The Role of Multimedia in ESL Classroom: An Overview from Teaching Perspective

Md. Mahroof Hossain

Abstract

In the era of 21st Century, to make teaching more effective and interesting for learners, technology plays a vital role. Teaching refers to an act of stimulus for the psychological and intellectual growth of a person. Learning technology refers to the technological tools which assist learning, teaching and assessment. So, we can say that today's pedagogy is combination of teaching and technology which helps the learning process for both teachers and learners. In this learning process the multimedia is a better tool to explore the new teaching method. Multimedia in ESL classroom provides an opportunity for both teachers and students to make learning and teaching more interesting with illustrated features, so that learners become motivated to learn. This article aims to analyze the role of multimedia in ESL (English as Second Language) classroom with its useful strategies, the role of teachers dealing with multimedia assisted teaching and implementation of multimedia in ESL classroom in the context of teaching perspective.

Key Words: Multimedia, Teaching, English as Second Language (ESL), ESL Classroom, Motivation, Pedagogy

1. Introduction

English is the worldwide language, as it is the most widely spoken language in the world. It has transfused across the world as it is spoken as the second language in many countries. English language always has an advantaged position in Bangladesh. There is always a panic among the students to learn English and for this reason the students consistently lose interest in learning the language. To overcome these obstacles, teachers must implement motivating and artistic methods to make learners learn English in a smooth way. They should generate interest among students. As the students show much attention in using new technology, the teachers can make use of the new technologies to improve the English language teaching. This can result in an operative and meaningful way to learn language in the ESL classroom. Generating a good environment for learning and teaching is one of the most motivating features of learning process and it is also one of the toughest tasks to master. For those new to the teaching profession, failure to set the precise manner will greatly impede their effectiveness as a teacher. Approaches that worked effectively for many years suddenly became futile in the aspect of new challenges today's students are facing in the classroom. Becoming a teacher of ESL implies the process of becoming a member of that community of preparation.

'The Information and Communication Technology revolution is fast changing the world and creating a generation that is media hungry and technologically savvy. The new generation is using digital media for learning and communicating.' (Tapscott, 2008).

'The advent of multimedia and multimedia technologies has changed the way educators teach and students learn. With multimedia, the communication of the information can be done in a more effective manner, and

Md. Mahroof Hossain, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Z.H. Sikder University of Science and Technology, Kartikpur, Shariatpur, Bhedergonj, Bangladesh

11IJTET21June12_p108-116.indd 108 15-07-2021 09:26:24

it can be an effective instructional medium for delivering information. Multimedia application design offers new insights into the learning process of the designer and forces him or her to represent information and knowledge in a new and innovative way.' (Neo and Neo, 2000)

'Multimedia 'provides' a means to supplement a presenter's efforts to garner attention, increase retention, improve comprehension and to bring an audience into agreement', which consequently results in people remembering 20% of what they see, 40% of what they see and hear, but about 75% of what they see and hear and do simultaneously.' (Linstrom, 2004)

Multimedia in education has been tremendously productive in teaching individuals a varied range of subjects. Multimedia is altering the way we connect with each other. The methods by which we send and receive messages is more effectively done and better understood. While a lecture can be extremely informative, a lecture that incorporates pictures or video, images etc. can assist an individual's learning and intercept information much more successfully.

2. Multimedia in the ESL Classroom Teaching

The world around us has become a technological world. In the case of educational world, it is no exception. Because of this technological development, students and teachers are creating stimulating and ground-breaking ways to make learning more vibrant, longer lasting and more applicable to the world outside the classroom. Multimedia technology plays a constructive role in improving activities and initiatives of students and teaching effectively in the classrooms.

ESL classroom, in a country can be defined where English is not the first language. Students share the same language and culture. The teacher may be the only native English speaker they have exposure to. With the pace of time English language models change swiftly, there has been a noteworthy growth of literature regarding the use of technology in English language teaching. These literatures plainly accept technology as the most vital part in teaching. Such an inclination has emphasized on an essential role of technology that has been central for the teachers. As the popularity of English is increasing day by day and worldwide, the teachers of English feel the need of shift in their language teaching methods. There are teachers who use the 'leading edge' of technological and scientific development' (Young and Bush 2). But majority of teachers still teach in the traditional manner.

To keep pace with English language teaching with more confidence, they have to stride into the arena of multimedia technology. Here multimedia technology refers to computer- based collaborative applications that use both the hardware and software, letting people share their ideas and information. It is an arrangement of text, graphics, animation, video, and sound. With the fast growth of science and technology, the usage of multimedia technology in language teaching has generated a favorable context for reforming and exploring English Language teaching models in the new era. This implication features the use of audio, visual and animation effects in the English language teaching classrooms. Technological modernizations should go hand in hand with the progress of English and change the way in which we make interaction.

As we are living in the 'age of technology', many teachers are still uncomfortable with the idea of incorporating it into classrooms. There are many reasons behind this, including lack of preparation and tools,

11IJTET21June12_p108-116.indd 109 15-07-2021 09:26:24

opposing perceptions about technology in general and a lack of knowledge with regard to the effectiveness of classroom technologies.

Graddol (1999) 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 and socio-cultural context, business, education, industries media, library communication across borders and key subject in curriculum and language of imparting education.'

Despite the technological advancement in teaching profession, nothing can fully replace an experienced teacher, technology only acts as a helping hand for teachers to run smoothly and deliver lecture in the classroom. The teaching principle should acknowledge new technologies and functions where they make available something conclusively useful and never allow the machines to take over the role of the teacher.

3. Elements of the Ideal Multimedia Enabled Classroom

When we take class in Multimedia Enabled Classroom then we have to consider that multimedia has two key uses:

i. Spontaneous demonstration of information through text, graphics, images, audio, and video.

ii. Use of different applications to access the needed information.

Multimedia is composed of various components: text, graphics, animation, sound, and video. These components can contribute differentially to learning of material.

Text: It is major element in all multimedia applications. It conveys most information (Vanghan, 2004). We can use ordinary text or different special effects for emphasis or explaining in English teaching. To catch the reader's attention, teachers can use various font size, color, and style to convey information, stress a certain word or phrase.

Graphics: It refers to image, and pictures, such as chart, diagram, and photograph, which contains no movement. According to Andrew Wright's Book --'Picture for language learning', graphics can stimulate interesting activities and enhance motivation, improve understanding ability of language, and offer especial reference object and topic (Wright, 2003). Graphics play a vital role in language teaching process.

Animation: Animation is the rapid display of a system of images of 2D or 3D artwork, to create an illusion of movement. It displays basic graph with simple subject matter to a detailed image with complex movements. Assisted by this use of animation teachers can highlight key knowledge points and heighten students' motivation (Vanghan, 2004)

Sound: It is speech, music, or any other sound that is stored and produced by computers. It has more benefits than tape recorder. In language teaching, sound plays a vital role as it is related to pronunciation. In multimedia class, teacher can use more vivid and fruitful sounds to support students' English learning.

Video: It is the noticeable part of a television transmission and broadcasts visual images of stationary or moving objects. Compared with animation, video can offer more vivid information, but it will consume more storage space than animation. (Vanghan, 2004)

11IJTET21June12_p108-116.indd 110 15-07-2021 09:26:25

In traditional classroom, most English teachers are used to using some orthodox equipment, such as blackboard, chalk, tape recorders and so on. However, we can find more modern equipment in a multimedia classroom.

To ensure that learners can obtain information in a spontaneous way in the environment of multimedia English language teaching classroom, an illustration of a distinctive one-multimedia- PC classroom, setting is important and essential.

i. MPC- Multimedia Personal Computer.

ii. VCD/DVD player- Video Compound Disk/ Digital Video Disk.

iii. Amplifier and Hi-fi acoustic system.

iv. Screen/Curtain

v. Projecting Apparatus.

vi. The access to Internet

vii. Cassette Tapes recorded

viii. Camera Recorder

ix. Overhead/ Slide Projector

4. The Role of Teachers in Multimedia Classroom

It has been observed by the Educationists, Researchers and Administrators that the use of the multimedia in educational institutions brings a change in learning and teaching patterns. For the changing pattern of teaching and learning scenario teachers have some important roles in the usage of multimedia. They are as follows:

i. Facilitator and Guide: To act as a facilitator, teachers must know more than they would as direct givers of information. As a facilitator he or she cannot depend on just one or two texts, he or she should have a variety of knowledge of using available materials for improving students' language skills. It will not be wise to consider language textbook as the only source of information. Multimedia offers sound and visuals, electronic dictionaries and encyclopedias which are available for instant reference. Not only that, online- newspapers provide up to date information on current affairs in the countries of the target language. Teachers should have the knowledge how to make proper use of all the materials effectively. As facilitators, teachers have to be flexible, responding to the needs that students have.

ii. Integrator: It is not enough for teachers to have the knowledge of the functions of different media available. They should also have the knowledge of when best to implement them. Teachers in the learning process of learners, they need to guide learners in the use of word-processing, graphics, and presentation programs. Integration of audio-visual elements will bring home to learners the fact that the foreign language environment of the target language is as vibrant and multifaceted as the society in which they live.

iii. Researcher: It is a prerequisite criterion for teachers to have knowledge of how and where they can access information for their own and for the learners' use. Knowledge and competent use of search engines and reliable information sources are important. To have knowledge with the use of multimedia

11IJTET21June12_p108-116.indd 111 15-07-2021 09:26:25

tools for language presentation will enable teachers to increase their own linguistic and professional competence and increase their confidence in the use of the language.

iv. Designer: To create a successful learning environment, teachers need to learn how to combine learning activities and materials to guide their learners for successful execution. It is the teacher's role to research and evaluate source materials, setting the overall aims and objectives and breaking down tasks into meaningful and manageable sequences.

v. Collaborator: Collaboration with colleagues will lighten the burden and make the efforts more fruitful and rewarding. Cooperation within a specific teaching institution will prove more efficient, but the new technology will provide possibilities for exchange, between institution and beyond borders. Teachers, having less knowledge about language use and language teaching, could well profit from such internet exchanges.

5. Strategies of Using Multimedia

I. Combination of modern teaching methods with traditional teaching methods.

There is no question about that modern teaching methods have many advantages over traditional ones. A multimedia program can provide immediate feedback on the correctness of the learners' response compared to traditional textbook or workbook. Because of the complex nature of using multimedia, still traditional teaching methods are being used because of their own strong points. If there is a combination of the traditional teaching strong points with modern teaching methods, then it will not only raise classroom teaching quality and efficiency, but also improve teaching and learning environment between teachers and students.

II. Viewing multimedia as the assistance to teaching

Multimedia features including sound, animation, videos, and records allow computers as model skills to help students and teachers assess them. But using multimedia in teaching means it just assists the teaching and learning process but cannot take place all the other teaching methods. It will not be right for the teachers not taking notice of textbooks when they are designing lecture plan. It is clear, that multimedia can only help English teaching, teachers should get a clear idea of how and when to make good use of them. The use of the multimedia application technology aims to enrich teaching, but teaching is not intended for multimedia. In today's technological advancement era, there is no doubt that teaching needs multimedia, but using multimedia does not mean enhancing teaching efficiency. Therefore, multimedia can only be used as a supplement to classroom English teaching.

III. Building the ideal relationship between teachers and students

The use of multimedia technology can make teaching efficient and do part of work instead of teachers. But it is totally wrong to hold the view that machine can take the place of human beings. Instead, it becomes more challenging for the teachers now that the expectations are more complex. In other words, in the information age, the role of teachers has also changed, moving from a traditional teaching role to being 'facilitators' when learners can take advantage of the true potential of multimedia as learning tools. At any time, teachers' explanation plays an extreme part, which is a language part and cannot be substituted by any teaching methods. In the past, students were thought of to be passive knowledge receivers. However, the role of students with

11IJTET21June12_p108-116.indd 112 15-07-2021 09:26:25

learning has changed in the information age. There is a movement towards learner-centered approaches. How actively students participate in the learning situation is an important parameter for the learning environment.

IV. Strengthening teacher training

Multimedia assisted English teaching requires proper training and experience. It is a challenge for teachers using multimedia because of heavy preparation work and increased workload. In the light of this fact, the teachers should be trained with the use of modern equipment. They should be familiar with the operation. They should know well about modern educational theories and techniques.

6. Advantages of Using Multimedia in Teaching

The continuous development of technology and new methods of teaching is the main factor for bringing changes in teaching and learning process. Emergence of the internet has challenged the teaching of English, as a result the modern teaching and learning has introduced many/ various and new ways of teaching. The role of the teachers has also changed radically as teachers have to keep in mind the students' interest in English learning and increase the efficiency of teaching during class. Among the use of different types of technology in teaching, multimedia has been proven to be a golden mean in coping with these problems. In the multimedia teaching, with eyes looking, ears listening, mouth speaking, hand writing, brains keeping active, students will greatly improve their passion for learning, leading to higher class efficiency.

The implementation of multimedia will allow teachers to take full advantage of technology to teach English as a Second Language to non-native speaking students.

i. **Motivates students to learn English**
   The traditional teaching methods are not interesting and do not motivate the students to learn English in the English language classroom. The use of multimedia with the help of audio, visual and animation effects, motivates the students to learn English quickly and effectively.

ii. **Develops students' communicative skills**
   Learning English language effectively is very difficult through the traditional teaching because it hampers the students' capacity to understand the structure, meaning and function of the language. But now multimedia technology has been a great help to integrate teaching and learning and provides the students greater incentives, carry forward students' 'future competitiveness at the workplace' (Healey et. al. 11)

   For Suleyman Nihat Sad, the utilization of multimedia technology, 'breaks the monotony of traditional class teaching and is enjoyable and simulating.' (35)

iii. **Widens students' knowledge about the culture of language**
   To have a broad knowledge about the culture of the language in ESL classroom, is another advantage of multimedia in the classroom. Implementation of the multimedia in teaching provides students more opportunities than in the case of traditional teaching where sources of receiving knowledge is limited, textbook cannot compete with real –life language materials in ESL classroom which will attract students' attention. 'Multimedia provides abundant information, students gain the knowledge unconsciously about linguistic factors, such as the customs and cultural background of the target language. (Pun, 2013: 31)

11IJTET21June12_p108-116.indd 113 15-07-2021 09:26:25

iv. **Creates a harmonious environment for learning the Four Skills of English Language**
In the English teaching process, there are four areas which students master, namely: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Teaching with multimedia creates harmonious environment among these four skills. Moreover, it presents good learning scenario, maximizes practice in four basic skills and motivates students to take part in class activities.

v. 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 becomes 'central to language practice' (Motteram)

vi. **Provides students opportunities to gain more information**
The use of multimedia widens the path to gain knowledge by offering them abundant information, more than what is found in the textbook/s.

vii. **Promotes interaction between teachers and students**
The use of multimedia helps both the students and teachers to make a lively and spontaneous interaction to make the learning process easier and creates problem solving atmosphere.

7. Disadvantages/Limitations of Using Multimedia in Teaching

The introduction of multimedia in the teaching area breaks the original conventional model associated with 'blackboard and chalk' and provides opportunities to create new modernized teaching methods to overcome the drawbacks of traditional teaching. It changes the dry learning content into vivid, interesting, visual, audible, and dynamic content.

Inspite of that, using multimedia technology in ESL classroom has many problems too.

i. **Emphasis on the supplementary of effective teaching**
Multimedia technology, used in ESL classroom as a supplementary tool for English language teaching, is 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. (Warschaucer 2). As the modern teaching emphasizes that teachers play the role of facilitator to the students, but if the teachers are more dependent on multimedia devices during their teaching, they may turn into slaves to multimedia technology and may not be able to perform their roles properly assigned to them. On the other hand, many teachers are active in using multimedia technology, but they are not proficient enough to handle it properly. The teachers stand by the computers all the time and students are just concentrating on the screen, the teachers cannot/do not have the direct eye contact with the students. The development of multimedia technology in the language classroom is considered effective but many benefits of the traditional teaching model have been forgotten. Therefore, the teachers should understand that multimedia should be used as a supplementary tool rather than a main tool of teaching in ESL classroom.

ii. **Lack of communication between teachers and students**
One of the basic things in ESL classroom is that there should be a lot of communicative activities in the language classrooms. The teachers should teach the students on how to pronounce certain

11IJTET21June12_p108-116.indd 114 15-07-2021 09:26:26

words, to comprehend the sentences, to improve thought patterns and to express what they have learned. The use of audio, visual and textual effect in the multimedia classrooms enhance the interest of the students, but the students will have a very limited time for speaking/oral communication. The video and audio of multimedia technology affects the students' initiative to think and speak. The ESL classrooms turn into a show case and the students are considered only as viewers rather than the active participants in the classrooms.

iii. Lack of real-time teaching

In ESL classroom, to play an active role, both the teachers and students need a lot of discussion which is formed through questions and answers. The teacher asks real-time questions and guides the students to think, and to give the answers. For example, "students need to be given maximum opportunity for authentic social interaction.' (Warschaucer 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. The students should be given scope for thinking, analyzing, and exploring their own world.

iv. Abstract thinking may be replaced by imaginable thinking

With the use of multimedia technology, the students easily understand the content but their thinking capacity in some cases gets restricted, thereby gradually their logical thinking fades away. In the students' learning process, the knowledge of perceptual recognition to rational apprehension is very important.

v. 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). The language learning programs start with expenses that are related to implementing new technologies in education.

vi. Lack of special skill

There are many multimedia teachers who just have half-baked knowledge. It is a challenge for teachers to use multimedia equipment sometimes. The work- load of the teachers increases because of the use of virtual technology. As in multimedia technology computer operation experience is needed but owing to traditional educational system, many teachers are not good at computers. Because of lack of proficient operation of multimedia, some teachers waste certain time in operating the computers. The unskilled operation on computer would affect the instruction flow which in turn would demotivate students, if it happens frequently in the class.

8. Conclusion

It is urgent that education needs to be modernized in rapidly modernizing society and multimedia is an important aspect in modern education. The changing role of education is currently being reinforced with

11IJTET21June12_p108-116.indd 115 15-07-2021 09:26:26

the integration of multimedia technology and this has led a new paradigm in education and the evolution of new concepts in content development, and a number of innovative methods by which information can be communicated to the learner. The main purpose of using multimedia technology in language teaching is to determine students' motivation and learning interest in the English language. 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. The language teachers should maintain the students' communicative competence through multimedia technology. The utilization of multimedia technology can fully improve the students' thinking and practical language skills. In sum, regardless of the difficulties lying ahead, we must admit that multimedia does make a revolutionary impact on language teaching.

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11IJTET21June12_p108-116.indd 116 15-07-2021 09:26:26