Chapter 27
Using Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Electronic Storybooks in ESL Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, a qualitative approach used to investigate the experiences and learning of 110 preservice teachers in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses when they read electronic storybooks for their school projects. During their online class, participants were asked to read one culturally and linguistically familiar electronic storybook (e-storybook), develop a reading lesson plan, and partici-pate in two online discussions after reading four culturally and linguistically familiar or unfamiliar e-storybooks. After these discussions, the participants revised their lesson plans. The findings provide insight into what ESOL preservice teachers learn and the strategies they use in reading e-storybooks. The participants revised the original lesson plan based on these reading experiences and learned about their future students who will study English as a second language. The article concludes by discussing the influence of this online task-based instruction on ESOL preservice teachers' learning and technology use in teacher education courses.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary world, literacy requires the capacity to understand various forms of presentations, such as audio, video, and computer games, as well as both traditional and online written material. Adding to this complexity, diverse groups of people make meaning differently in new reading contexts (Hamston, 2006; Kellner, 2001; New London Group, 1996, 2000; Park & Kim, 2011). In these new

literacy contexts, teachers need to help students understand and improve their facility with spoken language, print, and multimedia texts (Anstey & Bull, 2006; Chatel, 2002). Preservice teachers must thus develop diverse repertoires and transfer these to their future teaching contexts (Bean, 1997). As teacher educators we must prepare preservice teachers by providing guidelines and firsthand reading experiences to read different types of electronic books (e-books). With this sort of preparation, their *praxis* will emerge as more sophisticated and adequate to the contemporary media-saturated world. We define *praxis* following Freire (1970): As [individuals] gain new knowledge, they reflect on and practice their own learning and future teaching. Therefore, providing preservice teachers significant opportunities to read electronic texts (e-texts) and to adopt them in their teaching will help them become more successful teachers of 21st century students.

BACKGROUND

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

Cultural and linguistic diversity is critical for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)[1] preservice teachers. Culture has been defined in many ways (Robinson, 1985; Smith, Paige, & Steglitz, 1998; Snow, 1996). It can refer to (a) observable activities and items, such as art, drama, pop music, and mass media entertainment, (b) distinctive groups and societies, such as adolescents and the French and their culture, and (c) intangibles, such as beliefs, values, rules, roles, and so on (Díaz-Rico & Weed, 2010). For a teacher to be familiar with a culture requires familiarity with learners' experiences as well as the typical beliefs of a culture (Kim, 2005). In this paper, we adopt a view of culture as fluid and dynamic, as something that changes over time as new ideas and practices spread to different groups and subgroups (Street, 2005).

Language is an integral part of being human (Denham & Lobeck, 2013), and the primary means of interaction between people (Bonvillain, 2013). Linguistic abilities are diverse, depending on the speakers' language learning or acquisition stages. Since language proficiency refers to "the ability to use a language effectively and appropriately throughout the range of social, personal, school, and work situations required for daily living in a given society," in both oral and written form (Peregoy & Boyle, 2008, p. 34), appropriate and necessary language skills vary substantially across different situations. We must attend carefully to culture and language, as well as readers' knowledge of these two critical components, when helping others to develop skills in both one's first language (L1) and second language (L2).

Reading Electronic Books

Reading is a complex but essential skill for language learners[2] (Au, 1993; McPherson, 2005; Urquhart & Weir, 1998). Au (1993) describes reading as a process of constructing meaning while interacting with other people (e.g., writers) and texts in a social context. Readers play active roles, as meaning-makers, and the relation between reader and text is situated in a particular time and place (Au, 1993; Rosenblatt, 1978, 1982). Reading is a socially and culturally situated activity rather than an isolated one (Perez, 1998), so any perspective on reading must address the wide variety of contexts in which people read (Gee, 2000, 2001).

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