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Multimedia in Language teaching

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ABSTRACT

Language teaching have been concerned for many researchers to find a better method and better material in teaching language. The aim of this research is to study the role of multimedia as a material for teaching language. Multimedia help to stimulate one of the most important aspects of teaching – curiosity. Some studies that were comparing advantages and disadvantages of traditional teaching texts and multimedia didactic means show that the differences in in education are mainly caused by content of communication. On the basis of pedagogical experiences it can be said that media bring qualitative change. This is achieved by interactive communication, simulation of authentic environment, individualization of study – respecting everybody´s own pace of studying, etc. As a result, a fear from making a mistake is decreased (computer enables learners to make a mistake without losing their social status). Interaction has a primary role in the field of multimedia. Self-activity of a student supports the most effective method in the teaching process – active teaching, or teaching by doi .Nowadays, the stereotyped traditional teaching methods and environment are unpopular while multimedia technology featuring audio, visual, animation effects naturally and humanely makes us more access to information. Besides, with such characteristics as abundant-information and crossing time and space, multimedia technology offers a sense of reality and functions very well, which greatly cultivates students' interest and motivation in study and their involvement in class activities.

Key words: language teaching, multimedia, technology, class activities

INTRODUCTION

Language instruction has five important components--students, a teacher, materials, teaching methods, and evaluation. Allwright [1] argues that materials should teach students to learn, that they should be resource books for ideas and activities for instruction/learning, and that they should give teachers rationales for what they do. By increase of using electronic devices in communication and based on this fact that language is communication, so we need to develop teaching methods by use of new technology in language teaching. With the popularity of computers and the continuous development of English teaching software, multimedia teaching mode based on network circumstance will certainly become the main teaching method of college English teaching. The former teaching method depends on a book, a piece of chalk and a tape recorder, and the teacher's main teaching aim in class is to impart

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language knowledge. Nowadays, English teaching based on network circumstance brings the advantage of network into full play, and its' main aim is to impart language knowledge, study methods and application skills. So the students' interest of self-study English will be strengthened, their ability of speaking and listening to English will be also heightened. Multimedia as a new material for teaching language has focused on using computer and electronic devices to teach better.

Finally, there is information from computer mailing lists and web pages on the Internet. Lists on language teaching often have discussions on materials, and the teacher can ask questions and may get good feedback. Many publishers have www pages and e-mail addresses, so the teacher can check with them and also ask questions about the materials.

The Role of Multimedia in Language Learning:

Various studies have examined the process of second language (L2) learning through instruction with and without computer assistance as well as the effectiveness of these two L2 learning instruction types [3]. With respect to the former, researchers have explored the benefits of using a variety of computerized tools, such as computer-meditated communication, concordancing, and multimedia, to mention a few. This paper explores the use of multimedia applications to foster L2 vocabulary learning.

Multimedia can be defined as the simultaneous use of texts, sounds and moving images [11]. In L2 education, the definition of multimedia put forward by Mayer [11] has been interpreted as the use of words and pictures to facilitate the meaning-oriented use of the target language through input and output-based opportunities [10]. In a recent review of the multimedia literature, Izquierdo (in press) summarized the manner in which language learners seem to benefit from multimedia instruction through input and output-based multimedia applications and the effectiveness of multimedia features to facilitate students? Learning of L2 vocabulary and grammar. In his literature review, however, Izquierdo emphasized the importance of exploring the role of the L2 proficiency of the learners when they use multimedia applications for L2 learning as the success of learning tasks may be in line with the L2 competency of the learners.

In line with Izquierdo (in press) argument, Yoshii and Flaitz [16] examined the interaction between three different multimedia environments, L2 vocabulary comprehension and retention, and L2 proficiency. The researchers exposed 151 English as a Second Language learners from two levels of proficiency to multimedia-based reading comprehension environments. In these environments, vocabulary support was provided (i) with pictures, (ii) with text, or (iii) with text and pictures. A vocabulary pre-test showed that learners from both

proficiency groups were not familiar with the words targeted in the experiment. Results from analyses of variance revealed that participants exposed to the combined use of text and pictures had retained more vocabulary from the reading text than their counterparts in the other two multimedia conditions at post-test and delayed post-test times. Further, the analyses showed that multimedia equally benefited learners from both proficiency levels, leading to no gain differences between proficiency groups.

Based on the results of a later study, Yoshii [16] suggested, however, that further research was needed to examine the effect of multimedia on L2 vocabulary learning considering the learners? L2 proficiency level. Yoshii hypothesized that more proficient L2 learners would benefit more from multimedia instruction on L2 vocabulary that would include no reference to the first language (L1) of the learners than lower level learners. Lower level learners, however, would benefit more from L2 multimedia instruction that would include reference to the learners´ L1. Kawauchi [8] also emphasized that one of the serious problems that English college teachers face in Japan is the diversity of the L2 proficiency of their students. The researcher indicated, however, that computer-based vocabulary learning could be one way to help learners develop English vocabulary irrespective of their L2 proficiency level. While the results of Kawauchi's research [8] supported the beneficial effects of computer instruction for vocabulary learning, the study revealed that computer-based vocabulary learning was more effective among the students of the lower level than among those of the upper level (for similar results in regard to L2 grammar development, see Izquierdo, in press). While differential results obtained in terms of vocabulary gains among the L2 proficiency groups, their perceptions were quite positive and similar with respect to the use of computers to learn vocabulary.

The confounding results obtained in the previous studies, then, make it difficult to outline the potential effects of multimedia instruction on L2 vocabulary learning when learners from different L2 proficiency levels are exposed to the type of environments implemented in the previous studies. In these studies, all learners were exposed to multimedia environments where learning would occur implicitly from reading or listening tasks. In other words, in these environments, learners were expected to unconsciously take in the target words, while they completed the comprehension-based tasks, where no explicit teaching was conducted. In her review of the L2 research on vocabulary acquisition, DeCarrico [5] indicated that vocabulary learning occurs with less difficulty through implicit rather than explicit instruction once learners have built up a lexicon of 2000 words, because learners have already developed a lexical threshold that allows them to continue building their vocabulary through implicit tasks.

Several studies have examined the effects of multimedia applications on L2 vocabulary learning through implicit instruction [9,4,14,12,15]. However, to our knowledge, only Groot?s (2000) study provided a first indication that multimedia applications including explicit instruction, operationalized through intensive processing of new words rather than through unsystematic processing of the words out of context, could lead to better long-term retention. Moreover, based on the information-processing model of L2 learning [6,10], which describes L2 learning as the acquisition of complex cognitive skills through the proceduralization of declarative knowledge; the process of L2 vocabulary learning can be enhanced. Lyster [10] discusses that, in language learning, declarative knowledge relates to the knowledge of language items learners hold. The proceduralization of this knowledge refers to the cognitive operations that students develop to produce language spontaneously by effortlessly retrieving information stored in memory.

In the current multimedia literature, it then remains to be explored whether the L2 level of less proficient learners could mediate lexical gains when they are exposed to multimedia environments that include explicit instruction on the type of vocabulary they are expected to learn. To address this issue, in the current study the following research question was asked: Do differential vocabulary gains result among learners from two proficiency levels of English under a 1000 word threshold when learners are exposed to a multimedia environment that includes explicit instruction on Latin roots of English words?

Class Structure in Multimedia Approach:

The class was structured toward creating a problem-based learning environment for the students in a multimedia design context in order to harness their abilities to use and appreciate media effectively when representing various pieces of information to convey a message to the audience. This problem-based learning environment is employed to develop the students' capabilities to solve real-life problems and to exercise analytical, critical and creative thinking in their work [2,13]. Thus, by designing a multimedia application that is multi-sensory and interactive, the students are challenged to learn more about their chosen subject material and to develop their abilities to analyze and draw conclusions from it. Some of the goals for a multimedia project that were adapted from Agnew et al for use in this class included the following:

1. Higher-order thinking skills. Here the students were required to present their information appropriately and effectively. They were also required to select the appropriate media and to use them effectively in conveying their project's message, theme, drama and impact.

2. Group and interpersonal skills. This goal requires that the students to work successfully in a group and with members of their groups in class and interacting with people outside of the classroom environment. This is especially true when the students have to interview and do research.

3. Content and discipline. This requirement enables the student to learn significant facts and concepts in the multimedia discipline as well as interdisciplinary topics. The students can also familiarize themselves with the vocabulary of multimedia, its terms and interpretations.

4. Technical skills. No multimedia project is complete without the use of multimedia software technology. Here the students will learn about project planning and acquire execution skills. More importantly, the students learn how to use a multimedia authoring tool to complete their project and incorporate interactive features into their presentations. These interactive links will work alongside the display of information in multimedia form, using text, graphics, sound, video and animations, in an effective manner. The combination of all these elements will bring about a successful final interactive multimedia application.

The Interactive Multimedia course is a course taken by second-year students of the Multimedia University who are taking their Bachelor of Multimedia (BMM) degree. In this course, the students were given interactive lectures on multimedia concepts and multimedia project development. They were also given interactive tutorials and lab sessions on Macromedia Director, which would be the main authoring tool for them to use to create their final multimedia project. Their task was to propose a multimedia topic of their choice and to design and create an interactive CD-ROM application using multimedia technology.

The Role of Teacher in Using Multimedia:

When using modern technologies during foreign language classes, authentic language situations are introduced. These emphasize the process of learning and, at the same time, they provide the teacher and the learner with necessary feedback. Multimedia in foreign language teaching are able to compensate for some disadvantages that can be observed in case of traditional teaching. It is important to say that the role of the teacher has changed a lot since multimedia were introduced into teaching process. New role of the teacher can be described as follows:

• teacher is a consultant (offers consultations, seeks for information and finds an access to it)

• teacher is a team co-operator (as a member of students´ team, he/she takes part in the solution of problems)

• teacher is expected to help (point out mistakes, provides learners with explanations, he/she clarifies the results that students have presented)

• teacher is an evaluator (he/she supervises and evaluates students´ progress and shows them future options for advancement)

• teacher is a creator of syllabuses and study programs (he/she guarantees innovations concerning content and structure of curricula, teaching strategies and conceptions)

• teacher is a tutor (provides help related to students´ professional orientation, but he/she resolves private problems, too)

Advantages of multimedia:

1. Reduced learning time: According to some research, interactive multimedia/ videodisc training can reduce training time up to 60% over traditional classroom methods. This can be attributed to the immediate interaction and constant feedback which provides excellent reinforcement of concepts and content. Also, self-paced instruction which allows students to control the pace and content of their learning ie, more difficult concepts can be repeated or familiar content can be skipped.

2. Reduced Cost: The cost of interactive multimedia lie in the design and production. When the same program is used by more students, the cost per student is reduced, unlike the traditional instructional system which needs to cater to teacher salaries and overheads regardless of the number of students.

3. Instructional Consistency and Fairness: Instructional quality and quantity are not compromised as technology based interactive instruction is consistent and reliable.

4. Increased Retention: The interactive approach provides a strong learning reinforcement and therefore boosts content retention over time.

5. Mastery of Learning: A good interactive system can ensure the learning of the prerequisites by learners before proceeding to new content. This provides a strong foundation for continued learning and therefore helps to achieve mastery learning.

6. Increased Motivation: Immediate feedback and personal control over the content provided by an interactive multimedia system has proven to be highly motivating to learners.

7. More Interactive Learning: Interactive systems enable learners to have more responsibility and better control over their learning and this generates a greater interest to actively seek new knowledge rather than passively accept instruction.

8. Increased Safety: Interactive multimedia and the simulations they provide, allow the safe study of hazardous phenomena such as dangerous scientific experiments on harmful substances or natural disasters like volcanic eruptions or earthquakes by the learners.

9. Privacy/ accommodates Individual Learning Styles: This system allows for one to one learning and caters to the different learning styles of individuals. The freedom to ask questions repeatedly without embarrassment and the involvement of each individual learner motivates them and reduces the potential for distraction.

10. Flexibility: The flexibility comes from the ability to navigate, by using a keyboard, mouse or touch screen, through an interactive program and to choose what and how much information we want and when we want it.

Conclusion:

As traditional method are not useful for teaching language, many researches should be accomplished to find out the suitable method and materials. Some teachers may possess the improper concept that they would totally apply multimedia technology in their teaching. It is also believed that the more utilization of multimedia technology, the better class atmosphere may grow, the more actively the students get involved in class participation, the more easily the material access to the students. Apparently, the students show some interest in leaning.

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