

Chapter 5

Media Literacy in EFL Teacher Education: A Necessity for 21st Century English Language Instruction

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ABSTRACT

As one of the 21st century skills, media literacy refers to the ability of individuals to critically evaluate and creatively produce representations in a variety of media. A rapid changing world of media, information and communication, which is reshaping the future of work trends, changes literacy demands and requires more complex literacy skills. Thus, it is necessary for students to build the 21st century literacy skills through technology-integrated instructions and classroom practices. In particular, this chapter aims to raise awareness of the relevance of media literacy in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and EFL teacher education. This chapter provides an evolution of media literacy with its origin, explores the competencies of media literacy, analyzes various frameworks for media literacy education, and elaborates on different teaching approaches. Based on this review, a conceptual framework for media literacy competencies in teacher education is proposed. Additionally, this chapter offers recommendations for best practices of media literacy in EFL classrooms as well as in EFL teachers' preparation and professional development programs.

INTRODUCTION

Recent computer and multimedia technologies have imposed fundamental evolution on the concept of literacy. Thus, the focus of literacy has grown wider until it reached a complete shift from a mere comprehension of a text into an active interpretation of the world. This shift is considered both a condition and a means of active participation in all life aspects of the 21st century. The Pacific Policy Research

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-9261-7.ch005

Center (2010) mentions that 21st century media competences include accessing, understanding, and analyzing media products as well as creating and delivering media messages. Hence, 21st century media education should focus on enhancing learners' abilities to critically evaluate and creatively produce various forms of media.

The American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) and the Partnership for 21st century Skills (2010) mention media literacy (ML) as one of the essential skills that 21st century students need to be prepared for 21st century life and work. Media literacy embedded in the P21 curriculum-skills maps focuses on two major skills. The first skill is *analyzing media* which includes identifying both how and why media messages are constructed, examining how individuals interpret messages differently, examining how values and points of view are included or excluded, examining how media can influence beliefs and behaviors, and identifying the ethical/legal issues surrounding the access and use of media. The second skill is *creating media products*. Such a skill includes utilizing the most appropriate media creation tools, characteristics and conventions, and utilizing the most appropriate expressions and interpretations in diverse, multi-cultural environments.

The current global and national media environment is one of high stakes for media literacy initiatives to prepare citizens to resist fake news and disinformation. Saleh (2009) mentions that the status of media education, which is essential to civic engagement, is low in MENA countries (Middle East & North Africa). In MENA, media could be used as a platform for fabricated reality as MENA countries lack standards for critically assessing the media. In Egypt, the social media played an essential role in the Egyptian revolution and it led to vital political and social changes. El-Labban (2012) in his book about the media during 25th-January revolution in Egypt described the Egyptian Revolution as the Facebook revolution because of the role that Facebook and other social media applications played in that revolution. Naser's study (2013) analyzed how online discussions and media coverage before the revolution enabled citizens to communicate with each other and share content online and move their revolutionary ideas from the virtual world to the streets of Egypt. The Egyptian 25th-January Revolution showed the important role of social media as a means of information sharing.

In spite of the importance of media literacy in our modern life and the necessity of incorporating media literacy in education, the Egyptian education system does not pay sufficient consideration of this. There is a lack of research of media literacy and media education in general and in the field of English as a foreign language in specific. El-Seidy's study (2005) investigated the effect of implementing a unit of a suggested media education course on developing media awareness of 35 pupils in preparatory stage in El-Menofia. Results revealed an increase in students' knowledge and skills of understanding and analyzing media. It was recommended that media education should be integrated into the Egyptian education system as an optional course in the basic education stage (primary and preparatory stage). In addition, Amer's study (2016) examined the effectiveness of applying a media literacy program through playing video games in developing criticism and analysis skills of 40 adolescents in Cairo. The sample included 20 male students and 20 female students at the age of 14-15. The researcher developed a media education program using video games. Such games included one designed by the researcher named "Play with your mind" and three famous games which are FIFA16, Call of Duty, and Grand Theft. Results revealed improvement in students' critical thinking skills due to participation in the experimental media education program.

Due to the increasing demand for developing new media skills, Elmasry and El-Nawawy (2016) confirm that there is a necessity to form educational standards for media-related studies at the levels of pre-university and university education to motivate students to be critical consumers of media. Simi-

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