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**THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF MULTIMEDIA AND
ITS USING IN TEACHING ESL**

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ABSTRACT

Educational systems around the world are under increasing pressure to use the new technologies to teach students the knowledge and skills they need in the 21st century. Education is at the confluence of powerful and rapidly shifting educational, technological and political forces that will shape the structure of educational systems across the globe for the remainder of this century. Many countries are engaged in a number of efforts to effect changes in the teaching/learning process to prepare students for an information and technology based society. Multimedia provide an array of powerful tools that may help in transforming the present isolated, teacher-centred and text-bound classrooms into rich, student-focused, interactive knowledge environments. The schools must embrace the new technologies and appropriate multimedia approach for learning. They must also move toward the goal of transforming the traditional paradigm of learning. Teacher education institutions may either assume a leadership role in the transformation of education or be left behind in the swirl of rapid technological change. For education to reap the full benefits of multimedia in learning, it is essential that pre-service and in-service teachers have basic skills and competencies required for using multimedia. This paper, therefore, explores the latent benefit of using multimedia tools particularly in professional teacher education. The paper also discusses why pre-service teachers need to use multimedia technologies within the context of students' familiar, technology-rich living spaces to develop their own teaching skills and the technology skills of

their students. In addition, the author also explains the role of multimedia in enhancing the 21st century skills.

KEYWORDS: *Multimedia, Teacher Education,, Pre Service Teachers, 21st Century*

INTRODUCTION

Multimedia offers the lecturer many benefits including: satisfying educational objectives, increasing pupils understanding, demonstrating events, showing places, conducting experiments which would otherwise be impossible. Sharing of multimedia outputs is done carefully such that it will not disturb other learners working in the same classroom! Not only may a number of pupils be performing similar activities at the same time on a network, the lecturer must decide whether to control the activities via the media of the computer. The use of multi-party desktop conferencing with the lecturer chairing the running of the conferencing session, showing selected parts of a video is a case in point.

Giving pupils an opportunity to produce multimedia documents of their own provides several educational advantages. Pupils work with the same information from four perspectives: 1) as researcher, they must locate and select the information needed to understand the chosen topic; 2) as authors, they must consider their intended audience and decide what amount of information is needed to give their readers an understanding of the topic; 3) as designers, they must select the appropriate media to share the concepts selected; and 4) as writers, they must find a way to fit the information to the container including the manner of linking the information for others to retrieve.

Some of the advantages that can be listed for the use of multimedia, according to the authors of the above report, are as follows:

Multimedia can:

- enhance learning in different locations and institutions of diverse quality;
- present opportunities to pupils working at different rates and levels;
- provide (tirelessly, without holding up other pupils) repetition when repetition is warranted to reinforce skills and learning;
- compensate, in the short term, for high pupil populations and limited numbers of trained and experienced teachers – in combination with robust teacher development initiatives and improvements in teachers' working conditions.

Updates to content ware can ensure that teachers and pupils encounter and have the chance to work with current and authentic sources. Such encounters tie learning to the most important events of our time and underscore the general idea that knowledge itself is not fixed and finalized, that there is a universe of discoveries and a library of analyses that can be available to pupils.”

To what extent these advantages of multimedia are relevant to language teaching and learning will be discussed later in this section.

Teachers have chosen a variety of technologies to help in educating ESL pupils. In some instances the older technologies of audiotapes, language masters, televisions, and videotapes are still utilized. Audiotapes are used in listening centers, and in some cases with home projects. Language masters are still used as listening and speaking centers in some classrooms. The common technologies of television and videotapes are valuable learning tools, when used appropriately. With previewing, viewing, and post-viewing activities included, a wide array of activities can be used with video and television that provide both auditory and visual language experiences.

The emerging technologies of computers and multimedia provide opportunities for even more learning experiences for EFL pupils. Word processing, e-mail, computer software, the Internet, and the World Wide Web are all sources of more and different learning activities. The interactive nature of multimedia provides new ways to enhance the learning experience of EFL pupils.

Teachers use multimedia with EFL pupils for a variety of reasons. The text, graphics, video, and audio encourage immersion in language. The nonjudgmental aspect of technology is comforting for these pupils. The individualization, instant feedback, and assessment components of many software packages are all positive factors. Pupils are motivated when using technology, especially the new emerging technologies. They feel empowered and often content is more accessible to them.

Many factors need to be considered when evaluating multimedia. It should be easy to use and to navigate. It should be consistent with the knowledge we have about EFL pupils' learning needs. Software should be appealing and, of course, it should have a purpose.

Technology is a valuable part of all pupils' learning and education. It can be an integral factor in the EFL pupil's learning. Not only can technology, and particularly the emerging technologies, assist in the acquisition of language skills, but also technology can aid in the all-important task of aiding pupils in the mastering of curriculum content in English. When appropriate preparation and activities are utilized, technology can assist teachers in meeting the special language and learning need of EFL pupils.

One of the major concerns of many countries today is that there is a mismatch between graduates' skills, acquired from higher education institutions and the skill sets needed in industry. Many of the current graduates are found to be lacking in creativity, communications skills, analytical and critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.¹ As such, there is much need for institutions of higher education to focus on training future graduates to be more adaptable to the needs of the industry.

Currently, many institutions are moving towards problem-based learning as a solution to producing graduates who are creative and can think critically, analytically, and solve problems. Since knowledge is no longer an end but a means to creating better problem solvers and encourages lifelong learning, problem-based learning is becoming increasingly popular in educational institutions as a tool to address the inadequacies of traditional teaching. Since these traditional approaches "do not encourage pupils to question what they have learnt or to associate with previously acquired knowledge" problem-based learning is seen as an innovative measure to encourage pupils to "learn how to learn" via "real-life" problems.

We would like to extend this contention further by using multimedia technologies to create a multimedia-oriented project. By doing so, we hope to further develop the pupils' ability to become creative and critical thinkers and analyzers, as well as problem-solvers, within this multimedia-mediated problem-based learning (PBL) environment. This learning mode is constructivist in approach whereby the pupils participate actively in their own learning process and construct their own knowledge.

The move towards using problem-based learning in many educational institutions has resulted in a shift in the curriculum model. The focus is moving from content towards problems to provide a more realistic approach to learning and to create an educational methodology which “emphasizes real world challenges, higher order thinking skills, multi-disciplinary learning, independent learning, teamwork and communication skills” via a problem-based learning environment. However, this model can be further strengthened with the inclusion of multimedia technology into this problem-based learning environment to enhance the pupils’ learning experience.

With the use of multimedia projects, pupils can utilize the knowledge presented to them by the teacher, and represent them in a more meaningful way, using different media elements. These media elements can be converted into digital form and modified and customized for the final project. By incorporating digital media elements into the project, the pupils are able to learn better since they use multiple sensory modalities, which would make them more motivated to pay more attention to the information presented and better retain the information.

On the other hand, there are also some disadvantages of multimedia and its use in teaching. I can consider the price of the tool as the first problem, because as everyone knows multimedia tools are expensive and not all people or teachers can afford it for themselves. Every teacher wants to use it but, as they do not have enough money to have its tools they mostly try to avoid of using it.

The next disadvantage is that it is not always to configure, I mean not all teachers can use it easily. Because it is difficult to use it people who are not aware of this kind of program as it requires special hardware. Even sometimes teacher take a readymade material it is difficult them to use it because of lack of knowledge in that sphere.

Creating multimedia projects is both challenging and exciting. Fortunately, there are many multimedia technologies that are available for developers to create these innovative and interactive multimedia applications. These technologies include Adobe Photoshop and Premier to create and edit graphics and video files respectively, Sound Forge and 3D Studio Max to create or edit sound and animation files, respectively. They can also use an authoring tool such as Macromedia Director or Author ware to integrate and synchronize all these media elements into one final application, add interactive features, and package the application into a distributable format for the end-user. Another advantage of creating multimedia projects in the classroom setting is that when pupils create multimedia projects, they tend to do this in a group environment. By working in a group, the pupils will have to learn to work cooperatively and collaboratively, using their group skills and a variety of activities to accomplish the project’s overall objectives.

As stated by Agnew : “Pupil-created multimedia projects are beneficial, in addition, because they often involve substantial work, open-ended assignments, theme-based activities, and knowledge and experiences that the pupils draw from a wide variety of sources.” Multimedia-oriented

projects are “a way for pupils to achieve high self-esteem, to increase their ability to function as self-directed learners, to learn to think effectively, and to practice problem-solving and decision-making”.² Therefore, using multimedia in the teaching and learning environment enables pupils to become critical thinkers, problem-solvers, more apt to seek information, and more motivated in their learning processes. Multimedia is slowly gaining ground as a way for pupils to represent the knowledge that they acquire in class and to construct their own interpretation of the information acquired. It also fosters collaborative and cooperative learning between and among pupils, thus better preparing them with a skill set for real-life work situations.

Having analyzed the theme of my research work, having studied several resources on the given topic and having seen the works of other scholars about the multimedia and its use in education and especially in teaching EFL and ESL I came to the conclusions below:

1) The term Multimedia is said to date back to 1965 and was used to describe a show by the Exploding Plastic Inevitable. The show included a performance that integrated music, cinema, special lighting, and human performance. In the 1993 first edition of McGraw-Hill’s Multimedia: Making It Work, Tay Vaughan declared, “Multimedia is any combination of text, graphic art, sound, animation, and video that is delivered by computer. When you allow the user – the viewer of the project – to control what and when these elements are delivered, it is interactive multimedia. When you provide a structure of linked elements through which the user can navigate, interactive multimedia becomes hypermedia.”

2) The use of multimedia in education has been extensive, as it has been effective in increasing productivity and retention rates, where research has shown that people remember 20% of what they see, 40% of what they see and hear, but about 75% of what they see and hear and do simultaneously. It is now permeating the educational system as a tool for effective teaching and learning. With multimedia, the communication of the information can be done in a more effective manner and it can be an effective instructional medium for delivering information. A multi-sensory experience can be created for the audience, which, in turn, elicits positive attitudes toward the application. Multimedia has also been shown to elicit the highest rate of information retention and result in shorter learning time.

1. Most teacher advocates of audiovisual aids have made similar observations on the primary and secondary level as well. An effective teacher knows the secret of AV instruction is to utilize the unique capability of each medium. This can only be accomplished if the teacher is willing to put in the necessary planning and effort. The rewards can be considerable. Once a technique is mastered, its use can free the teacher for the many classroom activities in which human interaction is still, and always will be, vital.

Pupils respond to information differently. Thus, it is often to our advantage as teachers to use many different formats and modes to teach the subject matter of a lesson. This is why teachers normally use some combination of lecture, text and hands-on laboratory for conveying information. With the advent of the Internet and the multiple formats that can be communicated over the World Wide Web, we now have several new and exciting ways to present information. The Web allows the incorporation of animation, moving pictures, and sound into lessons, which extends our abilities to present materials that encourage pupil interaction with the subject matter. Pictures and animations help bring to life scientific principles, and multimedia allows pupils to take a more active role in learning: they can watch experiments in action, see microorganisms up

close, and use a mouse or keyboard to navigate images, simulations and interactive material. One of the advantages of using multimedia is to convey information quickly and effectively to all pupils – and keep them interested in learning.

2. Multimedia materials in the teaching of foreign culture are of inestimable value. I have discovered that these aids are extremely effective; especially at a time when the visual media seems to dominate all our lives and, as such, that this visual conditioning communicates to us with greater sharpness and impression. It must be kept in mind that multimedia materials serve the teacher only as supports to his lectures and the assigned required readings; Pupil evaluations both essay and objective, of the multimedia used in the course attest to the effectiveness of their use in the classroom.

So, as we are living in the 21st century we must use all opportunities that we are given. Teachers of this century have the opportunity to engage pupils like never before. Multimedia resources, such as interactive online games, video clips, pod casts and sets allow them to address a range of learning styles and meet the needs of every pupil.

CONCLUSION

To summarize the theme we have taken under discussion we can state that Teaching Reading, speaking, writing and listening with the help of authentic materials have profound advantages:

- it helps pupils form the experience of English text reading
- it supports the pupils enlarge vocabulary
- it helps pupils be aware of the history, social life and culture of people whose native language they are learning as a second or foreign language.
- it helps the pupils to develop reading, writing, listening, and speaking techniques; to improve their observational skills, to obtain analytical methods and make stylistic interpretation analysis.
- It improves the pupil's abilities of any authentic and compulsory material.
- It forms the pupils' fluency in the English language
- It provides the pupils' effective communication
- It develops pupils' critical thinking and creative approach abilities
- It helps the pupils to gain much knowledge, form the outlook.
- More over Teaching reading, writing, listening, and speaking for using authentic materials implements professional aim as to develop pedagogical – professional practice in pupils.

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