others in English.

Part 1 continues by covering a wide range of issues that provide a backdrop for the rest of the book. Issues of equal opportunity and recent U.S. educational legislation are addressed and call for ELLs to receive adequate resources and individual attention from educators. Other aspects include an overview of principles of second language acquisition and theoretical applications of the five principles listed above, descriptions of ELL programs, developmental stages in acquisition, specific intercultural developmental stages, the parents' role, and applications and models of ELL instruction for ELLs with special cognitive and socio-cultural needs.

Part 2 introduces the intersection of technology and ELL instruction. It emphasizes the role of social constructivism in the teaching of ELLs. For example, it presents the application of Vygotsky's theory (1962, 1978) on the student's *zone of proximal development (ZPD)* as well as the role of regulation in language learning for the classroom. Classroom applications are provided by discussing differentiated instruction, project-based learning, and constructivist pedagogy principles. The next three chapters illustrate ways to integrate and accommodate technology into lessons and discuss principles that should guide the use of technology in the classroom.

Part 3 is the most practical part of the book. The authors describe activities for middle and high school students with a view towards putting into practice the principles from the first two parts of the book. The activities are divided into four levels (Preproduction, Early Production, Speech Emergence and Intermediate Fluency), which correspond to common categories used to describe ELLs language skill levels. The activities are presented in the form of lesson plans, learning activities, and Web-based resources. Also included are special sections entitled "Teaching Tips," "Classroom Implications," and "Teaching Help" boxes. As in the rest of the book, most of the activities do not require the teacher to be experienced in the use of technology, to have computer labs, or to teach in classrooms with highly sophisticated technology. Instead, the existence of one or two computers with a minimal capacity can serve in many cases. For instance, Chapter 3.2 introduces what the authors call E-creation tools and self-made computer-based resources, such as podcasts, Power Point, moviemakers, audiomakers, and Web publishing, all of which permit students to develop their creativity with limited resources. In describing and suggesting tools, the authors use easily accessible and often free resources such as Hot Potatoes (p. 102), Audacity (p. 106), and a range of communicative facilitating e-tools such as e-mail, instant messaging, and listservs.

The final sections are devoted to improving ELLs' literacy in the four skills areas through creative activities such as using the whiteboard, creating wikis, and using and designing blogs, webquests, podcasts, and audioblogs. This section includes what we believe to be the most interesting part of the book because it covers informal performance-based assessments that serve both formative and summative purposes. In this highly practical section, the authors suggest the use of e-portfolios, e-surveys, e-quizzes, and e-rubrics. The authors also provide a brief foray into virtual learning environments such as Nicenet.

The book concludes with an extensive, well-annotated list of resources, which makes it valuable for CALL-intensive environments, as well as for classrooms that are in the early phases of technology integration. It also has a very clear and useful glossary, a student grouping chart for the classroom, and a well-organized list of references.

FINAL COMMENTS

Some parts of this book are similar to other volumes (cf., Dudeney & Hockly, 2007; Sharma & Barret, 2007), but it appears to be more practical. While the first two parts are more theoretically than practically based, the theory can be of benefit to those teachers who have limited knowledge or experience with

ELLs, and it is well-illustrated by case studies and real-life examples. In fact, the theory is presented in an accessible way; for instance, readers may not want to miss the excellent synthesis of the natural approach (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Another asset of this book is that it introduces emotional perspectives, which are less frequently discussed in language texts, through exemplified cases and also considers educational stakeholders such as the parents.

To conclude, although this book is aimed at practitioners working with ELLs, its applications and uses are also valid in general ESL and EFL courses, given the quality and variety of the resources described. Its pedagogical approach makes it especially useful as a textbook for educational technology for both general and bilingual education. For a broader, international context, the book may be attractive for content teachers working in Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Teachers who may lack knowledge in language learning but need to integrate second (or subsequent) language learning into their content will likely find that the theoretical underpinnings and practical recommendations will facilitate their work. All in all, this is an accessible volume that integrates theory and practice.

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