
MULTIMEDIA AS AN INNOVATIVE TOOL IN TEACHING WRITING IN ENGLISH

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Abstract:

The present era of globalization has brought meticulous changes which result in the growth of science and technology through the use of computers in all the fields. Multimedia is one of the recent technological developments in the present scenario. Using multimedia has become inevitable in every sphere of human life. Multimedia is a series of presentations that deal with graphics, animation, sound, videos and text information on various aspects. It provides a concrete knowledge in a simple and understandable manner and also creates a relaxed learning environment for the students as they are confined to only textbook reading. The traditional teaching method of English has been drastically changed with the remarkable entry of technology in the ESL classrooms as the traditional teaching method is not enough to teach English language so effectively to keep up the students' interest in the classrooms. Using multimedia in the ESL classroom will be an innovative strategy and motivates the learners in order to meet with academic challenges. It also helps them in developing English language skills, writing in particular. Further, it helps the learners to be independent in learning English and results in learner autonomy. This paper discusses how multimedia can be used as an innovative tool in teaching English language and writing in specific. The difference between a traditional classroom and multimedia classroom has also been drawn in this paper.

Keywords: Writing, multimedia, innovative tool.

Introduction:

Teaching is the usual flow of knowledge from the teacher to the learner in a smooth and efficient manner. In the current competitive world, the process of education has become more quality oriented. Researches in the field of education have shown that teaching with audio-visual aids, graphics etc have a greater impact on the learner than the textbook teaching. Information and communication technology has recently emerged as the basic provider of knowledge and skills in the 21st century.

As Apter has pointed out that, "Today technological education is being developed with the aim not only of making education more widely available but also of improving the quality of education which is already available".

In the present globalized era, teaching-learning process in classrooms cannot be confined to the chalk and talk method only but has to lead the learners towards good learning experiences through which they try to obtain the specific objectives of their academic goal. The main objective of teaching English to the ESL learners is to make the students communicate in English proficiently and effectively in English in order to fulfill their daily activities in real-life situations. Most of the learners fail to acquire basic English language skills and writing in particular. Writing is the most important skill among the four skills of English language. It is a productive skill. It is being taught as a content subject rather a skilled subject like maths, science etc. As a result of it, most of the students have poor proficiency in writing skill. Hence they are unable to communicate in English either in the academic spheres of classroom learning or in the real life outside the classroom. Because of it, many of the learners are not getting jobs due to their poor proficiency in English. Therefore using multimedia in the ESL classrooms will establish a link between the classroom and the real life outside the classroom where much English exists and happens every day. These multimedia devices can be appropriate to all levels and motivate the learners towards learning and directs to self-directed learning which results in learner autonomy.

In this context, the need for introducing technology in education has been felt. In the present scenario, using ICT in teaching and learning has almost become inevitable for two reasons: firstly, the vast information available on the internet changes the learner's perception and understanding of the subject. Secondly, the easy access to information generates interest in both teaching and learning. It is one of the powerful tools of information and communication technology which helps in exploring the nature of the world through its technological systems. It also has an immense impact on learning as it promotes individualization of instruction, illustration through graphics and display of information and diagrams. Moreover, on one hand, it makes the teachers work easier and faster through Computer Enhanced Instruction by creating instructional materials, worksheets, slide shows, displays etc by using computers. On the other hand, the students get an opportunity to learn, communicate and share the information with each other. Thus Multimedia provides an entertainment based learning environment for both teachers and students. However the present generation is more

media-centric than the past generation, that's why using multimedia as a resource in the classroom and in ESL classroom in specific for teaching/ learning process is in more demand. It can also be used in seminars, conferences, symposiums, meetings, workshops, demonstrations and so on. In the diverse modern methods like programmed learning, micro teaching, team teaching, multimedia is largely required for ensuring effectiveness and efficiency in learning. Multimedia as an interactive tool has been introduced important changes in the academic field and has paved a new way of communicating information to the learners. Thus, the main purpose of this paper is to discuss the use of multimedia as an effective tool in teaching and learning of English and writing in particular.

Definition of Multimedia:

"Multimedia is an exciting combination of computer hardware and software which allows integrating video, animation, graphics, audio, and text resources to develop effective presentations on an affordable desktop computer"(Fenrich,1997).

The term Multimedia itself means that 'more than one media'. According to Hofstetter (2001), multimedia is the use of the computer to present and combine the text, graphics, audio and video with links and tools that let the user navigate, interact, create and communicate. In further, multimedia is the combination of various digital media into an integrated multi-sensory interactive application or presentation to convey information to an audience (Damodharan and Rengarajan, 2007; Butcher- Powell, 2005). In the Educational system, multimedia is used to produce computer-based training through a series of presentations, text about a particular topic with associated illustrations in diverse information formats. Edutainment is the combination of two words education and entertainment, especially multimedia entertainment. This teaching method will bring out the students to the class where they can interact with the teacher regarding the subject. In recent years, multimedia is widely used and replacing in the traditional teaching methods. Multimedia is a technology used to establish logic relations and interactions between humans and computer. Multimedia teaching refers to the teaching process of choosing modern teaching media according to teaching objects and characteristics of students through the instructional design and combined with traditional teaching methods. Multimedia devices are electronic media devices which used to store and experience multimedia content.

The paradigm shift from Traditional teaching to Multimedia teaching:

The present globalized educational system stresses the need for introducing ICT in education. Comparisons between the past and present education system also firmly believe that new changes are to be implemented for quality education. The traditional teaching methods like using blackboard in the classroom, chalk and talk method, standing lectures which have been in practice for the past ages are to be replaced with the new technological changes. Multimedia teaching method develops the intuition of teaching and creates a relaxed learning environment for the students. Unlike the traditional methods which are mostly teacher-centered where the role of a student is passive and participation also minimal but multimedia

is learner-centered, it involves every individual in an active manner towards learning. Traditional teaching model focuses on the face-to-face live lecture of teachers and is also suitable for a small class lecture. Multimedia teaching can be used for large classrooms and on large scale by relieving the burden of teachers from shouting in the classroom. In the instructional teaching, it is difficult for a teacher to communicate with every student in a face-to-face mode in order to check the knowledge of the student, while multimedia teaching promotes the students to learn independently and actively in a friendly atmosphere with face-to-face mode with their teacher. Multimedia would promote students with the opportunity to develop new ways of learning such as online education. In the multimedia classroom, the learner is given control so that they may review the material at their own pace according to their own individual interests and needs. Hence it is to be understood that the basic objective of multimedia is not to replace the teacher but to change the teacher's role entirely. Teachers need to update their knowledge and skills in research, critical analysis and other sources of information according to the technology changes to assume a new role as experts in the learning process.

Using multimedia in teaching writing:

There are numerous types of multimedia devices which can help the learners to develop English language skills and writing in specific and some of them are-

Digital text and speech synthesis:

Digital texts can be read aloud by using recorded human voice or synthetic text-to-speech programs. It also offers potential benefits to students with visual defects, students with decoding problems, and reluctant readers. It supports the development of basic language skills (LSRW) such as listening, fluency, accuracy and reading comprehension etc. Speech synthesis is a writing tool for students to recognize errors when listening versus reading a composition. Through this device, all language skills can be taught easily. There is a scope for the students to develop writing skills through some writing activities such as paragraph writing, essay writing, letter writing, creative writing and expository writing etc based on the digital text and speech synthesis.

CD-ROM storybooks:

CD-ROM storybooks are one of the important devices which offer digital text in combination with features such as animations, illustrations, speech, and sound. They can benefit from developing language skills. These stories help the students to develop critical thinking skills as well as writing skills by digging up information about a topic in order to do writing activities. These stories would motivate learners and maximize their learning rate which directs to self-learning.

Video recording tools:

Video recording tools can also be used as tools to improve training practice by reviewing the video before or after the lesson is taught. They are called audio-visual aids which are effective teaching aids. Video disc-based anchored instruction can be applied to engage the students in the classroom and also motivate students. The tasks and activities can be designed on the video records that the students have seen. After watching these video records students can be asked to write what they have observed in that recording, this results in descriptive writing. They can also be asked to analyze the things in the video recordings which results in creative writing skills.

Hypermedia:

Using hypermedia in the ESL classrooms, teachers can help the students to overcome the important barriers posed by printed texts. It will offer new means for the students to demonstrate knowledge and skills that afford them a much greater range of possibilities than the printed text. Various writing activities can be designed based on this hypermedia.

Computer simulations:

Computer simulations mean that "to open up the walls of the classroom," providing students with an opportunity to observe manipulate, investigate in order to learn. Students can choose any topic they want to learn from the computer and it makes them independent learners of language which results in learner autonomy. The computer is a very useful device to get valid information related to subject knowledge with the help of internet and plenty of activities are available to practice writing skills to the students.

Benefits of using Multimedia in the classrooms:

The fact is that people only retain 20% of what they see and 30% of what they hear.

This statement explains the impact of using technology in Education. By adopting the diverse technological tools, today we have been able to enhance learning and teaching at the same time. At present Multimedia is used to increase the learning outcomes of a lecture.

- As a tool of creativity, it is more effective as the teacher/students can download images from the internet and add it to their text. This can be utilized many times with an option to incorporate any changes in the future.
- Easy-to-access course materials from "anywhere", at "anytime". Instructors can post the course materials or important information on a course website, which means that students can browse at any time to obtain the study material very quickly. Therefore it provides flexibility of learning and helps in the development of higher order thinking skills as well as language skills.
- Computer-based technology provides a practical learning environment where students are able to solve a problem by means of self-exploration, group collaboration, and active participation. Hence it is a benefit to the students to develop four English language skills.

- With multimedia, students can learn more and more in less time. It helps them to develop a positive attitude towards computers in computer-based classes. It will help a teacher to present information in diverse modes.
- Multimedia can help the students in developing study materials with still and animated graphics, video and audio integrated in a structured manner which facilitates the learning of new knowledge more effectively.
- It enables both the educators and learners to work together in an informal setting. Furthermore, it also encourages and enhances peer learning as well as individual creativity and innovation.
- Computer-based media helps the teacher or student to develop technical and research skills that they cannot get from reading a textbook alone.

Thus multimedia provides ample opportunities for the teacher and students to make their English classroom more effective in learning a language.

Limitations:

Multimedia has certain drawbacks like:

- Lacking the availability of the services of well learned and well-educated personnel.
- Unsystematic use of various methodologies.
- The recurrent use of computers, calculators and other operative machines makes the younger generation to depend upon machines rather than their personal ability such as memory, reasoning, and logic etc.
- Over-reliance on multimedia teaching may distract the attention of the students from the learning.
- Multimedia can also provide a wealth of information but cannot provide emotional teaching objectives or replace traditional teaching thus makes the class atmosphere dull.

Despite its drawbacks, multimedia has a positive effect on the learners to be motivated towards English language learning.

Improving Methods for Multimedia Teaching:

- The teacher needs to select teaching methods according to teaching content and target by making good use of modern multimedia devices.
- The textual representation of courseware content should be appropriate for using the proper graphics so as to the amount of the content and the expression methods.
- The use of multimedia courseware for teaching activities should be designed accurately so that the students will learn effectively.
- Multimedia Teaching should be combined with the traditional teaching method in order to achieve better teaching effect.
- Multimedia Teaching Schools should take efforts to improve both the hardware and software devices of multimedia, to establish well-equipped multimedia classroom and libraries with comprehensive content of resources, courseware.

Conclusion:

Therefore multimedia can arouse radical changes in the teaching and learning process in the coming decades. Hence Multimedia in education helps in enhancing the efficiency of the teaching and learning process and also makes the children more creative by providing them with an individualized learning environment. It ultimately results in self-learning. Therefore multimedia can be used as an innovative tool in the ESL classroom to teach writing skill.

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