

THE USE OF MULTIMEDIA TECHNOLOGY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to analyze the use of technology to English language teaching in the non-native speaking countries and to bring out the problems faced by both teachers and learners of English. The rapid development of science and technology such as multimedia technology has offered a better tool to explore the new teaching method. In fact, multimedia technology has played an important role in English language teaching, especially, in the non-native speaking of English situations. It also aims to make non-native speakers of English as language teachers aware of the strategies to use it in an effective manner.

KEYWORDS: English language teaching, multimedia technology, communicative competence, interaction

INTRODUCTION

In Nepal and elsewhere in the non-native speaking countries, English is used as a second or third language and for some people the first language. With the spread and development of English around the world, it has become an important means of communication among the people of different cultures and languages. At present, the role and status of English in Nepal is higher than ever as it is a medium of instruction and curriculum in educational institutions. As a number of English learners are growing up, different teaching methods have been experimented to see the effectiveness of English language teaching. The use of technology in the form of films, radio, TV and tape recording has been there for a long time. As for Prajesh SJB Rana, "Technology has turned into one essential aspect of society that helps students to understand the bigger picture of the world and not just stay confined to what schools and teachers teach them within their classrooms" (12). Of course, the technology has proved to be successful in replacing the traditional language teaching.

The modern language teachers have new challenges and duties given by the new era. The tradition of English teaching has been drastically changed with the remarkable development of newer technologies such as multimedia technology. Technology provides so many options as it makes teaching interesting and productive because it has capability to attract the language learners. David Graddol states that "technology lies at the heart of the globalization process; affecting education work and culture" (16). Thus, technology is one of the most significant drivers of both social and linguistic change.

Since there are more and more English learners in Nepal, the language teachers use a variety of teaching methods for effectiveness of their experiment. One method involves the use of technology in English language teaching in order to create English contexts. Rana argues, "Technology isn't something that students need to be separated from; rather

it's something that students need to embrace" (12). So it helps the students to get involved and learn according to their interests. It has been tested effective and has been widely accepted as a tool for English language teaching around the world. In particular, it has been utilized for the upliftment of modern techniques of language teaching.

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As the popularity of English is expanding day by day and worldwide, the teachers of English feel the need of change in their language teaching methods. There are teachers who use the "leading edge of technological and scientific development" (Young and Bush 2), but the majority of teachers still teach in the traditional manner. However, this paper does not claim that none of these traditional manners are bad or damaging the students. In principle, they are proving to be useful even today. There are many opportunities for students to gain confidence in learning English who learn the language for more than just fun. For them, to keep pace with English language teaching and gain more confidence, they have to stride into the world of multimedia technology. Here, multimedia technology refers to computer-based interactive applications that use both the hardware and software, allowing people to share their ideas and information. It is a combination of text, graphics, animation, video and sound.

The twenty-first century is the age of globalization and information technology as Harry Samuels argues, "Much more recent developments in social media and information technology are taking foreign-language education in new directions" (19). English is one of the important mediums of communication in the world, so it is important to learn the language. As a result, English language teaching has been one of the important subjects in education. In fact, there are more non-native than native speakers of the language. There is also the diversity of context in terms of learner's age, nationality, and learning background that has become an important feature of English language teaching today.

With the rapid growth of science and technology, the use of multimedia technology in language teaching has created a favorable context for reforming and exploring English language teaching models in the new age. This trend features the use of audio, visual, and animation effects in the English language teaching classrooms. Multimedia technology plays a positive role in improving activities and initiatives of students and teaching effect in the classrooms. Elaborating on the scope of technology, Rana argues, "Educational institutions all across the globe have already started implementing technology in education, and Nepal also needs to understand that there's no way to stop the evolution of technology; and rather than working on ways to separate technology from education, we rather need ways to combine them" (12). Thus, technological innovations should go hand in hand with the growth of English and change the way in which we communicate. In fact, the growth of the Internet has facilitated the growth of the English language. In this sense, computers are no longer the exclusive domains of a few individuals, but rather they are available to many.

As the English language teaching models change rapidly, there has been a significant growth of literature regarding the use of technology in English language teaching. These literatures unequivocally accept technology as the most essential part in teaching. Such a tendency has emphasized on an essential role of technology in pedagogy in which technology has been dominant over the teachers. As a result, if we ig-

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nore technological developments, the teachers will never be able to catch up with the new trend, irrespective of our discipline or branch. Here, Rana says, "Teachers need to stop following the same old ways of teaching and experiment and acknowledge that the world is changing and we need education that augments that change" (12). For this reason, it is important for language teachers to be aware of the latest and best equipments and to have all information of what is available in any given situations.

Teachers can use multimedia technology to create more colorful and stimulating language classes. There are many techniques applicable in various forms to English language teaching situations that now threaten "to undermine the classroom completely as a place of study" (Motteram 2). Some are useful for testing and distance education; some for teaching business English, spoken English, reading, listening or interpreting. The principle of teaching should be to appreciate new technologies without taking over the role of the teacher and without limiting the functions of traditional teaching methods. There are various reasons why all language teachers and learners must know how to make use of the new technology. Most importantly, the new technologies have been discovered and disseminated so quickly that we cannot avoid their attraction and influence on all of us: both teachers and learners, even both native and non-native speakers of English.

ADVANTAGES OF THE USE

As the multimedia technology becomes more readily available to all of us, it seems appropriate that the language teachers should integrate it into their lesson and assessment planning in the same way they have been doing with video, film and computer-assisted learning strategies. The students are surrounded by technology and this technology can provide interesting and new approaches to language teaching because "the use of technology for teaching and learning is moving their institution in the right direction" (Healey et. al. 17). In this way, the teachers of English can take full advantage of technology to teach English in the non-native speaking countries. The following are some of the important advantages of the use of multimedia technology:

Motivates Students to Learn English

The traditional teaching methods are unpopular and less effective in the English language classrooms. Now, multimedia technology, with the help of audio, visual and animation effects, motivates the students to learn English quickly and effectively. In this connection, Rana says, "We also need to take into account that as human beings, we're very visual beings, that what we see tends to affect our judgement more, and technology helps in bringing that visual aspect to education. Who here would prefer a lecture class over a presentation?" (12). It makes an easy access to information regarding the culture of the target language. With such features as abundant-information and crossing time and space, multimedia technology creates a real-life or native speaking country context for English language teaching, which greatly cultivates students' interest and motivation in learning the language.

Develops Students' Communicative Competence

It is hard to achieve the goal of learning English language through the traditional teaching because it hampers the students' capacity to understand the structure, meaning and function of the language. Such teaching method makes the students

passive recipients of knowledge. But, now, multimedia technology has been a great help to integrate teaching and learning and provides the students greater incentives, carrying for "students' future competitiveness at the workplace" (Healey et. al. 11). The teachers' instructions lead to the students' thought patterns and motivate the students' emotions. To Suleyman Nihat Sad, the utilization of multimedia technology "breaks the monotony of traditional class teaching and is enjoyable and stimulating" (35). For example, the use of PowerPoint template activates students' thinking and the capacity to comprehend the language. Its audio and visual effects help them to transform English learning into capacity cultivation. It creates a positive environment for the classroom activities such as group discussion, subject discussion and debates, which can offer more opportunities for communication among students and between teachers and students. Thus, multimedia technology encourages students' positive thinking and communication skills in learning the language.

Widens Students' Knowledge about the Culture of English

The use of multimedia technology, "connected to the target culture" (qtd. in Ren et. al. 235), offers the students with more information than textbooks, and helps them to be familiar with cultural backgrounds and real-life language materials, which can attract the students to learning. The learners not only improve their listening ability, but also learn the culture of the target language. Having the abundant information through the use of multimedia technology, the students can be equipped with knowledge about the culture of the target language. This brings about an information-sharing opportunity among students and makes them actively participate in the class activities that help the students to learn the language more quickly and effectively.

Improves Teaching Efficiency

Using multimedia technology in the language classrooms improves teaching contents and makes the best of class time. It breaks the teacher-centered traditional teaching method and fundamentally improves the teachers' teaching efficiency and has become "central to language practice" (Motteram 5). For large classes, it is difficult for the students to have speaking communication, but the utilization of multi-media sound laboratory materializes the face-to-face teaching. The traditional teaching techniques only emphasize on teachers' instruction and provide limited information to the students. But multimedia technology goes beyond time and space, and creates more real-life environment for English teaching. It stimulates students' initiatives and economizes class time, providing more information to the students.

Enhances Interaction among Students and between Teachers and Students

Gary Motteram is one the scholars to work on the effectiveness of technological use in the language classrooms. He says that it is still "the case that most teachers work in physical classrooms and looking at ways that these spaces can be augmented with digital technologies is a very good starting point" (7). In fact, multimedia technology in teaching focuses on the active participation of students, and enhances the importance of interaction among students and between teachers and students. One of the main uses of multimedia technology in the classrooms is to improve students' ability to listen and speak, and thereby develop their communicative competence. In this process, the teacher's role as a facilitator is particularly prominent. The utiliza-

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tion of multimedia technology can create a context for the exchange of information among students and between teachers and students, emphasizing "student engagement in authentic, meaningful interaction" (Warschauer 2). This opportunity improves on the traditional classroom teaching model. In doing so, the teachers in the classrooms no longer force the students to receive the information passively.

Creates a Conducive Teaching Environment in the Classrooms

The use of multimedia technology in the classrooms creates a favorable environment for language teaching. Highlighting the importance of its use, Healey et. al. say, "Bad teaching will not disappear with the addition of even the most advanced technology; good teaching will benefit from appropriate use of technology to help learners achieve their goals" (17). This technique makes the language class lively and interesting, motivating the students to participate in the classroom activities. Multimedia technology has its own features such as visibility and liveliness that produce special effects on the participants. While teaching English language through it, the sounds and pictures can be set together that enhance the active participation of both teachers and students. The teachers can show pictures and images of native speaking situations to enrich the sharing of information effectively. They also imagine different contexts while preparing for the lesson.

In the similar way, using the multimedia technology, the students in the class can receive abundant information about the language clearly. Thus, using multimedia technology in English language teaching is effective in cultivating students' interest in learning, improving the teachers' interest in teaching.

Provides Opportunities for English Teaching outside the Classrooms

Teaching English with multimedia technology is flexible that focuses on "how English language teachers, teacher educators, and administrators can and should use technology in and out of the classroom" (Healey et. al. 2). This means that multimedia technology provides opportunities to have English teaching not only within the classroom situations, but also outside the classroom situations. It creates a multimedia language environment for teaching English. Teaching should be handled by the teachers but it should be student-centered, which is one of the principles of good language teaching. Sometimes, the students' problems are addressed in the classroom teaching, but other times they should be handled outside the classroom contexts, which is "usually carried out using asynchronous tools, such as e-mail or conferencing systems" (Warschauer 4). In such circumstances, the students can take the advantage of multimedia technology, contacting the teachers through internet and having their problems resolved thereby.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE USE

There are many disadvantages of using multimedia technology in English language teaching despite it has facilitated the language teachers to improve their efficiency in teaching. The following are some of the disadvantages that this study has found in the context of non-native speaking countries:

Emphasis on the Supplementary of Effective Teaching

The use of multimedia technology is a supplementary tool for English language

teaching, not an end in itself as the blackboard is "supplemented by the overhead projector, another excellent medium for the teacher-dominated classroom, as well as by early computer software programs" (Warschauer 2). If the teachers are totally dependent on multimedia devices during their teaching, they may turn into slaves to multimedia technology and cannot play the key role as a facilitator to the students. In practice, many teachers are active in using multimedia technology, but they are not proficient enough to handle it properly.

If the teachers stand by the computer all the time and students are just concentrating on the screen, the teachers cannot have the direct eye contact with the students. The development of multimedia technology in the language classrooms is considered effective and many benefits of the traditional teaching model have been forgotten. Therefore, the teachers should understand that the multimedia technology should be used as a supplementary instrument rather than a target. For example, "Electronic communication within a single class might be viewed as an artificial substitute for face-to-face communication" (Warschauer 4). It should be considered and used as a tool for effective teaching and learning.

Lack of Communication between Teachers and Students

It is important that there should be a lot of communicative activities in the language classrooms. The teachers should teach the students on how to pronounce certain words, to comprehend the sentences, to improve thought patterns and to express what they have learned. Though the use of multimedia technology in the language classrooms enhances the interest of the students through audio, visual and textual effects upon the students, it lacks interaction among the students and between teachers and students. For example, Healey et. al. claim, "teachers used pen pals before they had access to keypals, print magazines and newspapers before they had online news, and work in groups face to face before they collaborated in virtual worlds" (17). In fact, it replaces the teachers' voice by computer sound and teachers' analysis by visual image. Thereby, the students will have a very limited time for speaking communication. The sound and image of multimedia technology affect the students' initiative to think and speak. The English language class turns into a show case and the students are considered only as viewers rather than the active participants in the classrooms.

Lack of Real-Time Teaching

Language teaching requires lots of discussion formed through questions and answers between teachers and students. The teachers ask real-time questions and guide the students to think, and to build up their capacity to give the answers. For example, "students need to be given maximum opportunity for authentic social interaction" (Warschauer 3). However, the teachers, with the help of multimedia technology, prepare the pre-arranged courseware for the language teaching that lacks real-time effect in the classrooms and the students become unable to give feedback to their teachers. It ignores the spontaneity in the students' mind that includes students' thinking, strengthening their learning capacity and solving problems. Thus, the cultivation of students' thinking capacity should be the major objective in teaching and using of multimedia technology. The students should be given opportunities for thinking, analyzing and exploring their own world.

Loss of Students' Logical Thinking

The use of multimedia technology in teaching makes the students understand the content easily, but their abstract thinking would be restricted and thereby their logical thinking would be faded away. In fact, the process of acquiring knowledge goes through perceptual stage and then rational stage, "developing critical thinking and autonomous learning while maximizing beneficial interactions" (Healey et. al. 9). So the teachers should understand that knowledge of something from perceptual recognition to rational apprehension is very important in the students' learning process. So if the students only perceive the images and imagination shown on the screen, their abstract thinking would be restricted and logical thinking would fade away.

Nowadays, the diminishing process of acquiring knowledge has been the major concern for today's students. Because textual words are replaced by sound and image, and handwriting is replaced by keyboard input. Here, again, multimedia technology should be used as an assisting tool for language teaching and should not replace the dominant role of teachers. In addition, it is not a mechanic imitation of teaching rather it integrates the visual, textual display with teachers' experience for effecting English language teaching. In this way, keeping in mind the students' process of acquiring knowledge, the teachers can improve the students' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills of the language.

Expensive Way of Conducting Language Classes

Using multimedia technology in English language teaching is an expensive way of conducting language classes, which may not be fulfilled (Panthee 39). Keeping this fact in mind, the administrators and policy makers should not only help language teachers realize "the potential benefits of technology, and prompt them to learn to use technology in their teaching," but they should understand "the significant role of technology so they foster the learning process by providing the necessary structure, support, and infrastructure" (Healey et. al. 9). Over time, it tends to result in higher expenses though it will help create more effective education. The language learning programs start with expenses that are related to implementing new technologies in education. The expenses usually entail hardware, software, staffing, and training for at least one networked computer laboratory where teachers and students can come and use it. It is often the case in poorly-funded language classes that the hardware itself comes in through a one-time grant, with little funding left over for software, staff training and maintenance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Multimedia technology and language teaching have gone hand to hand for a long time and contributed as teaching tools in the language classrooms. However, multimedia technology is still a source of fears and insecurity for many teachers everywhere around the world despite the latest developments applicable to language teaching such as websites, blogs, online journals, teaching methodology and so on. In this connection, Deborah Healey et. al. say, "The pace and extent of change in technology for teaching, however, have made it difficult for many teachers, teacher educators, and administrators to know how best to employ computers, other forms of digital technology, and the global interaction enabled by the Internet in language teaching" (2). So many countries have tried to modernize their equipments, have spent large amount in technology and have proved the positive effects of integrating technology

to language teaching. Still, there are many teachers who still have no interest to teach the language with technologies. Here, Rana suggests, "There are many different aspects of technology that hamper education but there are resources that help learning, too" (12). In order to improve the overall situations and make the language teachers aware of the function of multimedia technology in teaching, the following recommendations have been made:

Teachers Should Play the Leading Role in Teaching

The application of multimedia technology to teaching can make improvements in English language teaching and at the same time has enabled "teachers to re-think what they are doing" (Motteram 7). However, the teachers should play the leading role even if they use multimedia technology. Their position should not be replaced by the computers and other devices. For example, when each lesson is introduced and spoken English is taught, the students can easily improve their listening and speaking skills which the multimedia technology cannot do. Even, the teachers' interpretation during the language teaching should not be overlooked. In principle, English should be used frequently in the language classes in order to improve the students' communicative competence. Multimedia technology in spite of its extraordinary effects in teaching should be an assisting tool for the teachers. So the teachers should determine whether to adopt multimedia technology in English language teaching or not.

Teachers Should Not Consider the Computer Screen as a Blackboard or Whiteboard

It is wrong to consider the computer screen as the blackboard or whiteboard as some teachers do. They have readymade exercises, questions, answers and teaching plans into their computers and display them in the classrooms. They do not have to write anything on the blackboard or whiteboard. The teachers are supposed to create a context for teaching and motivate the students to communicate in English. Focusing on the use of both traditional and modern ways of language teaching, Dincay Koksall says, "We should kill neither the blackboard or the mockingbird. We need blackboards or whiteboards as visual aids and the sound of the mockingbird for relaxation" (68). It is, thus, advised to use the blackboard or whiteboard very often in order to bring the traditional and modern teaching methods together. In addition, the experienced teachers know well that a perfect teaching is in their mind. So they should use the blackboard or whiteboard to write questions raised by the students. In this way, the teachers can create a real-life context for effective teaching.

Teachers Should Encourage Students to Use Their Own Mind and Speak More

One of the features of using multimedia technology is to cause audio and visual effects that lively display the content of textual materials. Dincay Koksall suggests that "new technologies develop and are disseminated too quickly that we cannot avoid their attraction and influence in any form" (62). This process helps the students to understand the teachers' instruction and information. But only displaying the content of texts through the PowerPoint presentation cannot stimulate the students thinking. In the English communication situations, the teachers have to encourage the students to use their own mind and speak more. In order to use the modernized feature to English language teaching, they should not overuse the technology; rather they should actively join in the class practice.

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Teachers Should Use All Possible Teaching Aids and Techniques

Some language teachers tend to depend on entirely on multimedia technology in teaching. But the reality is that multimedia technology cannot be replaced by many other teaching methods. In the similar way, it cannot also replace any other forms of teaching methods. The functions of other traditional forms of teaching instruments are equally important in English language teaching though multimedia technology has its unique advantages in teaching. For example, the tape recorder still plays an important role in playing the listening materials. Thus, the language teachers are supposed to choose from the appropriate teaching instruments according to the requirements of the teaching contexts. However, "In the absence of teachers trained to use technological tools in the classroom, EFL students will be unable to learn English as fast and effectively as they could with technology or as fast and effectively as their fellow students across the globe" (England 399). So, in the non-native English speaking countries, the teachers should integrate multimedia technology with the traditional teaching tools as they can play an important part in the successful English language teaching.

Teachers Should not Overuse Multimedia Technology

Many teachers believe that the more use of multimedia technology may give the better performance in language teaching. They think that multimedia technology may create better class environment, may motivate the students to participate in the class, and may help students access to the language materials. Young and Bush say, "With no clear sense of effective technology use, teachers often ignore it altogether or resort to exposing students simply to whatever current software is most available, with little instructional support or curricular connection" (7). In fact, this is wrong to believe that the utilization of multimedia technology would have a magic to English language teaching. Although the students feel some interest in learning, they in reality feel inactive all the time because they are just looking on the screen. This kind of process ignores other skills in the language learning.

Practically, if the students are interfered during the language class, they acquire less from the language materials. Though there are many advantages of using multimedia technology in teaching, it should be used as a supplementary instrument for the language teachers. It is essential to apply traditional teaching tools to effectively train the students' communicative competence in the classrooms. Young and Bush suggest that teachers should avoid "the temptation to use technologies without understanding the pedagogical implications of using them" (8). If multimedia technology is utilized properly in teaching, without being overused, the students can be able to make full use of listening and speaking materials and develop their overall language skills. So the language teachers should introduce both traditional teaching instruments and multimedia technology to English language teaching so that the students can have the overall training on their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of using multimedia technology in language teaching is to promote students' motivation and learning interest in the English language. In the non-native English speaking context, this can be a practical way to get them involved in the language learning. To achieve this goal, the language teachers

should create a favorable environment for English language teaching, which should be based on the availability of information and teaching materials. While using multimedia technology in teaching if students are not too dependent on their mother tongue, they should be motivated to communicate with each other in English. The process of English learning should be more student-centered and less time-consuming. The language teachers should maintain the students' communicative competence through multimedia technology.

In conclusion, the utilization of multimedia technology can fully improve the students' thinking and practical language skills. This will ensure and fulfill an effective result of English language teaching. Despite some disadvantages of using multimedia technology in teaching, multimedia technology can be used effectively in the English language teaching classrooms. Overall, the non-native speakers of English as language teachers can teach English more efficiently if they use multimedia technology.

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