

# TECHNOLOGY ASSISTED ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING: SOME OBSERVATIONS

- RAJASHEKHARGOUDA S.MULIMANI

HONOURARY FACULTY MEMBER,

DEPT. OF P.G STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN ENGLISH

KARNATAKA STATE WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY, KARNATAKA.

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## Abstract.

*The ever developing world of technology has thrown open bewildering varieties of options in teaching and learning a language: Radio, TV, CD Rom, Computers, C.A.L.L., the Internet, Electronic Dictionary, Email, Blogs and Audio Cassettes, Power Point, Videos, DVD's or VCD's. This entering of technology into the field of pedagogy has brought revolution. This rapid rise and development of information technology has offered a better pattern to explore a new teaching model. As a consequence technology plays a very important role in English teaching. Using multimedia to create a context to teach English has its unique advantages. This paper tries to analyze the necessity of multimedia technology to language teaching and also tries to bring out the problems faced by using these technologies. It also aims to make English teachers aware of such strategies to use them in an effective manner.*

Key Words: English Language teaching, Multimedia Technology, Advantages, Disadvantages, Optimization, Strategies.

## I. Introduction:

It does not require the knowledge of Rocket Science to say that English, for some historical reasons and for some practical reasons, has triumphantly been established as a global language. It has spread across the globe and is being used as a second language in more and more countries, including India. It has attained a very privileged position in India. It has become the chosen medium of instruction, education and communication for large section of the Indian population. The craze of English medium schools and colleges has penetrated not only urban India but rural India as well. Though there is great demand for English medium schools and accordingly there are English medium schools in every nook and corner of the country yet, the quality of English teaching in most of these schools and colleges is far from satisfactory. To overcome this hurdle there is a great need to implement

the technology in the classrooms in a more effective and meaningful way. Use of technology to teach English will go a long way in reaching the desired target.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has posed new challenges and has equally some boons in the form of technology on the modern teacher. The tradition of English teaching has been drastically changed with the remarkable entry of technology. Technology provides so many options as making teaching interesting and also making teaching more productive in terms of improvements. Technology is one of the most significant drivers of both social and linguistic change. Graddol: (1997:16) states that” technology lies at the heart of the globalization process; affecting education work and culture. The use of English language has increased rapidly after 1960. At present the role and status of English is that it is the language of social context, political, sociocultural, business, education, industries, media, library, communication across borders, and key subject in curriculum and language of imparting education”. It is also a crucial determinant for university entrance and processing well paid jobs in the commercial sector. Since there are more and more English learners in India, different teaching methods have been implemented to test the effectiveness of the teaching process. One method involves multimedia in ELT in order to create English contexts. This helps students to get involved and learn according to their interests, It has been tested effectively and is widely accepted for teaching English in modern world.

The use of Technology is multipronged one- for the upliftment of modern styles; it satisfies both visual and auditory senses of the students. With the spread and development of English around the world, English has been learned and used by more and more speakers. According to David Graddol ‘it is the language at the leading edge of scientific and technological development, new thinking in economics and management, new literatures and entertainment genre..... David Graddol, The future of English, Page 2

## II. Technological intervention in Teaching English

As the use of English has increased in popularity so has the need for qualified teachers to instruct students in the language. It is true that there are teachers who use ‘cutting edge’ technology, but the majority of teachers still teach in the traditional manner. None of these traditional manners are bad or damaging the students. In fact, till date they are proving to be useful also. However, there are many more opportunities for students to gain confidence practice and extend themselves, especially for ESL students who learn the language for more than just fun. For them to keep pace with ELT and gain more confidence they have to stride into the world of multimedia technology.

## III. The Progress of ELT through Technology

There never was greater need to acquaint oneself with the English language as it is today. 21<sup>st</sup> century is the age of globalization and it is important to grasp various foreign languages and English language tops the priority. English Language Teaching has been with us for many years and its significance continues to grow, fuelled, partially by the Internet. Graddol’s study (2000) suggests that in the year 2000 there were about a billion English learners- but a decade later the numbers doubled. The forecast points to a surge in English learning, which has peaked in 2010. The same study indicates that over 80% of information stored on the internet is in English. For the first time there are more Non-Native than Native

users of the language and diversity of context in terms of learners, age, nationality, learning background etcetera has become a defining characteristic of ELT today.

With the rapid development of science and technology, the emergence and development of multimedia technology and its application to teaching, featuring audio, visual, animation effects comes into full play in English class teaching and sets a favorable platform for reform and exploration on English teaching model in the new era. It's proved that multimedia technology plays a positive role in promoting activities and initiatives of student and teaching effect in English class. It is fair to assert that the growth of the internet has facilitated the growth of the English language and that this has occurred at a time when computers are no longer the exclusive domains of the dedicated few, but rather available to many. With this there has been a very significant proliferation of literature regarding the use of technology in teaching English language. Mostly these writings unequivocally accept technology as the most essential part in teaching. In a sense, a tendency to emphasize on inevitable role of technology in pedagogy to the extent of obliterating human part of teacher by technology part has been very dominant. And as a result if we neglect or ignore technological developments they will continue and perhaps we will never be able to catch up, irrespective of our discipline or branch. For this reason it is important for language teachers to be aware of the latest and best equipment and to have a full knowledge of what is available in any given situation. Teachers can use Multimedia Technology to give more colorful, stimulating lectures (new Horizons).

There are many techniques applicable in various degrees to language learning situation. Some are useful for testing and distance education, and some for teaching business English, spoken English, reading, listening or interpreting. The teaching principle should be to appreciate new technologies in the areas and functions where they provide something decisively new useful and never let machines takeover the role of the teacher or limit functions where more traditional ways are superior. There are various reasons why all language learners and teachers must know how to make use of the new technology. Here we also need to emphasize that the new technologies develop and disseminate so quickly that we cannot avoid their attraction and influence in any form.

#### IV. Analysis on Necessity of Application of Multimedia Technology to English Teaching

##### 1. To Enhance Students' Interest in Study

Nowadays, the stereotyped traditional teaching methods and environment are unpopular while multimedia technology featuring audio, visual animation effects naturally and humanely makes us more access to information besides, with such characteristics as abundant-information and crossing time and space, multimedia technology offers a sense of reality and functions very well, which greatly cultivates students' interest and motivation in study and their involvement in class activities.

##### 2. To Make Students Effective Communicators

Traditional teaching has hampered students' capacity to comprehend certain language and also understanding to structure, meaning and function of the language, and makes the students passive recipients of knowledge, So it is hard to achieve the target of

communication. With teachers' instructions leading students' thought patterns and motivating students' emotions, the multimedia technology seeks integration of teaching and learning and provides the students greater incentives, The PPT courseware activate students' thinking; the visual and vivid courseware rand help them to transforms English learning into capacity cultivation. And such in-class activities as group discussion, subject discussion, and debates can also offer more opportunities for communication among students and between teachers and students. So multimedia technology teaching has uniquely inspired students' positive thinking and communication skills in social practice.

### 3. To increase Students' Knowledge of Western Culture.

The multimedia courseware can offer the students abundant information; more plentiful than textbooks, and help them to get of displays vivid cultural background, rich content and true-to-life language materials, which are much natural and closer to life. Not only could learners improve their listening ability, but also learn the western culture. Grasping information through various channels can equip; the students with knowledge and bring about information-sharing among students and make them actively participate in class discussion and communication.

### 4. To Improvise upon teaching.

Due to large classes it is difficult for the students to have speaking communication. The utilization of multi-media sound lab materializes the individualized and co-operative teaching. The traditional teaching model mainly emphasized on teachers' instruction, and the information provided is limited due to traditional classes. On the contrary, multimedia technology goes beyond time and space, creates more vivid, visual, authentic environment for English learning, stimulates students' initiatives and economizes class time meanwhile increases class information.

### 5. To Improve Interaction between Teacher and Student

Multimedia teaching stresses the role of students, and enhances the importance of "interaction" between teachers and students. A major feature of multimedia teaching is to train and improve students' ability to listen and speak, and to develop their communicative competence, During this process, the teacher's role as a facilitator is particularly prominent. Using multimedia in context creation creates a good platform for the exchange between teachers and students, while at the same time providing a language environment that improves on the traditional classroom teaching model. In this way, teachers in the classroom no longer blindly input information and force students to receive it in a passive way.

### 6. Easy to achieve Contextual Teaching and Learning.

With Multimedia it is easy to achieve contextual teaching . This method makes the class lively and interesting, as well as optimizing the organization of the class. Multimedia has its own features such as visibility and liveliness. During the process of multimedia English teaching, sounds and pictures can be set together, which enhances the initiative of both teachers and students, When using multimedia software, teachers can use pictures and

images to enrich the content of classes, and also imagine different contexts in the process of producing teaching courseware, Students in the class can use multimedia to understand the class in a clear way. Through the whole interactive process, it is apparent that using multimedia in ELT is effective in nurturing students' interest in learning English, as well as enhancing teachers' interest in English teaching. Through Multimedia and network technology we can offer students not only rich, sources of authentic learning materials, but also an attractive and a friendly interface, vivid pictures and pleasant sounds, which to a large extent overcomes the lack of authentic language environment and arouses students' interest in learning English.

#### 7. To Provide Flexibility to Course Content:

In addition, multimedia teaching provides flexibility to the teaching. It is obvious that the context can be created not only in the classroom, but also after class. Multimedia language teaching can also create a multimedia language environment for the purpose of conducting language teaching. English teaching itself must focus on the guidance of teachers and be student-centered, which we believe is one of the principles for language teaching. Students are bound to have some problems in classroom teaching, which can be addressed under the guidance of teachers. In such circumstances, students can use the new technology to their advantage, such as manipulating the network to contact teachers, and receiving answers by email.

#### V. An Analysis of Problems Arising from Application of Multimedia Technology to English Teaching

In spite of advantages of application of multimedia technology to English class teaching has to improve teaching effect and university students' overall capacities, there are many problems existing in practical teaching, such as:

##### 1. Major Means Replaced by the Assisting One

Application of multimedia technology is an assisting instrument to achieve the projected teaching effect, While if totally dependent on, multimedia devices during teaching, the teachers may be turned into slaves to the multimedia and cannot play the leading role in teaching, It is observed in practice that a lot of teachers are active in multimedia technology application but not proficient enough to handle it confidently. In class, they are standing by the computer and students are fixing their attention only on the screen, and therefore, there is no eye contact between teachers and students.. The trend of modern information and technology teaching appears to the extremity regardless of the essence of the traditional teaching. And hence, the notion of Creative Education is to be fully comprehended that modern educational techniques serves an assisting instrument rather than a target: and that should not dominate class. They are substitutes to effective teaching and learning.

##### 2. Some Students may face the Loss of Urge to Speak.

English language and English analysis by the teachers are effective in conveying knowledge to the students from English pronunciation to comprehension, improving students' English thought patterns and oral expression, Whereas, the introduction of

multimedia technology featuring audio, visual, textual effect fully meets audio and visual requirements of the students and enhance their interest, but it also results in lack of communication between teachers and students, replacement of teachers' voice by computer sound, and teachers' analysis by visual image and students have few chances for speaking communication. With the favorable atmosphere by the mutual communication between teachers and students fading away, and sound and image of multimedia affecting students' initiative to think and speak, English class turns to course ware show and students are made viewers rather than the participants of class activities.

### 3. It May Restrict Students' Thinking Potential

It is clear that language teaching is different from science subjects, for language teaching does not require demonstration by various steps, rather, the tense and orderly atmosphere is formed through questions and answer between teachers and students, Teachers raise impromptu and real-time questions and guide the students to think, however the courseware lacks real-time effect and lacks feedback. It ignores emphasis and importance in teaching; it also neglects instruction in students 'thinking, inspiring their paths of thinking, strengthening their capacity contemplating and solving problems. In this way, it should be noted that cultivation of students' thinking capacity should be the major objective in teaching and using of multimedia technology and it should not take up the students' time for thinking, analyzing and exploring questions.

### 4. Abstract Thinking Replaced by Imaginative Thinking

The Process of cognition goes through perceptual stage and rational stage. It also applies to studying process. It is our hope that teaching makes students adopt the outlook cognition from perceptual recognition to rational apprehension, and greatly leap from perceptual thinking to rational thinking; Therefore it is the major objective in teaching. To enhance the students' abstract thinking, the multimedia technology makes content easier, and with its unique advantages, it can clarify the emphasis in teaching. While if the image and imagination in students' mind were merely showed on the screen, their abstract thinking would be restricted and logical thinking would waste away. At present the decreased students' reading competence has become a major concern for reason that, textual words are replaced by sound and image, handwriting by keyboard input. All in all, the multimedia as an assisting instrument, cannot replace the dominant role of teachers and it is part of a complete teaching process. Besides, it is not a mechanic imitation of teaching, rather it integrates the visual, textual demonstration with teachers' experience to contribute to the programmed, automatic and continuous teaching project so as to enhance the overall improvement of students' listening, speaking, reading and writing.

## VI. Some Suggestions and Strategies to Overcome the Existing Problems

In practical teaching, It is improper to duplicate the textual material simply to the screen so that the teacher's position is ignored In order to ensure the function of, multimedia in teaching. It should be noted that:

### 1. The Beauty of Courseware Is not the Sole Pursuit

It is proved through practice that adequate application of multimedia technology to teaching can make breakthroughs in class teaching. That is to say, during multimedia assisting teaching, teachers still play the leading role that their position could never be replaced by the computer. For instance, the introduction to each lesson and speaking communication are good way to improve students' listening and speaking which the computer cannot fulfill, Therefore, teachers' interpretation shall not be overlooked. Meanwhile, as a practical linguistic science, English should be used very often in class to cultivate the students' communicative competence, Multimedia, as an instrument for assisting teaching, serves the teachers despite its extraordinary effect, So teaching determines whether to adopt multimedia technology. Otherwise, the teachers were acting as the projectionist, clicking the screen.

## 2. The Computer Screen can't Substitute the Blackboard

Some teachers take the computer screen as the blackboard, They have input exercises, questions, answers and teaching plans into the computer and display them piece by piece, without taking down anything on the blackboard or even the title of a lesson. It is known that teachers are supposed to simulate situations based on teaching and guide the students to communicate in English. Beside traditional writing on blackboard is concise and teachers can make adjustment and amendment to it if necessary. Furthermore, experienced teachers know well that a perfect courseware is an ideal project in mind, and that in practice, they need to enrich the content on the blackboard with emerging of new question raised by the students.

## 3. Power Point cannot Take the Place of Student's Thinking and Practices

At present, most multimedia courseware mainly feature on image and animation of teaching materials in order to cause audio and visual effect, which lively displays the content of textual materials and helps the student deeply understand the texts. A problem remains that displaying of the content of texts in the PPT courseware cannot take the place of students' thinking or English communication in simulated circumstance, When working on and utilizing the courseware, we need to encourage the students to use their own mind and speak more, actively join in class practice, we should not overuse the courseware merely in the hope of adding the modernized feature to class teaching

## 4. Traditional Teaching Instruments and Devices should not be Overlooked

The function of multimedia assisting in teaching cannot be replaced by many other instruments, which does not mean that multimedia can replace any other form of instrument; Some teachers tend to entirely depend on multimedia teaching. While, it should be noticed that although multimedia has its unique advantages in teaching, the characteristics functions of other forms of teaching instruments are still incomparable. For example, the recorder still plays a role in broadcasting listening material. So teachers are supposed to choose appropriate media and instrument based on the requirements of teaching and integrate multimedia instrument with traditional one and fully perform their merits, rather than merely in pursuit of trendy method

## 5. Multimedia Technology should not be Overused and should not be used Blindly.

Some teachers may possess the improper concept that they would totally apply multimedia technology in their teaching. It is also believed that the more utilization of multimedia technology, the better class atmosphere may grow, the more actively the students get involved in class participation, the more easily the material access to the students. Apparently, the students show some interest in leaning, but actually, they feel like looking on. In practice, the more unconscious attention the students pay. The more interference of teaching information during transmission, the less the students take from the language materials. It is impossible to effectively train the students' language expression in class time. It is clear that in spite of advantages of application of multimedia technology, it assists in teaching. During practical teaching, it is part of a complete teaching procedure. In practice, if multimedia technology would be properly implemented in English teaching, the students could make full use of English speaking and listening materials and develop their overall capacities, which is the objective for us to introduce multimedia technology to modern teaching thus, this leads to systematic training on students' listening, speaking, reading and writing, makes teachers' instructions come into great play, help the student gain basic knowledge as well as language training at classes, improves their expression ability in English and lays a fundamental basis for their English communication.

## VII. Conclusion

The purpose of both the traditional and computer-assisted cooperative language leaning classrooms is to provide a space in which the facilitation of learning, and learning itself, can take place. It is true that one of the ultimate goals of multimedia language teaching is to promote students' motivation and learning interest, which can be a practical way to get them involved in the language learning, Context creation of ELT should be based on the openness and Accessibility of the teaching materials and information. During the process of optimizing the multimedia English teaching, students are not too dependent on their mother tongue, but will be motivated and guided to communicate with each other. Concerning the development of technology, we believe that in future, the use of multimedia English teaching will be further developed. The process of English learning will be more student-centered but less time-consuming. Therefore, it promises that the teaching quality will be improved and students' applied English skill scan be effectively cultivated, meaning that students' communicative competence will be further developed In conclusion, we believe that this process can fully improve students' ideation and practical language skills, which is helpful and useful to ensure and fulfill an effective result of teaching and learning. Barring a few problem areas multimedia technology can be used effectively in classrooms of ELT with proper computer knowledge on the part of teachers, overcoming the finance problems in setting up the infrastructure and not allowing the teachers to become technophobes.

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