USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN ENGLISH TEACHING CLASSROOM – A STUDY

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Abstract: Using multimedia in teaching English as a second language has become an emerging tool in higher education. In this technology era, most of the students are computer literates and they adapt to computer learning methodology easily. Every student is confident enough to access computer, ipad, tablet, mobile phone and this confidence helps them to learn English in an effective way. Applications like whatsapp, Instagram, twitter, facebook etc., mesmerize youngsters directly or indirectly and that aid them to learn anything, especially English language, effectively. Though we are in this advanced age, many teachers confront great challenges in using multimedia in English classroom. The purpose of this paper is to introduce some useful and practical methods in learning English through multimedia.

Keywords: computational skills, communication skills, innovative methods

I. Introduction

In the present age, students’ acquisition of a language is measured in terms of their ability to communicate in the language rather than examining their grammatical skills. Many educational institutions have taken an extreme step by including a network of computers and related software, cassette players and slide projectors as a part of English teaching methodology. Though computer is not an odd word in developing countries, many teachers are reluctant to use gadgets in teaching English in the classroom. This paper explores the role of multimedia as effective tool and suggests the involvement and participation of teachers in the teaching process through electronic gadgets. English plays an important place in every student’s life directly or indirectly. Though, chalk and board method is unbeatable, using technology in the process of teaching English benefit learners voluminously. English should be considered as a language rather than a subject by adult learners.

In this competitive world, most of the institutions have set up language lab for their students to learn English. At present, multimedia lab is quite attractive and instilling the interest of learning the language. The difference between a normal language lab and a multimedia lab is that the former provides audio equipment through which learners can listen to the tapes, record their voices and communicate with the teacher, while the latter operates as a multifunction tool through which students can either listen to the tapes, watch videos and different TV channels, access internet or communicate with one another while the teacher can operate technical equipment to group or to pair students and hold discussions within the class. "Such video cameras and computers assist teachers in their jobs, bringing the outside world into the classroom, and, in short, making the task of language learning a more meaningful and exciting one" (Brinton, 2001, p. 460).

II. Literature review

For ages, teachers come out with unique ways to teach students. The trend is slightly modified from teaching of discrete grammatical structures to the fostering of communicative ability. Multimedia is a boon to teachers, academicians, educationalists and experts to attract learners by its colourful and useful functions. Brinton (2001) supposed that multimedia tools serve as an important motivator in the language teaching process because "media materials can lend authenticity to the classroom situation, reinforcing for students the direct relation between the language classroom and the outside world" (p. 461).

Media helps to kindle the learning interest of learners. The computer tools like internet, audio or video clips help learners to interact or listen to the native speakers; this increases the morale of learners. Using video, audio clippings in the classroom is a stimulus for students to communicate about anything interesting as Whatsapp or Facebook has become a common ‘syndrome’ for youth to view and read anything under the sun. Modern facilities make it possible for the teacher to present different sections of the video once or several times in different ways. Exercises such as class surveys, problem resolution, video title and ending discussions, brainstorming, video summaries, and information-gap exercises can aid learners to hone their cognitive skill.
Teachers are the initiator for all innovative teaching methods. If teachers are not tech-savvy then this method will be a total fiasco. Teacher-made-media materials demand an investment of time and energy beyond that of normal lesson plan. As a result, many teachers express their inability or unwillingness to use multimedia in their classrooms.

Froehlich (1999) affirms the positive effects of visuals to people, which is also true of present learners: ‘Most people prefer and respond more favorably to visual stimuli than to sound only. Learning today takes place less and less reading a text or listening to an audio-tape, modes of learning that require patience, concentration and the ability to internalize information and to transform it into knowledge. Instead, the learning process today is characterized by being informed and entertained simultaneously through a combination of complementary, easily absorbable signals to our senses… Foreign language education nowadays has to be fun.’ (pp. 150-151).

III. Multimedia in English Teaching Classroom

Multimedia has become an indispensable tool in English teaching classrooms. Teachers can be well equipped with more information at a click. Pronunciation, accent, vocabulary, reading, writing, listening and speaking skills can be taught using multimedia. Visuals can be used to develop the correlative thinking skills of students. In most of the classes teachers do the talking and students do a little talking, this situation prevails in every institution. Students’ creative, analytical and productive skills can be honed by showing colorful pictures, inspiring speeches by great people, current affairs with trouble shooters. This method helps students to improve their communicative skills.

A. Hypothesis

Does multimedia help students in English learning? Does the pronunciation get improved? Does vocabulary get improved?

B. Method

This section describes the manner in which data was collected for the study. Thirty students from an aided college on the outskirt of Chennai were used for this pilot study. The respondents were studying in B.A [History]. The background, age, motivation, confidence of all the thirty students was the same. The respondents studied in vernacular (Tamil) medium till class X and were not exposed to multimedia in the classroom before.

C. Criteria for Respondents Selection

1. All respondents were in the age group of 18 to 19 years
2. All respondents were first-generation learners
3. Their parents were educated at least up to class VIII
4. All respondents used Tamil as the medium of communication
5. They had a little knowledge about technology.

D. Procedure

Prior consent was taken from the Principal of the College for data collection. Pictures, advertisements from social media had been given to the respondents and instructed them to narrate the sequences on their own in English. The observer got introduced to the respondents as a teacher and she instructed them to behave and interact as naturally as possible during their performance. Response-stimuli happened among the respondents after viewing colorful clippings with a concept or theme. The responsive step helped the respondents to react, interpret, simulate according to each clipping. This process aided them to respond to the situation which attributed them to learn English quickly and interestingly.

IV. Observation and results

The respondents had numerous activities to listen to and improve their English knowledge. They even attempted to form sentences on their own. When the extra activities were introduced, the respondents could readily make associations between the language and the concept that would provide them a coherent context, where language and structures were being used. Pictures have an important role in the story –based teaching. Words can be better associated with pictures and the respondents could relate to a sequence of pictures for good memory. This helped them to practice speaking skill and they reconstructed orally with the help of visuals provided. A questionnaire was administrated to the respondents to evaluate their memory, confidence, understanding of LSRW skills and higher order thinking skill. The response was evaluated by Likert Scale (1-3 scale) with 1-agree 2-disagree 3-do not know.

Multimedia helped the respondents to have a direct understanding of observation where news, sponsored programmes on internet or mobile would give a direct conceptual narration. The colorful clippings with interesting words and promotional advertisements on mobiles helped them to have choice on selecting the interesting one of each respondent’s taste of understanding.

A. The results

Thirty respondents answered the questionnaire without any inhibition and compulsion as they had to answer only eight questions. For the first statement ‘My memory in learning English is increased because of gadgets’
only 7 respondents agreed to the statement as they felt as too many colorful pictures or information would make them to fade away from their memory, 5 respondents disagreed and the rest did not know the level of their memory in this learning process. For the second statement, ‘My vocabulary is developed’ 19 respondents agreed and the 1 respondent could not evaluate her stand on this statement. S3 ‘My listening skill is improved’ 15 respondents agreed and 4 respondents disagreed as they felt that too many information had distracted them and also as they had many choices, they level of interest was shifting from one to another.

S4 ‘I use the learnt words in my daily conversation’ 18 respondents agreed and 2 respondents felt that they did not know as they were not conscious of understanding while conversing.

S5 – ‘Writing skill is improved’ only 5 respondents agreed and the rest disagreed to this statement

S6 – ‘Reading is frequently increased’ 19 respondents agreed and 1 respondent disagreed.

S7 – ‘Innovative - Higher Thinking happens casually’

18 respondents agreed that their level of higher thinking with a layer of innovation happened and Two respondents disagreed.

S8 – ‘The level of confidence is high in using English language’

17 respondents agreed and the rest disagreed as they felt that they were afraid of the language as a subject.

B. Evaluation of the study

Evaluation and learning are continuous process. Learning happens throughout the life of a learner and the evaluation is not intended to make pronouncement on the learner’s abilities or the effectiveness of the teaching process. This study will help teachers to understand the strategies, materials, methods and practices adopted in language learning.

Transition is the process of moving from one activity to another and the teacher should prepare the learners at the time of transition. Always prepare learners for the new activities they face in the classroom. Proper planning and executing the activities perfectly will be effective among students. Students should learn in groups but with individual attention. This helps them to share, learn, listen and participate in meaningful activities. The activities should relate to students’ prior knowledge.

Teachers should make students to feel the language by immersing themselves as well as students in the language. Allow them to listen to the language through CDs, multimedia etc. Teach students and make them understand that the taught language is not an isolated one but essential one. This helps them to develop their receptive and productive skills.

V. Teacher’s role and learner’s progress in multimedia classroom

A multimedia class is more teacher-fronted than a student-centered as the teacher plays a crucial role in the class. Before teaching, it is teachers who must learn some important operations of computer, though not thoroughly. The major drawback in multimedia classroom is non-interactive session by teachers with students because both are busy handling equipment most of the time.

The success of teaching depends on the interest of students to the subject, and their desire to learn it. Sometimes classes pass by, not leaving a trace of learning in the process. Apart from inadequate technical ability, a majority of students make little improvement because of their learning habits and lack of concentration. In conventional teaching, students are focused on listening to the live demonstration by teacher or fellow students or oneself. In some cases the stimulus is very difficult to create. But the high motivation to study English is observed by using multimedia which gives a variety of forms of teaching from listening to audio records and watching video, reading blogs, tweeting on twitter, chatting online and working on computer programs.

6.0. Conclusion

There is no denying that technological development can critically affect our behavior and expectations. Regarding multimedia in teaching language, the advantages of authenticity, interactivity, various accessible resources, and combinations of pictures, sound and text are obvious. Nevertheless, in many cases language teachers and learners have not yet maximized the benefit of multimedia in English teaching classroom. Multimedia is a universal means, as it can be used for teaching and also aids to make the studying process effective, interesting and accessible. Education can create a better society and teacher can impart good education to learners. Every action in this world has a positive reaction and education instills a lot of confidence when students are educated in a good way. Education in the present day is a great challenge. Quality is the basis of present and future education modules. Therefore, it is imperative that one should develop originality, divergent thinking, flexibility etc., to achieve mission in life and to reach excellence in life. Teachers should empower Youth by providing more and better educational opportunities so that young students become knowledgeable, bold and powerful.

References
