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## **Multiliteracy in Three English as a Second Language (ESL) Middle School Classrooms**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigated the teaching of multiliteracy in three middle school English as a Second Language Arts classrooms. The research question was: How are English learners (ELs) developing multiliteracy - defined as critical literacy, electronic literacy, and socio-cultural literacy, if at all, in middle school ESL Language Arts classrooms? Collected data consisted of classroom observations, transcribed teacher and focus student interviews; copies of teacher and student artifacts such as handouts and student notebooks. The findings of the study suggest that teachers did not teach all aspects of multiliteracy and the students seemed to be developing mostly electronic literacy, but not so much critical and socio-cultural literacy. The implications of these findings suggest the need for professional development and in-service training on the various aspects of literacy.

For purposes of this manuscript, I use Caws (2006) definition of multiliteracy, which integrates three types of literacy, namely critical literacy, electronic literacy, and socio-cultural literacy. Caw defines these concepts as follows: Critical literacy is the ability to think critically and evaluate the credibility of the information; electronic literacy is the ability to use technology; and socio-cultural literacy is the ability to communicate and collaborate in the context of the new digital reality.

### **Technology, Literacy, and Multiliteracy**

The rise and use of information communication technologies such as the Internet have contributed a great deal to the expansion of the meaning of ‘literacy’ and to students and teachers have come to view and practice it in everyday life (Bruce, 2002; Baguley, Pullen, & Short, 2010; Duke, Schmar-Dobler, & Zhang, 2006). Digital technologies have changed and are continuing to change human interaction (Baguley et al., 2010), “...the nature of texts, as well as the ways people use and interact with texts” (Borsheim, Merritt, & Reed, 2008, p. 87). Texts are “...becoming more closely intertwined with the other modes [such as webpages or email messages], and in some respects becoming more like them” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 182).

The nature of interaction we have with digital technologies has also evolved (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Technology allows us to be more engaged and more active in what we do (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009), to have easy access to knowledge and information, and to communicate instantly (Anderson & Rainie, 2010; Purcell, 2011). These new realities and possibilities require a new set of skills not clearly defined and encompassed in the term literacy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Thus, the definition of literacy has expanded to being able to

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communicate, collaborate, interact, comprehend, read and write in the context of the new digital multimodal environments and technologies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Duke et al., 2006).

However, the term literacy may not be the right descriptor to denote all these multitude of skills, knowledge, and strategies to use with these new tools; it has been suggested that multiliteracy is a better term (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Teachers need to explicitly teach multiliteracy skills to their students (Tour, 2010) because the ability to access and use technology effectively enables individuals to be active participants in society and in everyday life (Van Dijk & Hacker, 2003). A multiliterate person is a problem solver and critical thinker; is able to use previous knowledge and skills to adapt to new technologies and literacies associated with them; is capable of using both new and old technologies; is able to find information, communicate, and collaborate in different social and cultural contexts (Anstey & Bull, 2006). In order to develop multiliteracy in the classroom, Hilton, Nicholas, and Gitsaki (2010) recommend the following:

- Teachers should base their lessons on the concepts and skills of their content area;
- Teachers should take into account students' prior knowledge and experience with technology;
- Teachers should teach students how to read different texts or representations such as videos, web pages, audio;
- Students should be exposed and should experiment with various modalities of communication, information gathering and writing such as webpages, email, forums, blogs, wikis, videos, or podcasts. Modeling and guiding students in creating and reading the different texts should happen.

### **The Present Study**

In light of the above research highlights, it makes sense for the teaching of literacy in schools to be viewed as the teaching of multiliteracy. This expanded view of literacy provides a focus of this study, which seeks to find out whether and to what extent ELs in three middle school classrooms develop multiliteracy. Thus, the purpose of this study is to look at ELs' multiliteracy development.

The research question of this study was: How are ELs developing multiliteracy - defined as critical literacy, electronic literacy, and socio-cultural literacy, if at all, in middle school ESL Language Arts classrooms? Finding answers to these questions will help teachers and teacher educators to more effectively reach and teach these students in the mainstream classrooms. ELs in U.S. schools are learning the English language, the subject matter content, and multiliteracy skills that would enable them to be successful participants in the 21st century workplace and schools (Warschauer, 2001). EL presence has dramatically increased in U.S. schools with more than 5 million in 2009/2010 school year (NCELA, 2011). In addition, unlike their native speaker peers, these students are lagging behind in terms of academic achievement (NAEP, 2013) and college readiness (Callahan & Shifrer, 2012).

## Conceptual Framework

In the 21st century, digital technology is present everywhere in society (Luke, 2002) and there is a need to develop students' multiliteracy – the ability to critically use a variety of new digital technology – to function in a quick-paced society (Frey, Fisher, & Gonzalez, 2010; Warschauer, 2001). Based on Caw's (2006) description of multiliteracy, the conceptual framework for this study suggests that the development and teaching of multiliteracy means teaching of critical, electronic, and socio-cultural literacies (Figure 1).

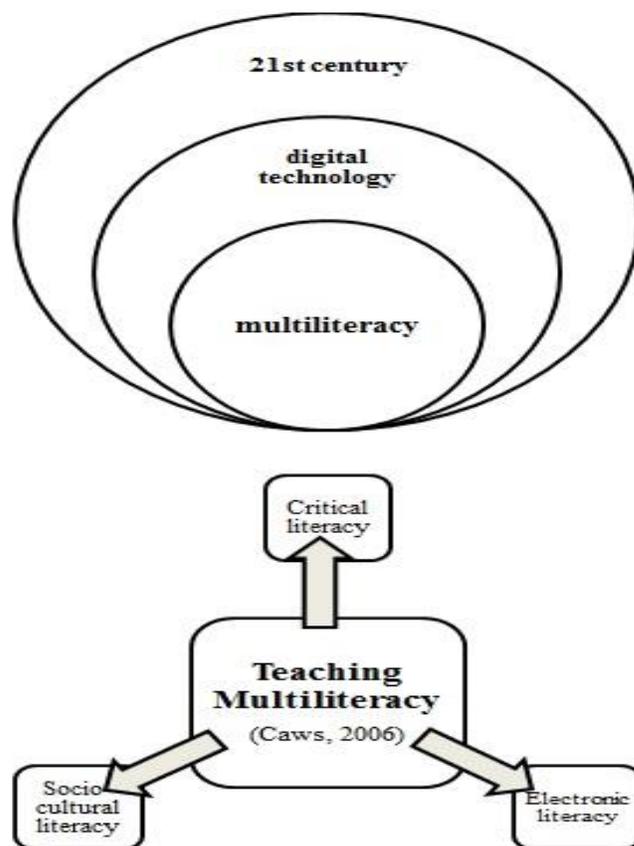


Figure 1. Teaching multiliteracy.

## Method

### Instructional setting

The study took place in three ESL classrooms at West Middle School<sup>1</sup>. West Middle School is a middle school in Hills County Public Schools, a district in a town in a Southern state. Demographic information about West Middle School, Hills County Public Schools, and U.S. schools according to publicly available data can be found in Table 1. The data shows that West Middle School was more diverse and with more low socio-economic status students, if we

<sup>1</sup> All names (places and people) in this report are pseudonyms.

consider information about free and reduced lunch as a proxy for socio-economic status, than the district. In comparison with the whole U.S. school population, West Middle School had slightly less students from low socio-economic status and comparable percentage of ELs (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

	<b>West Middle School</b>	<b>Hills County Public Schools</b>	<b>U.S. Schools</b>
School year <sup>2</sup>	2011-2012	2010-2011	2010-2011
Group	Percentage from total student population		
Male	54.6	51.1	N/A
Female	45.4	48.9	N/A
White	53.4	69.6	52
African-American	22.4	11.4	16
Hispanic	10.3	9	24
Free and reduced lunch	41.1	25.4	48
ELs	14.8	8	13
	West Middle School	Hills County Public Schools	U.S. Schools

*Table 1: West Middle School, Hills County Public Schools, and U.S. Schools Student Population*

The study, which is a part of a more extensive research on technology in middle school ESL Language Arts classrooms, looked at the three ESL teachers at West Middle School and their ESL Language Arts classes. The Language Arts block at West Middle School was the primary class where ELs learned English as well as the Language Arts content. The students in these three classes were ELs who needed help with their English language learning and they were learning both the language and the Language Arts content in the same time. The three teachers were: Ms. Jones, who taught 6th graders; Ms. Wong, who served 7th graders; and Ms. Miles, 8th graders. However, during the data collection, the three teachers decided to regroup all the ELs in their ESL Language Arts class by language proficiency level identified by the English language proficiency (ELP) test scores students had, rather than by grade level so they can better serve the students' needs. Thus, Ms. Jones taught the intermediate level; Ms. Wong, the newcomers; and Ms. Miles, the advanced.

I noticed Ms. Jones and Ms. Miles had their ESL Language Arts classes aligned in terms of Language Arts objectives: they were working on the same content units such as figurative language or types of conflict in the same time. In interviews, both Ms. Jones and Ms. Miles said they met and unit planned together for their students. Ms. Wong was not involved in this planning since she had newcomers and she planned differently focused more on the language learning rather than language learning and skill content.

<sup>2</sup> Data were available for different school years.

## Participants

The three teacher participants were all young and at the beginning of their teaching careers: Ms. Jones, 27, had five years of teaching experience; Ms. Wong, 26, had four; and Ms. Miles, 32, five years of teaching experience. All teachers had ESL teaching licensure and taught ESL classes to ELs. The study also included all ELs in the three ESL classes, but had four focus student participants. The number of focus students was limited to four, so that the researcher can focus better on their actions in class. The four students were selected so that they represent various ELP levels, grade levels, and countries of origin. The ELP overall scores that the students had could range from 1 to 6, with 1 being a novice English speaker and 6 being native-speaker like. Students with overall scores below 5 are not yet proficient in English and need ESL support.

The study also included all ELs in the three ESL classes, but had four focus student participants. The number of focus students was limited to four, so that the researcher can focus better on their actions in class. The four students were selected so that they represent various ELP levels, grade levels, and countries of origin. The ELP overall scores that the students had could range from 1 to 6, with 1 being a novice English speaker and 6 being native-speaker like. Students with overall scores below 5 are not yet proficient in English and need ESL support.

The four focus students selected for the study were: Kiano, Mei, Vihan, and Ali. Kiano, 6th grade, was 11 years old, she was from Kenya, and had an ELP score of 2.7. Mei, 7th grade, was 11 years old, she was from China, and she had an ELP of 4.6. Vihan, 7th grade, was 11 years old, he was from India, and his ELP score was 2.1. Ali, the oldest of the participants, was in 8th grade, was 14 years old, he was from Jordan, and had an ELP 2.2. Kiano, Mei, and Vihan had been in the country for less than a year while Ali had been for 2 years.

## Data Collection

Data collection consisted of classroom observations, transcribed teacher and focus student interviews; copies of teacher and student artifacts such as handouts and student notebooks. Collected evidence from multiple sources such as observations, interviews, and documents allowed me to triangulate the data (Erickson, 1986; Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

Erickson (1986) suggests that researchers spend extended time in the field. I conducted observations in the three ESL classes for a prolonged period of time. I observed for 10 weeks in the fall semester of 2012, a total of 31 different observations for one hour and 30 minutes each. I observed each teacher at least once a week, with the exception of the week of Thanksgiving week when there were only two days of school. Table 2 details the number of observations for each teacher.

Teacher	Number of Observations	Number of Observation Hours
Ms. Jones	12	18
Ms. Wong	9	13.5
Ms. Miles	10	15
Total	31	46

*Table 2: Number of observation and observation hours*

I interviewed both teachers and students following a standardized open-ended questions interview guide as described by Rossman and Rallis (2012) both for teacher and student interviews. The reason I chose to do a standardized interview format was to make sure I addressed the same topics with all the participants to elicit their meaning making and interpretations (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The interview questions stemmed from my research questions and from what I observed in the field. Table 3 provides details about the dates and the number of teacher and student interviews.

<b>Participant (Teacher/Student)</b>	<b>Number of Interviews</b>	<b>Interview dates</b>
Ms. Jones (Teacher)	2	Interview 1: 10/26/2012 Interview 2: 12/06/2012 Follow up interview: 2/13/2013
Ms. Wong (Teacher)	2	Interview 1: 10/26/2012 Interview 2: 12/06/2012 Follow up interview: 2/13/2013
Ms. Miles (Teacher)	2	Interview 1: 10/26/2012 Interview 2: 12/06/2012 Follow up interview: 2/12/2013
Kiano (Student)	2	Interview 1: 11/14/2012 Interview 2: 11/28/2012
Mei (Student)	2	Interview 1: 11/16/2012 Interview 2: 11/29/2012
Vihan (Student)	2	Interview 1: 11/19/2012 Interview 2: 11/29/2012
Ali (Student)	2	Interview 1: 11/14/2012 Interview 2: 12/06/2012

*Table 3: Interviews*

Artifacts were collected either in hard copies or electronic copies, such as PowerPoint presentations, handouts or students' notebook. All artifacts were dated, digitized if they were not in digital form, and organized chronologically in a folder dedicated to documents.

### **Data analysis**

Data analysis happened simultaneously with data collection (Creswell, 2012): during data collection, 1) I reflected on my process of observation, note taking, and write ups and 2) I kept track of data collection, data interpretation, and methodological decisions (which may take the forms of analytic memos to myself) in a methodological journal (Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

I did the write up of my observation notes 24 hours after the observation or/and before the next observation session, whichever came first. While doing the write-up, I also wrote analytic memos to myself that informed the next observation session. The analytic memos contained interpretations of the data and identified possible emergent themes. Analytic memos enabled identification of emergent themes and possible assertions for use in the data analysis process. At the end of the data collection, the collected data was uploaded in a data-processing

software, read in its entirety, labeled and then organized by emerging patterns and ideas. Then the data was read and re-read again and analyzed to identify confirming and disconfirming evidence for the emerging themes (Erickson, 1986). Peer debriefing was used to check themes in the data I collected (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The peer debriefing consisted of identifying and organizing the data according to the emergent themes in a selection of data: two observations, one teacher interview, and one student interview. Peer debriefing was then checked against my themes for consistency.

## Findings

Caws (2006) definition of multiliteracy was used as a criterion for looking at the three ESL classes and the students' multiliteracy development. A presence or an absence of activities and student skills that addressed multiliteracy was considered a presence or a lack of multiliteracy development. The students in the three ESL Language Arts classes were developing some multiliteracy skills, but mostly electronic literacy. They were lacking strong critical literacy skills in the context of digital technology. No evidence of developing social-cultural literacy was observed being developed in the classroom.

### Electronic Literacy

Electronic literacy, as one aspect of the multiliteracy, is defined as the ability to use technology; (Caws, 2006). The students in all three ESL Language Arts classes and the four focal students had some electronic literacy. Examples of electronic literacy that were observed include being able to construct a PowerPoint presentation, to use Internet sites to practice specific skills, and to access tests and functions on iPods.

For example, in one of Ms. Miles' class, students worked on their PowerPoint presentations. Each student had his own device: a desktop or a laptop. Some of the students stayed in class, but two of them went to the library to use the desktops there. While working on their presentations, the students changed font color and size, selected different backgrounds for their slides, added additional slides, or checked their slides by playing a slide show. Moreover, students knew how to insert forms in their slides to create a Venn Diagram, or asked their peers if they needed help with that. Figure 2 is a slide created by Ali. The slide had a variety of fonts, that suggests Ali played with the font size and font colors, and a Venn Diagram. Ali got help with inserting the Venn Diagram from one of his peers. By looking at this slide, one can conclude that Ali had some electronic literacy that allowed him to create this presentation.

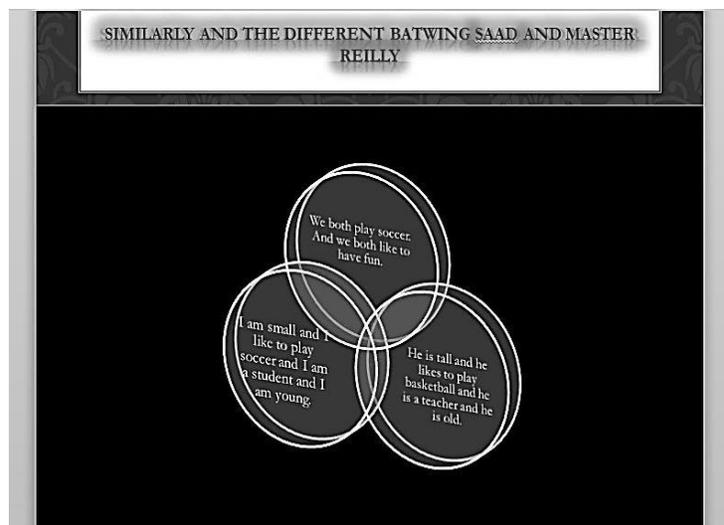


Figure 2. A Slide from Ali's PowerPoint Presentation (Ali, 09/25/2012)

In interviews, when prompted, the students (Mei, Vihan, and Ali) described themselves as comfortable using PowerPoint, with the exception of Kiano who acknowledged she knew how to use it "...a little bit" (Kiano interview, 11/28/2012). The students learned to use PowerPoint either in school or in their home countries. Ms. Miles told me the students came to her classroom with some prior knowledge of how to use PowerPoint: "Enough of them come with knowledge of PowerPoint and they're using it already. I often rely on them to teach the other students how to use it" (Ms. Miles interview, 12/06/2012). During the class in which the students were working on PowerPoint presentations, I noticed that Ali was asking one of his peers to show him how to insert circles: "How do you put circles on it?" (Ms. Miles classroom observation, 09/25/2012). As Ms. Miles suggested the students indeed knew how to use PowerPoint and helped each other.

The students were not only able to use the PowerPoint, but they seemed to be able to use iPods to record themselves and to access recordings from iTunes; write on the classroom digital board and change the color of the pen; log in to school computers using their student accounts; log in and navigate language learning websites such as [www.raz-kids.com](http://www.raz-kids.com), [www.littlebridge.com](http://www.littlebridge.com), or [www.spellingcity.com](http://www.spellingcity.com); use Google Images or Google Translate; or use the iPad camera to take pictures for fun. If there were students who stumbled or got lost in their use of technology, they usually asked for help from their peers or from their teachers.

Overall from classroom observations, the students, regardless of their English language proficiency level, seemed to have a good grasp of how to use the available technology for the tasks assigned. For example, in Ms. Wong's class of newcomer students, the students were comfortable navigating the different websites they could choose from to practice their language ([www.raz-kids.com](http://www.raz-kids.com), [www.littlebridge.com](http://www.littlebridge.com), or [www.spellingcity.com](http://www.spellingcity.com)). Students seemed to be able to navigate the iPods to listen to spellings tests recorded in iTunes without much difficulty: they turned on the iPods, plugged in the headphones, identified and opened iTunes, and chose their assigned tests. From interviews, students said they felt comfortable using PowerPoint,

Word, the digital board, and the iPods. They said they learned how to use these either at school in their home country or at school in the US. The teachers also mentioned that the students came with good prior knowledge from their elementary schools:

“We were doing an “All About Me” project and I noticed all the kids from the elementary school, Westover [an elementary school that feeds into West Middle School], were very comfortable using PowerPoint. ...They just seemed very proficient with most of the software” (Ms. Jones interview, 10/26/2012).

Ms. Wong also suggested the students were exposed to technology with family and/or friends and that they were fast learners:

“...iPods are so similar to most smartphones. ... a lot of friends or parents or cousins of these students have that.... At the beginning, I had to say exactly where to go. ‘When you want to get to the audio recordings, you go to music.’ But I didn't have to teach them very much how to turn – there are so few buttons.... I haven't had to do much explicit instruction in using that” (Ms. Wong interview, 12/06/2012).

Ms. Jones mentioned that the students had exposure to technology at home and brought that background knowledge at school: “...they're all very comfortable using the Internet because I think that's immediately what they use when they go home, the Internet” (Ms. Jones interview, 10/26/2012). From interviews, students noted they did not have their own smart phones at home, but one family member might have one and they used it.

Ms. Miles suggested that there might be a digital divide of access between some of her students: “...there's probably a few that might have computers but not Internet, or just don't have a computer, Internet, or printer, you know, just don't have it connected” (Ms. Miles interview, 10/26/2012). So, there seemed to be a digital divide of access as described by Attewell (2001) and Ferro, Helbig, & Gil-Garcia (2011) between some of the ELs the three ESL teachers had. However, the digital divide of access did not seem to translate in a gap of usage ability at school. Ms. Miles thought the students with no or limited technology at home could still create documents or PowerPoint presentations, skills they were learning in school, but those students might not have access and/or experience using Facebook or Skype. Ms. Jones was also aware of the digital divide of access and also seemed to know who the students who did not have access to technology at home were “...I have students like Kiano. She's never had a computer before in her life, and so we're starting from the ground and building up on – with her, and she had no idea how to log into the computer” (Ms. Jones interview, 10/26/2012). Kiano herself in one of her interviews when asked what technology she had at home she admitted to not having a computer. Ms. Jones who had Kiano in her ESL Language Arts class during the study, even after changing the groups noted,

“...she's catching on very quickly. She's in a keyboarding class, so I think that's exposing her to technology almost every other day, ..., but it was just really interesting seeing the difference between her and someone like Mishu or Mei [pseudonyms], who probably use the computer every day for games or Skyping or studying English or whatever. It's just a part of their routine, and with Kiano, it's like it's something special.” (Ms. Jones interview, 10/26/2012).

Ms. Jones noticed the quick catch up that Kiano was doing in terms of electronic literacy due to the available technology at school closing the digital divide of usage due to a digital divide of access.

Kiano was indeed catching up and learning quickly. One day, in the computer lab, when the students were working on their typing using a typing program, Kiano was helping another student navigate the program. Kiano was coaching her peer where to type user name and password and how to navigate the program.

Students used the technology at home differently from the way they engaged with technology at school (Prensky, 2001; Ware, 2008). Students in this study mentioned that they used the computers and phones available at home for playing games or communicating with family, but they also used it to practice math, look up for words in bilingual dictionary or check homework assignments on school's website.

In interviews, students acknowledged they were slow at typing. Kiano noted that "...sometimes I'm a slow typer and I don't want to type" (Kiano interview, 11/28/2012). Mei also suggested typing is something she needs to work on: "I'm not very good, but I can type things...I can't do like very fast typing" (Mei interview, 11/29/2012). Typing and keyboarding do not necessarily help the students learn English, but it is one of the electronic literacies they were developing. The teachers also noticed the students needed to develop the skill of typing faster and that was why they decided to start the typing Fridays, which was an initiative the three teachers had:

"As we've been working on technology, that's something we've noticed that is impeding their ability to use technology – speed of typing and recognizing keys on the keyboard. So starting this Friday.... we're going to practice just typing skills to try to bring up speed on that" (Ms. Miles interview, 12/06/2012).

Ms. Jones resonated with Ms. Miles and mentioned: "it takes them forever to type things because they haven't really ever been taught how to properly type before" (Ms. Jones interview, 10/26/2012).

### **Critical Literacy**

Critical literacy is the ability to assess and think critically about what one uses or reads in an electronic or paper-based format (Caws, 2006). The students in this study needed to work on their critical literacy in the context of digital technology. Critical literacy refers to the ability to question sources and identify reliable information, biases, and propaganda techniques; distinguish between fact and opinion; identify main ideas and important details. Ms. Jones expressed this need based on her informal observations of her students: "They don't realize they have to analyze it [an article they are reading] and pick information out and really sort through the unimportant details and find those key points.... but I think that they're seeing that there is value in technology, but it also requires some effort on their part, that they can't just type in the question, find the answer and that's it" (Ms. Jones interview, 10/26/2012). Later in the interview Ms. Jones added: "They're just not comfortable sitting and really picking out those important things. They want the answer now" (Ms. Jones interview, 10/26/2012). Ms. Jones noticed the lack of critical literacy her students had when reading online and how the students' perceptions

of technology which provided easy and immediate answers might not help with students' critical literacy. Ms. Miles expressed the same concern about students' critical literacy:

“So, if they're finding a website, is there a bias or is this what I'm looking for? Is this a reliable source, rather than just searching whatever and grabbing the first thing that comes. Okay, what are some sources that we know we can trust and how do we find those rather than just what's the easy way?” (Ms. Miles interview, 10/26/2012).

Ms. Miles not only expressed her concerns about critical literacy related to technology, but she also identified specific discrete skills her students need to work on to develop critical literacy. The students mentioned in their interviews they used technology at school to find information on the Internet on different topics as required by their teachers, but did not mention anything about the difficulty or ease of those tasks.

No use or development of critical literacy in a technology based format was noticed during the study. It may be possible that these teachers might have addressed and worked on critical literacy in the other ESL classes they were teaching, specifically sheltered Civics or Science or in mainstream classes where they collaborated with content area teachers. However, there were instances of development of critical literacy in a print-based format. During a reading activity in Ms. Miles' class, the students were reading a short story and together with Ms. Miles they discussed what happened in the story, how the character might have felt and what the students thought the character might have done next. Ms. Jones had literature circles in her classroom and she provided students with various tasks. Students from the same group were to read the same chapter and each student had a different task. For example, in Figure 3, the students were asked to identify fragments from what they were reading:

“Your job is to locate a few special sections of the text that your group would like to hear read aloud. The idea is to help people remember some interesting, powerful, funny, puzzling, or important sections of the text. You decide which passages are worth hearing, and jot plans for how they should be shared. You can read passages aloud yourself, ask someone else to read them, or have people read them silently and then discuss”.

Literature Circle Role Sheet *Ms. Jones*

# Literary Luminary

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Book \_\_\_\_\_ Author \_\_\_\_\_

*Chapters*  
Page Numbers Covered in This Literature Circle \_\_\_\_\_

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Your job is to locate a few special sections of the text that your group would like to hear read aloud. The idea is to help people remember some interesting, powerful, funny, puzzling, or important sections of the text. You decide which passages are worth hearing, and jot plans for how they should be shared. You can read passages aloud yourself, ask someone else to read them, or have people read them silently and then discuss.

	Location	Reason for Picking	Plan for Reading
1.	Page # _____ Paragraph # _____		
2.	Page # _____ Paragraph # _____		
3.	Page # _____ Paragraph # _____		
4.	Page # _____ Paragraph # _____		

Possible reasons for picking a passage:

<i>Important</i>	<i>Surprising</i>	<i>Funny</i>
<i>Confusing</i>	<i>Informative</i>	<i>Controversial</i>
<i>Well-written</i>	<i>Thought-provoking</i>	<i>Uses repeated sounds</i>

<http://www.mr-anderson.com>

Figure 3. Literature Circle Role (Ms. Jones' class)

### Socio-cultural Literacy

Socio-cultural literacy as a component of multiliteracy refers to the ability to interact, communicate, and collaborate in the context of the new digital reality (Caws, 2006) in social media, blogs, chats, or online collaboration projects. No observations of socio-cultural literacy development in the context of new technology was noticed being developed in the classroom during this study.

If we consider social media (email, Facebook, Twitter, or Skype) as a medium to develop socio-cultural literacy, access to these websites in school is limited. When asked if they were allowed to check Facebook at school, all four focal students said no. Ali and Mei had an email account, but admitted they did not use it regularly. Kiano, who did not have any new technology

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at home and was not exposed to it before coming to West Middle School, when asked if she had a Facebook, she did not seem to even know what Facebook was. It should be noted that the students interviewed for this study did not have access to personal cell phones. This may be related to their age and grade level.

When prompted if the students were allowed to go to any websites at school, the three teachers noted they were specific about which websites or applications students could use. Ms. Wong noted that: “it needs to be used explicitly for my learning goals for that day” (Wong interview, 12/06/2012). Ms. Miles agreed with Ms. Wong and said: “When they're on the computer, generally it's for a specific purpose. They should only be on whatever that website is or creating a document” (Ms. Miles interview, 12/06/2012). Ms. Jones suggested that she provided the students approved lists of websites where they needed to go during an activity.

When prompted how technology was used at home, the four focal students mentioned: play games, check homework for other classes than the ESL Language Arts class, check words in dictionary, and communicate with family. The teachers seemed to be aware of the students' home technology use. Ms. Jones said: “They're probably going home and playing games or using, I don't know, Google or something to look up stuff for homework” (Ms. Jones interview, 10/26/2012). She also noted that some of the students used Skype to communicate with family from their native countries and that she might try using Skype in class, too:

“I know a lot of my kids Skype with family from other countries... but I would like to Skype somehow this year either with another classroom or another teacher maybe in a different county ... because I think some of the kids are not familiar with Skype and how it's really useful and it allows you to communicate and connect with people....” (Ms. Jones interview, 10/26/2012).

Ms. Miles believed half of her students knew how to use social media, specifically Facebook: “Social networking is also big for about half of them. They've mentioned that they're checking Facebook on a regular basis (Ms. Miles interview, 10/26/2012).

## **Conclusions and Implications**

The findings for this study cannot be generalized to a larger scale, as data collection was limited to the three teachers and their ESL Language Art classes. The ELs and the focal students in the three ESL classrooms seem to have developed some electronic literacy. The use of student created PowerPoint presentations, language websites, and typing programs addressed the electronic literacy. Critical literacy, even though developed in a print-based environment could be extended to an electronic medium, especially since the teachers seem aware of the need to develop their students' critical literacy as they use the Internet. Socio-cultural literacy seems to be more difficult to develop because of limited access by students to social media. However, websites and social media sites that are similar to Facebook as well as blogs can be used in the classroom. Assignments that require students to participate and be present on websites and social media sites outside of school should be limited. There was a digital divide of access that existed between some of the students and the teachers seemed to already aware of it.

In terms of ways to teach multiliteracy as identified by Hilton et al. (2010), the three teachers base their lessons on Language Arts concepts and skills and take into account students' prior knowledge with technology. However, students do not seem to read different texts or representations such as videos, web pages, and audio and do not seem to work with various modalities of communication.

The findings of this study suggest the ELs were developing multiliteracy in a limited way, which might be problematic in the context of today's world. The three ESL teachers did not seem to be aware of multiliteracy as a central objective of the ESL classroom and not numerous instances of multiliteracy teaching were observed. In interviews, the three teachers did not specifically mention the idea of multiliteracy or the variety of skills and knowledge a multiliterate person needs. In terms of objectives for the ESL classes, Ms. Miles said she was trying to balance language and content learning; Ms. Wong mentioned she wanted her students to be prepared for the mainstream classroom; and Ms. Jones talked about raising the language proficiency test scores. One of the reasons the three teachers might not have considered developing multiliteracy at the center of their ESL Language Arts classroom objectives was because there were other objectives which seemed of more immediate importance and application such as the yearly English proficiency tests or ELs being in mainstream classrooms for their content area classes with no support.

Multiliteracy is one of the important objectives of schools today and for the ESL classroom. Therefore, greater emphasis should be placed on teaching the skills and strategies that support it. All levels of student multiliteracy need to be developed: electronic literacy, critical literacy, and social-cultural literacy. These three teachers and, perhaps, others would benefit from becoming more aware of multiliteracy and the importance of multiliteracy to student success. Professional development and professional days in which the topic of multiliteracy is tackled should be made available to the teachers.

Multiliteracy could be developed in the classroom in the following ways.

- Electronic literacy can be developed by teaching and allowing students to use the available technology for various instructional tasks, such as writing an essay in a word-processing software; creating PowerPoint presentations to show what they learned; navigating websites to look for information; blogging about a novel or a reading that was done in class; creating videos to show content understanding and comprehension; using electronic readers and web-based reading materials.
- Critical literacy can be developed in print-based environments, but it must be extended to an electronic medium. Students will be using forms of digital technology that we cannot even imagine and need to be able to distinguish between the good, bad, and the ugly. Students can review various websites and decide their trustworthiness; read online articles and identify points of view and persuasive techniques; read product reviews and decide their worth; or research online.
- Socio-cultural literacy might be more difficult to develop if school districts have social media sites such as Facebook blocked. However, websites and social media sites that are similar to Facebook or other social networking websites and applications as well as blogs and wikis can be used in the classroom so that

students can learn responsible usage and see the connections between technology and their own path to school success. Assignments that require students to participate and be present on websites and social media sites outside of school should be limited, however, since there might be a digital divide of access for some students.

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