

Role of Language Teachers to Use Multimedia for Language Teaching and Strategies to Develop Multimedia Packages

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Abstract

This article gives a brief sketch about the historical development of various stages of the development of language teaching by giving more importance to second language teaching methods. Further, it also highlights about the latest development in multimedia-based language teaching methodology and how and why language teachers should get themselves familiarized with this computer-based language teaching techniques. Apart from this mention is also made in this article how the language teachers can help in preparing need-based multimedia packages in order to enhance the quality of language teaching.

Keywords: Multimedia, Language Teaching, Strategies to Develop Multimedia Packages.

It is not a misnomer to say that it is almost an impossibility to identify a country, city or even a small town which is purely monolingual. In other words, the multilingualism and multiculturalism is prevalent in every part of the world. Subsequent to this, mutual dependency of the multilingual societies is inevitable. This leads the societies to learn one another's languages and get acquainted with their cultures. As a result, the second language teaching techniques became imminent.

Though the history of second language teaching methods and techniques can be traced much prior to 1850s, systematic approaches to teach and learn second languages have become more popular during the year 1850. Since then, more than 9 approaches to second language teaching have been formulated and practiced in the discipline of language teaching. Among them Grammar translation method, Direct method, Audio-lingual method, Audio visual method of language teaching, Structural approach to language teaching or Situational method, Humanistic approach to language teaching, Communicative language teaching, Task based language

teaching, Eclectic approach to language teaching etc. are some of the methods prevalent even now.

Apart from the various methodologies, the language teachers have their own unique way of following certain teaching strategies and prepare need based instructional materials. Unless this is not followed there will not be any success in attaining the required results as far as learning achievement is concerned.

It is observed that most of the experienced and successful language teachers often adopt the method of language teaching which can be termed as **principled eclecticism**. This is the integration of approximately **Eleven** relevant and situation-oriented teaching strategies discussed below which are culled out from the nine second language teaching methods listed at the first paragraph above. The systematic integration of the teaching strategies includes:

1. **Grammar teaching** at the reference level.
2. **Drilling** strategy to make the students to get used to the appropriate pronunciation of the sounds and the natural and language specific syllabic rhythm of the target language.
3. Practicing **objective oriented exercises** involving mostly the technique of gap filling in order to familiarize the students to develop awareness regarding the appropriate use of socio linguistically conditioned functional expressions involving mostly lexical forms.
4. Technique of **information gap filling** at the sentence level in order to inculcate free writing and speaking among the learners.
5. **Language personalization** for the students to be more creative and to have free expression during the exercise of role play.
6. **Task based approach** in order to get the students to be familiarized with various group dynamics exclusive to the target language culture.
7. Technique of **output feedback** when the teacher uses the conversation activity to produce student output and then feedback on language errors.
8. **Test- Teach- Test** procedure when students are asked to prepare object-oriented material spontaneously without being given any time to prepare.

9. Aspect of grammatical structuring during linguistic exposition.
10. Aspect of individual **monitoring and error notification** and
11. The technique of **rectification and remedial procedures**.

Though the above teaching strategies are adopted during the face-to-face teaching process, the modern technological advancements in general have made significant inroads in the language teaching scenario. This revolution in language teaching is mainly due to the introduction of multimedia-based language teaching procedure. It is needless to say that the language teachers who are competent in teaching language by following traditional teaching strategies should get themselves acquainted with the modern methods of multimedia-based teaching strategies. In order to handle efficiently both the machine and the material it is mandatory that the language teachers should get familiarized with the techniques and potentialities of this modern and the most efficient medium. No doubt nothing can replace a teacher. While discussing about this Rockhart and Scott Morton, 1975 say that *'multimedia's true role should be the enrichment of learning, complementing rather than replacing current learning methods'*. In order to achieve this, language teachers should have awareness in technology; its potentiality coupled with systematic knowledge in producing need-based multimedia-based materials. This material produced by the language teacher should be interfaced to the multimedia packages with the help of the software personnel. This can certainly do significant impacts on the multimedia-based language teaching.

In order to excel in this the language teachers should get themselves acquainted with the following **TWO** broad areas which are interconnected.

1. Thorough knowledge about the structure and potentiality of the multimedia.
2. Expertise to develop highly auto instructional material for computer interfacing with the help of the technical personnel.

Structure and Potentiality of Multimedia

Multimedia has the following **five** basic components embedded in it. It is the combination of text, graphic art, sound, animation, and video delivered through the computer or other electronic means. If all the above five factors are appropriately linked, we can achieve high level interactivity. In such case the language teaching material can be to a greater extent auto instructional. In order to achieve this one should utilize every intricate potentiality of the technology to its maximum. Primary aims of a language learning multimedia package are to transform the end users from **Passive learners to Active learners or Experimental learners**.

This is to say that the efficiency of the package depends on how effectively the package involves the learners to engage in active interaction with the various objective oriented language learning components incorporated in the lessons.

In order to achieve these, material producers should take into consideration the following two parameters.

1. Establish a perfect link between the five elements such as Text, Art, Sound, Animation and Video to achieve high interactivity -- **an interactive multimedia**.
2. Smooth navigation between the above five elements by the end user to get – **hypermedia**. (Hyper linking the relevant learning component for the learner to follow directly and interact. For instance, if a text is displayed in the computer screen, provision is made for the reader to have immediate access to the relevant pictures, anecdotes, stories etc. which can give full explanation for the text about which the learner seeks more clarification in order to have full understanding. This interactivity should be made available through the hypermedia by the material producers. This interactive process can be activated simply through a click of a mouse).

While designing Multimedia packages for language teaching the material producers should think of the following two other features which should synchronize at every level frame by frame. They are

1. Designing for computer presentation and,
2. Content (subject) designing

I. Designing for computer presentation

While designing for the computer presentation, the material producers should take into consideration the following two factors.

- i) Designing the general appearance*
- ii) Designing the interface*

i) Designing the general appearance

While designing the general appearance there are **FIVE** points the material producers must look into

1. Color combination

2. Reality of the pictures and their natural animated movements
3. Number of pictures in every page
4. Size of fonts and their relationships with the content (*titles, subtitles, other points etc.*)
5. Synchronization of the music with the activities

All the above points concerned with the physical appearance of the multimedia package contribute a significant impact on the minds of the end users during the process of taking the language lessons.

ii) Designing the interface

There are approximately **SEVEN** points the material producers should take into consideration while designing the interface. They are,

1. Clarity in presentation
2. Selection of icons and their understandability
3. Systematic and graded progressive navigation with navigation clues
4. Reverse navigation if needed
5. Icon to go back to the first page
6. Provision for the learner based desired navigation (*options*)
7. Proper directions to the user for systematic navigation

II. Content (subject) designing

The subject designing can be divided into the following **FOUR** phases

1. Pre designing brain storming phase
2. Post designing end user testing phase
3. Post designing revision phase
4. Designing phase

1. Pre designing brain storming phase

During the pre designing brain storming phase, the material producers need to look into the following graded material producing strategies.

- Decide the macro level objective of a particular content to be designed which means what is expected to be achieved after the completion of the particular lesson.
- Identification of the relevant topics which can suit the macro level objectives decided.
- Identification of the micro level objectives through which the macro level objective will be achieved

- Proper blueprint should be made regarding the graded presentation of the micro level objectives in the multimedia package. For instance, in case certain grammatical categories are to be introduced, the material producers should spell out which grammatical category should be introduced first and how this can be presented etc. Further, one should decide on the subsequent grammatical gradation too by following certain academic norms.
- Identification of the appropriate hyperlinked multimedia activities to be incorporated in the needed places in order to achieve the specific learning objectives.
- Care should be taken to identify the material's potentiality to cater to the need of the heterogeneous learners
- Decide and design the type of exercises to be presented at every level of micro level learning process
- Decision should be made on the type of testing strategies to be adopted at each level
- Strategies for reinforcement through language games etc which can function as a catalyst to create interest among the learners to further go ahead with the multimedia package with more zeal and enthusiasm.

2. Post-designing end user testing phase

It is very important that the validity of the designed blueprint should be tested by following certain evaluation strategies in order to

- Identify the gaps in the material
- Identify the problems in appearance
- Identify any incomprehensibility
- Identify any other problems in the structure of the multimedia package

3. Post-designing revision phase

- On the basis of the result of the post designing testing phase appropriate revision should be undertaken on the basis of the identified flaws in any one of the areas of the multimedia package

4. Designing phase

- While designing, all the necessary steps should be taken to incorporate all the points identified during the three phases discussed above.

As discussed above, the material for the auto instructional multimedia packages cannot be prepared unless the language teacher has the full understanding of the structure and function of the multimedia package in its totality. Having prepared the multimedia compatible material and the explanatory script for interface and the presentation strategies, another important factor for the actual preparation is the technical support and other important manpower needed for the completion of the project. The language teacher should also aware that there are roughly 18 personnel including the subject expert in the team involving the preparation of multimedia packages. Some of them can of course have the capacity and expertise to handle more than one task. Following are the identified designations of the personnel needed.

1. Executive producer: Overall supervision
2. Producer/Project manager: Responsible for overall development and implementation of the project and co coordinating the day to day operations.
3. Creative director / Multimedia Designer
4. Art director / Visual Designer
5. Artists
6. Interface Designer
7. Game Designer
8. Subject Matter Expert
9. Instructional Designer / Training Specialist
10. Script Writer
11. Animator (1-D/3-D)
12. Sound Producer
13. Music Composer
14. Video Producer
15. Multimedia Programmer
16. HTML Coder
17. Lawyer/Media Acquisition
18. Marketing Director

It may be noted that the language teacher who is the subject expert will be the overall supervisor and he has the full responsibility for the uniqueness, success and the popularity of the language learning multimedia package. All the other personnel mentioned above are only supporting personnel. In view of this, at the modern scenario it is not possible for any language teacher to be ignorant of the preparation and functioning of the multimedia packages.

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