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Changes in the pattern of language teaching

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Abstract

Aim of this paper is to present an effective way of exploring an authentic text while teaching legal English through integrating multimedia into reading, writing, listening speaking and vocabulary tasks. It focuses on the theme of 'Criminal Procedure', and it includes investigating and solving a crime case on the computer which enables students to activate their legal vocabulary; and also doing different types of vocabulary tasks, which enable them to explore various ways of examining legal English. The aim is to have students practice reading skills through different tasks, which lead them to argumentative essay writing.

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Keywords: Educational technology; Students of Law; web-assisted language instruction; reading skills.

1. A Move Towards Technology

With the development of technology, plenty of changes have been occurring in our lives. With the Radio and TV, a huge amount of knowledge and information have become accessible to everyone instead of being concealed behind writing, in books. Videos and DVDs along with the TV have brought films and movies and documentaries into our homes. Education has even become possible outside ordinary classrooms, in our comfortable homes through TV sets, which was in fact the beginning of distance learning.

Further technological innovations, however, like the Internet, provide a more flexible learning environment where the learners are given the autonomy to direct their own learning cycle. For example, an individual can learn a language or improve his/her use of the target language him/herself via different multi-medias. S/he can even be involved in setting up the syllabus s/he will follow instead of following a set syllabus in a traditional classroom with the guidance of a teacher using traditional or contemporary techniques while teaching.

Today, many institutions involve the use of digital technologies in the classroom to enhance learning. This approach, of course, requires competency in technological skills as well as pedagogic flexibility. If these two do not exist, then the use of multimedia or technology can turn into a disadvantage.

Table 1. shows some of the most important advantages and disadvantages. The advantage of providing pedagogic flexibility can turn into a disadvantage due to a possible loss of teacher's full control over students'

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learning. However, by redefining teacher's role, this can easily be overcome. Although a shift from a teacher centered classroom to learner centered one seems to be a disadvantage, it is in fact an advantage since it increases student involvement in a classroom.

Table 1. also indicates the advantages of getting quick access to all information and increasing student interaction. Yet, both depend on the level of the students' computer literacy and their competence in computing skills. If the students are competent enough to do effective search on the Internet and to handle interactive tasks on multimedia, then there will naturally be no such disadvantage. But if the student is not competent enough, then of course, s/he can hardly make use of the technology in his/her benefit. His/her autonomy would then be limited which in return would limit the level of interaction via multimedia. Still, these problems can be diminished and overcome by introducing students with Word Processor, e-mailing and how to do search on the web before having them exposed to tasks which require computing skills and internet skills.

Table 1. Pros and Cons of Using Technology in a Language Class

Advantages	Disadvantages
1. Enhances Flexible Learning (Pedagogic flexibility)	1. A loss of T's full control over students' learning (Pedagogic flexibility)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ SS involvement ➤ SS comfort ➤ SS motivation 	
2. Quick access to all information	2. Incompetence in computing skills and computer literacy
3. Increase student interaction	3. Limited student interaction

2. How We Use Technology In Legal English Classes

Having in mind all the advantages and disadvantages discussed above, we've been using technology in our classes for the last 4 years. Let us now turn our attention on how we've been doing this. But before that, let's first give you some background information about our institution and our students at the Faculty of Law.

Background information

Eastern Mediterranean University is an English-medium university in North Cyprus. According to the university regulations, the new students who cannot pass the English Proficiency Exam go through an intensive period of learning English in their first year in the Intensive English Division of the School of Foreign Languages. This regulation applies also to Law students even though their departmental courses are conducted in Turkish since they study Turkish Law. After this intensive period, the students are exposed to English for five hours (with one multimedia hour) per week in their first year and four hours (with no multimedia hour) in their second year in the department.

Educational context

In the first year, the courses are designed to use the multimedia hour as a follow up for the in-class teaching. The students mostly practice what they learn in their classes in this separate hour. Therefore, considering the 3P's in language teaching (Presentation, Practice and Product), multimedia is engaged in at the stages of either "Practice" or "Product" most of the time. For example, we first introduce our students with the new vocabulary items in class via a reading or listening activity, and then, we have them practice these vocabulary on their own through some vocabulary tasks provided on our webpage. As another example, we ask them to search on a topic on the Internet (during the multimedia hour) in order to collect information for their writing after we show them how to write an academic essay and have them had enough practice on such writing. We also ask them to use word processor with all its tools to finalize their product.

Within this framework, we must admit that what we are currently doing is not really a full integration of multimedia into the classroom, but using it as a complement/supplementary source for classroom teaching.

However, a full integration of multimedia into language teaching is possible, and it is quite interesting, exciting, motivating but also challenging for both the students and the teachers.

3. An Effective Way of Integrating Multimedia into Classical Techniques of Language Teaching

3.1 Target students

Target students are the first year, second semester students from the Faculty of Law. They have sufficient input and practice on basic crime-related vocabulary, argumentative essay writing, and internet searching.

3.2 Proposed approach

The presentation focuses on the theme of ‘Criminal Procedure’ with which the target students introduced beforehand. First, the learners’ schemata will be activated through a multimedia task on related vocabulary. This will then be followed by various vocabulary tasks. The integration of multimedia, before working on the vocabulary tasks, will provide students with a visual environment that will enable them not only to activate old vocabulary but also to guess the meaning of new ones from the context provided. These activities will prepare students to the reading on ‘Criminal Evidence’.

In the reading part, students will work on different types of reading tasks to explore various ways of examining Legal English. This will constitute the basis for their argumentative essays, which will be written by using the vocabulary introduced and practised through various tasks designed with an integrated approach. However, in order to increase student involvement and creativity, another multimedia task will be provided to the students before writing. In this task, the students will be required to search on the Internet to collect data for their argumentative essays.

Finally, after conducting a research on the Internet, the students will be able to write an argumentative essay by using the vocabulary introduced and practiced through various tasks designed with an integrated approach.

3.3 A Detailed analysis into the model

There are 9 different vocabulary tasks which work for a different purpose in this part of the series of lessons. In these tasks students identify the words they come across during an interactive game online. They are introduced to new words and then they are exposed to the definition of some words, most of which have been introduced in the previous task. Students are also introduced to the noun forms of the target verbs and therefore, they become aware of some suffixes to make nouns from verbs, and then analyze the words in terms of linguistics. Analyzing the words gives students the opportunity to digest the words by considering the previous tasks. Pronunciation is also practiced as the students pronounce the words to find the similar ones, and thus they figure out the system of pronouncing certain suffixes, i.e. ‘-tion’ and ‘-fy’. Students then practice sentence structure along with the identification of the verb – noun forms of the target words. Fill-in the Blanks type of exercises are also used to practice the use of newly introduced vocabulary by writing their own sentences.

3.3.2 Part II listening, speaking and reading

The second part aims to practice listening, speaking and reading skills through an integrated approach with the use of an authentic reading text about the use of DNA in criminal cases.

3.3.2.1 Listening and speaking

The students listen to the narration which talks about two cases which were resolved with the use of “Genetic Fingerprinting” through DNA analysis, and complete. The listening script is in fact an adapted version of the reading text they are going to read, and the aim is to introduce/prepare students to the reading. In the first listening task, two tables are prepared: one for the first case and the other for the second. The students are put in pairs. Student As are given Table 1 and student Bs are given Table 2. While listening, the students are asked to complete the missing information in the tables they are provided.

After the students listen and complete their tables, they are then asked to work with their pairs to figure out the similarities and differences between the two cases by asking each other some questions. Here, the students practice speaking by asking and answering questions. This is a good exercise, and it would be highly effective in a small classroom where the teacher can monitor each pair easily. However, what happens in big classes? It is natural that the teacher may feel unable to monitor the whole class in such classes during this speaking activity. At this point, the use of multimedia would be of great help. With the use of chat programs, for instance, the pairs can be asked to do the same activity on the Internet. They can ask and answer questions to figure out the similarities and differences while they are chatting with each other. This would not only increase student motivation and interest to the task, for it takes them away from the atmosphere of the ordinary classroom, but also helps the teacher to monitor the activity more effectively by giving him/her the chance to view each and every pair's talk either instantly or later at home from a CD or a Diskette.

3.3.2.2 Reading comprehension

The students focus on reading skills with Referencing and Comprehension Questions, and the level of these reading tasks can differ according to the level of the students. Since the students get the general information about the reading text in the listening activity, we turn onto referencing and detailed questions here in this part. However if you change the pre-reading activity and start with a discussion on the topic of the reading text instead of listening, for example, you can easily turn the listening task I into a reading task and have your students work on it and practice scanning while reading.

The discussion part comes after the reading as a post-reading activity. A statement, which is in fact the last sentence, is taken from the reading passage. What it says is open to discussion. Therefore, it is a good source to this end. Two questions can be asked; one for opening up the discussion, and the other for the discussion itself. The students are asked to work in pairs again so that the activity can then easily be turned into a multimedia activity. The students can continue their discussion in chat rooms, or the discussion can change its shape and become a group discussion on a discussion board. In either case, the teacher can be involved in the discussion either as a passive or an active member to monitor it.

After the discussion, the students are given an Internet task on Simpson case. This appears to be a follow up activity after the reading and discussion. However, it also works as a preparatory phase before the writing which will again be on the use of DNA evidence in criminal cases. The questions being asked are there to guide the students during their research. This is a guided research which is then followed by a free one in the writing part which follows. But, according to the level and the competency of your students, this task can also be given without any guided questions.

3.3.3 Part III writing

The students are given a couple of statements/ideas on the topic they are going to write. What they are required to do is to state whether they agree or disagree with them. They are also required to provide their reasons for each. The aim of this task is to increase students' awareness of the topic and to lead them to realize their stand point before they start writing.

This task is another Internet Search Task on the writing topic. This time, as opposed to the Internet Task on Simpson, the search topic is broader and there is no guidance while searching. This is an extended internet search task which requires high competence in searching skills.

At the end, with the help of the two preparatory tasks in this part along with all the others, the students are now ready to write. This task asks them to choose their stand and write an argumentative essay to discuss their thesis.

Final Remarks

To conclude briefly, considering the whole work presented here, the students are first prepared to the listening, reading and speaking activities with various vocabulary tasks which would also help them when they write on the same topic. Listening, reading and speaking activities help them to have a vision on the theme that is focused. This vision is further widened up through Internet tasks with which the students gather information about the topic they are supposed to write. And finally, as the "Product" of the lesson, the students are now expected to write an argumentative essay embracing all they have accomplished up until this point. Multimedia was present throughout

the process and it is still on duty during writing, for the students are expected to furnish their final product with the use of Word Processor.

4. Conclusion

The proposed approach is an effective way of exploring an authentic reading text through the integration of multimedia in teaching and learning legal English. As technology cannot be a goal in itself, it becomes an integral part of how classroom functions – as accessible as all the other classroom tools. This is one way to promote more student involvement and to have more learner-centered classes. It greatly enhances learners to gain their self-esteem as it allows them to have more responsibility and control over their own learning.

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