Critical Media Literacy: A Curriculum for Middle School English Teachers

Jennifer J. Hale
University of San Francisco, jenjeanhale@gmail.com

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Critical Media Literacy: 
A Curriculum for Middle School English Teachers

A Field Project Presented to 
The Faculty of the School of Education 
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment 
Of the Requirements for the Degree 
Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

by Jennifer Hale 
December 2014
Critical Media Literacy:
A Curriculum for Middle School English Teachers

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

by
Jennifer Hale
December, 2014

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this field project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:

[Signature]
Instructor/ Chairperson

[Signature]
Date

December 19, 2014
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CHAPTER I:
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

According to Silverblatt (2008), Americans watch, on average, four hours and thirty-nine minutes of television each day, which equals seventy days of non-stop viewing per year; this is more than double the amount of time people spend socializing. As interests, engagement and needs with media continue to increase, concerns also continue to rise over its impact. The media sells more than just products and entertainment. It also sells values, images and ideas. In many ways, the media defines who we are and who we should be.

Often, who we are or who we should be is formed from a biased perspective because “media promotes the dominant ideology of a culture” (Silverblatt, 2008, p. 98). This dominant ideology consists of a variety of traits, including, but not limited to, favoring white, middle and upper class, heterosexual, and male populations. As a result, the media provides favorable representations of these dominant groups, while hindering or ignoring others. Those who fit outside this box are often negatively stereotyped while those inside this box are presented as intelligent, attractive and idealized.

What is perhaps most concerning for media critics is the impact these messages have on those who are tuned in most- adolescents. According to Ahuja (2013) it is estimated teens spend over seven and a half hours per day watching TV, listening to music, going on the internet, social networking and playing video games. Although teens are heavily engaged with media (Gut & Wan, 2008), research has found adolescents are not critically aware of these offset messages (Ashley, Lyden & Fasbiner, 2012). As new consumers who are still developing critical-thinking skills, and who are still formulating
their own individual identities and values, “most teenagers are sensitive to peer pressure and find it difficult to resist or even question the dominant cultural messages perpetuated and reinforced by the media” (Kilbourne, 1990). If adolescents accept what media offers at face value, they will not only continue to strive for unattainable perfection, but will internalize various stereotypes and generalizations, positive and negative, of themselves and of others.

Although all adolescents should engage in media education, as a future teacher of English language learners (ELLs), I argue media education is particularly crucial and beneficial for these students. As part of a minority, often marginalized population, our ELLs are at high risk for internalizing negative representations of themselves, based on media influences. For example, research has shown, among Latino adolescents, the longer Latino adolescents live in the U.S., the more aware they become of negative Latino stereotypes in the media (Rivadeneyra, 2006). This implies that, over time, our immigrant populations internalize negative representations of themselves through media influences.

Media education should be implemented in classrooms with ELLs in order for all students to become more conscious, critical consumers of media, as well as to create counter-narratives to speak out against its problematic messages. Teachers who engage in media education not only create higher critical awareness and action against the social inequities that play out in our everyday viewing of media, but they also open doors for ELLs to feel liberated, successful, and motivated in their school and community (Choudhury & Share, 2012; Vargas, 2006).
Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to provide middle school English teachers, who will likely have a mixed class of students, ranging from native speakers to high-intermediate and advanced ELLs, with an introductory curriculum for critical media literacy. The curriculum focuses on building students’ English language proficiency and critical-thinking skills through media-based content.

By focusing on critical aspects of media literacy, teachers will help students develop the critical-thinking skills needed to analyze complex media messages as well as understand that media messages are socially constructed, and therefore arbitrary. Through this process, students begin to see how media is manipulated to convey particular messages for specific purposes. The teacher’s goal is to facilitate students’ understanding of media in order for students to become more conscientious and aware of their own usage of media as well as develop a deeper understanding of the effects of media messages.

In the project, teachers also provide the space for students to create their own narratives, proving how and why problematic media messages are untrue. Once students learn how messages are created, and for what purposes, students will create their own media messages to counter their findings. This final step validates students’ personal experiences and identities, while providing a space of necessary creativity for students to feel proud and liberated about their identities.

Theoretical Framework

The following three theories frame this project: critical theory, constructivist theory, and sociocultural theory. Each has a different role within the curriculum in
relation to content, teaching approach, and language acquisition, respectively. Critical theory requires that students question the various social inequities within society, in order to disrupt power binaries and enact change. This theory sets the foundation for the content of the curriculum, critical media literacy. Constructivist theory provides a general view of how learning occurs; this relates to the teaching approach taken within the curriculum. Students must be active, social, and collaborative participants (as opposed to passive receivers) in their learning. The third theory, sociocultural theory, posits a socially-mediated construct of language acquisition. As such, it establishes that language learning is more conducive in social, collaborative environments. A more detailed explanation of each theory is described below.

**Critical Theory**

According to Horkeimer (1993, cited by Bohman, 2013) critical theory, which was initially inspired by Marxist thought, must “liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them” (p.21). Critical theory, then, is an analysis of social systems or social inquiry that examines the various dominating forces that keep particular groups of people in power while hindering others. The goal of such analysis is to pinpoint problematic binaries in order to free those who have been dominated, and thus create a more democratic society.

Critical theory also resonates with the work of Freire and Macedo (1987) who argued that in order for one to truly understand the cycles of oppression in which one lives, participants must develop critical consciousness by examining themselves in relation to their various communities. In order to do this, participants examine their own
life through consciousness-raising experiences, placing themselves within the broader society, and examining the relationships they hold within these various spaces.

It is important to note that even proponents of critical theory have various viewpoints and criticism for its use. For example, Bohman (2013) argued that critical theory has been loosely defined, leaving numerous ways in which constructs such as power, dominance, and control, can be critically analyzed. To explore all of them at once would be an impossible undertaking. As a result, many educators and theorists narrow in on subtopics of critical theory, such as critical race theory or critical gender theory. In relation to this project, critical media literacy will be used as a narrower and more manageable means by which to engage in critical theory with students.

In critical media literacy (CML), participants explore how the media, in particular, reinforces dominance and power. For example, within CML, students might examine their own experiences in relation to experiences depicted on television or within a genre of music. Because Western media often represents Western ideologies, in CML, students realize their positions of power or authority, or may realize their positions of weakness or subordination. It is essential, however, that teachers communicate with students these two binaries are not mutually exclusive; all people have complex, multi-layered identities that travel in and out of these spaces. Depending upon context, social situation, and individual identity, all people experience varying degrees of power and subordination.

Bohman also noted that critical theory, if used incorrectly, has the potential to recreate the dominance that it so strongly stands against. Often, teachers become so passionate in examining these power controls, they end up forcing students to accept their
own interpretations or agenda. This not only mirrors a banking model to teaching, where the educator is the sole holder of knowledge, but also forces students to remain subordinate and accepting of the very control they should be critically examining.

I have chosen critical theory as the foundation for the content of my curriculum because it provides the lens needed to engage in CML. Because the media is detrimental to adolescents and marginalized populations, this lens provides a way for students to understand how these problematic views are constructed. Critical theory also provides a space for multiple voices to be heard and multiple opinions to be validated.

**Constructivist Theory**

According to Mordechai (2009), constructivist theory, developed from the work of Piaget, Vygotsky and Freire, resides in the process of obtaining knowledge. From their work, we have learned knowledge is not only individual or learned in one’s mind, but rather, that knowledge is also shaped by the social and cultural experiences in which we witness and participate. In other words, much of what we believe, know, and accept comes from the experiences we share with others, and does not come solely from our own individual consciousness. Thus, maximized learning occurs when collaboration, social interaction, and inquiry take place. This is not to say learning only occurs through social interaction. On the contrary, it is these moments of collaboration and social interaction that influence and build upon the individual consciousness.

Adopting a constructivist theory of learning has significant ramifications for pedagogy. Unlike more traditional approaches, such as the banking model, where the teacher may lecture to students, giving them the information to be memorized and repeated at a later date, it is common for constructivist methods to be structured through a
hands-on, long-term project or study. According to Hubbard (2012), a constructivist teacher facilitates and guides students through learning, providing scaffolding, resources and necessary building blocks, but over time, backs away, allowing students to discuss, explore, create, and draw their own conclusions. This is not to say a teacher will accept any answer by students and have an *anything goes* approach. Rather, if students are off track, the teacher will facilitate, through questions or open discussion, to collectively work through the issue at hand. Hubbard also stresses that in true constructivist environments, students are not only active, engaged and critical participants, but they receive the necessary tools from the teacher to learn how to be.

Critics of constructivist methods argue that teachers become too hands-off, resulting in students aimlessly having to teach themselves, or worse, to not learn at all (Hubbard, 2012). However, constructivists argue their methods may be misinterpreted, based on misconceptions about how teaching should look. For many teachers, who are accustomed to having full control of the classroom, constructivist approaches appear as ineffective; students are not truly learning if they are not directly and explicitly told the information. However, Lattuca (2006) in an article responding to criticism, stated, “Constructivist pedagogy doesn’t relieve the teacher of the responsibility of teaching. Teaching is not delivering content. It is the act of designing experiences that enable learning” (p. 356). In other words, constructivist teachers carefully design lessons, embedded with student interaction and engagement, to foster learning. Therefore, they must properly scaffold and plan, be active and aware, and must also know when to step back and let students take control; on the contrary to assumptions, constructivist teachers
are perhaps more actively involved in the classroom due to the constant negotiation necessary to provide the right support for student learning.

I have chosen constructivist theory for the project for two reasons. One is its relation to the content, CML. If I am to engage effectively and successfully with CML, then I must create the open and comfortable space that allows students to bring their experiences and points of views to the table. Otherwise I run the risk of taking over the classroom. The second reason connects to language acquisition, which will further be discussed through sociocultural theory in the following section.

**Sociocultural Theory**

Sociocultural theory views learning as a mediated process (Mitchell & Miles, 2004). As individuals we negotiate or mediate between what we know intrinsically and what influences and teaches us extrinsically. Children, for example, are taught to use various tools, like language, by people who have already mastered them. Without help, or without being socially engaged, children will not fully develop language nor will they fully master other skills and knowledge that are often passed down by others. We must have contact with people and communities in order to learn. Like constructivist theory, sociocultural theory views language learning as a social, face-to-face process which, in return, influences and builds upon mental understanding.

This also includes the process of microgenesis. Microgenesis refers to the development of thought or knowledge that occurs within mediated situations, usually involving at least one expert and one novice. Humans of all ages, including adults, can gain additional information through these local, contextualized situations. In regards to language, this means ELLs have the opportunity to gain additional language input (from
expert native speakers or more proficient peers) as well as comprehension-based tools and new ways of thinking. In other words, it is through collaborative activities, and within authentic communicative contexts, that ELLs improve their English proficiency.

Lev Vygotsky’s theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which falls under sociocultural theory, also states that in order for learners gain knowledge, including language, the learner must be guided or facilitated to a level just beyond their current understanding. In order to get from current understanding, point A, to a new, higher level understanding, point B, scaffolded steps must be taken to help reach that target. This process is also known as the formula (i + 1) where i is the current knowledge one holds and 1 is the place just beyond that current knowledge.

Sociocultural theory reminds the teacher that language is not a solely intrinsic process. Students cannot learn a language by filling in worksheets or reading a textbook. The teacher must provide language input and opportunities for dialogue so that the highest gains can be made in authentic, real life, communicative environments. Constructivist methods provide the proper space for students to gain these opportunities. In addition, Vygotsky’s ZPD reminds teachers to not only be aware of students’ current proficiency levels, but to properly guide, yet challenge students through the language learning process.

**Significance of the Project**

Adolescents spend the majority of their afterschool hours engaging with media. However, according to Gut & Wan (2008), less than half of adolescents receive any form of control or guidance from parents in relation to their media use. Although schools in the US are beginning to implement media as a form of literacy to be learned in academic...
contexts (Silverblatt, 2008) approaches and implementation are still new and developing. The project provides an introductory curriculum for middle school teachers to address this growing need and to begin implementing media literacy with students.

Because adolescents are actively engaged with media but do not know how to maturely engage with it, the curriculum provides introductory material to develop critical-thinking skills related to media viewing. Students, as a result, will make more informed decisions when on their own time, in relation to their media use. These skills are not mutually exclusive to media, however, but can carry over to other academic subject areas. This includes developing problem-solving, critical-thinking, and analysis skills.

In addition, when students create media, they learn additional skills (such as how to create web-pages or blogs, or use applications like Word and Powerpoint). By asking students to create media, they develop a different expectation of themselves, that they are creative and innovative and not passive followers or copiers of information. Creating projects that also rely on collaborative work, helps students learn to get along with others, an important skill set, particularly in middle school. All of these additional skills are relative to the 21st century both within education and within the job market.

The media itself also provides a variety of input for ELLs. Research shows that multimodal input aids in language comprehension (Whiting & Granoff, 2012). In other words, when material is provided to students in different ways, there is higher access to comprehension. The media, particularly movies, television and commercials, also provide pragmatic and conversational language input to ELLs.
Lastly, CML provides students with an increased sense of pride and empowerment. Many ELLs come from a marginalized minority as second language learners and come from different racial backgrounds than those idolized in the media. Providing all students with the voices to break these generalizations apart gives power, pride and validation to their personal and social identities.

Teachers who implement CML in their classrooms provide an engaging, rich and relevant context for student learning to take place. When students are interested in the content and are provided with multiple forms of information (such as visually, in writing, and through group discussion), multiple intelligences are addressed, and as a result, more students are able to gain access and understand the academic material. Equally important, teachers also take part in shaping students to not only become better informed of the social inequities and social hierarchies in their everyday lives, but in shaping students to see themselves as active agents of change. The role of a teacher is not limited to teaching subject area content but extends to creating democratic and responsible citizens for the future. CML addresses these necessities for teachers, as it is both academically rigorous and critically transformative.

**Definition of Terms**

- *Channels/ Forms of Communication, of Media*: Both terms refer to the various ways messages can be sent to viewers of media. These include: television, radio, the internet, music, video games, etc.

- *Critical*: I use the term *critical* in two distinct ways. When referring to critical media literacy, critical theory or critical pedagogy, *critical* is used as a verb in direct relation to social and power binaries- to *critique* or to evaluate. When
referring to critical-thinking skills, I use critical to refer to general intellect and deeper-level thinking.

- **Critical Media Literacy or CML**: I use the term and acronym interchangeably throughout the project; both refer to the analysis of media messages as they relate to critical theory.

- **Message(s)**: In the context of media literacy, messages refer to both the explicit and implicit information sent to viewers or consumers through various forms of media. An example of an explicit message includes the list of features on a brand new 2014 Dodge Ram; the muscular man driving the durable-looking truck through rugged terrain sends an implicit message that trucks are masculine, and thus should be driven by males.

- **Multiple Literacies and Multi-literate**: Multiple literacies refer to the various forms with which one can become literate. This includes written information as well as visual and audio information. To be multi-literate is the ability to critically analyze and evaluate messages in a combination of these forms.

- **Reading**: Throughout the project, I refer to reading in two similar ways. One sense is literal- reading print. The other is related to reading media. In this sense, I refer to reading as a means to decipher, analyze and interpret media messages, even if not in print. (However, I would argue the skills needed to read both forms, print and non-print media, are the same.)
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature review provides research evidence in order to demonstrate how media literacy, CML, and media-based projects can benefit and positively impact ELLs. It is organized into three sections, each emphasizing these different benefits. The first section is Improvement in Language Comprehension; here, four studies are reviewed. Within the studies, students improved particular areas of language development in relation to reading, writing, listening and/or speaking. The second section is Increased Feelings of Pride, Confidence and Motivation; one study provides a cautionary warning to teachers of media literacy, followed by three additional studies that demonstrate how CML, embedded in critical theory, has specifically provided students with feelings of empowering. The third is Additional Skills Gained; in the four studies reviewed, students who engaged in media-based projects learned critical-thinking skills as well as how to conduct their own media, thus developing additional and relevant skills for the 21st century.

Each of these topics are divided and discussed below. However, many of these studies overlap into other subsections. This is to say, one benefit was not mutually exclusive of another; some studies, although categorized under one section, demonstrated success in others as well. I chose to place studies in particular sections based upon my conclusions for which study most closely, or best fit, the section.
Review of the Literature

Improvement in Language Comprehension

When students are provided with multiple forms of information, such as visual, audio and in written forms, their comprehension increases. The studies in this section highlight the particular ways in which the media provides additional language input and increases students’ understanding. Most of the studies here do not address the critical aspects of media literacy; rather, they examine if the media itself can benefit students’ understanding of particular language areas. The following four studies reaffirm the effectiveness of media on students’ language comprehension. The first study by Whiting and Granoff (2010) addresses reading comprehension. The second study (Ajayi, 2008) and third (Markham, 1999) address vocabulary building. The fourth and final study by Bahrani and Shu Sim (2012) addresses speaking proficiency. All studies demonstrate how multimodal media forms increase students’ proficiency and production within these language areas.

Whiting and Granoff (2010) conducted a study with thirty seven college-level ELLs to determine the effects of additional input on the comprehension of a textual story. They aimed to determine which would be more successful: a reading of the story followed by a small group discussion, a reading of the story followed a small group discussion and audio input, or a reading of the story followed by a small group discussion and audio and visual (video) input.

All students read “The Lottery”, a short story by Shirley Jackson. After reading the story for homework, students came to class and answered a series of seven pretest questions, based on Bloom’s Taxonomy. Questions one through three were based on
factual information, taken straight from the story. Questions four through seven were based upon application and evaluation of the story. Researchers rated each answer holistically and together as a group. (It should be noted that some students could have received outside help for comprehension, as this was not monitored during the study.) Students came back to class and were then separated into one of three groups: small discussion of story only, small discussion plus audio recording of story, or small discussion plus video (audio and visual) representation of story. All students were given the same questions as a posttest.

Results indicated that the small group discussion and the audio groups did not improve from their pre to posttests; in other words, these activities did not improve comprehension. Most students wrote similar answers to their pretest. In addition, when asked to name “the most vivid moment” in the story, nearly all participants in these two groups named the final, ending moment. The video group, however, showed improvements with their posttest answers and understood the story more clearly. One student, Dan, for example, had trouble understanding the story because he assumed it would be about winning something, like a prize, due to the story’s title, “The Lottery.” After watching the video, however, he better understood the significance of the title and its different meaning. In addition, more students in the video group varied their answers to “the most vivid moment”, giving researchers the notion that a visual image can be more powerful and better understood than a written one. The video also especially aided in struggling readers’ comprehension.

The researchers concluded that additional input, especially when given in visual and written form, benefited students’ understandings of a written text. In addition, the use
of video was especially helpful in aiding struggling readers’ comprehension. Students also became more emotionally interested and invested when provided with video input. The researchers also concluded that small group discussions, although enjoyable for students, did not help students better comprehend the story. Given the availability of additional input, like DVDS, CDs and online websites, they stressed that teachers should take advantage of these resources to use with students.

Although Whiting and Granoff’s study did not take a critical approach with media in their study, they still reaffirm why it is beneficial to use various media, particularly visual media, with students; when information can be provided in a variety of ways (as opposed to limiting students to text-only material), comprehension increases. This notion helps shape how I plan to use media with students. Not only will it be the content to drive students’ learning, but it will be a source of learning and gaining comprehension in itself. Also, because I plan to use partner and group work throughout the curriculum, I must be aware of how group work will benefit students’ progress, as this study demonstrated group work is not always beneficial or useful for aiding in comprehension. Therefore, I must think through how to best structure group work, especially as it relates to the purpose and outcome of the lesson.

Ajayi (2008) conducted a similar study to Whiting and Granoff in relation to media and comprehension. Whereas Whiting and Granoff studied the effectiveness of discussion, audio or visual input, Ajayi studied the effectiveness of multimodal input specifically related to vocabulary meaning. Ajayi was interested to know how ELLs use visual representations, as well as the social conditions of their lived experiences, to create word meanings. The participants consisted of a classroom of thirty three high school
advanced ESL students in Los Angeles; the participants had been learning English anywhere from two to five years.

The researcher concentrated on the fears about national security and public safety following the September 11 attacks in 2001. Because anxiety was high, new proposals were being introduced surrounding immigration. One, which interested the researcher, was the proposal to deny illegal immigrants the right to drivers’ licenses. The researcher planned to read a Los Angeles Times news article about the proposal, but first conducted a series of pre-activities. This included a gallery walk of immigration-related photographs to spark prior knowledge and a video rally campaign advocating against the right for illegal immigrants to have licenses. After reading the article aloud together as a class, students guessed the meanings of particular vocabulary words, such as undocumented worker, immigration and legal. After further discussions, they studied and created billboard-like ads and political cartoons based on their understanding. Small group and class discussions ensued. As a final assignment, students created a final list of definitions for the studied vocabulary words.

Qualitative observations were conducted by the researcher during these activities while written work was also assessed. Ajayi found three key results from this mini-unit. One was the multiplicity of activities being an important mediating factor for meaning making to occur, especially during discussions. The second relates back to the research question concerning how students use their lived experiences to create word meanings; here, Ajayi found students developed word meanings that related to their own lives, becoming “active designers of meaning” (p.226) but only after they felt comfortable with others and understood the material clearly. (This was determined by analyzing students’
guessed vocabulary words versus final definitions.) The third and final finding was the effectiveness of the multimodal approach as being critical to affording more opportunities to tap into different meaning making understandings.

Initially, some students did not even guess the meanings of vocabulary words; this was credited to students’ not fully understanding the article. Others guessed but questioned their efforts. The researcher credited the latter success of vocabulary definitions to built relationships among class members, the use of multi-modal visuals, and to group activities. Students were more academically successful when they could discuss with one another and when they received information from different sources (such as text and visual representations).

In order to move forward, Ajayi concluded that teachers must engage in the process of learning with students. This includes understanding students and their lived experiences as well as working and collaborating with students during the learning process. In this way, academic contexts of classroom learning not only become connected to the social and political contexts of students’ realities, but students become agents of change during the learning process. Ajayi also stressed the importance of using diverse forms of learning with students, to help students see how meaning making occurs in different contexts and for different purposes.

Ajayi’s study encompasses the key elements I plan to use for my field project; it contains a critical approach to a topic by asking students to draw on personal experience in relation to immigration-related issues, it uses a constructivist approach where students are collaboratively guided through the unit, and it incorporates media elements to aid in student comprehension. Although this study used media primarily to aid in
comprehension of a written text, particularly surrounding vocabulary words, the study provides evidence for how visual media (such as the video rally campaign and the gallery walk of immigration-related images) and media-based projects (such as the creation of billboard signs and political cartoons) are beneficial in aiding students’ understanding and comprehension of vocabulary, a key component of language fluency. In addition, Ajayi did have success with group work, unlike Whiting and Granoff. Knowing I will be encompassing a high amount of group work within my curriculum, I must be mindful how I not only structure the group dynamics among students, but how I involve the teacher to facilitate and play a key role within that process.

The third study by Markham (1999), like Ajayi, also studied vocabulary development. However, rather than focus on constructing meanings related to personal experience, Markham’s study looked closely at word recognition (such as stems, alternatives and spelling). With 118 university level advanced ESL students in the US from fifteen different language backgrounds, Markham was interested in the effectiveness of captions in video input. In other words, do captions in the target language, while watching an informational video, aid in word spelling and word recognition?

The study consisted of two informational videos, one was a thirteen-minute segment on whales and biology; the other was a twelve-minute segment on the civil rights movement in the US. Approximately half the students watched both videos with captions while the other half watched the videos with no captions. Afterwards, a fifty-question multiple-choice, listening-only test was administered. Statements, based upon
the video, were read to students; they had to choose the correct spelling of a word spoken from the statement. One point was awarded for each correct answer.

Results indicated that students who watched the captioned videos scored significantly higher on the multiple-choice test than those who did not have captions; the availability of captions significantly improved students’ ability to recognize words on the video and in subsequent listening-only tests.

The researcher concluded more research should be conducted to examine the effects of captions within ESL contexts. Based on his findings, he also suggests that ELLs should use captions when available, whether during classroom video sessions or at home for additional language input, particularly for vocabulary building and spelling, as well as pronunciation of given words.

Although my curriculum will not focus closely on the morphology and spelling of particular words, I chose to include this study within the literature review because it reaffirms the necessity of written words for students. The first two studies in this section primarily focus on visuals, but it is important to note that media and media literacy do not rely solely on visual-heavy material, with little other input. Adding captions or written explanations, in addition to visuals and audio, is just as important. In other words, within CML, a combination of these forms is necessary.

The fourth and final study in this section was conducted by Bahrani & Shu Sim (2012). The researchers were concerned with the lack of social interaction among EFL students in Iran, noting EFL students do not participate in social interaction within their coursework, especially in comparison to ESL students. The researchers decided to conduct a study to determine the answers to two questions. First, how does social
interaction among ESL peers promote English proficiency? And second, how does exposure to media technologies among EFL participants promote English proficiency?

The study consisted of 100 EFL students from Iran and an additional 100 ESL students from Malaysia. Students were at an intermediate proficiency level. A speaking proficiency pretest and posttest were administered to all students; this test included points for fluency, accuracy, comprehension, communication, vocabulary and accent. Scores were taken out of a total of thirty, with a total of five points per category. Students in both contexts also kept diaries, recording the amount of time they spent either in social interaction (ESL group) or watching visual media (EFL group). Students also noted any difficulties or findings throughout this process.

In their diaries, the ESL Malaysian students reported an average of 132 minutes per day engaging in social interaction. Their pre to posttest scores did not show improvement for speaking proficiency. The researchers concluded this could be due to social interactions occurring with fellow ELLs and not native speakers of English; it could also be due to modifications being made during interactions in order to communicate effectively, thus simplifying conversation and not gaining or improving speaking proficiency.

The EFL Iranian students reported an average of 71 minutes per day engaging with visual media content. These students showed improvements on their pre and posttest scores, and scored higher, on average, than the ESL students. The researchers concluded the improvements could be due to the multimodal input provided by media, such as visuals, audio and subtitles to aid in comprehension. In addition, the language from media
could not be modified or simplified for the viewer, thus forcing the viewer to engage in understanding beyond his or her level of proficiency.

The researchers concluded that the quality of input matters more than the quantity of input, as evidenced by the ESL students engaging in social interaction for longer periods of time each day, but not making significant gains. The researchers also concluded that teachers should utilize visual media technologies, like television, to aid in students’ speaking proficiency.

Bahrani & Shu Sim’s study relates to my curriculum because it adds another dimension for how the media can aid in students’ understanding of language. In classrooms, often the main form of input for pronunciation and speaking of English for ELLs comes from the teacher and from the native speakers in class. This study demonstrates how media can be used as an effective and as an additional form of input for speaking proficiency, whether it be to assign students television homework or to use visual media in class. In mixed classrooms especially, visual input can be a vital tool for not only overall comprehension of a subject, but for students to gain pronunciation and pragmatic information.

**Increased Feelings of Pride, Confidence and Motivation**

Our roles as educators are not limited to teaching subject-area content. Particularly among ESL teaching, much of our work also consists of building students’ confidence and motivation in a new place. Because many of our students have limited communication in English and do not feel connected to their current communities, our ELLs do not always have the confidence to succeed academically. In order to address these areas, as well as validate who they are as individuals, it is imperative we create
curriculums that foster these necessities. The first study highlights unintended negative outcomes for ELLs. Duff (2002) shares observations of a mixed, high school English class where pop culture discussions created unintended sentiments among ELLs, thus providing areas of caution within my curriculum. The following three research studies, embedded within a CML framework, demonstrate how teachers and researchers have successfully provided ELLs with necessary confidence, motivation and empowerment. Two studies, one by Choudhury & Share (2012) and the second by Vargas (2006), examine the effects of CML on student language performance and motivation. The third study by Chun (2009) examines the effects of *Maus*, a graphic novel based on the Holocaust, to student motivation and interest.

This first study serves as a cautionary example for integrating media and pop culture into class discussions. Duff (2002) conducted a study of a mixed, high school English class in Canada. While observing two mixed classrooms of twenty-eight and twenty-four students, she focused on language socialization within mainstream content areas. Duff particularly observed the second class’ weekly one-hour current events discussions, taking field notes and interviewing students in the class.

The current events discussions surrounded a newspaper article from that week; students read the article together as a class then discussed its elements. She found an overt pervasiveness of pop culture within these discussions. Often the discussions of the article were sidelined, drawing references to television shows like *The Simpsons, Ally McBeal, Seinfeld* and *America’s Most Wanted* or naming famous icons like Wayne Gretsky and AC/DC. The researcher found that these discussions united the native speakers in the class, allowing them to share their interests and sociocultural affiliations.
The ELLs in class, however, often remained silent and only spoke when required. They did not understand the cultural references or why the discussions were funny; they also did not want to raise their hands to ask for fear of being othered. For example, in an interview with an ELL student from Hong Kong, the participant stated that she read the Chinese newspaper online everyday and listened to the radio, but she could not understand the discussions in class. In addition, she didn’t share current events from her home country because she felt like her class would not want to hear about them. These discussions, as a result, led to the ELLs in class feeling like outcasts.

In her results, Duff also noted the teacher was unaware of his actions; he felt ELLs silenced themselves by choice, and not by the dynamics playing out in the classroom. Although the discussions were often rich, informative, and meaningful for a handful of students, the researcher concluded that the teacher was simply unaware of how to incorporate ELLs as positive contributors and as part of the classroom community.

The researcher concluded several steps should be taken when engaging in pop culture and current event topics. One is to survey students about their news sources and pop culture knowledge. In this way, the teacher knows the variety of resources students use and the variety of pop culture they connect with. The second is to write down and give descriptions of pop culture references made in class on the white board. This way references are contextualized for everyone in the room. The third is for teachers to question the bias and favorability of the sources they choose to use or that are shared in class discussions, and be more conscientious of their various perspectives when bringing them to the discussions.
I must be cautious of these potential problems, as the curriculum’s audience includes a mix of native speakers and ELLs engaging with pop culture-based content. I must be aware of how my choices in materials, as well as the discussions shared in class, affect all students in the classroom. As a result, I must create materials that open up for multiple perspectives, as well as create discussions that foster a richer, more global variety of media and pop culture resources.

The following three studies examine how researchers and teachers successfully implemented CML with ELLs, and fostered positive emotional growth in the process. Choudhury & Share (2012) conducted a project for 72 middle school ELLs by analyzing racial generalizations in the media. The researchers aimed to determine the effectiveness of media literacy on student confidence and attitudes, as well as language performance. Five key concepts, produced by the Center for Media Literacy, surrounded the media literacy project. These five concepts are: (a) all messages are constructed, (b) media messages are constructed using creative language with its own set of rules, (c) different people experience the same message differently, (d) media have embedded values and points of view, and (e) most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

Choudhury, the teacher and researcher of the project, found students took a naturally hands-on, self-guided approach. Admitting it was difficult at first for students to open up and discuss issues of power and subordination, Choudhury’s determination paid off when students began to discuss perceptions others had of their community. After focusing on negative perceptions, Choudhury asked students to explore their community’s positive elements. It was the students themselves who asked to conduct a project to prove the media wrong. Students became ethnographers by interviewing
members of their community and photographing various areas of the neighborhood in order to show its positive elements. This additional step did not originally come from the teacher, but by being flexible and allowing students to take control, the results created necessary empowerment for a group of students who, at the start of the school year, had low self-esteem and negative attitudes towards school.

The researchers also found three-fourths of students substantially improved their performance levels on the California Standards Test in English-Language Arts. At the beginning of the school year, sixty four percent of students were categorized as far below basic. By the end of the year, twenty one percent remained at the same level. Among the twenty one percent, all showed improvements from their original scores at the beginning of the year. Sixty five percent of total students were reclassified as English-Fluent-Proficient, which meant these students could begin taking mainstream content courses.

This study validates not only the content of my curriculum (CML), but the constructivist theory I chose as well. By letting students guide themselves and take initiative, the teacher/researcher had great success with not only student motivation, but improvements in English proficiency. In addition, the five key concepts to media literacy provide an organized, focused framework that I plan to adopt for my curriculum. This study reaffirms that CML can be used to effectively teach English-based, academic standards, and that a constructivist approach, if done effectively, can lead to higher motivation and positive attitudes about school.

A similar outcome was found by Vargas (2006) who aimed to determine how working-class, transnational Latinas related to American television shows. Like Choudhury & Share, she found students became more engaged and motivated with
media-based content. She conducted a series of interviews with thirteenLatinas, ages ranging from thirteen to twenty, aiming to discover students’ attitudes and reactions to racial representations in television. Participants’ backgrounds included the following: Puerto Rico, El Salvador, Mexico, Columbia, Honduras and Venezuela.

The results were based on qualitative, in-depth interviews and participant observation, with class sessions transcribed and audio-taped. Data also included homework, classwork and media artifacts students brought to class.

The researcher found layers of complexity among her participants’ use of television. Many did not watch much television in English because they felt disconnected; they did not have the same experiences as white, upper middle class Americans. However, one participant was well aware her life was much different than the television show, *Friends*, but admitted she enjoyed watching it anyway for its entertainment and comedic elements. In addition, because many of the participants attended racially diverse schools, the majority watched a mix of what the researcher defined as Anglo media culture, Black media culture, U.S. Latino local media culture and panhemispheric media culture. Other participants did not recognize, until it was problematized, the representations of Hispanic, Mexican or Latino characters in Anglo media culture, who are often shown as poor, unintelligent or involved in crime.

In relation to English-language results, Vargas found her students, over time, became more eager to engage in language-based activities, such as reading aloud, practicing pronunciation and writing in journals. Because the unit was interesting and engaging, she concluded fears about speaking and making mistakes in English lessened.

In addition, Vargas described a transition into an ESL-focused classroom where, initially,
she had not planned for this focus. However, based upon the different levels of language ability, in both Spanish and English, she began creating materials not only related to media concepts, but also providing differentiated English-focused materials for better understanding. She stated, “we began to think that the ESL classroom might be the ideal setting for TCML [Transnational Critical Media Literacy] programs” (p. 278).

It was unclear as a reader how many of Vargas’ students were ELLs and to what degree. She gave indication, based on the changes she described with creating English materials that at least some of her participants were in the process of developing their English. In addition, she defined transnational Latina teens as, “foreign-born individuals, natives of foreign-born or mixed parent-age, and Puerto Ricans residing in the continental United States” (p.268). Although it is implied that at least some of her participants are ELLs, she does not elaborate or specify these characteristics of her participants. However, she directly connects the relevance of TCML to ESL classrooms, thus providing clear reasoning to include this study in this literature review and within this section.

Vargas’ study informs my curriculum, particularly in the way she engaged in media-based discussions with students. Because her content (media) was relevant and engaging, English language embarrassment appeared to decrease. In the project, I must keep in mind the types of conversations and content that will bring students in. However, I must also keep these activities flexible enough so that teachers who adopt the curriculum can feel free to adjust for their own student interests. In addition, I cannot assume my students will like or enjoy a particular form of media. All our students come to the classroom with complex, multi-layered identities, and I must work to find out what
those interests and identities are in order to create a similar positive, confidence-boosting space with which Vargas had success.

The fourth study in this section by Chun (2009) was interested in a different media form, graphic novels, and its effects on second language development. Like Vargas (2006) and Choudhury & Share (2012), the researcher took a critical approach to engage in student learning. Chun’s findings advocate for incorporating and expanding multiliteracies in classrooms, especially classrooms with ESL students. Working closely with a high school ESL teacher, Chun helped plan a unit around *Maus*, a graphic novel by Art Spiegelman, published in 1986. The unit included a “critical took kit” (p. 148) which consisted of making text to self connections, problematizing and discussing controversial issues, such as race and discrimination, examining political historical representations and using multimodal strategies in order to engage in these topics. Although the number of participants are not provided, Chun stated it was one class of ESL students, grades 9-12. The purpose was to examine the impact of graphic novels on language development.

The teacher in the study began the unit with student surveys, gaining students’ current knowledge about World War II (the time period of *Maus*) along with a sense of their current reading habits. The teacher also reported to the researcher throughout the unit based on her observations in relation to student engagement with the novel and their language development.

The teacher initially discovered most students did not read longer texts outside of class, but did read bills and mail, song lyrics, text messages and text on social media sites, like MySpace. A small percentage read newspapers outside of class, while a handful of students had also never read a graphic novel. They knew very little related to
World War II, the Holocaust or Judaism. She quickly realized she would need to scaffold and contextualize much of the novel with students as well as explicitly teach them how to read visual texts and clues.

Throughout the unit, the teacher described a change in students’ enthusiasm. Once immersed in the themes and images of the graphic novel, their interest in the historical context of World War II and the Holocaust dramatically increased. In addition, they became interested in the hidden metaphors and meanings, often shown through the visuals in the novel. Although the teacher shared it was still difficult to get students to read longer texts, and the ongoing challenges with reading still existed with *Maus*, she described a higher interest with history, with a lot of questions and a great amount of curiosity from students, due to the engaging graphic novel.

The teacher also noted nearly all wanted a copy of the novel when they had finished reading it. To the teacher, this meant students were changing their mentality about reading, and were becoming more interested and eager to read. In addition, students consistently asked the teacher to read the novel aloud to them during class so they could follow along with the images. In some places of the novel, nonstandard English was used; the read alouds provided opportunity to not only demonstrate how to pronounce nonstandard English, but to discuss nonstandard versus standard English as a class. Students also made text-to-self connections and wanted to know more real stories about the people who personally lived and witnessed the Holocaust.

In his conclusion, the researcher stressed that teachers who use highly engaging texts, like graphic novels and those that connect to real-world experiences, can bring disinterested readers into reading. It also allows for students to become more deeply
engaged with texts, as they can draw connections from their own lived experiences as well as develop an understanding for multi-literate texts. Initially disinterested and disengaged, the students in the class changed their perspective once given a meaningful, engaging and multimodal text that was taught through a critical lens.

Like the previous two studies in this section, Chun’s research reiterates how critical pedagogy, through relevant content, can engage students in the classroom. However, Chun did not use video or online technologies (which are often what we think of when it comes to media); yet, graphic novels still constitute as media and they also provide a variety of input with textual and visual information. Chun reminds us that media does not always have to be computer or television-related, but can also include a rich, visual text like a graphic novel.

**Additional Skills Gained**

The four studies within this section highlight the additional skills ELLs gain when they create media-based projects. The first study by Black (2009) studied the effects of online fan fiction, finding students gained skills related to individual problem-solving, particularly through an online writing application. The second study by Turner (2011) studied the effectiveness of an extended day literacy program taught through media-based content; the researcher found students gained deeper insight as to how their current learning would help them get jobs and careers. Students also gained critical-thinking skills that carried over into their other academic classes. The third study by Mergendoller (1991) studied the effectiveness of MacMagic, a project-based curriculum embedded in computer and media-use. The researcher found students learned to work in pairs and small groups, thus helping students to develop social and collaborative skills. The fourth
addition to this section is a study by Moglen (2014) who provides a first-hand account of incorporating world news media into his adult, intermediate ESL elective course. These studies encapsulate the additional input, knowledge and growth students gain when they engage with and create media.

The first study takes a different approach towards media literacy. Although I would argue that it lacks the critical aspect of CML, it offers another approach to successfully implementing media literacy for ELLs. Black (2009) studied how the process of writing online fan fiction helped three ELLs with their developing English. The researcher conducted an ethnographic study of adolescent English learners’ literate and social activities surrounding online fan fiction. The participants used already existing fiction to recreate or add on to these stories. Their new work was posted online where they received feedback from other users and readers on the site. The researcher was curious to find how the writing space provided literacy development as well as how the virtual space promoted interaction in English.

By reviewing participants’ fiction as well as their interactive comments, the researcher found online writing gave participants a comfortable space to practice and receive feedback for their developing English. She also found her subjects engaged in a self-directed form of learning, teaching themselves how to write, edit, add artwork, and publish within online writing programs. In other words, the students used their own critical-thinking skills to solve problems and create solutions within web-based writing. In addition to gaining confidence with their English and becoming self-directed learners, students also received compliments related to their individual styles, including their personal artwork. One student, who used Chinese characters as artwork throughout her
stories, felt a sense of pride when fellow participants commented on her individual style. Students’ personal identities, including their first languages, were validated in this process.

One limitation to this study is its small sample size; with only three participants, it is hard to gauge how successful or manageable this activity would play out in a larger classroom setting. In addition, it was unclear what specific improvements were made in relation to participants’ English development. However, I have included this study due to several findings I feel are important for my curriculum. One is the level of freedom provided to students, which, as a result, led to self-directed learning. With a constructivist approach, I aim to create this same form of learning, particularly when students create a final project at the end of each unit, as it is important for them to understand the process of media, which includes how to create and manipulate it themselves. This study highlights the additional skills, aside from language, participants can receive by going through this process, such as the critical-thinking and research skills needed to create a final, written product. The other finding is the space provided to show off personal identity. This is particularly important for CML, as students must receive a comfortable space to discuss difficult, but important issues, as well as feel pride for who they are. Although my project will not do this in a web based format, this study demonstrates the validation students feel when given that opportunity.

In a similar but more CML-focused study, Turner (2011), studied an extended day literacy intervention program in an impoverished, low performing middle school in Northern California. Here, 36 seventh and eighth graders participated in the after-school program four days per week for one and a half hours in a class titled Multimodal Media
Production (MMP). Students spent time with one teacher and several tutors who helped students not only develop and create their own media materials, but first how to analyze and critique them. Similar to my field project, the students were first taught how to evaluate problematic media messages (in this context, focusing on portrayals of Hurricane Katrina) then centered on students’ creation of media, including videos and music. The students were predominantly African American and Latino; 3/4 were below grade level while all came from a wide array of linguistic ability, including ELLs.

The researcher was interested in three questions regarding this MMP class, particularly in relation to how the class was improving students’ literacy. First, what were the specific literacy skills students developed? Second, how did the acquisition of these skills further students’ literacies? And third, what was the students’ understanding of technology across contexts?

She used a mix of qualitative methodologies including surveys completed by students regarding media use, classroom observations, video observations, audiotaped interviews with various teachers, tutors, and students, as well as post-questions based on what was learned. Teachers included those involved in the MMP class and those who taught the students during the school day; they were interviewed about course objectives and differences they noticed with the students in MMP versus those who were not enrolled. The researcher created themes, based on observation and responses and tallied answers using a Likert scale.

Overall, the school day teachers responded that the students enrolled in the MMP class were quicker with media-based technology (like researching online and navigating through websites) in comparison to students who were not enrolled. In Language-Arts,
the MMP students brought in-class discussions on social justice issues to deeper levels, and made strong text-to-self and text-to-world connections with literature being read. MMP students also made comparisons to media in class, like drawing connections and analyzing the media, in comparison to students who were not enrolled.

Based on interviews and surveys, the MMP students also recognized the benefits and cross-contexts of media literacy when they discussed how media knowledge would benefit them in their future, which included answers related to job possibilities and educational gains. In other words, students understood how their learning in the MMP class transferred to their everyday lives. For example, students shared they could create documentaries for a living and report on important current events, like Hurricane Katrina, or work as a computer technician, as they “make a lot of money.” Overall, the students felt the class mattered and had direct relation to their futures.

This study encapsulates how the media can be used to build upon and expand student literacies, aside from traditional print text. In other words print text and media “text” (audio, visuals) do not have to be seen as two separate entities, but students can use the same set of skills to study and carry over to both. In addition, creating media projects allowed students to gain technological skills that will help them in the 21st century job market. This study validates the thinking behind my field project, as it encompasses multilayered benefits that media-centered curriculum can provide to students.

In addition to these media-related skills, engaging with media through project-based teaching methods can also build other skills related to cooperation and collaboration. The third study by Mergendoller (1991) studied the effectiveness of MacMagic in a class of 29 seventh graders, nine of who were classified ELLs. The
purpose of MacMagic was to pilot a newly developed, project-based program, connecting
English and Social Studies subjects, while using computer and video technology.

The students met daily over the course of one school year for two and a half hours
each day. (This time period included their English, Social Studies and multimedia
elective classes.) The goal of the researcher was to observe the effectiveness of
MacMagic, including: the skills students developed, the language support it provided for
ELLs, and the level of collaboration among peers. Although the researcher did not use
constructivism as part of his terminology, the ways in which he described the relationship
between faculty and students was in line with constructivist teaching methods; teachers
led or guided students to solutions when they had difficulties, especially when navigating
through the computer-based writing program. They also had an experiential-based
approach where students were given freedom and flexibility with their projects (as
opposed to being restricted by a particular rule or focus). Students also spent ample time
working in partners and small groups, trouble-shooting and creating solutions among
themselves. The researcher took qualitative field notes throughout the year, interviewed
those involved on the teaching faculty, and interviewed students informally.

In relation to language support, Mergendoller concluded that students benefited
from the routine of having verbal collaboration among peers while creating projects,
which helped with oral proficiency. In addition, because projects were filmed or
recorded, students put higher concentration into their pronunciation and helped one
another with their mistakes. (Because this was going to be a recorded and watched
production, with higher stakes, students tried harder to show off their proficiency.) In
regard to additional skills, the researcher shared several student statements, which
included students feeling more aware of their learning process (metacognition) in other subject areas, based on the work being completed with MacMagic. They also felt they made new connections and friends with native speakers who could help them with their English. Several students also gained a new sense of self-direction, and felt more like independent learners, based on the amount of freedom provided to them throughout the program. In relation to collaboration, many students shared that MacMagic gave them insight on proper social behaviors; they learned how to get along more productively with peers, especially peers from other countries and peers with different linguistic abilities.

The researcher concluded by reaffirming the effectiveness of the piloted MacMagic program with ELLs, especially due to the language success and positive feedback from students. He did, however, highlight two key areas for change. One was the need for more writing support within the program; students felt they did not receive explanations or support related to their writing; they received corrected work but did not know what they did wrong or why particular corrections were made. The other was the need for more support among native speakers in the program. Some felt they were pushed aside and not given as much attention as ELLs; in addition, ELLs felt they could have received useful support from their native speaking peers, but often they were not paired together.

This study connects to my curriculum in two distinct ways. The first is its concentration on student collaboration as a key and important skill for students. Many of the activities in my curriculum will be group and partner centered; however, I initially included this structure because it is well supported for productive learning. However, this notion of developing students into collaborative and cooperative group members is one I
would also like to keep at the forefront of my project. In other words, a key skill for all students to learn is how to be a genuinely good person to others, which will not only help them in school and in their community, but also in their future careers. The other way this study relates to my project is where it is flawed. Because the curriculum will be designed for a mixed class of ELLs and native speakers, I must be consciously aware of the needs of both groups, and not just one. This includes native speakers also feeling like they have a voice, are a part of the class, and are receiving the necessary learning support they need to also grow.

Moglen (2014), who teaches adult ESL in an international English program in northern California, summarized in his article similar outcomes related to building positive social interaction among students, as well as building critical thinking skills, by incorporating world news media into the classroom. In one intermediate level optional class, Moglen used news media as a direct form of authentic language material. However, because news is unpredictable (a teacher cannot assume which news stories will be available in the future), Moglen took an exploratory approach, leaving the stories and content unknown, but he provided structure related to consistent vocabulary building, regularity of assignments, and expectations for final projects.

Students engaged in a variety of activities throughout the project. Working with the magazine *The Week*, students concentrated on news stories from around the world, finding articles that addressed different countries; each student summarized and read their summaries aloud, thus practicing written and oral language. Other common activities were discussions surrounding bias and negativity within the news stories; these discussions often led to students sharing government-controlled news bias in their own
countries. Vocabulary was also reviewed each week, with students highlighting words and phrases from the stories they did not know. The teacher chose the top twenty most useful words and phrases to review with the class. For the final project, students chose one of three options: they could examine bias in the media by focusing on a controversial topic. They could concentrate on the development of one news story, particularly if it was ongoing in the news, and discuss its development. Or, as a final option, they could examine how three different news stories about or from one country provide particular images of that country. (Students could not choose the U.S. or their home country.)

Because this article serves as a firsthand account of the implementation of a news-based course, and is not a formal research paper, the author does not provide formal measurements for data collection. Instead, he draws upon informal observation (such as checking in with students during class time and assessing written work) and also draws upon prior teaching experience with using news stories, to reach his conclusions.

In his observations with this particular class, he concluded students not only gained authentic language input by focusing on real world, contextualized content, but also gained critical-thinking skills. This was done through examining and discussing bias in various news stories. Students also worked on their collaborative abilities, as students often worked with peers or small groups to negotiate meaning in the stories.

Although the content focuses on adult learners, some of the material overlaps and has relevance to my curriculum. For example, Moglen examined bias within news stories which is very similar to how bias will be examined within media in my curriculum. News stories are an additional form of media that I could incorporate, as Moglen described these discussions had positive effects by validating students’ home countries, while also
building critical-thinking skills. These are areas I also want to increase within the curriculum. In addition, Moglen describes that collaborative activities, if done effectively, can help students learn to work positively with others. This is an area where I also want to focus, as middle school students are still developing their social identities and learning how to positively interact with their peers. Moglen’s account reaffirms that it is possible to develop these skills through an engaging and interactively designed unit.

**Summary**

Although more research should be conducted to examine the benefits and challenges of implementing media education specifically designed for ELLs, current research exists to highlight its benefits. These benefits include three distinct areas. The first is students’ increase in language proficiency and production, specifically including reading comprehension, vocabulary building, and speaking proficiency (Whiting & Granoff, 2010; Ajayi, 2008; Markham, 1999; Bahrani & Shu Sim, 2012). The second is increased feelings of pride, confidence and motivation (Choudhury & Share, 2012; Vargas, 2006; Chun, 2009). The third is additional skills such as new knowledge in web-based applications, problem solving, critical-thinking, and social skills (Black, 2009; Turner, 2011; Mergendoller, 1991; Moglen, 2014). Based on the above research, critical media education can help ELLs to become more prepared, more successful and more self-assured, within their schools, communities, and with their own personal uses of media.
CHAPTER III:
THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

Description of the Project

The field project consists of an eight-week CML unit, designed for a middle school English class. The project anticipates a mixed level of English abilities, including native English speakers and high-intermediate to advanced ELLs. Within the unit, students learn media literacy vocabulary, gain critical-thinking skills to analyze and interpret media messages, and learn to create media by making their own television commercials. The Five Key Concepts of Media Literacy, as well as Bloom’s Taxonomy, help lay the foundation for students’ analysis and evaluations.

The field project contains three parts. The first is a general unit overview. The general unit overview provides an eight-week layout; each week is listed next to the central topic. Essential questions are also listed which guide the week’s activities. This overview’s purpose is to show the overall sequence; students begin with introductory media material and build into more detailed analysis. Towards the end of the unit, students progress into the application of media by creating their own commercials and demonstrate their evaluative skills by writing a final, argumentative essay.

The second part is a more in-depth break down of each week. Here, content objectives, language objectives and desired learning outcomes are listed. A more detailed explanation for what students will do during the week is included within the objectives. The desired outcomes list what students should be able to do by the end of the week’s activities.

The third and final part includes a sample of lesson plans with handouts. Four lesson plans are included. The goal with these lesson plans is to demonstrate how
pedagogical thinking, as well as how the theoretical framework, are reflected within these lessons. Each lesson plan also aligns with the Common Core State Standards to demonstrate how the particular lesson addresses a standards-based language area. All handouts are included within the lesson plans. Additional resources, such as helpful tools and ideas for teachers, are included in the Appendix.

It should be noted that the project assumes that some routines have already been established by the teacher. Within the first week of a brand new class, for example, a teacher spends time community building with students. Given each teacher has his/her own preferences for developing classroom norms, community and behavior, I left these details to be determined by individual teachers. In addition, in Lesson Plan 1, I do not have a detailed method for student note-taking, as teachers may prefer to have students take notes in a particular way. I also mention “small groups” often throughout the unit overviews and lesson plans. The unit assumes this routine of working in small groups has already been established. Small group sizing is also dependent upon the individual teacher. Although I tend to group in threes, and change groups often (once every one to two weeks), this can vary according to teacher preference.

**Development of the Project**

I first realized a need for CML in 2013, when I taught summer school to low-income Latino middle school students in the North Bay through a program called Aim High. I quickly noticed how deeply connected students were to various media. The seventh and eighth graders regularly chatted about celebrities, movies, television shows and music, and spent much of their leisure time on Facebook and Instagram, smart phone applications that can be used to communicate with others. Although I was impressed with
how much they knew about entertainment, and was even more impressed with how well they maneuvered through different online technologies, there were moments I was taken aback. I found students were overly passive and accepting with what they viewed, and how they navigated, through various media; students often accepted what they saw on television and social media as real or true, and worse, often compared themselves to celebrity figures. I wondered how I could bring this issue to light within an academic setting.

The following summer, I returned to the same program. I decided to experiment with a media literacy unit by focusing on stereotypes in television commercials. I decided to build upon students’ academic writing skills through media-based content. We initially spent time with key vocabulary then analyzed popular television commercials, many of which students had already seen on a daily basis, but now through a new lens. Initially, I found the same passive engagement, with many students responding, “I don’t see any stereotypes… I don’t get what I’m supposed to find here… I think it’s funny; is that bad?” We spent some time emphasizing how media has very positive attributes; we should find television funny and we should enjoy its benefits. But I also wanted to emphasize that we cannot accept everything we see on television; we need to be active and deep thinkers about the messages media sends.

At the end of this process, for a final project, students chose a stereotype of their choice that they had seen before somewhere in the media. They were to write an essay about why this stereotype was problematic to them personally. Many students wrote about immigrant stereotypes, particularly about how the US news views Latino immigrants as illegal, poor and here to take away citizens’ jobs. Others wrote about
gender stereotypes, such as women and artificial beauty (the necessity of make-up and material things) or men and masculinity (the need to be rugged, strong and athletic).

As a new teacher, I was nervous with how well the unit would be received. I had never seen media literacy taught in the classroom, and had never experienced it personally, as a teacher or a student. My main resources were articles and ideas I had read from various educational sources. To my surprise, I found the content to be highly engaging for students and academically challenging. Students worked hard to improve their academic writing skills, particularly when being guided through the essay-writing process. Students also developed critical thinking skills in several ways; they were asked to analyze commercials on a deeper level, looking at implicit (as opposed to explicit) messages, and they discussed social justice issues, such as racial and gender inequities. They felt the unit not only related to them and their interests, but also gave them a sense of empowerment; they were proud with their new abilities to read commercials in ways they hadn’t before. Being able to outsmart these messages also made them feel intelligent, an adjective few had described of themselves before the unit began.

Given the success we had that summer, I decided to use the field project to build upon the initial summer unit. The field project pulls from many of the activities that summer, but delves more deeply into the content. Because summer programs are often very short (we had five weeks together) I wanted to make sure that within the field project students received plenty of time to engage, analyze and process the material, which is why the unit in the field project has an additional three weeks. I also wanted to put a higher focus on the students, particularly high-intermediate and advanced middle school ELLs. Much of the research included in the literature review explores how media
literacy can benefit ELLs. The field project is also shaped by this research, paying more attention to their academic and emotional needs.
# The Project

Critical Media Literacy Unit Overview  
English Language Arts Grade 7  
8 Weeks  
5 Days Per Week; 50 Minute Time Blocks

## Unit Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK #</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1      | Introduction to Media Literacy             | What is media? What are examples of media?  
What is media literacy?  
Why does media literacy matter? |
| 2-3    | The Five Key Concepts to Media Literacy    | Who created this message?  
What techniques are used to attract my attention?  
How might other people understand this message differently from me?  
What lifestyles, values or points of view are included, or omitted from, this message?  
Why was this message sent? |
| 4      | Applying Bloom’s Taxonomy to Media Analysis| What are the 6 different levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy and what do they look like in practice?  
By using a critical lens (Bloom’s Taxonomy) in relation to media, what conclusions can you make about specific messages? |
| 5      | Social Constructions of Media and Their Implications | Throughout your media analysis so far in this unit, what patterns do you notice about media messages?  
What do you feel are the effects of these specific messages?  
What do you personally internalize, based on the various messages you see? |
| 6      | Creating Media: Commercials                | What is a specific issue you feel strongly about in relation to media? Why?  
What message do you feel is important for viewers to understand in relation to your issue?  
What elements must be considered when making a commercial? |
<p>| 7      | Construction of                            | What steps do you need to take individually (for the opinion |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>letter assignment) and collaboratively (for the group commercial project) in order to complete them? How will your visual, audio, and written elements impact viewers?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 Finalizing Projects and Reflection</td>
<td>What have you learned throughout the media literacy unit? How will you take your media literacy knowledge and apply it to your future?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Weekly Overviews

WEEK 1:
Introduction to Media Literacy

Key Questions:
- What is media? What are examples of media?
- What is media literacy?
- Why does media literacy matter?

Content Objectives:
Students will:
- participate in an introductory whole-class activity by raising their hand if they use particular forms of media. (This activity serves two purposes: one is for students to visually see the number of people who use different media on a daily basis; the second is for the teacher to bring students’ media interests into the class.)

- take notes on introductory information related to media literacy, such as focus vocabulary. This is done through a blend of whole-class instruction using Power Point slides, small group discussion and practice activities.

- begin to analyze magazine advertisements by noticing their visual and written qualities. This is first demonstrated in a whole class, guided exercise by the teacher then followed by collaborative, small group exploration.

- based on their initial exploration, brainstorm and discuss in small groups why media literacy is important.

- receive an overview of the 8-week, CML unit. Students will receive a general handout for the unit that will be reviewed as a whole class.
**Language Objectives:**
Students will:

- take notes and complete activities related to media-based vocabulary.

- in small groups, fill out a graphic organizer to note visual and written details in magazine advertisements.

- engage in small group and whole-class discussions about key questions.

**Desired Learning Outcomes:**
By the end of week 1, students will be able to:

- demonstrate knowledge of focus vocabulary within written and verbal contexts (assessed with small group and whole class discussions related to analyzing magazine advertisements and using students’ written work).

- observe, discuss and write down basic, visual elements found in magazine ads, such as colors, shapes, key words, people or images, and overall organization (assessed with small group magazine ad activity and through the completed graphic organizer).

- articulate why media literacy is important (assessed with small group responses and an individual, written homework assignment).

**WEEKS 2-3:**
The 5 Key Concepts of Media Literacy

**Key Questions:**
(based on 5 key concepts of media literacy)
-Who created this message?
-What techniques are used to attract my attention?
-How might other people understand this message differently from me?
-What lifestyles, values or points of view are included, or omitted from, this message?
-Why was this message sent?

**Content Objectives:**

Students will:

-examine various media based on the 5 concepts of media literacy, using the key questions as a guide. This is first completed through guided practice by the teacher then in small groups, and, by the end of the first to beginning of the second week, completed individually by students.

-discuss in small groups, then as a class, the positive and negative elements of media, based on students’ 5 concept analysis.

-individually create a two sided poster each advertising two different versions of themselves; one is a “resume self” and the other a “social media” self. The purpose of this assignment is to emphasize the ways we personally manipulate language and visuals to portray different perspectives of ourselves.

**Language Objective:**

Students will:

-use the 4 language skills by:
  -listening to audio components of commercials to examine their effects and purposes.
  -reading words, phrases and images to determine their purposes; this includes denotative and connotative meanings.
  -answering key questions in verbal and written form.
-filling out a graphic organizer of their media analysis findings.
-examining their own word choice and sentence structure in order to advertise certain perspectives of themselves on their posters.
-discuss how the two versions of themselves are created for a targeted purpose, as well as how the assignment connects to media messages.

**Desired Learning Outcomes:**
By the end of week 3, students will be able to:

- understand, recognize and analyze media using the 5 key concepts of media literacy. The 5 key concepts are:
  1. All messages are constructed (key question 1)
  2. Media messages are constructed using creative language with its own set of rules (key question 2)
  3. Different people experience the same message differently (key question 3)
  4. Media have embedded values and points of view (key question 4)
  5. Most media are created to gain profit and/or power (key question 5)
(This is assessed with class observations during students’ collaborative analysis of media and with written responses to key questions.)

-recognize that everyone (not just media) subjectively manipulates language and images in order to portray particular messages. (This is assessed with the students’ poster assignment.)

**WEEK 4:**

**Applying Bloom’s Taxonomy to Media Analysis**

**Key Questions:**

-What are the 6 different levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy and what do they look like in
practice?

-By using a critical lens (Bloom’s Taxonomy) in relation to media, what conclusions can you draw about these specific messages?

**Content Objective:**
Students will:

- receive direct instruction related to the 6 levels of analysis, based on Bloom’s Taxonomy. This is done through powerpoint slides with visual examples. Students will take notes on each of Bloom’s levels.

- under guided, whole-class practice, examine magazine advertisements through each of Bloom’s Taxonomy levels. After guided practice, students will individually analyze advertisements individually.

- individually begin to look for patterns among media by answering teacher-generated questions on a handout, based on Bloom’s analysis. Students will compare findings in small groups.

**Language Objective:**
Students will:

- in small groups and individually, conduct close reading analysis of magazine advertisements using Bloom’s Taxonomy, including the ads’ explicit and implicit meanings. Teacher generated questions will guide the close reading analysis.

- write about and discuss their findings from their Bloom’s analysis.

**Desired Learning Outcomes:**
By the end of week 4, students will be able to:
- understand and respond to each level of Bloom’s Taxonomy, using media based content. (This is assessed through observations of group discussions and individual writing assignments. An additional mini exam will be given to students, asking them to individually analyze a magazine advertisement, based on Bloom’s Taxonomy questions.)

- articulate and provide specific examples of how media messages often repeat similar persuasive strategies and particular ideologies. (This is assessed through students’ written examination of media using Bloom’s analysis.)

**WEEK 5:**

**Social Constructions of Media and Their Implications**

**Key Questions:**

- Throughout your media analysis so far in this unit, what patterns do you notice about media messages?
- What do you feel are the effects of these specific messages?
- What do you personally internalize, based on the various messages you see?

**Content Objective:**

Students will:

- based on their analysis of media using Bloom’s Taxonomy, and the 5 key concepts of media literacy, to begin to look for and organize patterns among explicit and implicit messages. Based on these patterns, students will discuss in small groups how these patterns affect viewers.

- discuss and write about how various media messages often make them feel, while also providing specific examples of problematic messages to support.
-read an opinion article about the lyrics and visuals in a controversial music video. Students will read and annotate the song lyrics as a class, then watch the music video. Students will discuss in small groups their observations and discuss their reaction to the music video. Afterwards, students will read the article, judging the effectiveness of its argument, and discuss in small groups. At the end of the activity, the teacher will discuss this article includes the type of critical thinking and observations expected in upcoming weeks.

-individually create a poster that categorizes the patterns of explicit and implicit messages they find. Categories are divided into Words/Phrases, Images, Sounds, and Ideas. Under each category, students will list examples along with implications. Also on the poster, students will describe how these particular implications affect them.

**Language Objective:**

Students will:

- use the 4 language skills to determine explicit and implicit media messages and present their findings. This includes:
  - listening for audio cues (such as dialogue or background noise).
  - reading words, phrases and images (and examining their implications).
  - close reading song lyrics and an opinion article by annotating the texts.
  - writing and presenting their findings on a poster.

- analyze claims and evidence about a music video; students will answer teacher-generated questions related to claims and evidence.

- begin to formulate their own claims and evidence in writing, which will help students to organize the body paragraphs of their argumentative essay in following weeks.

**Desired Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of week 5, students will be able to:
analyze the effectiveness of a written argument, assessing for claims and evidence (assessed with the close reading annotation of the article and small group discussions).

understand there exists a link between media messages and their effects on people (this is assessed through students’ poster assignment).

understand media messages are not random or unique, but follow particular rules and ideologies; students will be able to pinpoint some of these ideologies, based on their analysis (this will also be assessed through their poster assignment).

**WEEK 6:**

**Creating Media: Commercials**

**Key Questions:**

- What is a specific issue you feel strongly about in relation to media? Why?
- What message do you feel is important for viewers to understand in relation to your issue?
- What elements must be considered when making a commercial?

**Content Objective:**

Students will:

- be given a brief overview of the commercial group project with a handout and rubric.

- review the 5 key concepts of media literacy with group members, brainstorming how they would use these concepts to guide their own commercial creations. This is done through group discussion.

- decide an idea for their own television commercial advertisement, taking into
consideration the 5 key concepts of media literacy and Bloom’s Taxonomy. Students can
decide what company or institution they represent as well as what message they would
like viewers to receive. Each group will fill out a handout that addresses these areas.

-determine what specific message they want viewers to know, why they are sending it,
and how they will do this explicitly and implicitly. Groups will share these ideas verbally
with the class.

-begin thinking about an issue (such as a stereotype or message) from the media they feel
strongly about to begin brainstorming for an opinion letter.

**Language Objective:**
Students will:

-brainstorm in small groups for the commercials; groups will answer teacher generated
questions that demonstrate they have thought critically about the 5 key concepts of media
literacy as they relate to their commercial.

-begin to brainstorm how elements of language will play a part in their commercials.

**Desired Learning Outcomes:**
By the end of week 6, students will be able to:

-provide a strong understanding and rationale for why they are choosing their commercial
topic (this is assessed through a written response turned in by groups).

-determine the steps and roles each group member will take in order to complete their
project successfully (assessed through class observations).

## WEEK 7:
Construction of Projects
**Key Questions:**

- What is an issue you feel strongly about in relation to media? Why?
- What steps do you need to take individually (for the letter assignment) and collaboratively (for the group commercial project) in order to complete them?

**Content Objective:**

Students will:

- receive a brief overview for how presentation of commercials will be conducted the following week. Students will receive a checklist for what to cover.

- analyze two opinion letters to help provide a model for the final letter assignment.

- work in small groups to create their television commercials.

- receive a rubric for the final opinion letter assignment as well as guided instruction for how to structure a formal letter.

**Language Objective:**

Students will:

- use their learned knowledge about media concepts to construct and film their television commercials. This includes language skills, such as visual and audio elements to be included within the commercial, as well as a script students will act out.

- read and analyze an opinion letter that will model/mirror the type of letter students will be asked to write.

- begin organizing their opinion letter, discussing a stereotype or issue of importance from the media of their choice, by using a graphic organizer. At the end of the week, students
will submit the organizer to be reviewed by the teacher.

**Desired Learning Outcomes:**
By the end of week 7, students will be able to:

- demonstrate their knowledge of the 5 concepts of media literacy, as well as their learned knowledge of media, to the creation of their own television commercial (assessed through the final commercial).

- understand that, as creators of media, they are also agents of change, with the ability to provide counterarguments and additional perspectives to others (assessed through class observations and the final commercial).

- turn in a completed letter outline with intended audience (reader) listed (assessed through the graphic organizer).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK 8:</th>
<th>Finalizing Projects and Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Key Questions:**

- What have you learned throughout the media literacy unit?
- What are important issues related to media that you have found throughout the unit that you feel strongly about? Why do you feel strongly about them?
- How will you take your media literacy knowledge and apply it to your future?

**Content Objective:**
Students will:

- introduce their commercial topic and why they chose it. They will provide an explanation for how the 5 key concepts of media literacy play into the creation of their commercial, as well as the outcome they intend. Students will show their commercials.
-provide written feedback to peers’ commercials.

-finalize their written letters.

**Language Objective:**
Students will:

- spend time in writing workshops to receive support, and complete, their argumentative letters.

-use Bloom’s Taxonomy, as well as their learned knowledge about media literacy, by providing peers written feedback to their commercials.

-complete a final written reflection for homework, expressing what they learned throughout the unit and how they will apply this information in their future.

**Desired Learning Outcomes:**
By the end of week 8, students will be able to:

-complete an opinion letter, addressed to someone relative to a media issue, that demonstrates their learned knowledge within the unit and follows academic writing expectations (assessed with a rubric)

-thoughtfully and holistically reflect on their learned knowledge of media literacy, by completing a written reflection of what they have learned and how they will use their learned information in the future (assessed with the written reflection).
Sample Lesson Plans

Week 1, Day 1

Introduction to Media Literacy

Content Objective: Students will (SW) write about and discuss their observations of visuals in a magazine advertisement.

Language Objective: SW work with focus vocabulary (related to media) and fill out graphic organizer related to analyzing media.

Common Core State Standards:

Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition and Use 6: Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Reading Standards for Informational Text, Key Ideas and Details 1: Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences from the text.

Materials:
Whiteboard/ Chalkboard
Projector (connected to computer)
Class Survey (sample in appendix; see 1-1-1)
Attached Power Point Slides (attached; also see 1-1 for definitions in appendix 1-1-2)
Magazine Advertisement (attached with Power Point Slide; also see 1-1-3)
A Method for Student Note-Taking (Notebook, Binder Paper, Flashcards, etc)
Writing Response Handout (attached)

Activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Does</th>
<th>Students Do</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Class Survey: (5 min)</td>
<td>1. Class Survey: (5 min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Explain directions of class survey to class: A statement will be read aloud. Students will raise their hand if the statement pertains to them. If it does not, students do not raise their hand. With each question, students should pay attention to how many people raise their hand to each</td>
<td>a. Students listen to activity directions. b. Students raise hand if statement pertains to them; casually observe how many people raise their hand. Students share specific examples of media.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b. Read each statement aloud to students, allowing time for students to raise hand and observe between statements. Call on several students to share specific examples of that media statement. (ex. If the statement was: “I have a favorite t.v. show”, call on students and ask which t.v. show is their favorite.)

c. At the end of the survey, ask students to hold their hand up, showing a 1-5 scale to the question, “based on the survey, how often did we raise our hands?” (A 1= not at all, a 5= very often.) Verbally share how many people are showing each number (“I see about 10 5’s… a couple 3’s…” etc). If there are students not participating, ask them to hold up a number.

d. Explain to the class that these questions all relate to media. If they don’t know what media is yet, that’s okay. We will be learning to analyze and “read” media more critically.

2. Media Literacy Vocabulary (15 min)

a. Show first Power Point Slide related to Media. Ask small groups to discuss for 1 minute: “What is media, according to your knowledge and according to this slide? What are specific examples? ” Call on several groups to share answers. Based on answers, generate a definition and write definition on board.

b. Repeat step a for Literacy and Media Literacy terms.

3. Magazine Advertisement (20-25 min)

a. Explain to the class that today we will “read” our first advertisement. Show the Advertisement Slide and provide the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Media Literacy Vocabulary (15 min)</th>
<th>2. Media Literacy Vocabulary (15 min)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Students take out vocabulary notes. Students analyze Power Point Slide, discuss in groups, and verbally decide on a definition for Media. Groups should be prepared to share answers with the class. Students write class-generated definition to notes.</td>
<td>b. Repeat step a for Literacy and Media Literacy terms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Students will listen to directions, then work in small groups to analyze their first magazine advertisement. Each group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
corresponding handout to each group member. Explain the directions: students will have 10 minutes to observe the advertisement, discuss and answer the questions from the handout.

(As students begin to work, recreate the handout on the board. Then, monitor and check in with students during activity.)

b. Call on two to three groups to share answers to each question. Add their answers to the board for students to fill in. Validate, redirect and add to student ideas.

4. Writing Response Exit Ticket (5-10 min) If class ends before this activity, students can complete it for homework.

a. Provide students with the writing response handout. Ask them to complete the questions as an exit-ticket, thinking about the day’s activity, and why media literacy is important.

b. Group will share answers when called upon. Students will add notes from board into handout.

4. Writing Response Exit-Ticket (5-10 min)

a. Students will complete writing response individually, working silently, and will turn in their responses in before leaving class.

Assessment:

Small Group Monitoring/ Check-Ins
The teacher should monitor and check-in with small groups as they work on the magazine advertisement activity. (Step 3) The teacher can ask the whole group, or individual students, questions related to their answers or to elements of the magazine advertisement. This will give the teacher a sense for students’ general observations and understanding of the activity. Oftentimes middle school students will rush through their work, and although it may be “complete”, more explanation or additional answers should be included. Checking work as students complete it will help to ensure students complete work thoroughly and to the expectations desired. Checking handouts will also let the teacher know if the pace of the class is moving too slowly, too quickly, or at a pace that is suitable for students, and if redirection or clarification is needed.

Written Sample
The exit-ticket/homework assignment (Step 4) is also included to get students reflecting about the activity and thinking about the importance of their learning. Because the main activity (Step 3) is primarily group oriented, this last activity allows the teacher to see more closely how well individual students understood the lesson. In addition, it asks students to think about how their learning relates to their lived experiences.
Power Point Slides

Slide 1

**Media Literacy Intro**

Focus Vocabulary:

- Media
- Literacy
- Media Literacy

Slide 2

**Media**

Based on these pictures, what is **media**? What are specific examples of **media**?
Literacy

- Based on these pictures, what is literacy?
- What does it mean to be literate?

Media Literacy

- Based on all of these pictures, what is media literacy?
Magazine Advertisement

Old Spice Ad:

What do you see? What visuals pop out at you?

What is being sold? How do you know?

What do you like about the ad?

What is weird or strange about the ad?
Name:

Magazine Advertisement Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Ad</th>
<th>What do you see? What visuals pop out at you? (List them here)</th>
<th>What is being sold? How do you know?</th>
<th>What do you like about this ad?</th>
<th>What is strange or weird about this ad?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old Spice</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Created by Hale (2014).
Name:

Media Reflection #1
(Remember to always answer in complete sentences.)

1. Which visual element from today's magazine advertisement stood out most to you and why?

2. On a scale from 1-5 (1 = very easy, 5 = very difficult), how did you feel about today's magazine activity? Explain which part was easy or which was difficult.

3. In your own words, what does it mean to be able to “read the media”? 

4. Why should we read the media? Why is it important?

Created by Hale (2014).
Week 4, Day 3

Analyzing Magazine Advertisements  
Using Bloom’s Taxonomy

Content Objective: Under guided practice, SW begin to analyze magazine advertisements using Bloom’s Taxonomy.

Language Objective: SW conduct a close reading analysis by looking at an advertisement’s explicit and implicit messages.

Common Core State Standards:

Reading Standards for Informational Text, Key Ideas and Details 1: Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Reading Standards for Informational Text, Key Ideas and Details 3: Analyze the interactions between events and ideas in a text (ex: how ideas influence individuals or events)

Reading Standards for Informational Text, Key Ideas and Details 6: Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.

Materials:
Whiteboard/ Chalkboard  
Projector  
2 Magazine Advertisements (included with sample Bloom’s questions; see appendix 4-3-1)  
Bloom’s Taxonomy Handout (attached)  
Bloom’s Analysis Handout (2-sided, attached)  
Homework (attached)

Activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Does:</th>
<th>Students Do:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Bloom’s Taxonomy Review (15 min)</strong></td>
<td><strong>1. Bloom’s Taxonomy Review (15 min)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. As students come into class hand them the Bloom’s Analysis handout. Tell students to take out their Bloom’s Taxonomy handout (from last class) and take a few minutes to analyze the advertisement on the projector. Instruct</td>
<td>a. Students will write 6 questions about the projected advertisement, based on Bloom’s Taxonomy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Students will share their questions with one another. They will decide, based on</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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students to individually write down 6 questions (on their new handout), one from each of Bloom’s levels, to ask about the advertisement.

b. Assign each group a level of Bloom’s; give students 3-5 minutes to review the definition and decide on the best question from their answers, for that level, to share. If there are more than 6 groups, some Bloom’s levels may overlap.

c. Review the 6 different levels of Bloom’s by calling on groups and asking them to share the level type, definition, and question decided. Write their level, definition and question on the board. (If students misinterpret their question or ask an over-simplified question, redirect by asking another group to help or by adding/tweaking their answers.)

2. Guided Analysis (20 min)

a. Explain to students they will now answer one another’s questions about the advertisement.

Directions: groups will get two minutes to discuss the question; one or two groups will be randomly called on to share their answers with the class. The teacher will summarize answers, and decide on one final, combined statement to be written on the white board.

(Throughout the discussion, add questions sporadically for students to also answer. For example, ask students why people are dressed or posed a certain way.)

As students discuss, walk among groups and listen to conversations. Redirect or add if needed.

b. At the end of the activity, review their Bloom’s level assigned, which question they will share with the class.

c. Each group will share their level name, definition and question with the class. As the responses are written on the board, students will add the questions to their Bloom’s Analysis handout.

2. Guided Analysis (20 min)

a. Students will discuss each question, one by one, in small groups to come up with an answer. Students should be prepared to answer when called upon. They will write responses from the white board into their handout.

b. Students will reflect on the explicit and implicit messages sent in the advertisement, and discuss them as a class, for final closure to the activity.
implicit versus explicit messages as a class. Ask students what explicit messages they received, and what implicit messages they received, from the advertisement. Call on volunteers to answer.

3. Application Homework (5-10 min)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application Homework (5-10 min)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. If time, tell students they may begin their homework.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application Homework (5-10 min)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Students will begin their written homework assignment independently.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Adaptations:**

-Sometimes, during small group work, individual students will ignore group work and class conversation and rush to answer the questions independently. To avoid this, try:

- Keeping students’ personalities in mind when creating groups; seat shy students with outgoing students to encourage discussions. As a personal preference, I tend to organize groups in threes, where each group has at least one to two talkers.

- Anticipate potential rushers and seat them in close proximity so you can see whether or not they need to be redirected.

- Emphasize the purpose of the activity is for discussion and exploration, not rushing or completing the assignment first.

- If there are independent workers:

  Talk with the student independently and explain we are still in the initial stages of analysis, and at this stage, understanding from many perspectives is much more helpful than just one; there will be a lot of time later in the week, and later in the unit, for individual analysis.

  Call on the student to answer in order to get his/ her attention. Ask what their group members had shared in the group; this reiterates they should be discussing in their groups.

**Assessment:**

**Small Group Discussion:** The teacher should monitor small group discussions to check for understanding. Walking the room and listening in on conversations will allow the teacher to comment or ask questions in each group’s discussion. In this way, the teacher not only gets a formative assessment as the activity is still in-progress (and as a result,
can provide immediate feedback or redirection), but can also ensure everyone is working cooperatively and collaboratively. The teacher can also refer to individual group’s ideas when addressing the whole class.

**Handout:** Since the handout will be completed together as a class, it is not a reliable individual assessment (as students will be copying answers from the board). Because this is an introductory activity, however, that’s okay. The handout can still be used as a self-assessment for the teacher. She/he can check to see how well students kept up and paid attention to the material. (If the class at too quick a pace for students, for example, often information will be missing, even if it was written on the board.) In addition, if students have different answers than what was generated as a class, the teacher knows who she/he should check-in with.

**Homework:** The written homework assignment serves as a reflection from the day’s lesson. When the teacher reads over students’ answers, she/he can check to see how well students can independently apply Bloom’s Taxonomy levels, as well as grasp the differences between implicit and explicit messages, as these will be key concepts moving forward within the unit.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
<th>KEY WORDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EVALUATION</td>
<td>Make judgments and defend opinions with evidence.</td>
<td>judge, compare/contrast, argue, convince, choose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYNTHESIS</td>
<td>Combine parts to create a new whole; see material in a new way.</td>
<td>create, design, build, develop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANALYSIS</td>
<td>Break down information; look at specific, smaller parts.</td>
<td>categorize, analyze, break down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPLICATION</td>
<td>Apply acquired knowledge in new ways.</td>
<td>predict, apply, solve, demonstrate, model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPREHENSION</td>
<td>Understand the facts.</td>
<td>describe, explain, summarize, provide examples of...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNOWLEDGE</td>
<td>Memorization and repetition; recount information.</td>
<td>restate, define, match, name, label, quote / cite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bloom’s Analysis

STEP 1: Create 6 questions, one for each level of Bloom’s Analysis, to ask about the advertisement:

KNOWLEDGE: ________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

COMPREHENSION: _______________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

APPLICATION: _________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

ANALYSIS: _____________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

SYNTHESIS: ____________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

EVALUATION: ___________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

(Wait for Step 2!)

STEP 2:

My group’s assigned Bloom’s level is: ______________________________________

Our definition is: _________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

Our decided question about the advertisement, based on our Bloom’s level is:

_______________________________________________________________
STEP 3:

1. KNOWLEDGE:
   Question: _________________________________________________________________

   Response:
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________

2. COMPREHENSION:
   Question: _________________________________________________________________

   Response:
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________

3. APPLICATION:
   Question: _________________________________________________________________

   Response:
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________

4. ANALYSIS:
   Question: _________________________________________________________________

   Response:
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________

5. SYNTHESIS:
   Question: _________________________________________________________________

   Response:
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________

6. EVALUATION
   Question: _________________________________________________________________

   Response:
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________

Created by Hale (2014).
Bloom’s Analysis Homework

Directions: Similar to what we did in class today, analyze the following advertisement by thinking about and answering the questions below.

1. What is being sold? How do you know? __________________________________________

2. What colors are used in this ad? How do these colors add to its appeal (likeability)? __________________________________________

3. How does happiness relate to Coca Cola? __________________________________________

4. How does music relate to Coca Cola? __________________________________________

5. What is this ad telling you, explicitly? (What do you see in the ad that tells you about Coca Cola?) __________________________________________

6. What is this ad telling you, implicitly? (What does the ad imply about Coca Cola?) __________________________________________

7. Do you agree with the ad's implicit and explicit messages? Why or why not? _____

Week 5, Day 3

Analyzing Arguments

Content Objective: SW read and analyze three different opinions regarding Katy Perry’s “Dark Horse” song lyrics and music video; SW decide which arguments are strongest, looking for claims (opinion) and evidence.

Language Objective: SW close read three passages of opinions, looking for claims and evidence. This initial activity will help students create their own strong arguments for their opinion letters in upcoming weeks.

Common Core State Standards:

Reading Standards for Informational Text, Craft and Structure 6: Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.

Reading Standards for Informational Text, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 8: Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is sufficient to support claims.

Reading Standards for Informational Text, Integrations of Knowledge and Ideas 9: Analyze how two or more authors writing about the same topic share their presentations of key information by emphasizing different evidence or advancing different interpretations of facts.

Materials:

Projector
“Opinions: Is Dark Horse Too Dark?” Handout (attached)
Pen and Highlighters for Annotating
3x5 Cards or Half Sheets of Paper (for exit-ticket)

“Dark Horse” song lyrics (analyzed 2 days prior, attached)
“Dark Horse” music video (viewed several times and analyzed by students 1-2 days prior)

Activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Does:</th>
<th>Students Do:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Review “Dark Horse” Activities (5 min)</td>
<td>1. Review “Dark Horse” Activities (5 min)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Introduction and Model to Lesson (15 min)</strong></td>
<td><strong>2. Introduction and Model to Lesson (15 min)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>a.</strong> As students come into class, tell them to take out their “Dark Horse” lyrics and any notes or handouts they completed during the prior two days’ activities. Tell them to take 5 minutes to quick write about what they remember from the lyrics and music video discussions over the past two days.</td>
<td><strong>a.</strong> Students will take out their “Dark Horse” lyrics and related work. Students will take 5 minutes to quick write and reflect on the past two days’ activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>b.</strong> After 5 minutes, call on 4-5 students to briefly share their responses. Write their responses on the board or overhead. Add additional review information if needed.</td>
<td><strong>b.</strong> Students should be prepared to share with the class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Introduction and Model to Lesson (15 min)</strong></td>
<td><strong>3. Analyzing Argument Activity (20 min)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>a.</strong> Pass out the Opinions handout. Explain to the class they will be analyzing various opinions of Katy Perry’s lyrics and music video. Read the handout directions to students then ask them to complete the first example with you.</td>
<td><strong>a.</strong> Students will listen and read along as directions are explained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>b.</strong> Tell students you are going to read the first opinion paragraph aloud. However, as you read, you are going to annotate the paragraph by underlining, circling and summarizing in the margins, looking particularly for the author’s opinion and evidence. (Do a think-aloud during this process, explaining why you are circling or underlining that section as you go.)</td>
<td><strong>b.</strong> Students will annotate their Opinions handout, based on the teacher’s model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>c.</strong> After annotating, read the first guiding question out loud. Ask for student volunteers to help answer the question. Repeat this process for the next three questions.</td>
<td><strong>c.</strong> Students will volunteer to answer the guiding question about the paragraph; they will individually fill in their answers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reiterate the purpose of the activity is to analyze the author’s opinion. They should be annotating for opinion and evidence, then deciding if the argument is strong or not.</strong></td>
<td><strong>3. Analyzing Argument Activity (20 min)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


a. Tell students they will follow the same steps for the following two more paragraphs. They can work individually or with their small groups to answer. Monitor and assist students as they work, looking specifically at progress on the handout.

As students are finishing, add the exit-ticket directions onto the board. (See below)

4. Exit-Ticket (5 min)

a. Provide students with a 3x5 card or half sheet of paper. Ask them to put their names on it and write a paragraph, answering the following:

“Which opinion from today’s activity did you think was strongest? Why? Provide one example from the paragraph to support your opinion. Use complete sentences.”

Collect the handout and exit-ticket as students leave class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Exit-Ticket (5 min)</th>
<th>4. Exit-Ticket (5 min)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Students will complete the following two more examples on their own or in small groups.</td>
<td>a. Students will write a short paragraph, stating their opinion (based in evidence) about which paragraph from the activity they thought was the strongest (and why). Students will turn their handout and exit-ticket in as they leave class.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adaptations:

Because this is an optional work-alone or work-with-a-group activity, anticipate who will likely need support for the activity. Seat these students with peers who also need support or who are social and prefer group work. Seat the individual workers together, assuming they will choose to work alone.

If a seating change needs to be made during the activity, make it. If several students are working alone but appear to be struggling, ask them to sit and work on the assignment together.

Assessment:

Monitoring:
Because this activity has the potential for silence, continually walking the room and looking explicitly at students’ progress on their handouts will be key to ensuring they understand and are completing the task. This allows the teacher to discuss and clarify
with students within the moment of learning, as opposed to afterwards. The teacher should also make themselves available for any students who have questions. If many students are confused or mistaken, the teacher can also stop the class and clarify for everyone.

**Handout:**
Although the teacher should observe students’ annotations to get a sense of their active reading tendencies, the primary purpose of the activity is to analyze arguments. Students’ answers to the guiding questions on the handout will allow the teacher to get a sense for how well students can analyze others’ opinions and identify pieces of evidence.

**Exit-Ticket:**
The exit-ticket will serve as a formative and pre-assessment. Because students have just looked at opinions with evidence, the exit-ticket serves to see how observant and critical they were during this process. By choosing one strong piece of writing, students have to deduce the best opinions and the best evidence. The piece also serves as a pre-assessment to see how well students can formulate their own opinions with evidence. Here, they not only need to pick the strongest paragraph, but explain why they’ve chosen it. The teacher will get a sense for how to move forward and work with students on creating their own opinions (claims) with evidence, for their letters.
"Dark Horse"
by Katy Perry (featuring Juicy J)

Oh, no. Are you ready for, ready for
A perfect storm, perfect storm

[Juicy J:]
Yeah
Ya’ll know what it is
Katy Perry
Juicy J, aha.
Let’s rage

[Katy Perry:]
I knew you were
You were gonna come to me
And here you are
But you better choose carefully
‘Cause I, I’m capable of anything
Of anything and everything

Make me your Aphrodite
Make me your one and only
But don’t make me your enemy, your enemy, your enemy

So you wanna play with magic
Boy, you should know what you’re falling for
Baby do you dare to do this?
Cause I’m coming at you like a dark horse

Are you ready for, ready for
A perfect storm, perfect storm

Cause once you’re mine, once you’re mine
There’s no going back

Mark my words
This love will make you levitate
Like a bird
Like a bird without a cage
But down to earth
If you choose to walk away, don’t walk away

It’s in the palm of your hand now baby
It’s a yes or no, not maybe
So just be sure before you give it all to me
All to me, give it all to me

So you wanna play with magic
Boy, you should know what you’re falling for
Baby do you dare to do this?
Cause I’m coming at you like a dark horse
Are you ready for, ready for
A perfect storm, perfect storm
Cause once you're mine, once you're mine (love trippin')
There's no going back

[Juicy J - Rap Verse:]
Uh
She's a beast
I call her Karma (come back)
She eats your heart out
Like Jeffrey Dahmer (woo)
Be careful
Try not to lead her on
Shorty's heart is on steroids
Cause her love is so strong
You may fall in love
When you meet her
If you get the chance you better keep her
She's sweet as pie but if you break her heart
She'll turn cold as a freezer
That fairy tale ending with a knight in shining armor
She can be my Sleeping Beauty
I'm gonna put her in a coma
Woo!
Damn I think I love her
Shorty so bad, I'm sprung and I don't care
She ride me like a roller coaster
Turned the bedroom into a fair (a fair!)

Her love is like a drug
I was tryin' to hit it and quit it
But lil' mama so dope
I messed around and got addicted

[Katy Perry:]
So you wanna play with magic
Boy, you should know what you're falling for (you should know)
Baby do you dare to do this?
Cause I'm coming at you like a dark horse (like a dark horse)
Are you ready for, ready for (ready for)
A perfect storm, perfect storm (a perfect storm)
Cause once you're mine, once you're mine (mine)
There's no going back

Opinions: Is Dark Horse Too Dark?

PARAGRAPH 1:

It’s devastating that we often generalize and negatively stereotype gender within music. In Katy Perry’s, “Dark Horse” song lyrics, for example, the woman in the song is powerfully mysterious, particularly towards men. Jeffrey Dahmer, who was convicted of murderer in the early 1990’s for killing 17 people, is also used as a comparison to the woman in the song. (A chilling reference to Dahmer’s cannibalism is also mentioned.) This comparison means that this woman is a murderous cannibal. This song sends the message that women are not only unpredictable and not trustworthy, but they are downright evil when it comes to love.

1. The author’s opinion is: ____________________________________________________________________________

2. The author’s evidence includes: ____________________________________________________________________________
                                                                                                                ____________________________________________________________________________
                                                                                                                ____________________________________________________________________________
                                                                                                                ____________________________________________________________________________

3. On a scale from 1-10, (1 = weak, 10= strong), this paragraph rates: ____________

4. I rated the argument a _______ because ____________________________________________________________________________
                                                                                                                ____________________________________________________________________________

Created by Hale (2014).
I don’t understand what all the fuss is about. Criticism has been coming in left and right about Juicy J mentioning Jeffrey Dahmer in the “Dark Horse” music video. What’s the big deal? Music is meant to entertain people and that is all. Clearly the writer needed something to rhyme with “kharma” so “Dahmer” was used. We should be less concerned with the words in a song and more concerned with its beat!

1. The author’s opinion is: ____________________________________________________________

2. The author’s evidence includes: ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

3. On a scale from 1-10, (1 = weak, 10= strong), this paragraph rates: ____________

4. I rated the argument a _______ because ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

Created by Hale (2014).
PARAGRAPH 3:
In Katy Perry's, “Dark Horse” lyrics, Juicy J mentions Jeffrey Dahmer. Juicy J says, “She’s a beast/ I call her Karma/ She eats your heart out/ Like Jeffrey Dahmer.” Dahmer was a serial killer during the 1990's who murdered, dismembered and even cannibalized 17 men over a 13-year period. Why would a writer put someone like Dahmer’s name into a pop song? Murderers should not be glorified in the media because this gives them additional attention they do not deserve. What about the men and women whose families were directly affected by these murders? Adding his name to this song not only teaches viewers that we idolize and glorify these terrible acts, but also forces people to relive and remember the crimes he committed. This is not the type of music we should be listening to and learning from.

1. The author’s opinion is: 

2. The author’s evidence includes: 

3. On a scale from 1-10, (1 = weak, 10= strong), this paragraph rates: 

4. I rated the argument a _____ because 

Created by Hale (2014).
Week 7, Day 1

Introduction to Opinion Letter Assignment

Content Objective: SW discuss how they can be agents of change on a local level, then analyze a sample opinion letter as a specific example.

Language Objective: SW read and annotate a sample opinion letter for claims and evidence then begin brainstorming ideas for their own opinion letter.

Common Core State Standards:

Reading Standards for Informational Text, Craft and Structure 6: Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.

Reading Standards for Informational Text, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 8: Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is sufficient to support claims.

Materials:

Sample Opinion Letter (attached)

Activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Does:</th>
<th>Students Do:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Discussing Change (10 minutes)</td>
<td>1. Discussing Change (10 minutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. As students come into class, ask them to take 5 minutes to write about two moments in their lives. One moment is a time when they witnessed action or change (they stood up for someone/something or witnessed someone they know standing up for someone/something). The other moment is a time when they knew they should have stood up and didn’t. Tell students to describe these two times, and discuss the emotions during and after each situation. (Provide an example of each to give students ideas.)</td>
<td>a. Students will take 10 minutes to silently write about two distinct moments in their lives. One is a time when they actively took a stance (or witnessed someone they knew taking a stance) for what they believed in. The other is a time when they should have taken a stance, but didn’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Ask volunteers if anyone would like to share their writing.</td>
<td>b. Students will be given the option to share their writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Students will brainstorm how we can act and stand up for what we believe in, particularly on a manageable, local level. Students will share answers with the class.</td>
<td>c. Students will brainstorm how we can act and stand up for what we believe in, particularly on a manageable, local level. Students will share answers with the class.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
share their situations. (If no volunteers, respect student privacy).

c. Explain to students that standing up for what one believes in does not have to be on a large scale. (We don’t need to contact Congress or get the entire town to commit to our cause.) Ask for students to volunteer how we can create change on a manageable more local scale. (Ideas might include: creating a club at school, handing out flyers, standing up to a bully on the playground, writing a letter, etc)

2. Sample Letter (20 minutes)

a. Explain to students they will read an opinion letter together, which is a perfect example of creating change at the local level. Provide students with a brief background of how opinion letters to newspapers work.

b. Read the attached letter aloud as a class. Ask students to individually annotate for claims (opinions) and evidence.

c. Once read, ask the students if there are any words they do not know, or if they are confused with any parts of the letter. If no one responds, prompt students with questions like, “what is a transient? What does it mean if you have a bachelor’s degree? What does expansive mean?” Discuss the meanings with students.

d. Ask students the following questions in their small groups, one at a time, calling on groups to discuss each one. (Allow 30 seconds to 1 minute per question to discuss).

What is this letter about? What happened?

How does the author feel about what happened? (What is her opinion?)

2. Sample Letter (20 minutes)

a. Students will listen to the introduction for the activity, and its connection to the warm up writing task at the beginning of class.

b. Students will listen and read the letter, annotating for claims and evidence.

c. Students will discuss any words or meanings in the letter they do not understand by answering teacher-prompted questions as a class.

d. Students will discuss in small groups:

- The summary of the story
- The author’s opinion
- The author’s evidence
- The author’s tone
- The meaning and purpose of the letter; what action, mood or change does it create?
What evidence does she provide to back up why her opinion is justified?

How would you describe the tone of this letter? (Review tone with students if needed)

How does this letter change the way we view the newspaper? How does it make us think differently?

3. Student Brainstorm (10 minutes)

a. Explain to students they will be writing a formal letter to someone relevant about a media issue of their choice (this might be to a magazine brand, a newspaper, a tv station, a celebrity figure, etc). Much like the author of the letter, students must choose a personal and passionate topic to write about. Reiterate that the letter assignment reflects taking a stance and creating change, even if on a small scale. Ask students to write on a 3x5 card whatever ideas they have for their opinion letter. Who might they write to? What media issue will they discuss? What evidence can they provide? Students will turn in their cards as they leave class.

3. Student Brainstorm (10 minutes)

a. Students will listen to directions related to the letter assignment then begin brainstorming ideas for writing a letter related to a media issue they are passionate about. They will write their ideas on a 3x5 card and turn it in as an exit ticket before leaving class.

Adaptations:

In Steps 1 and 3, the tasks heavily rely on students having to cold write. Sometimes when we ask students to write on the spot like this, they will say, “I can’t think of anything” or “this has never happened to me” or “I don’t know what to write about.” A good amount of time is provided in each of these steps to give students time to think. Often, they just need ideas to get started. In Step 1, it may be helpful to provide students with multiple examples. This will help students know that 1.) the teacher is willing to make him/herself vulnerable by telling personal stories, thus they may be more trusting to share their own, and 2.) they understand what the teacher means by the topic. Sharing one’s own stories may spark similar experiences in students as well. For Step 3, if a lot of students are having trouble thinking of ideas, stop the brainstorm and do a quick review of what has
been covered so far in the unit. Small groups can try to create a list of as many activities and topic that have been covered. Call on groups and write ideas on the board; this will give students a refresher, and potential topics, to write about.

Assessment:

The lesson serves to introduce the letter assignment to students, getting them to connect that writing and sharing with others what they think is a form of action that can be powerful. The sample letter serves as a model to demonstrate this (the letter was taken from an actual newspaper opinion column.). Because the lesson is primarily introductory and serves to model what students will be asked to produce, the teacher can use student participation with the whole class as a basic formative assessment to see how well students understand the purpose and meaning of their letter assignment. In addition, the teacher can read their 3x5 cards to see if students have a general idea for the topic of their letters.
“A Fuller Portrait”

To the Editor at The Press Democrat,

The woman found dead in custody following a drug arrest, Rhonda J. Everson, was a best friend of mine (“Third county inmate dies in three weeks,” Oct. 20). Both lifelong residents of Sonoma County, we met in the halls of the chemistry department at Sonoma State University many years ago.

At the time of her death, she held a bachelor’s degree in chemistry, accomplished while raising two young boys on her own. Her mother, three brothers and two sons survive here and also live in Sonoma County. While it is true that Everson struggled during her lifetime with drug addiction, the sole description of her as a “transient from West Sonoma County” failed to acknowledge her as a whole person with strong local roots and an expansive life.

This letter aims to honor Everson and her family and to remind this community that drug addiction is a tragic disease, and those who suffer from the disease should not be defined or classified by the disease.

JULIET ELIAS

Santa Rosa

CHAPTER IV: 
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions:

Adolescents spend a high percentage of their after school hours engaging with media-based content; however, because adolescents do not receive much control or guidance related to their media use, either at home or in the classroom, this field project was created to provide middle school teachers with introductory materials to address this growing need.

This field project contains an introductory, critical media literacy curriculum designed for middle school English classrooms; it is designed for mixed level language abilities, including native speakers and intermediate to high-level ELLs. The curriculum focuses on building students’ English language proficiency and critical-thinking skills through media-based content within an 8-week unit, moving from basic and introductory media exploration, to more in-depth analysis, and lastly, to the creation of media.

By engaging in this curriculum, I believe students will not only become more critically aware of the ways in which media is socially constructed, but will also be more conscientious of the ways in which media persuades and manipulates viewers to think in particular ways. Through a constructivist approach, and with a critical lens, ELLs can also gain additional language input, both from their native speaking peers, and from media content, thus increasing their language proficiency. As a result, all students in the class will not only make more informed decisions, and react more logically, to media, but will also gain empowerment by being able to counteract and reject problematic messages they find.
Recommendations:

I taught a similar CML course in a five week summer program in 2014. Although the overall unit was successful, there were some issues that arose. Based on this summer experience, and based upon potential issues I foreshadow, the following lists potential limitations to the project.

One of the biggest limitations in teaching a unit on CML is its necessity for showing media in a variety of forms to the class. The project assumes these materials will be ready and on-hand at any school or institution. For example, not all schools may have projectors or computers or equipment in the classroom, but for many of the lessons in the curriculum, these materials are needed. And whenever technology gets included into a lesson, there is potential for malfunction. If, for example, the internet happens to be down at school, or the computer does not connect to the projector, the teacher needs to have a second plan in order to fulfill the day’s lesson. It’s important for the teacher to check with his or her school ahead of time to see if these technological resources are available and reliable for consistent use.

A second limitation to the project is its high emphasis on group work which has the potential to make or break a lesson. Not all students are social and not all students like to verbally participate. Yet many of the lessons focus on these verbal interactions. One way for group work to run more smoothly is to anticipate and create seating charts ahead of time for how to group students. The teacher should communicate, from the onset of the school year, group work expectations and even practice how to conduct effective group work. In addition, the teacher should also make it a habit to collect written work. This gives the shy, non-talkers another method of sharing their knowledge and input.
The sociable talkers will also tend to volunteer in class discussions more often. To prevent the same five people from raising their hand (and allowing the remaining 20+) to sit back and potentially check out of the conversation, the teacher should create a system for calling on all students. I tend to allow groups to discuss for a minute or two before I call on an individual student; this allows all students to get information before I cold-call right away. If a student is unsure, I will ask a group member to help out. In this way, it’s not a big deal to be unsure of an answer, but it keeps students on-task, focused and seen as an active participant in the discussion.

A third limitation is the content itself. As mentioned prior, media consists of culturally and socially constructed information. Within the US, nearly all media represents Western ideologies and cultural references. ELLs may not know or be aware of the types of media we choose to use in the classroom. For example, in one of my lessons I choose a song by Katy Perry to analyze. Although Katy Perry is very popular among native-speaking and native-born middle school students, I cannot assume all students will be familiar or accepting of her music. In addition, the particular song contains implicit sexual undertones that some cultures and schools may not find appropriate to be discussed and analyzed in a classroom setting. Teachers should be conscientious of the types of materials they bring into the classroom and make informed decisions on their appropriateness for students and within the institutions they work for. This is not to say a Katy Perry song should not be used; on the contrary, exposing ELLs to popular music as well as cultural material helps them to become more aware and knowledgeable about their new communities. However, it is important to provide essential background information in a way that is sensitive and welcoming to all students.
In addition, asking students to compare or share their own favorite music, for example, validates different cultural and personal taste, which enriches everyone in the room.

**Evaluation Plan**

**Question and Participants**

To evaluate the effectiveness of the CML unit, I would propose a study that focuses on the three general benefits listed in the literature review, as these benefits constitute the shaping for the curriculum. I would ask: “To what extent does CML improve and foster the following areas: language proficiency, feelings of pride, confidence and motivation, and additional, necessary skills?” Some of these areas would definitely need to be more clearly defined for the researcher. For example, additional, necessary skills, according to the literature review, refer to technological, media-related skills and collaborative skills. The researcher may also choose one language area to focus on, such as vocabulary or reading comprehension. Within my curriculum, I talk about language in overall, general terms. However, it may be more beneficial for the researcher to narrow in on one central focus to make the study clearer and more manageable.

The participants would include one full class of middle school students, with a range of mainstreamed high intermediate to advanced ELLs and native English speakers. The teacher would conduct the eight week unit, focusing on CML five days per week for approximately fifty minutes per class session.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Because the study examines three different areas (language proficiency, motivation/pride/confidence, and additional skills gained), this requires the researcher to collect data in a variety of ways. One way is to administer a “pre-test” and “post-test” in
order to examine what content information, language skills, and additional skills students
gain throughout the unit. I use pre and post test in quotations because these do not need to
be formal assessments. The pre-test could be the writing activity given on the first day of
class where students notice various visual elements of magazine advertisements. The
post-test could be a number of writing samples or graphic organizers that come later and
naturally within the unit where students are asked to analyze advertisements in greater
depth. Here, the researcher could determine any additional critical thinking and writing
skills students gained from the pre to post test.

In addition, the researcher should observe the class throughout the eight-week
unit, perhaps once or twice a week, and take observational field notes. I have theorized
that much of the learning that will occur in the unit will be grounded in group and class
discussions, thus it is vital that these discussions be examined for effectiveness. Audio
recordings would also help determine the level of thinking among group discussions as
well as the conversational and academic language used to negotiate meaning among
group members. The researcher should also collect various coursework (handouts,
graphic organizers, and writing samples) and review them across the eight-week unit.
This will give him or her a clearer picture as to whether students are able to understand
and apply their learned knowledge of media content. The researcher should also examine
students’ final projects; the commercials will give him or her an idea for the additional
skills students gained while creating the commercials while the letters will give him or
her indication as to how meaningfully and personally students chose to write about a
topic.
In addition, the researcher should conduct interviews with several students throughout the unit. Although it would be too overwhelming to interview all students throughout the process, the researcher could pick a small sample size of mixed language abilities, to check-in with periodically. After building trust, the researcher could gain information related to students’ feelings of motivation, confidence and pride as the unit progresses, as well as ask ELLs about their language learning process as it relates to media content and surrounding activities. The interviews should be recorded so the researcher can go back to relist and analyze the information given by students.

**Validity Concerns**

One of the main concerns surrounding qualitative data is its subjective nature. It is up to the researcher to analyze students’ responses in interviews and writing samples, for example. This can create questionable results, particularly if the researcher is personally tied to the project. Because of this concern, the teacher should not be the researcher. Although the teacher can and should provide valuable information, additional outside researchers and evaluators should be included to avoid bias. This might mean that two or three people analyze student recordings and writing samples in order to create more uniformed and accurate results.

In addition, group work and group discussion are not the most consistent ways to collect information. Some days group work may run successfully while other days, for whatever reason, group work may be a disaster. It is important that the researcher not focus on one group alone during observation days, but walks around and gets a more holistic overview. In addition, the researcher should be provided with additional
recordings on missed days to get a more accurate rendering of overall group effectiveness. This might mean the teacher also records groups a few days per week.

A final concern relates to students’ general work output. Not all students are consistent; some are absent more than others while others complete homework more than others. In addition, some focus students for interviews may not be interested in speaking with the researcher. It is important that these issues are anticipated and accounted for early on in the unit so as not to skew the data.

I would be interested to read about the successes and challenges provided by the results of this study. Having taught a slightly different approach of what this study proposes (during the middle school summer program mentioned earlier), I can attest to the positive effects it had on my students; I felt it to be so successful that I have dedicated my field project to exploring CML further. With more research, on top of teachers’ testimonies and recommendations for implementing CML in the classroom, I believe it has great potential and flexibility for providing a holistic and engaging curriculum for students of different grade levels and different language abilities.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX

Week 1, Day 1

Class Survey

“Raise your hand if…”

- You have a favorite television show. (Optional: ask 2-3 students to share which ones)

- You have a Facebook, Instagram or Twitter account

- You have a favorite kind of music. (Optional: ask 2-3 students to share what kinds, such as genre or favorite songs or artists.)

- You go on the internet at least once everyday, including smart phone or computer.

- You text message someone everyday.

- You read magazines or newspapers often. (Optional: ask 2-3 students to share which ones)

- You are up-to-date with news stories

- You have a favorite movie (or you like to go to the movies)

- You play video games everyday. (Optional: ask 2-3 students to share which ones)

- You get annoyed by t.v. commercials and advertisements

- You have ever gotten offended by something you have seen or heard on t.v., or the radio.

- You believe that t.v. is factual and/or truthful.
Week 1, Day 1

Vocabulary

**Media**: forms or ways of communication.

Examples: television, movies, radio, music, video games, social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc), journals, magazines, newspapers, news stories, books, commercials/ advertisements, internet, etc.

**Literacy**: the ability to read

Example: Someone who is *literate* can read a book.

**Media Literacy**: the ability to read various (many) forms of communication.

Examples:
- We know that a certain type of movie (comedy, murder/ horror, love story, etc) will have certain characteristics or traits that make it that type of movie.
- We are aware of different strategies companies use to persuade us to buy products.
- We understand a song’s main message, taking into account the song’s words and sounds.

**Magazine Advertisement**

Students discuss:

1. **What do you see?**
   Possible answers: a horse, a man with his shirt off, muscles, “smell like a man, man”, “old spice”, the ocean, holding a bottle… (hard to see, but diamonds are falling off the bottle) (List visual elements on the board as students generate them.)

2. **What is being sold? How do you know?**
   Possible answers: Old Spice, deodorant, body wash, a bottle of something, something for men
   It has the words “Old Spice and Man”, I know Old Spice is for men, Old Spice sells deodorant, He’s holding a bottle of something, it says “smell.”
   (List student answers on the board)

3. **What do you like about the ad?**
   Possible answers: It’s funny, It’s creepy in a funny way, It’s entertaining, etc

3. **Is there anything that seems weird in the ad? (Why is he not wearing a shirt? Why is he on a horse? Why are diamonds falling from the body wash? Why use the word Man twice? )** Have an open-ended discussion with students about how each of these traits contribute to “manliness.” Ask students: How do we see men, according to this ad? Should manliness be defined in this way? Why or why not?

Created by Hale (2014).
Week 2, Days 1-5

Five Key Questions/ Five Core Concepts of Media Literacy

1. Who created this message?
   All media messages are constructed.

2. What techniques are used to attract my attention?
   Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own set of rules.

3. How might different people understand this message differently from me?
   Different people experience the same message differently.

4. What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
   Media have embedded values and points of view.

5. Why was this message sent?
   Most media messages are organized to gain for profit and/or power.

Magazine Ad 1: The Cover of Seventeen Magazine

Sample Questions

KNOWLEDGE
What words stand out to you in this ad? Who is the girl on the cover? (Does anyone know anything about her?)

COMPREHENSION
Provide examples of what this magazine is going to tell you about, according to the cover.

APPLICATION
Is this magazine designed for men or women? How do you know? Is it designed for a particular kind of woman? If so, what should women be like?

ANALYSIS
What is important, according to the magazine cover? How do you know? Who gets to decide this?

SYNTHESIS
Sketch the same Seventeen-style cover but geared for men. What captions would you include? Who would be on the cover? Why? What does this tell you about how we define men and women?

EVALUATION
Do you think this magazine contains valuable information? Why or why not? Does this magazine accurately reflect a wide audience? Why or why not? Who is missing?


Created by Hale (2014).
Magazine Ad 2: Dolce and Gabbana

Sample Questions

KNOWLEDGE: What is the brand name? (Does anyone know what it sells?) What are people wearing?

COMPREHENSION: Summarize what is happening in this picture. Describe how the woman is positioned, as compared to the men.

APPLICATION: If you did not know the Dolce and Gabbana brand, what would you predict they sell, according to this picture?

ANALYSIS: According to this image, how is gender defined? Who has power or control, men or women?

SYNTHESIS: Develop a story line, based on this image. What has happened to get to this scene?

EVALUATION: Aside from products, what other messages are you being “sold” from this image? Why would Dolce and Gabbana choose this image to advertise their products?


Created by Hale (2014).