The Necessity of Appropriate Application of Multimedia Instruction to English Teaching

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Abstract

In recent years, with the development of information technology and the renewal of the teaching equipment at schools, multimedia instruction has been extensively accepted and applied to teaching field. "In general multimedia is the combination of visual and audio representations. These representations could include elements of texts, graphic arts, sound, animation, and video" (Joseph, 2004, p.365). Multimedia instruction is typical of its directness, convenience and up-to-date speed, which are helpful to trigger its popularity among teachers, esp. the young. Here, the essay mainly states the significance of multimedia instruction in the teaching process through a comparison between traditional teaching method and multimedia teaching method. In addition, as the saying goes: "Overdone is worse than undone", the proportion of multimedia method in the teaching process and the standard or the assessment of a successful multimedia for teaching will still be a thorn that needs to be overcome.

Key words: Multimedia; Comparison; English teaching

INTRODUCTION

Rapid advances in the domain of science and technology are having an unprecedented effect upon the provision of higher education in universities throughout the world, the pace of change often being so fast as to make planning for the development of the "classroom of the future" an extremely difficult task. (Tuckett, 1997, p.95)

Today, the rapid development of computer network, multimedia and other modern means of education are widely applied to English teaching. There is no doubt that the multimedia plays a great role in auxiliary English teaching, which challenges the dominant status of the traditional English teaching mode. But this does not mean that the traditional teaching has to quit the stage of English teaching, because the multimedia teaching has its own limitations. How to correctly handle the relationship between multimedia teaching and the traditional teaching, and to realize the complementation between them is still a hot topic, as well as a problem to be solved for English education workers in recent years. Accurately, at present, the size of a class in china is much larger than western classes. In addition, levels of students' learning ability are also quite different from each other in each class. Thus, there are always certain existent problems in class. In addition, the interaction between teachers and students is hard to realize. Students even deem it that they have no duty to act in co-ordination with teachers to perfect their lessons and in this case, they may develop the habit of keeping quiet in class gradually. So if the teacher speaks much more spoken English, students will feel bored and puzzled. If things continue in this way, students will feel ignored by the teacher, and eventually lose the interest and creative thinking in this subject. At the same time, the terrible studying stress may trap students in the depressed abyss and may even exert a negative effect on other subjects. Above all, for most students, the standard of English language remains unsatisfactory. "For creative thinking the results showed that the MLT was instrumental for students to generate flexible and original ideas, but not fluent ideas. This was reflected through students' product creativity which showed novel and aesthetic qualities, but lacked practicality" (Kassim, 2014, p.10). Then, to attract students' attention and stimulate their practicality in English, we may

as well make our lessons more vivid and interesting, which calls for the appropriate use of multimedia teaching.

1. THE COMPARISON BETWEEN TRADITIONAL TEACHING METHOD AND MULTIMEDIA TEACHING METHOD

Since the teacher began to use chalk and blackboard as teaching tools to impart knowledge, it has already been a long historical period. Such traditional English teaching has been ever accepted by humans widely. But traditional teaching method has its disadvantages. In order to make students remember a lot of information or understand better, teachers should write down a lot of key words on the blackboard. It's obvious that it is a waste of time and efforts. Compared with traditional teaching method, multimedia instruction also has its advantages and disadvantages. First, it's a convenient and direct way to impart knowledge to students. Whether we regard multimedia teaching method as a modern foreign language teaching material or as a modern foreign language teaching method, such kinds of design with PowerPoint have been accepted by both teachers and students. Multimedia class instruction has started a multidimensional space for the students. In the space, students can become open, interactive and they may save a lot of time to exchange their ideas with peers and teachers. They can also do some teamwork to cultivate their cooperative learning spirit. Ultimately, it can arouse students' interest towards this subject and fill the lesson with something new, deep, outspread and vivid. Accurately the differences lie in the following parts.

1.1 The Theoretical Basis

Multimedia teaching is based on the theories of constructivism and autonomous learning. The tenet of constructivism theory is laid on the shift in students' roles from the traditional passive receivers of knowledge to the constructivists of the meaning of knowledge in a complete and real environment, which emphasizes the center of learning as students. Autonomous learning theory is aimed to make students learn how to learn, transforming the passive learning, rote and mechanical training methods for students to initiative exploration, independent learning and inquiry-based learning.

Multimedia teaching can not only simulate realistic learning environment, but also make use of the network teaching software to solve some problems students will meet, such as autonomous learning materials, information, resources and so on, realizing the center shift from teachers to students, and finally meeting the development of the modern English teaching.

1.2 The Comparison of Teaching Modes

The traditional teaching emphasizes the teacher-centered mode, mainly through the way of teachers' teaching and writing on the blackboard in class, whose advantages lie in the following parts: First, teachers can teach students in accordance with their aptitude, flexibly changing the teaching contents, and adjusting teaching ways, and in addition, the opportunities for information communication and emotional interaction between teachers and students become more bountiful than before. But single teaching means fails to reflect the dominant position of students in learning, so that the teaching content often breaks away from the real language environment, which is boring and dull, even affecting students' learning enthusiasm, initiative and creativity.

However, multimedia teaching is available to present the teaching content to the students interactively, lively and vividly, with the organic combination of text, sound, videos, and cartoons in the teaching process by utilizing computer technology management and regulation in teaching activities, ushering the class teaching in a new situation, where teachers are inclined to make the traditional and boring teaching form relaxed and happy, fully stimulating students' learning motivation, as well as inspiring students' thought so as to improve the quality of English teaching. The current multimedia teaching promotes the diversified development tendency of teaching mode. The most common modes of multimedia language teaching are classroom teaching model (Classroom Learning), collaborative learning mode, (Cooperative Learning) and individualized learning mode (Individual Learning).

1.3 The Comparison of the Teaching Content

From the point of writing material, the traditional teaching content is based on descriptive words and complementary graphs, which fail to achieve the integration of sound, images, and animation to present the teaching content. However, multimedia teaching can create the combination of dynamic and static teaching situation, illustrated with text and pictures, with different colors, images, forms, according to different teaching contents and characteristics. Courseware's production makes up for the inadequacy of the original teaching materials, so that the students can not only acquire textbook knowledge, but also learn extra-curricular knowledge beyond the textbooks, which can , accordingly, enrich the teaching material content, widen the students' field of vision, and inspire their interest in English.

2. THE CURRENT PROBLEMS IN MULTI-MEDIA ENGLISHTEACHING

2.1 Lack of Effective Communication and Personality Education

Teachers need organize the teaching, while operating a computer, so teachers cannot devote much time and

energy on students, in which case, the true communication of feelings between teachers and students are impaired, which is not conducive to the emotion development of the students. And English is a teaching subject with strong practicality, laying stress on interaction between the teachers and students, which can be the oral language, a facial expression, or body language. However, man-machine dialogue cannot reach the teaching effect of traditional face-to-face communication between teachers and students.

One of the aims of education is to undertake a kind of healthy personality education to students. However, teaching machine can only mechanically exercise the functions, according to people's willingness, which fails to endow students with personality education, and which is also difficult to make them really understand the connotation of personality.

2.2 One-Sided Pursuit of Form as Well as Ignorance of the Content

Some teachers make courseware mechanically, simply paying attention to attractive form, excessively rendering courseware interface, and employing sound and video material, so that the result left the students only aware of those beautiful pictures at the end of the lesson, just as a presumptuous guest usurps the host's role. This kind of practice, typical of attention to the form and ignorance of the content, makes the original meaning of multimedia English teaching come to naught.

2.3 Other Existent Negative Effects

Multimedia, applied to assist English teaching, can enhance the students' interest in learning, but it can not be used excessively. If teachers employ multimedia blindly, the students are apt to watch the screen for a long time, which is easy to cause their visual fatigue, absence of mind and finally an undesirable learning efficiency. In addition, teachers should prevent the content of multimedia courseware from being too rich, so as not to impact the teaching focus, which is also not favorable to students' class notes, eventually, bringing a bad effect on the teaching practice.

3. THE APPROPORIATE USE OF MULTIMEDIA INSTRUCTION IN TEACHING FIELD

First, PowerPoint's appropriate use is necessary in the teaching process. Provided that a lesson only makes full use of multimedia teaching but ignores traditional teaching method, it may also be a failure. This kind of lesson couldn't show the part of a teacher's exemplary role before classes. Obviously, no one would like to advocate a loss of traditional teaching method in class. Some teachers are too dependent on multimedia teaching method. During the whole period of a lesson, they may

not write down a single word on the blackboard, and this teaching method won't be of help to students. In more cases, the participators need teacher's explanation or marking whenever they come across an unfamiliar word, but sometimes, teachers are apt to ignore this. Moreover, some teachers may totally make a copy of something from network resources or make up a PowerPoint in a hurry and even not make a good preparation for their lessons. In a word, in order to get a good result for class instruction, teachers should combine the traditional teaching method and the multimedia teaching method together, and attach great importance to the latter. Above all, class instruction can work through an organic combination of traditional teaching method and multimedia teaching method. A teacher can put his overall layout as well as the details of the lesson into PowerPoint. Meanwhile teachers should write down something on the blackboard if necessary. It will be a reflection of both integrity and flexibility of class instruction. All of these can be summed up as the next points.

3.1 The Choice of Knowledge Information Must Be Appropriate and Healthy

This may be reflected in two aspects; the amount of information should never be too large, because we should take time and the understanding ability of students into consideration. If the information is too large, we may keep away from the important teaching points and teachers must spend most of the time on reading the information on the screen, which is not what we want. Another point lies that the teacher is the one who will impart knowledge and educate people, so the teaching method and demonstrating material in front of the whole class must be healthy and instructive.

3.2 Knowledge Information Should Be Accurate

Mistakes appearing on the screen may be easier to find out than appearing in teachers' dictation. Though we can get more ready-made information from the network resources but this kind of teaching skills must be original and suitable for the contents of main teaching materials. Our aim is to make full use of acoustic resources or network resources to serve our teaching activities. Such information may include words, pictures or videos etc. Appropriate introduction or usage can attract students' attention and arouse their interest, but, on the contrary, if the PowerPoint uses a lot of fancy or complex pictures, that may distract students' attention from study, thus it tends to exert a reverse effect.

3.3 Certain Tasks Need the Help of Power Point

Using PowerPoint to interact with students is a good way. As we know, objectives should be matched with instruction. That is to say, in order to achieve different teaching objectives, we should adopt different class instruction models. Moreover, we should also set different tasks helping to achieve that objective in class.

When it comes to the contact with multimedia PowerPoint, some teachers find it hard to handle the problem, esp. hard to make a good PowerPoint by themselves. However, once they download several ready-made PowerPoint and employ them during their lessons, they will find out the charm and convenience of PowerPoint. After that, they will begin to learn how to make and use it to a great extent. Generally speaking, a good PowerPoint or good network resources can perfect the class instruction, but how to make a good PowerPoint and how to perfect the class instruction? Teachers can make a reference to the following points: for example: If we want to teach basic skills, facts and knowledge, we may use the direct instruction model in class, this model is essential in planning for any instructional design. The following steps are contained procedures in direct instruction model: Firstly, teachers should review previously learned material which can be helpful to consolidate the previous lessons. Then teachers should state objectives for the lesson and present new material. Next, teachers should guide practice with corrective feedback and assign independent practice with corrective feedback. Finally, teachers are responsible to assist students to review periodically with corrective feedback if necessary. Among these steps, lesson objectives should be stated clearly and written on the board in the language students can understand. The purpose of stating objectives is to tell the learners clearly and simply what the purpose of the instruction is, and what outcomes they should expect. Now a more perfect class instruction must contain this step, which will guide students to participate in studying activities under a clear mind. Whether the objectives are long or short, we all should learn to show them by PowerPoint. There is no need to write it down on the blackboard. The golden rule of teaching is to be clear. So teachers should employ every minute to conduct more significant teaching activities. Also when using this model, there are many concepts or facts remaining to be learned, so if they are given the form of PowerPoint, it will be more efficient. In addition, when dealing with such passages concerning figures, teachers may as well use more pictures or videos to show figures' appearance, deeds or life history. This method will be more vivid and interesting than teacher's dictation. Whenever teachers teach a lesson related to a figure, they may collect as much information as they can, only aiming to let the students learn more about the great person and think beyond the surface of the fact to the deeper levels of meaning and implication. So, in this instruction model, PowerPoint is also of great help.

As for the interaction between teacher and students, if necessary, we'd better use PowerPoint. "Our sample revealed that computer based material is the most popular and effective way to learn from and computer technology is the most effective delivery platform." (Davies, 2013,

p.205) When you want to set a task or an assignment to your students, there will always be a set of rules or instructions. It may not be so clear if the teacher only explains the rules or instructions orally. But if you try the requirements into the computer and show it on the screen, everything would be easier than before and students prefer you to do this as well. At the same time, in a traditional teaching method, maybe teacher often omit the procedures of drawing pictures or forms on the blackboard even if it's necessary to do so, but in class, through the combination of traditional teaching method and multimedia teaching method, we can show any kinds of forms, pictures or exercises on the screen through PowerPoint. We could encourage students to participate in more interactive activities only if time is permitted.

3.4 The Combination of Complementary Advantages of Multimedia Teaching and Traditional Teaching

Teachers should choose teaching methods flexibly, according to teaching request, namely, the traditional classroom teaching and multimedia courseware should be combined. Teacher's teaching and multimedia courseware should be used alternately. In the teaching process, teachers can use the demonstration function of multimedia information to introduce the content of cultural background knowledge, etc. to students. when the emphatic and difficult content are introduced, teachers must carry out writing design on the blackboard, with the emotional communication between teachers and students at the same time, which will make teaching more attractive, accordingly, building a kind of active classroom atmosphere, and get twofold result with half the effort.

CONCLUSION

In the end, perhaps, the an multimedia teaching still remains in immature stage and it need to be improved through proper teaching mode in the future time.

Abstract Personalized delivery of multimedia content over the Internet opens new business perspectives for future multimedia applications and thus plays an important role in the ongoing MPEG-7 and MPEG-21 multimedia standardization efforts. Based on these standards, next-generation multimedia services will be able to automatically prepare the digital content before delivery according to the client's device capabilities, the network conditions, or even the user's content preferences. (Jannach, 2006, p.112)

Anyway, multimedia teaching method brings us a whole new idea and pleasure, and teachers should learn more from it and get to a status of "to teach is to learn". In short, we should clearly recognize the multimedia technology in English teaching activities as one auxiliary method, which is not able to completely replace the traditional teaching. Teachers should combine the two kinds of means of the multimedia teaching and traditional English teaching

together, according to the needs of teaching content and students, optimizing English teaching, and improving students' English learning ability so as to depict an ideal education prospects.

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