


Graphic Novels: A Bridge Between Print and Media for ELL Teaching

A decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping, semi-transparent spheres in shades of blue, green, and yellow. The spheres are arranged in a cluster, with some overlapping others, creating a sense of depth and movement. The background is a dark blue grid pattern.

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Historical perspective of Graphic Novels

- 1978 “graphic novel” was coined by Will Eisner with *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories*
- 1981 The first U.S. bound series of comics for children was published. The graphic novel was *Elfquest* by Windi Pini.
- 2002 the movie Spider-man led to more awareness toward comic and graphic novels




Historical Perspective Cont.

- 🌐 2008 Toon Books launched graphic formatted books Francoise Mouly and Art Spiegelman responsible for this vision

First study

- 🌐 Public charter elementary school
- 🌐 Six weeks
- 🌐 Three university faculty members, one graduate students and a volunteer cartoonist
- 🌐 First and second grade students




First Study Cont.

-  **Participants: non-readers to confident readers**
-  **Preliminary inquiry: Survey, sequencing a comic strip**
-  **Length of the Study: Six lessons focusing on sequencing**

Second Study

- 🌐 **Participants: English as another language Master Degree students**
- 🌐 **Pre-service teachers**
- 🌐 **Length of the Study: A semester**
- 🌐 **Experience: Knowledgeable working with ELLs**




Inquiry:

-  How did educators approach graphic novels?
-  What personal connections did educators make?
-  How would educators use graphic novels in their own classroom?




How did educators approach graphic novels?

- 🌐 “I struggle with looking at the pictures. I often just skip over them unintentionally as I search for text on the page...”
- 🌐 “I thought was a very exciting topic. I remember reading X-Men graphic novels when I was a kid, and I loved them”


What personal connections did they make?

-  “I was interested that graphic novels are being treated as legitimate literacy experiences ...”
-  “It is cool to me how our brains work differently which adds to your ability to be a filmmaker”
-  “I have used comics as a reward for motivating students but it never occurred to me to use graphic novels as actual content “

How would they use graphic novels?

-  “I would love to incorporate them in reading and building exercises into a curriculum. Not only does it put reading into a more entertaining context for kids...”
-  “I really would like to learn how to teach a graphic novel because sometimes I think it really improves critical thinking”
-  “It seems to me that graphic novels would be an excellent introduction for students to both literature and visual arts”

- 🌐 **Study:**
- 🌐 **Pedagogy of multiliteracies
(New London Group, 1996)**
- 🌐 **Read: *American Born Chinese*
(2006) by Gene Luen**
- 🌐 **Strategy: Literature Circles**
- 🌐 **Self select a graphic novel**



Multiliteracies, with its four dimensional instructional framework: 1) situated practice, which draws in part from students' own life experiences; (2) overt instruction that introduces metalanguages to deconstruct the myriad and multimodal ways in which meaning is constructed; (3) critical framing of the cultural and social context in which meaning is disseminated and understood; and (4) transformed practice that aims to resituate all of these meaning-making practices to other cultural sites or contexts.





American Born Chinese

- 🌐 2006 Michael L. Printz Award (an American Library Association award, given to the best book for teens) and the YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association) for Great Graphic Novel award
- 🌐 Finalist for the 2006 National Book Award

Findings and Recommendations

- 🌐 Students and teachers unfamiliar with primary graphic novels
- 🌐 Challenging creating stories in such short time
- 🌐 Grasped the concept of sequencing stories
- 🌐 Familiar with primary graphic novels
- 🌐 Enthusiastic about reading books on their own

Conclusions

-  Graphic novels are tools for exploring multiple literacies
-  Graphic novels promote critical literacies for ELLs at all levels
-  Graphic novels foster understanding of content and language use
-  Graphic novels provide comprehensible input