

New media literacies and the 21st century language learner

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This presentation describes a broad research program examining on-line communication, new media literacies, and gaming as settings for second language (L2) use and development. The text begins by contextualizing communication technologies within broader demographic, historical, and sociocultural perspectives. A number of examples of online interaction are then explored: (1) participation in plurilingual and intercultural online communities; (2) interaction in organized Internet-mediated intercultural foreign language partnerships, and (3) multi-lingual transcultural communicative activity occurring in multiplayer online games. In each of these settings, multiple languages and cultures can be seen to serve as resources for carrying out a variety of indexical and proleptic functions, social actions, and identity play. Collectively, these new media contexts suggest enormous possibilities for agentive language use and language-culture learning. The final section of the presentation describes a pedagogical framework designed to increase the relevance of instructed foreign language education through the structured juxtaposition of digital vernaculars with more formal ‘classroom’ genres of language use, an approach I am terming “bridging activities.” In conclusion, an argument is made for continued exploration of new media genres of language use and their selective inclusion into instructed L2 pedagogy, processes, and curricula.