COMBINING VISUAL MEDIA AND TALK IT APPLICATION IN READING ACTIVITY

By RisaTriassanti, M.Pd.

ABSTRACT

In many universities, the success of students' acquisition is now measured in term of their ability to communicate in the foreign language rather than on examining their accuracy in using certain grammatical features. Therefore, apart from experimenting new teaching methods, more and more universities have been applying modern technology to support language skills teaching. Although multimedia have enthusiastically been praised by many experts and academicians, the contribution of multimedia in supporting language learning is not obvious due to the limitations and restrictions of learning styles, teaching approaches, and computer skills . Therefore, this paper explores the application of visual media (picture) and verbal media (Talk It) in assisting teaching especially reading. The study shows that the students were enthusiastic in doing reading activity. They can think faster and smarter in limited time. Therefore, the teacher should provide an innovative strategy in teaching reading to make the class more alive.

Key terms: reading, visual media, verbal media, Talk It, Application

INTRODUCTION

Instructional materials designed and developed using multimedia have provided exciting potential learning opportunities thanks to advancement in information technology, making their pedagogical effects on learning and teaching worth examining. L1 reading comprehension takes place when a previous acquired schema stored in the long-term memory is retrieved to assist the processing and understanding of new unfamiliar information (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). The process of transforming incoming information/knowledge elements into schemata requires considerable cognitive mental effort. Native language speakers typically encounter difficulties in reading when they have gaps in their content knowledge. However, the problems faced by L1 readers can also be applied to L2 readers. Insufficient background knowledge hinders the processing of the new information, and limited language competence of second/foreign language learners makes the decoding process even more difficult. For EFL learners with low prior knowledge of a subject matter, instructional strategies need to be integrated into the material.

Instructional materials developed using multimedia are believed to be able to facilitate learners' information processing, and to enhance effective cognitive encoding due to the multiple representations that trigger both verbal and visual modes of processing in human beings.

Many forms of teaching material have been built with interesting visual appearance but we can hardly find a text that built with spoken version. English material especially English text appeal to a listener's sense of hearing. The most important thing about this is that they must be read aloud, they must be heard, in order to be easily understood and appreciated. The problem is that how to make the text spoken in accurate pronunciation. The typical reading strategy is using the teacher voices. There is another way to make the spoken text more interesting for the students. We use Talk it application to read the text. The voices are varied for examples the voice of woman, man,children, old woman and many more that give a lot of fun. The students can also practice pronunciation.

LITERATURE REVIEW   THE ROLE OF MULTIMEDIA IN TEACHING ENGLISH

Since the early 1960s, language teachers have witnessed dramatic changes in the ways that languages are taught. The focus of instruction has broadened from the teaching of discrete grammatical structures to the fostering of communicative ability (Warschauer& Kern, 2000). Together with the appearance of communicative approaches, the emergence of multimedia tools in language teaching has attracted the attention of teachers, academicians, educationalists and experts. From the opinions of those who have studied the role and function of the tools, it seems to be rather controversial and unlikely to produce a definite answer to the apparently simple question, "Do multimedia tools actually enhance and promote foreign language learning?"

Brinton (2001) supposed that multimedia tools serve as an important motivator in the language teaching process because "media materials can lend authenticity to the classroom situation, reinforcing for students the direct relation between the language classroom and the outside world" (p. 461). Hartnett (as cited in Brinton, 2001) shared that perspective by saying that media tools appeal to students' senses and help them process information, thus empowering their understanding of the target culture and increasing their motivation toward language learning, reinforcing the teaching points, and saving the teacher unnecessary explanation.

ACTIVATING VISUAL AND VERBAL SYSTEM OF THE BRAIN

Dual-coding theory (Paivio 1971, 1978, 1990, 1991) provides theoretical justifications for the use of visuals in the instructional presentations. According to the dual-coding theory, human memory is composed of two independent but interconnected coding systems. The visual system primarily deals with visual codes, such as images, pictures, concrete objects, or events; the other system, the verbal system deals with nonvisual codes such as words, speech, language, or semantic codes. Generally, each of the systems functions independently but most information processing requires connections and reinforcement between the two systems (Lai, 2000). Generally speaking, visuals are more likely to be processed in both verbal and visual systems, and hence the probability that they are retained in working memory and retrieved later from long-term memory is higher than when the presentation contains verbal informationalone (Kobayashi, 1986).

Mayer (1994) developed a generative theory of multimedia learning to provide design principles of multimedia instructional materials. The basic tenet of the generative theory of multimedia learning is that learners actively construct knowledge and are involved in a meaningful learning process. A meaningful process occurs when learners consciously select information from presented stimuli, organize information into coherent representations, and then make efforts to integrate new information with other information. The step of integration of information from two individual systems, i.e. verbal and visual, is especially critical. For a successful integration process to occur, both verbal and its corresponding visual information must be held in the working memory simultaneously.

READING STRATEGY BY ACTIVATING SENSORY IMAGERY

We first learn about the world through our senses. A newborn's skin responds to temperature, her eyes to light, her ears to the sound of her mother's voice, and her nose to her mother's scent. Her hungry mouth opens for nourishment and expresses a preference for the taste of her own mother's milk. Over time, babies gradually learn to distinguish one sense from the other and use their senses to explore and —make sense‖ of their surroundings.

Sensory experiences are a significant aspect of our background knowledge. Sensory imagery is an important part of our schemas. When we think about our sensory experiences, we are creating representations of those experiences in our memories (Marzano 2004, 35). In fact, our most powerful memories are attached to sensory experiences. A smell or a taste can trigger a long-cherished recollection—bread baking in the oven in grandma's kitchen, the damp earth that signals rebirth in nature each spring. The metaphor of the elephant's ears reminds us that we can tap into all of our senses, not just our sense of sight,

as we read. When we bring our sensory knowledge to the reading of a text, we are the directors of the movie that plays inside our heads. The movies we create as we read are richer if they include a variety of sensory details.

Sousa (2005) notes that technology provides many images for students, which makes visualization more difficult for them. Like underused muscles, students' ability to use their imaginations is being reduced by the lack of opportunity. It is particularly important for educators to teach students to visualize by the time they are ready to read or listen to chapter books without illustrations. Readers transitioning to non illustrated texts must be ready to apply their own imaginations and what they have learned through their experiences with visual media and other sensory input in order to create mental pictures and sensory images for characters, settings, and plots as well as information presented in texts.

Classroom teachers can emphasize sensory experiences in read-aloud lessons in both the classroom and the library. Reinforcing these experiences supports students' understanding of the significance of their senses in literacy, in learning, in memory and recall, and in life. Learning engagements that focus students' attention on each sense singly help readers develop their ability to identify and use each sense to improve comprehension. As students become more sophisticated in utilizing their senses, sensory imagery can be combined to show how the senses work together to enhance our understanding and enjoyment of text.

As educators collaborate to plan, implement, and assess sensory-focused lessons, it is essential that they take into account students' individual differences. Some children may not have typical eyesight or hearing. As a result, they may have developed keen sensory ability in another category. Some children may not have the mobility to engage in a variety of kinesthetic experiences; instead of touch, another sense may more fully capture sensory input for them. The classroom teacher's assessment of individual student needs is a critical component of the knowledge she brings to the collaboration. Lessons must be modified or adapted and must be presented in such a way that all learners are given opportunities for sensory development in order to achieve comprehension.

Gardner's (1993) theory of multiple intelligences reminds us that people learn best in different ways. Some learners have diverse and strongly developed proficiencies for learning that emphasize one or more of their senses. Students with visual, spatial, musical, and body-kinesthetic intelligences may utilize their senses of sight, hearing, or touch spontaneously as they make meaning with text. Educators can capitalize on these preferences and invite these students to share their gifts with classmates. Classroom teachers themselves may be talented in utilizing one or more of their senses. Art, music,

and physical education teachers can contribute their expertise and talents to collaborative teaching and learning focused on developing sensory knowledge. Other adults with these strengths can also provide outstanding support for teaching through the senses.

One of the research-based instructional strategies recommended by Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001) is nonlinguistic representation. Generating mental pictures, drawing pictures and pictographs, and engaging in kinesthetic activities are braincompatible strategies. As support for linguistic representations, they help learners connect both hemispheres of the brain.

TALK IT COMPUTER APPLICATION FOR ASSISTING READING ACTIVITY

Talk it is also called TalkAny, was a popular text-to-speech (TTS) software by SoftVoice, Inc. It was used to teach pronunciation of words and for simple text-to-speech uses, including narration and accessibility. Talk It! came in two languages, spanish and English. It was one of the first programs to properly pronounce two different languages. The application **reads both English and Spanish texts,** but it doesn't translate them. This will help people that are studying Spanish as a foreign language to learn how things as pronounced.

Students can have a good time using computer, Talk It and its capability to generate voices, prepare yourself to have a good time. This software is capable of **pronouncing any word or sentence that you write.** To do so, it includes software that generates the sounds the correspond to each letter and its intonation.

Talk It allows the **user to hear any written sentence or word,** allowing him to configure many of the voices aspects: **man or woman, boy or girl, it can even be configured as a text to sound like a robot or alien,** assuring many hours of entertainment. What's more we can **configure the reading speed and the tone** used, it also allows us to configure it so that it speaks in murmurs, using heavy breathing or normal, we can even make it shout if we want.

RESEARCH FOCUS

Built on cognitive psychology theories underpinning the use of multimedia to facilitate L2 learners' reading comprehension, this study examines application of picture as visual and talk it application as verbal multimedia in teaching reading.

RESEARCH METHOD The Participants

The participants of the study were 100 students drawn from three classes of first year English department students at UNIROW Tuban. Participants in this study have not had the experience of studying or living in any English-speaking countries.

Material

The material used in the current study is a paper-based reading material developed by Hana English Academy. The material in this book was specifically chosen to assist students in Advancing their English Conversation. It Includes Lots of interesting stories and has exercises that include Grammar, Listening, Critical thinking and other fun exercises, geared to get students into discussions and lots of open talking.

Each page is accompanied by a contextual visual of a picture (see appendix 2). The material was further developed into a PDF format with picture. The title of each page on top and an image in the middle to illustrate the corresponding text.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY Before Reading

Read the title of the book using Talk it. Ask the students to close their eyes and take a minute to imagine football game. When they open their eyes, brainstorm a picture of football game. After that the teacher elicit new vocabulary using Talk it application.

In this beginning, the students are curious with the voices of a children in Talk it application. They try to guess the words they listen to. It make them more concentrate on the reading text. Using children voice makes the students laugh. It is important to improved students motivation to read the text. Besides, the words are expected to stay longer in students memory.

During Reading

The teacher read the text using Talk it application (see appendix 3); one closes her eyes. The students also close their eyes during the readings of a passages. Listeners imagine the story during the readings.In this activity, the students looks curious with the voices of a man in Talk it application. They try to guess the words they listen to. It makes them more concentrate on the reading text. For students, reading text alone by themselves are quite boring and they have low motivation. This activity is useful to reduce students boredom in reading text. The purpose of this activity is only to activate sense of hearing to help the students comprehend the text. It does not force the students to memorize the text.

After that the students are asked to work in group. The teacher distribute reading texts to every group. The group must compete to get the higher score. Every group are offered to choose and answer four types of questions. Every type of questions has different score:

Type A : score 20

Type B: score 20

Type C : score 10

Type D: SCORE 10

For false answer the total score reduced 50 % of the selected score. For example if they choose a questions of type 1 and wrong, their score will be reduced by 50% X 20 = 10. In the last, they will be offered a star questions. they can choose it or ignore it. The star score is 100. If they can answer, they will get 100 hundreds, but if they can't answer their total score will be reduced by 100.

This activity is designed to be a competition game among students group. They will be more challenged to get the highest score. Even, a low motivated students are enthusiastic to involve in this activity. They cooperate to discuss the answer in limited time. Some of them have different job in the group to answer the questions or to find difficult words.

After Reading: Reflection

The teacher mentions the score of every group and the winner of the game. Then she ask the difficulties faced by them. Some of them have low listening skill. They can hardly catch the questions, therefore they don't understand the questions. Secondly, they are lack of vocabulary to support text understanding. And the last they can't think faster in limited time to comprehend the text. In order to minimize the problem, the teacher should adjust the speed of the speeches. Besides, the teacher also gives more brain storming on vocabularies.

Conclusion

There is no denying that technological development can critically affect our behavior and expectations. Regarding multimedia in teaching language, the advantages of authenticity, interactivity, various accessible resources, and combinations of pictures, sound and text are obvious. Nevertheless, in many cases language teachers and learners have not yet maximized their benefit for two main reasons. First, teachers and students lacked adequate computer skills and familiarity with the tools, which slowed down and obstructed

the learning process. Second, the current teaching and learning styles of trainers and learners also prevented the learning process from flowing.

In short, teachers and students are responsible for the success or failure of multimedia tools in supporting language learning. These modern tools may help us to fulfill our tasks effectively, and "create a new dimension for language learning and teaching as well as an additional literacy" (Schrum&Glisan, 2000, p. 325) only when teachers and students are in the right position to exploit them. Therefore, teachers should consider the following factors when using multimedia tools in order to fulfill their teaching goals: the type of skills be presented; student and teacher preferences and teaching styles; the availability of software and hardware; the physical circumstances of the classroom lab; and the type of materials. To carry out their teaching task successfully, language teachers need adequate computer skills training as well as the access to the communicative teaching approaches instead of traditional approaches.

APPENDIX 1 : TEACHING MATERIAL

Text Title: Mayors and their football

Two mayors made a bet on the outcome of the Vegetable Bowl, the annual football game between their high school teams. If Arvada's team lost, the mayor of Arvada would send the mayor of Boulder ten pounds of sliced potatoes, ready for frying. If Boulder's team lost, the mayor would send ten pounds of sliced tomatoes, ready for sandwiches or salads.

Unfortunately, before the game started, the mayor of Boulder overheard the Arvada mayor tell someone: ―They grow the worst tomatoes. If they lose and send us their tomatoes, I'm going to give them all to my pig.‖ The mayor of Boulder was upset to hear this, because he thought Boulder's tomatoes were the best in the state. So he gave the matter some thought.

The following week, the big game was played. Boulder lost its star quarterback in the first half when he tripped over a cheerleader and sprained his big toe. The quarterback glumly watched the rest of the game from the bench. His team ended up losing, 38 to 12. The two mayors shook hands after the game, and the Arvada mayor said, ―I'm really looking forward to those tomatoes.‖

As the Boulder team left the stadium, some unhappy fans threw ripe tomatoes at them. A week later, the mayor of Arvada received a package of beautifully sliced tomatoes. He took them straight to his pig, which gobbled them right up. That night the mayor of

Boulder asked his wife if Arvada's mayor had called. ―No,‖ she said. ―Why?‖ ―Because I mixed a pint of hot sauce into the tomatoes and I wanted to know how his pig's doing.‖

Vocabulary

annual   adj.

bench   n.

cheerleader   n.

glumly   adv.

gobble   v.

mayor   n.

package   n. pint

n.

Score:

    A. 5 x 20 = 100

    B. 5 x 20 = 100

    C. 5 x 10 = 50

    D. 10 x 10   = 100

     ***** = 100

Total score = 450

Questions

    A. Score 20. Answer these questions based on the text.

       1. Who made a bet?

       2. How often does the vegetables bowl occur?

       3. What were the prizes for the bet?

       4. How many pounds of sliced tomatoes were there?

       5. What can you do with sliced potatoes?

    B. Score 20. Answer these yes or no questions.

       1. Did two mayors make a bet?

       2. Does the vegetable bowl contain lettuce and tomatoes?

       3. Does the vegetable bowl occur twice a year?

       4. Are sliced potatoes ready for frying?

       5. Are sliced tomatoes ready for planting?

C. Score 10: Find the words in the text that match to the following statements.

1. A person from another country   F……..

2. What do you taste food with   T……..

3. The joint connecting the foot and the leg A……..

4. A large area of dry land.   D……..

5. A note used in business   M…….

D. Score 20: Find the Synonym of these words.

1. cut up

2. listen to

3. disappointed

4. slipped

5. unhappily

6. problem

7. wrench

8. trembled

9. directly

10. eat up

Star question: What happened to the Arvada's mayor's pigs at last?

 (in the last paragraph of the text)

APPENDIX 2 : VISUAL MEDIA

Picture 1. A line of scrimmage on the 48-yard line. The offense is on the left.

Picture 2. A quarterback searching for an opportunity to throw a pass.

Picture 3. A running back being tackled when he tries to run with the ball.

Picture 4 : Try to throw the ball

APPENDIX 3: TALK IT APPLICATION

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