USING MULTIMEDIA TO MOTIVATE EFL STUDENTS’ INTEREST IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

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USING MULTIMEDIA TO MOTIVATE EFL STUDENTS’ INTEREST IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

With the development of technology and the boom of digital revolution, foreign language teachers find it necessary to think about effective new ways to create a better foreign language teaching and learning environment that is supported by multimedia technologies. As a result, Computer Assisted Language Learning, or CALL, has become increasingly popular in the foreign language teaching field.

Based on the analysis of the features of CALL, this paper is focused on how multimedia can play an important role in EFL classrooms. The literature review was conducted on definitions and the development of multimedia. Furthermore, the review of the literature was conducted on multimedia as a teaching method from both theoretical and pedagogical aspects. By analyzing the weakness and the strength of CALL, some practical and effective teaching ways, as proposed by professional educators and qualified teachers, are discussed on how to effectively use multimedia in the classroom.

Following the literature review, the writer makes the following conclusions: multimedia English teaching is a recent technique with both strengths and weaknesses. Teachers, who are regarded as the most important factor in instruction effectiveness, need to make full use of multimedia to create an authentic language teaching and learning environment where students can easily acquire a language naturally and effectively.
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Chapter One: Introduction

According to Nunan (2001), a percentage of language educators cling to the transmission model, which emphasizes the teachers’ responsibility of conveying the knowledge and correcting the errors. In this model, students are just to receive and store information taught in the class. As a result of this practice in recent years, more students tire of this teacher-centered model of English learning and complain that the English class is very boring and monotonous and they want something new and different. One attempt to solve this problem may be to develop a fresh teaching approach to stimulate students’ interest in English language learning.

With the development of technology and the boom of digital revolution, multimedia is increasingly accepted as a means of English language instruction. More English teachers who have tried multimedia teaching hold firmly that teaching English with multimedia makes the English class more active than the teacher-centered model. Compared to the traditional teaching methods in which students are usually passively spoon fed with large amount of grammatical rules and vocabulary, Multimedia has shown its superiority. Students can be easily exposed to sound, video, and animation of the authentic target language, which can give the students the strong visual impact and make them get involved in the authentic language environment more completely. Learners’ language acquisition can be improved by means of using the computer’s integration of text, sound, graphics and image to present the learning content. The internet offers a lot of opportunities for students to interact with native speakers in a convenient way and provides access to the most updated information throughout the world. Also, teachers can present video and audio materials separately or simultaneously to the students according
to the teachers objectives. In this case, not only could the multimedia make the students get more interested in English learning, but also more progress could be made than in the traditional classroom. Realizing the importance of using multimedia in language teaching, computers have become very popular in schools and many teachers are now using them for language learning.

This is not to say that multimedia is the substitute for teachers. Teachers are always the facilitator of the whole class, whether in the multimedia classroom or in the traditional classroom. A quality teacher would do more than press the button on the multimedia computer technology. They would apply teaching methodologies accumulated from the many years of teaching experience from language teachers and experts while adding the use of multimedia in the teaching of English. The quality teacher would know how to convey the information in an appropriate way and how to arouse students’ interest by means of using computers or the internet. Therefore, proper combination of multimedia and teaching methodology is appropriate to attract EFL students’ attention during English language learning.

The theoretical research of this report is based on the previous research of linguistics which focuses on Cognitive Psychology, Constructivism, Theory of Divided Attention (Matlin, 1986) and Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1985). The report also uses research from the fields of psychology, pedagogy and technology, which are related to multimedia-assisted language learning.

**Statement of the Problem**

The problem expressed as a question is, “How does multimedia motivate EFL students’ interest in English language learning?”
Purpose of the Research

The objective of the research is to:

(1) Investigate the theoretical basis for computer assisted language learning.

(2) Study the strengths and weaknesses of multimedia applied in English teaching to motivate EFL students’ interest in English learning.

(3) Ascertain the teacher’s role in the multimedia-assisted language learning class.

(4) Propose some feasible approaches to stimulate students’ interests in English learning.

Definition of Terms

In order to ensure that readers can completely understand the multimedia applied in English teaching it is necessary and important to explain the following definitions:

Multimedia: Multimedia generally consists of VCD, CD, DVD, CD-ROM, the internet, films and courseware designed by teachers.


CALL: Computer Assisted Language Learning. CALL is an effective approach to language teaching and learning in which the computer is used to present the learning materials in a variety of ways (Levy, 1997).


E-Learning: Electronic learning (or e-Learning) is a type of education where the medium of instruction is computer technology (Retrieved on March 11, 2009, from

**Delimitations of the Research**

The research will be conducted in and through the Karrmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, during the spring semester. Primary searches will be conducted via the Internet through EBSCO with ERIC, Academic Search Elite and Google/Google Scholar as the primary sources. Key search topics included “multimedia,” “motivate,” and “EFL.”

**Method of Approach**

A brief review of the history of multimedia employed to motivate EFL students’ interest in English language learning was conducted. A review of literature relating to research studies, and theoretical evidence of multimedia-assisted language learning, and its impact on students’ performance was conducted. Also, the review of literature included the teachers’ role in the use of multimedia English teaching. The findings were summarized and synthesized, and suggestions made.
Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Definition of Multimedia

Multimedia is a recent and popular term in the field of computer usage. Generally speaking, multimedia is the combination of text, sound, pictures, animation, and video. Typical set-ups include CD-ROM, CD-ROM player, sound equipment, and special hardware, which allow the display of sophisticated graphics.

With the rapid development of the internet, which has become a powerful medium for it provides a number of services including “e-mail, the World Wide Web (WWW), newsgroups, voice and video conferencing, file transfer and exchange and numerous corporate services delivered through specialized programs” (Mudge, 1999, p. 11). In the context of teaching, multimedia can be called an integrated media, which consists of various media forms such as text, graphic, animation, audio, etc. to browse, query, select, link and use information to meet students’ requirements (Lu, Wan & Liu, 1999). Smith and Woody (2000) defined multimedia as “the use of both visual aids and verbal descriptions to illustrate concepts” (p. 220).

Development of Multimedia Applied in English Teaching

According to Mudge (1999), Multimedia applied in English teaching may include four stages. The original stage can be dated back to the 1950s when only a few foreign language institutes started to employ phonograph, broadcast, movie, tape recorder and other current media in foreign language teaching. During that time, audio and video were once considered a significant revolution to the teaching of foreign language. Following in the 70s and 80s, audio and video developed dramatically with the advancement of electronic technology. Electronic taping, slide projectors, videocassette players, language
labs and other electronic devices were included in this era. By the turn of 90s, multimedia technology was becoming increasing available in foreign language instruction because of the development of computer technology and the coming of the digital revolution. In the early 2000’s, the internet became a powerful medium for the delivery of computer-aided learning materials. The internet provides a world-wide means to get information, lighten the work load, and communicate with each other at any time and at any place.

CALL which is Computer Assisted Language Learning came into play during the later part of the 20th century. Warschauer (1997) divided the history of CALL into three stages: behavioristic CALL, communicative CALL, and integrative CALL. Behavioristic CALL applied in 1960s and 1970s was based on the behaviorist learning and featured repetitive language drills. The computer was regarded as a mechanical tutor to deliver the materials to the students. An example of a behaviotistic CALL strategy is PLATO. PLATO (Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching Operations), the best-known tutorial system, is a special hardware consisting of extensive drills, grammatical explanations, and translation tests at various intervals (Ahmad, Corbett, Rogers, & Sussex, 1985). The next stage, communicative CALL, appeared in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It focused on the communicative teaching method and encouraged students to generate original utterances through the process of discovery, expression and development rather than just repeat the prefabricated language. Students were supposed to make use of the computer or the hardware to assist them in language learning. What they actually work with is not the computer but their classmates or teachers. In this model, the computer is viewed as stimulus (Taylor & Perez, 1989) or tool (Taylor, 1980). Popular CALL software developed in this period included word processors, spelling and grammar checkers.
Following this stage is the third stage, integrative CALL which included the development of multimedia computers and the Internet. This model not only integrates various skills (e.g. listening, writing, speaking and reading) but also bonds different technologies serving as effective and comprehensive tools for language learning and teaching. With integrative CALL, teachers were moving away from communicative perspective of teaching to a more social way, which emphasizes the language use in authentic social environments. Applying this multimedia networked computer in the language class provides students a more effective means to learn English. For instance, students can have rapid access to the background, grammatical or vocabulary explanations, pronunciation information while the main lesson is in the foreground. Besides, students under this model are usually encouraged to engage in their own language development rather than learn in a passive way. The history of CALL suggests that multimedia can serve a variety of purposes for language teaching. It can serve as a tutor to offer language drills or a stimulus to stir students to think. With the advent of the advanced technology and internet, computer usage in language teaching provides an authentic environment for students to communicate with native speakers in an inexpensive means.

Nevertheless, the application of multimedia in English teaching is not as widely used as expected. A reason for this could be the underdevelopment of technology and immature pedagogy about using multimedia in teaching foreign languages. For example, multimedia cost is high and not all educational institutions can make use of this tool. In addition, many teachers are not trained in using multimedia to teach English. According to Gong & Zhou, (2007), some teachers who have been aware of the applicability of multimedia teaching tend to focus on the flowery and fancy courseware and neglect the
teaching aim, teaching object and teaching content, so the whole English classroom would become a demonstrating hall of computer functions.

Theoretical Basis of Multimedia English Teaching

Constructivism Constructivism, which places emphasis on the learner’s active engagement during studying, was introduced in the early 1990’s. It is often discussed from two perspectives, cognitive constructivism and social constructivism.

According to the cognitive constructivism, knowledge refers to restructuring and reorganizing the experience. Knowledge cannot be simply transmitted to the students but should be acquired through students’ experience and discovery (Fosnot, 1996). The famous psychologist Piaget (1980), who may have been an early constructivist with the emphasis on learners’ cognitive development, viewed the knowledge acquisition as a natural process and mental construction.

Social constructivism holds that learning is the process of interacting and collaborating either among the students or between the students and the teachers (Fosnot 1996). Piaget (1980) also emphasized the interactive effect between internal causes and external causes and proposed the following formula: S - (AT) - R, which means someone can make a response to a stimulus as soon as the stimulus is assimilated in the context. Naturally, the teachers’ task is not to spoon feed the students with the knowledge but to offer an access through which students can experience the diverse ways of life. Nunan (2001) similarly pointed that the function of the education system is to create an environment in which students can reconstruct their knowledge through relating their existing input with the new knowledge.

Constructivism encourages students to learn through personal experiences rather
than being fed by teachers (Numan, 2001). Knowledge building is inherently a social-dialogistic process (Duffy & Cunningham, 1996). More recently, a Chinese Scholar Zhou (2004) stated that knowledge is not obtained only by teaching but by others’ help and suitable learning material from constructivism way under a certain social cultural backgrounds and teachers should put new and effective modes, ways, and designing thoughts into multimedia teaching practice.

**Cognitive psychology** Experts and researchers started to focus on the learners’ psychological process and studied learners’ psychological characteristics and cognitive laws during the 1970’s. Martlin (1989) did some research on cognitive psychology. He pointed out cognition, or mental activity, involves the acquisition, storage, and use of knowledge, and learning is not to acquire knowledge in a passive way but initiative procedure of information acquisition depending on learners’ attitudes, demands, interests, habits, and their own backgrounds. From this statement, we can conclude that an individual is regarded as being an active and constructive being rather than one who is a passive recipient of information, which is why multimedia language teaching and learning is effective. Therefore, a teacher’s responsibility is not to fill in the students’ brain with a large amount of knowledge but to arouse students’ interests and desires to learn. Thus, multimedia has this quality to sustain learners’ participation by using the multimedia’s integration of text, sound, animation, graphics and images to present the learning content in a multi-dimensional way.

According to cognitive psychology, learners can receive information through five senses. Trylong (1973) proves that the five senses play an effective role in getting information through experiments: 83% information is obtained visually, and 11% is
obtained auditorially. Other information is through olfactory organ (3.5%), tactile organ (1.5%), and taste organ (1%). Multimedia applied in the language class can offer multiple ways to convey the information, including the visual and auditory access.

Similarly, Howard (1983) grouped the sensory registers into three parts: the auditory sensory register, the visual sensory register and the tactual sensory register. They are very essential because they give the learners some outer stimuli to acquire the knowledge. In the traditional classroom, students are always exposed to the auditory sensory register. However, auditory sensory register might have some negative effect on students resulting from the poor or inaccurate pronunciation of the language by the teacher. Multimedia, the modern projector, can offer the authentic English materials conveniently and accurately in both visual and audio ways.

**Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis.** Krashen (1985) defined this hypothesis as affective factors that affect the language acquisition; these affective factors need not be related to linguistic, they can be social or psychological. According to Krashen (1985), a number of emotional variables, including anxiety, self-doubt, motivation, self-confidence, play an important role in the second language acquisition. Learners’ affective factors are just like the adjustable filter, which freely passes or blocks the acquisition of new material. Learners can acquire the knowledge effectively with high motivation, low self-doubt, and low anxiety. On the other hand, low motivation, low self-confidence, and high anxiety can combine to form a mental obstacle to prevent learners from acquiring the information.

“Multimedia applied in teaching can create a relaxing and non-threatening learning environment in which learners’ motivation and self-esteem can be promoted and learners’ anxiety can be reduced” (Warschauer, 1997, p. 478).
Theory of Divided Attention. Matlin (1986) defined attention as “the concentration of mental activity” (p. 47). Divided attention refers to a person’s attention being distributed to more than one thing and the distribution of attention is affected by the occupation of the sensory register. For example, if a participant is listening to an interesting story and some new words at the same time, the participant will definitely allot more attention to the story because the story is obviously more meaningful than the separate words. If a teacher presents the new words by showing the pictures at the same time, the performance on recognition of these new words will be much better. That proves that students’ attention can be focused on visual stimuli more easily than the tape recorder. Just as Smith & Woody, (2000) stated, “those students who prefer visual input to verbal input will benefit more than those who are less visually oriented” (p. 223).

In traditional classrooms, teaching resources are usually delivered through auditory sensory register or visual sensory register respectively. In modern teaching classrooms, students are allowed to get access to the information through both auditory and visual ways, and therefore, greater learning will probably occurs.

Pedagogy in Multimedia Teaching Class

Multimedia English teaching does not mean to just press the mouse of the computer or present some pictures to the students, but rather it should be an assistant way to teach.

In Harmer’s (2000) work How to Teach English, the author summarizes certain similarities in successful language acquisition:

First of all, they are usually exposed to language which they more or less understand even if they cannot produce the same language spontaneously themselves. Secondly, they are motivated to learn the language in order to
communicate. And finally, they have opportunities to use the language they are learning, thus giving themselves chances to flex their linguistic muscles—and check their own progress and abilities. (p. 24)

What elements are necessary for successful language learning in classrooms? As language learners, students need to be motivated, be constantly exposed to the target language, and given more chances to exercise it. According to Harmer, “three elements of ESA will be present in all - or almost all - classes” (Harmer, 2000, p. 25).

E stands for Engage. Harmer (2000) stated “this is the point in a teaching sequence where teachers try to arouse the students’ interest, thus involving their emotion” (p. 25).

S refers to Study which means “any stage at which the construction of language is the main focus” (Harmer, 2002, p. 25).

A means Activate, which “describes exercises and activities which are designed to get students using language as freely and communicatively as they can” (Harmer, 2002, p. 25)

In the following paragraphs, the three elements found in Multimedia English teaching will be discussed.

First, in multimedia English classrooms, music, video, stimulating pictures, animation, dramatic stories and films can get students engaged. However, to engage is just the first step in language class, because proper planning, careful designing and reasonable timing is also vital to the learning process.

Second, the main purpose of learning English is to improve the reading, listening, speaking and writing comprehension in order to communicate with others more effectively. In the technology-enhanced multimedia classroom, the main focus of English
teaching can be better achieved with the use of these modern and efficient technologies.

Third, Thomas, Place & Hillyard (2008) clarified that in multimedia classes, more chances are available to activate students’ knowledge than in traditional classes. For instance, video film can provide rich and vivid teaching resources to train students’ speaking ability. Students can be exposed to the authentic language and imitate the way of speaking, including pronunciation, speed and intonation. Other speaking activities can be performed around characters, plots, themes, ideas, concepts and even culture to develop students’ ability to speak fluently and authentically. For instance, to dub the conversation in the film is an effective way for students to improve their spoken English. Besides, writing is the comprehensive technique, and it is also a difficult skill to learn. Teachers in the traditional class have to spend a large part of class time in writing the examples on the chalkboard. In the high-technology classes, multimedia can solve this time-consuming problem easily and provide more related materials about the writing topic to move the students forward.

**Strength of Multimedia English Teaching**

**High effectiveness** Rubin (1987) suggested that the use of video has been found to effectively develop listening skills and grammar. Johnstone and Milne (1995) stated that the use of a teacher-controlled multimedia tool increased the amount of communicative discourse in the classroom by both teachers and students.

In this multimedia environment, students will become more active and autonomous. They will be engaged in the language learning effectively via the attractive pictures, animation or sound. They collaborate with their classmates to solve a problem or complete a project in a relaxing environment. Students can learn on their own according
to their plans or purposes and teachers can act more as a guide rather than a knowledge-giver. This environment increases the effectiveness of language learning and teaching (Acha, 2009).

**Diversity** Mayer, Plass, Chun & Leutener, (1998) illustrated that Multimedia is the combination of sound, text, computer data, animation video, etc. So teachers have multiple conveying and displaying means to present the teaching material to arouse students’ interest, which would make the whole class more effective. For example, if encountering a boring topic but a necessary one, teachers can play a piece of light music at the beginning of the class to create a relaxing environment, which can help students become more focused. Also, instructors can make use of visual images relative to the boring topic to arouse students’ interest.

Naturally, students can get different kinds of information using computer. Computers can display the written text and use sounds, pictures, and video simultaneously to convey the input in different ways, which assists students to understand the information more easily. Through simulation and other techniques, computer can present abstract things in a concrete way. Besides, computers also have access to various types of aids, such as dictionaries, pictures, graphs, and voice.

**High efficiency** In traditional English classrooms, instructors have to spend time on writing the vital language points and important information on the chalkboard. In the multimedia classrooms, the teacher can use the button and keyboard to show significant content in a few seconds as long as he or she is familiar with the operation of the multimedia. In addition, the microphone and hi-fi stereo can reduce the teacher’s laborious work. Moreover, with the courseware teachers do not need to write the same
language points several times for the different classes, which will not only save a lot of
time in the class, but also release teachers from heavy labor. (Wang, 2008)

Besides, as the internet has been brought in the teaching English class, multimedia is
connected with the network and it becomes a “hypermedia”, which provides a number of
services including the e-mail, video conference, chat room, etc. Lu, Wan & Liu, (1999)
demonstrated the following strength of hypermedia:

Integration Hypermedia comprises various media and integration, such as text,
graphic, animation, audio, etc. not only have various media and their
integration greatly enriched the learning environment, but also the production
of multimedia teaching material. (p. 42)

Interaction Learners and hypermedia systems can freely realize man-machine
interaction. The learner’s CAI system allows the learner to make various study
commands on his own and can effectively distinguish these commands. On the
other hand, responding to the learner’s requirements, the study content and the
study process given by the system are in accordance with the learner’s study
level. (p. 42)

In addition, Acha (2009) pointed out that multimedia can provide a large amount of
instructional information to the students for the purpose of English learning and
accelerate the process of information searching. When we need some related information,
we can easily find it from the large amount of information stored on the internet. With a
wealth of updated information from the internet, multimedia is popular with the teacher
who need to update the teaching materials. (Acha, 2009).
Concerns of Multimedia English Teaching

**Learners factors.** This is little doubt that multimedia can give learners more information and resources and is one of the advantages of multimedia English teaching. But more information and resources do not mean more effective learning (Morrison & Anglin, 2005). For example, when the video films are being played in the class, both visual and audio information are presented to the students. In this situation, students have become the determinant elements to learn the detailed information. They can select what they think important and useful for them. However, some students involved in this kind of video English class may watch the film for fun and neglect the material. Maybe, they have got used to the didactic and duck-stuffing approach and waiting for the teachers’ instructions. This passive attitude of learning destroys the effect of multimedia language learning. (Morrison & Anglin, 2005)

Students need to learn how to use the computer before they use it in their study. Sometimes it is necessary for students to use computer to do research or communicate with native speakers, teachers or peers. The students who always feel uncomfortable with using the computer often make mistakes when learning in the multimedia classroom (Gao, 2005).

**Teachers factors** Zhou (2004) emphasized that teachers play an important role in both technology-enhanced teaching and traditional teaching classrooms. The most important factor for class effectiveness is teachers’ quality. However, in the multimedia English teaching classroom, there are some problems.

First, the strategy used by teachers is fixed. Most teachers depend on multimedia teaching method excessively and neglect its auxiliary teaching function. In fact, using
multimedia cannot determine the teaching optimization. No matter how powerful the modern education technology is, it is only a kind of technology. Qualified teachers are referred to those who can stimulate students’ interests, their desire to study and they know their students. Smith & Woody (2000) pointed out “the optimal teaching strategy depends on the type of students taught” (p. 223). Some teachers do not notice this point but use the same courseware no matter whom they are teaching. Therefore, it is very important for teachers to know their students along with knowing how to use different teaching strategies.

Second, there is less face-to-face communication between teachers and students. Just as Mudge (1999) stated,

With remote learning, students may not get the same degree of nuance or emphasis that a teacher had originally intended. It is possible, however, to incorporate e-mail and even voice links from WWW pages that could be used to facilitate two-way exchanges between remote students and teachers. (p. 14)

Third, some teachers who are just graduating from the university and have little experience in multimedia teaching may be less effective. In addition, some teachers do not get the professional training on multimedia teaching. These factors prevent the multimedia from becoming popular in some parts of the world.

**Suggestions about Multimedia Applied in EFL Classrooms**

Owing to the important role teachers play in teaching, there are some requirements proposed for teachers. First of all, the training of multimedia instruction is very necessary for teachers. Peterson & Sellers (1992) suggested the following objectives of teachers’ training with multimedia instruction:
Provide a classroom setting in which undergraduate education students will be able to observe and interact with laboratory school students engaged in interactive learning utilizing computer enhanced, multimedia learning station. (p. 2)

Provide the capability for staff development efforts focused on the integration of technology into the teaching/learning situation. (p. 2)

Teachers should be trained to master the technology of multimedia, such as how to use the multimedia correctly, how to design the teaching courseware with the updated material information from the internet, how to flexibly deal with breakdowns that may occur during teaching.

Moreover, Wang (2008) agreed that teachers should realize the determinant of teaching optimization does not rely solely on using new media. English teaching should combine modern technology with traditional teaching techniques and pedagogies which can remedy the disadvantages of multimedia instruction.

Lastly, teachers should shoulder the responsibility of teaching and should probe effective teaching methods with all his or her energy to overcome the shortness of multimedia English teaching and stimulate student interest to improve their English capability. As to the former concern of multimedia instruction that students are watching just for fun, teachers can set some teaching and learning objectives before the film is shown so students can enjoy the film for the purpose of learning instead of fun. (Gao, 2005)

As far as technology factors are concerned, courseware should be changed and renewed. According to Duan (2006), the vivid courseware does not mean that it will be
vivid forever, so the teacher needs to change the structure, background and methods so the students can be exposed to the new English environment everyday. Besides, Mudge (1999) emphasized that,

Use all the different media that are available and appropriate for the message that is to be conveyed. This may mean pictures, animations, video and sound. Take care, however, not to overdo the diversity in a way that makes a presentation seem shallow, gaudy or uncontrolled. (p. 15)

Multimedia teaching mode is the vital factor affecting the teaching result. However, “multimedia cannot replace all other teaching methods and we can apply several methods together in one class” (Gong & Zhou, 2007, p. 38), one could combine multimedia with traditional teaching techniques such as recorders, radio and micro-teaching appropriately in the English teaching (Duan, 2006).

In summary, the purpose of English teaching is to cultivate students’ reading, listening, writing and speaking abilities, so all the teaching methods which can reach the purpose can be called effective teaching techniques. Multimedia is just one of the effective ways to improve teaching quality, so teachers are usually expected to apply the multimedia appropriately to arouse students’ interest in English language learning.
Chapter Three: Conclusions and Recommendations

The reviewed literature in this paper is a report on research about multimedia English teaching in EFL classrooms from the theoretic, pedagogical and practical aspect. The literature offers several effective and concrete suggestions for the use of advanced-technology in terms of the role of multimedia and how instructors are to incorporate its use in effective pedagogy.

Multimedia can be used to create an authentic and relaxing language environment in which students can communicate with native speakers to naturally acquire language.

Multimedia technology allows a variety of media, such as text, graphs, pictures, sound, and video, through which students can have multiple access to the target language. Since the same information can be transmitted through various media, learning efficiency can be greatly improved. Many students who are uninspired with the traditional method of teaching are interested in the new style of learning and enjoy the vivid pictures, appealing video and well-done graphs.

Internet, a new approach to instruction, is also used in the language teaching class. Via the internet, learners can communicate synchronously with the outside world. On one hand, internet provides a convenient way for students to access authentic language materials and updated information. On the other hand, students can communicate with native speakers inexpensively and conveniently.

Although multimedia can take the place of some of teacher functions, it cannot totally replace teachers as far as the whole class is concerned. What is the role of the teacher in language class? Generally speaking, teachers are expected to plan lessons that include the content of the lesson, the objective of the class, the methodology he or she
will use, as well as the selection of the complementary teaching materials. Apart from what teachers have set up ahead of time based on a curriculum, teachers have to be able to respond to the needs that students have during the class. Teachers are responsible for beginning activities, providing instructions, clarifying questions, leading transitions from one activity to another, stopping the activity, and giving proper feedback. A teacher should be able to offer additional materials, stimulus, motivation and technical support to the students and evaluate students’ performance, give them corresponding positive or negative feedback, and guide them to improve future performance.

What is a qualified teacher in the multimedia classroom? First and foremost, an instructor should get the professional training on how to effectively operate the modern devices. Secondly, the teacher should change their ideas of using multimedia teaching. The modernization of teaching media is not equal to teaching optimization. Wang (2008) suggested,

What teachers should do is to combine the advantages of traditional teaching methods and modern technologies to arouse students’ interest and desire in English rather than press the button and to apply alternatives such as group discussion, pair work and so on to expose students to rich and contextualized language with high degree of authenticity by the instruments of VCD, DVD, recorder, internet, etc. to acquire English naturally. (p. 43)

Thirdly, continual research and study on multimedia study is the necessary work in teachers’ life. Only in this way can teachers keep up with the development of teaching pedagogies and also find solutions to the increasing number of problems in class. Effective teachers ought to keep pace with its development and use the simple and
updated course strategies.

Last but not least, appropriate education reform should be brought in to overcome the current education shortcomings. Specifically speaking, the CET 4 and CET 6 in China are in need of modification so that students will have the burden of examination-passing eased and will be able to equip themselves with increased English comprehension capability. In addition, schools should adopt reasonable curriculum in multimedia classrooms. Currently, most universities in China have four periods each week for the entire semester and this arrangement often makes teaching very intensive. A little change could alter the instruction pace from rush to walk.

In summary, multimedia English teaching is a recent technique with both strengths and weaknesses. Teachers, who are regarded as the most important factor of instruction, ought to make full use of multimedia’s advantages and combine the traditional teaching methods with modern techniques in a wise way to reach the purpose of English teaching - communicating in English fluently with others.
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