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Influence of multimedia-enhanced lessons in teaching English online

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Abstract---In the era of technologies and Internet, information is constantly being updated so there are many distractors. That means, currently it is very challenging to keep the audiences' concentration and a multimedia implemented lesson is a really helpful tool to grasp learner's attention. Moreover, multimedia implemented lessons are nowadays crucial than ever before, as there was a period when lessons were held online. An unexpected situation with Covid-19 showed the necessity in multimedia enhanced teaching and even pointed at some of its problems as well.

Keywords---multimedia, auditory, kinesthetic, visual, Covid-19, pandemic, online classes.

Introduction

As great scientist Albert Einstein said, "Interest is the best teacher". So the current world of teaching young generations is boiling and seeking newer ways of involving the students in the procedure of lesson. This is mainly because the learning process is no longer the image with a teacher standing in front of the class, explaining the rule and controlling the lesson. It has already become learner-centered, the teacher being the facilitator of the process.

The fundamental transformations that are being held in our country require the content of education to be changed from the point of the time. The choice of our country for its economic and social development is a key element of the overall objective of this work, both in the field of science and in the improvement of the system of personnel recruitment.

The sphere of education, being one of the predominant fields in our country, is receiving a great deal of attention, specifically in English teaching and learning. From this perspective, the language teaching process is experiencing huge changes, turning from grammar-translation to communicative and cognitive approaches. That means drilling the grammar rules and translating the texts and words are not of current interest. Correspondingly, learners' cognitive

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characteristics are considered significant issues that can involve them in the learning process. From this point, the scientists' and teachers' first task is to differentiate the learners according to several peculiarities.

A wide range of classifications is suggested by scholars related to solely types of learners. But we must say that the classification of learners is a controversial topic, which differs from one source to the next. For instance, according to Frederic Vester (1998), to whom the theory of types of learners goes back, there are 4 learning types:

1. Auditive
2. Visual
3. Haptic
4. Learning through the intellect.

He relates learning styles to receptive channels and doesn't take into account that there could be other factors that can also play role in learning preference (Vester, 1998).

According to another source (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992), there are five dimensions of language learning styles. Note that they now call learning preference as style and take into account other factors as well:

1. Analytic-global – refers to learners inclined to learn grammar rules, who tend to find some regularities in systems.
2. Sensory preferences. This dimension includes three of the above-mentioned four types: visual, auditory, and hands-on (kinesthetic).
3. Intuitive/random and sensory/sequential – refers to their way of presenting material. The first sees the big picture but not in order whereas the latter prefers showing output in a sequential and detailed way.
4. Orientation to closure – refers to learners' willingness to close or end with rules. Here learners are divided into 2: 1. Those who are eager to reach the concluding part of explanation or instruction, so that they will analyze and organize the obtained material themselves; and 2. Those who let the teacher control the flow of the lesson and want everything to be on time, not earlier and explained and directed by the teacher
5. Competition-cooperation – refers to learners' preference towards either working in a team (cooperation) or competing with peers (competition).

Although the scholars' opinions dramatically differ from each other in classifying, they agree at a point, that the role of visual, kinesthetic, and auditory learning styles is salient in organizing a lesson. (Brown, 2006).

Reid (1987) has suggested a number of systems of styles and chose six for international comparison: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, preference for individual-learning, and preference for learning in groups.

The following question comes up at this point. Why did we look through all of the above-given types of learners? So the answer is that multimedia implemented lessons will help teachers in achieving the desired outcome more effectively. Simply saying, multimedia matches the preferences of the majority of learner

types. When we are referring to all types of learners, we are using the categories by Brown H. Douglas (2006) and J. Reid (1987). Furthermore, the pandemic situation in the world left no choice but the multimedia-enhanced lessons as the process of education switched to online teaching and studying.

What does the notion of multimedia mean? We conducted a small survey among the students of our institute. According to our survey, most people do not have relevant or enough information about multimedia itself. Certainly, they are familiar with means of multimedia, like video, PowerPoint presentation, and so on. But when asked a question about the notion itself and what it refers to, most of the participants could not give a proper answer. So, the question was:

“What does the notion of multimedia mean?”

It has different explanations depending on the angle you are investigating it from.

1. Multimedia is a process of presenting information or communication by combining any of media types, like audio, video, image, sound, and text in an interactive way utilizing electronic devices (Vaughan, 2011). There are different types of multimedia according to various categories, but as our aim is not multimedia itself, but its implementation to the process of the lesson, we are going to keep on our journey.
2. Multimedia is the “use of multiple forms of media in a presentation”. (Schwartz & Beichner, 1999, p. 8).
3. Multimedia is a notion whose implication has evolved. A couple of years ago, in the sphere of education, it referred to the process when a combination of slides, a TV, or movies was used. Today it implies using computer technologies (Brooks, 1997).

After clarifying multimedia, the degree of its significance has become obvious. As we mentioned above, it fits the preferences of almost all of the learners, sounds involving auditory learners, images for visual ones, and its interactivity for kinesthetic learners get all of your students highly concentrated during the class, making them enchanted. But in most cases, students possess the combination of two or more learning styles, and again the mixture of media types perfectly matches the demands of all of them.

Why multimedia implemented lessons?

With the widespread and fast enhancement of electronic devices, multimedia has become an indispensable part of the lessons as they gave us a good chance to combine media types and make the procedure of the lesson more attention appealing. Their role is especially crucial in giving information but the role in receiving the result also shouldn't be underestimated, because when the output is to prepare interactively, most of the students do it with a good eagerness.

In the past, teachers used to dictate the texts, give grammar rules, give instructions in front of the room and use chalk and the board during their classes. But now the central character of the lesson is switching to the learner from the teacher. So a learner-centered lesson should contain some involving tools. But, it should be noted that multimedia and electronic devices are not

methodological items, they can be considered as a meditational tool in achieving the objectives. Moreover, a good teacher should know when to add multimedia-based tasks so that the lesson will not be too electronic device-dependent and students' attention will be kept.

When to use multimedia?

Teaching is a long and not stable process. It needs to be altered and adjusted all the time. So there are surely some cases when it requires multimedia enhancement. These are some of them:

- *When students have split attention.*
On some occasions when there are too many causes to lose concentration, a picture or a video can be a nice tool to get the attention back. But the teacher must be careful with the usage of the multimedia type, because some types of materials like video with both pictures and text, or too complicated mixtures of media types can lead to even worse results, causing the concentration to be divided into even more parts.
- *While having online classes.*
Because of the rapid expansion of Covid-19 throughout the world, the pandemic situation became worse in our country, as well. Lessons started being held online. Multimedia-based lessons appeared to be very effective from the perspective of presenting the input or information. But it also showed that we must work on this type of lesson, develop them even more.
- *In order to check the previously learned material (by quizzes, questionnaires, tests, retention tests, etc.)*
From the cognitive point, previously learned material can be measured with the help of retention tests that check the memorization of the given material.
It is one of the fast and most effective ways of examining prior knowledge. Furthermore, as an electronic device is involved, the young generation will feel free to participate. In order not to lose the flow of the lesson, this part should be shorter. Because students may feel too involved and can make noise.
- *When your students are presenting output.*
To check the output, transfer tests are commonly used. They measure students' ability to use the information to solve problematic situations (Mayer, 2014).
Performing the acquired material is one of the essential parts of teaching. So, from time to time, teachers give their students tasks so that they can use the learned material and cause communication to occur. And obviously, all students cannot perform at once. That means, at the time when one of them is showing the output, the rest can feel bored, be distracted, be a distractor, not involved, and so on. As we gain most of the information with the help of our eyes and ears it is crucial that the speaker uses at least two means of media. By this: 1. We receive students' attention; 2. They will learn something new as well. Furthermore, the computer-assisted presentation makes the speaker less stressed as all the attention will be paid to the screen. Besides, it gives a teacher a good opportunity to check students' progress even in online education.

- *As a practical device to cover bigger issues in a short period.*
Multimedia implementation gives us an opportunity to highlight key points. That will be an instruction to students according to what they have to look over the topic further.
- *In order to strengthen the relationship between the teacher and students.*
As a multimedia-supported lesson does not take too much time (it can be prepared once and is available to use several times, or can simply be downloaded from the internet according to the level of the students) the teacher's task is to work more on learners' cognitive characteristics. They may include such notions as aptitude, intelligence, motivation, risk-taking, or inhibition in performance.
Abbas Pourhusein Gilakjani (2012) says that multimedia should be used when:
- *Learners lack motivation.*
Not all students are learning the language willingly; some factors might be playing a key role. But teacher's task is to deliver equal knowledge to each learner. So it is crucial to keep them interested so that the students will direct themselves.
- *A properly organized material is available.*
It is clear that not only from the point of multimedia implementation but also every single lesson, prepared material should be effective and well-organized, or else there is no use of applying it to the process.
- *For cognitive purposes.*
Under the current conditions, multimedia is the only tool to fully satisfy students' audio-visual and other sensory organs, and this way gets the best cognitive effect. Therefore, using multimedia teaching is very necessary, especially in English teaching; only effective co-ordination of multimedia can better complete the teaching task.
- *In needs of qualitative education.*
Multimedia enhanced lessons allow the learners to be incorporated in using different sensory organs while learning. This encourages the involvement of the relative cortical function area. Such stimulation contributes to understanding and memorizing knowledge, gives higher learning outcomes, and improves classroom efficiency, thus breaking the traditional English teaching methods (Zhang, 2016).

What are some advantages of using multimedia in our classes?

- *Language acquisition will be constructive when prior learning conditions are present in the next stage.*
This way, students feel relaxed and the learning process will continue effectively. As in the case of our country, thanks to the developments in education and new approaches in English teaching, learners from young ages get accustomed to multimedia-enhanced classes, so it is implemented to following levels, also.
- *It promotes interaction and collaboration.*
Early language learners especially benefit from this as they organize multimedia content in groups. This is significantly useful in online learning, too, because the contact between the learners, that are distant from each other and participate in lessons separately, is too small or sometimes even

lost. This makes them communicate (via the Internet) and gives the feeling of a team or community. It is vital because people are social creatures.

- *Flexible.*

Multimedia material can go beyond the classroom, learning does not require fixed time, and place and can cover a big number of learners.

- *Motivates to learn English.*

Dr. Min Pun (2013), from Tribhuvan University, claims that as human beings we always tend to imagine the picture or rely on an image. So by using multimedia, we can create a real-life or native-speaking country context that plays a key factor in motivating them and develops students' interest in the country whose language is being learned. The case is the same with online learning. Teachers can ask students to watch a documentary about one of the English-speaking countries and make a presentation on the results of the video. It will increase the empathy towards the country being studied.

- *Helps students to find their way of learning.*

The teacher's role in the classroom is not only to provide information but also to change students' mindset, from "want me to study" to "I want to study". Multimedia enhanced classroom and multimedia involving tasks enable students to identify their ways of learning, thus transforming them into active learners from passive ones (Zhang, 2016).

- *The data can be updated and exchanged.*

As multimedia resources can be downloaded, they can be uploaded, at the same time. It allows the teacher to exchange ideas with other colleagues all over the world, or other teachers can point out some inaccuracies in materials. Besides, one material that is prepared and fully organized by a teacher and uploaded to the internet, can be accessible in any other corner of the world, which simplifies other teachers' tasks, so that they can improve their methodologies. To tell the truth, a teacher cannot be perfect in all aspects, but now we have access to a huge amount of resources, some of which are done perfectly. The only thing to do is to study it thoroughly, and present it to students.

- *Improves cultural awareness.*

It is an obvious benefit of a multimedia implemented lesson. By showing videos, images and making presentations we share more authentic and realistic information than expressing it orally (Min, 2013).

- *The same efficiency in comparison with in-class teaching.*

It has already been proven that there is no substantial difference between teaching in class and distance learning (Keengwe et al, 2008).

- *Increases both students' and educators' technology literacy.*

As Chan et al. state (2011, 74), "the use of educational technology also allows us, as a by-product, to strengthen students' general computer and multimedia literacy, even if this is not a primary goal of foreign language teaching". Without any doubt, this type of teaching has its drawbacks, as well.

So, what are some possible weaknesses of multimedia implemented teaching?

- *Multimedia can be dominant in the teaching process.*

Teachers should avoid the multimedia materials taking the leading part of the lesson. No matter how multimedia effective is, the teacher's role shouldn't be underestimated or forgotten. But sometimes teachers use multimedia products as much as possible to attract students' attention, which neglects the objectives of the lesson. Teachers should remember that it is a tool in achieving the goal, not the aim itself.

- *Confusing.*

During both online and offline classes, there might be misunderstandings about the information presented through multimedia. When the lesson is face-to-face, it is a manageable situation, but when it comes to online, the level of confusion can arise.

- *Requires special skills.*

Although multimedia applied lessons are interesting, they require skills in the usage of computer devices or multimedia equipment. Since many teachers were students of the traditional educational system, they may sometimes face some difficulties in using multimedia, waste some time searching for relevant material or it takes some time before they can cope with equipment. It can disrupt students' concentration and demotivate sometimes (Zhang, 2016).

According to Patel (2013), most teachers are claimed to be positive towards multimedia use but they may have not enough proficiency to use it confidently. This makes them uncertain, which makes the process not smooth.

- *Leads to dependence.*

Over-use or misuse of these tools may sometimes lead to addiction to them. As we mentioned above, multimedia material is always at hand and can easily be downloaded, so some teachers may stop developing professionally. If there is not any enthusiasm, there is no use of multimedia. By automatically downloading and presenting the material, a teacher can turn into only information-giver, by which students continue being passive learners (Zhang, 2016).

- *Updating and uploading the material*

Especially, in the case of online education, it is very challenging to update the material daily and upload it to either the site of the educational establishment or to the private group of learners on social media.

- *Time-consuming.*

There are various cases when extra time might be needed, as an example of creating multimedia, uploading it, searching for proper material, analyzing and studying it to provide appropriate instructions.

- *Risk of decrease in students' logical thinking abilities.*

Multimedia makes the content easily understandable, thus blocking learners' logical thinking skills. In other words, students get accustomed to "spoon-feeding". But, if correctly organized, students can benefit by learning with technology when technology is used for complex problem solving and information-retrieving purposes.

- *Loss of teaching time.*

According to the results of a research conducted by Tuncay Yavuz Ozdemir and others (2013), lack of experience and knowledge in using technology can lead to loss of teaching time.

- *Lack of interaction.*

Zheng (2005) argues that many online platforms or courses lack interaction between the educator and the learner. He admits that information is delivered, but individuality is lost. That is to say, every student is individual, with learning preferences. With multimedia-enhanced classrooms, these borders are faded away (Zheng, 2005).

Conclusions and suggestions

Analyzing all of the data cited above, we may come to several conclusions that will be highlighted further.

1. Multimedia enhanced lesson is inevitable and irreversible part of teaching and learning process. Its role is even irreplaceable in lessons that are being held online during the pandemic situation. Because, face to face lessons are transferred to the internet and it is sometimes challenging to achieve the desired outcome. But multimedia keeps the interest concentrated and helps to get the goal.
2. Moreover, multimedia meets the expectations of all three types of learners: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. Thus, making the online learning process effective.
3. Culture integration is in higher level. Undoubtedly, it is better to see once than hear about it a thousand times. That is, while presenting the culture, it is more useful to combine media types rather than speech itself.
4. It is a productive tool for teachers as an ongoing-training because materials and skills required for implementation of multimedia should be updated all the time.

However the issue is one of those, that requires improvements and changes, such as:

1. First and foremost, this type of lessons cannot fully replace the role of the teacher. No technical tool can analyze students' perception by observing them. Only human beings are capable of this ability. At least, currently so far.
2. It can lead to time loss because of several factors that can cause some problems, such as loss of integration among students or lack of teacher's talk.
3. Last but not least, multimedia implemented lessons may block students' logical and critical thinking abilities that are essential in current world.

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