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Mainstreaming the Vocabulary through Multimedia Modules – An Analysis

K. Kamala Devi, M.A., M.Ed., M.Phil.

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Obstacle to Obtaining Fluency

Words, words, mere words... the major factor that inhibits the fluency of second language learners. Especially the beginner students find themselves sailing in two boats at the same time as they try to grapple with the structure of a new language and search for the apt vocabulary to use. It is the greatest challenge for the teachers of second language to make the children feel at ease while expressing their ideas and feelings. The flow of the words should match the speed of their thoughts, for which the vocabulary should be acquired rather than learned.

The acquisition normally takes place unconsciously and inductively while the new things are presented with the real situation, whereas the conscious efforts are put forth for learning. This acquisition can easily become possible while the teacher is able to supply the real experiences inside the classroom. Here the multimedia packages come to the rescue.

Multimedia Packages

The role played by multimedia packages for educational purposes is highly significant. It helps to overcome barriers to fluency and help students and teachers go beyond the four walls of the classroom. It fills the gaps in learning. Those who have properly implemented the multimedia

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instructional system have reported that outcomes exceeded both single medium channel utilization and traditional verbal instruction (Goel, D.R. et al. 2002).

Multimedia devices are more capable of penetrating deeply into human character with an immediate excitement than any other single medium. When these multimedia packages are used as an integral part of the modules, the blend and the reinforcement of both will ensure effective learning (Ananthakrishnan, M.V. et al, 2003). The traditional curricula, methods, organization and examination are found irrelevant to the modern age. Therefore, flexibility and multiplicity of media and materials are to be encouraged.

In this backdrop, I undertook a comprehensive research study to develop a Multimedia Courseware Package and to test its effectiveness for the upper primary students' attainment of vocabulary level.

Objective

The primary objective of the study was to test the scholastic improvement of the students in terms of vocabulary while the teaching-learning process was assisted with multimedia packages.

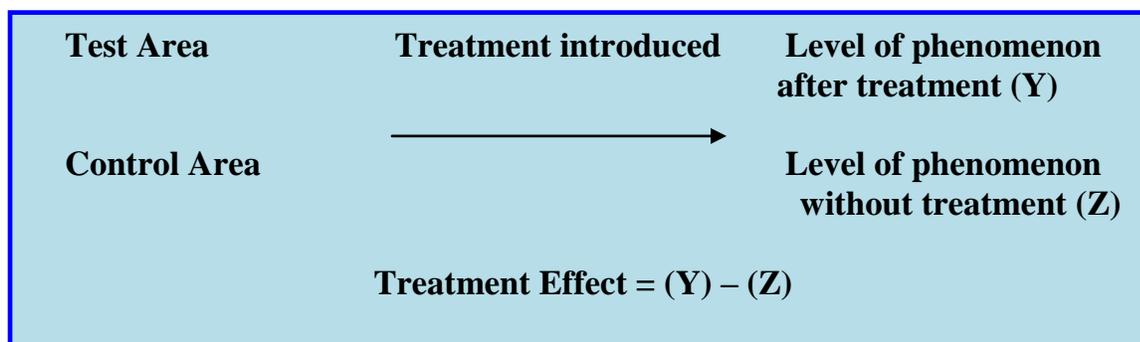
Hypotheses

The specific hypotheses formulated and tested by the experiment are given below:

1. There will be significant difference between the mean achievement scores of the experimental and control group students.
2. The pupils taught through the Multimedia Courseware Package will have higher mean achievement than the pupils taught through conventional methods of teaching.

Methodology

The researcher followed "After-only with control design" which is an Informal Experimental Design. In this design two groups or areas (Test area and Control Area) have been selected and the Test group was taught using the Multimedia Package. The dependent variable is then measured in both the areas at the same time. The treatment impact is assessed by subtracting the value of the dependent variable in the control area from its value in the test area. This is shown in the following table.



The basic assumption in such a design is that two areas are identical with respect to their behaviour towards the phenomenon considered.

For experimentations, care was taken to ensure that the subjects selected were equivalent in many respects. Thus, two intact groups of 80 students of Sixth standard Tamilnadu State Board formed the “Experimental Group” named “Multimedia Courseware Group” (MCG) and the Control Group named “Conventional Method Group” (CMG) as shown in the table. The students were picked up from Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar Boys Higher Secondary School, Karaikudi.

Experimental and Control Groups

Nature of Group	Sex	No. of Students
Multimedia Courseware Group	Boys	40
Conventional Method Group	Boys	40

The subject taken for both groups is a prose lesson of the above mentioned standard: “The Country Mouse and the Town Mouse”. The focus of the teaching was to ensure the vocabulary power of the students by introducing the new words in that lesson. The researcher herself taught both groups: with the help of the Multimedia Courseware to the experimental group, and by following Conventional Method to the control group for ten working days for that single lesson.

Sampling Technique

Simple Random sampling technique was followed both in selecting the institution to assign the children to the Experimental and Conventional groups. There were 80 sixth standard students. The students were sorted out in alphabetical order of their names. The students at even numbers were selected for the Experimental Group and the students who received the odd numbers were in the Conventional Group.

The Multimedia Module

Using software such as Photoshop, Flash, Coral Draw, and Movie Maker, the Multimedia module was framed. The story of the prose lesson was brought into real life situation with the

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help of Audio Video Interleave. AVI allows synchronous audio with video playback. The video was also accompanied with apt dialogue in audio format along with suitable music. In the multimedia presentation of the lesson, the students could easily relate themselves to the new vocabulary in the appropriate situation. This was further reinforced through the PowerPoint presentation. The Scholastic achievement of the students in terms of vocabulary acquisition was assessed through the achievement test which tested in terms of spelling, meaning and usage in sentences.

Various Stages in the Construction of the Achievement Test

Planning the Test

Before the construction of the achievement test, the investigator analyzed the various aspects of vocabulary usage. For the effective use of vocabulary, one must know the meaning of the word, its spelling and its use in own sentences. So the achievement test was framed in order to test the above elements.

Preparing the Test Items

The question paper for the achievement test was prepared for 30 marks. The investigator assigned 10 marks each for testing the students' comprehension of words, spelling and use in own sentences. The words which are taught in the given lesson "The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse", were taken for the study. The questions were in the form of objective type. The researcher also had the assistance of the research guide and opinions of experts in determining the difficulty level of the question items.

Administering the Achievement Test

The achievement test was administered to both Experiment Group and the Conventional Group after the lesson was taught. The time duration given for the achievement test was one hour.

Evaluation of the Achievement Test

Since the questions of the achievement test were in the form of objective type, evaluation was so easy and objective in nature. While evaluating the item, "Construction of own sentences using the new vocabulary", the investigator paid attention to the logical construction of sentences rather than grammatical errors. For each correct answer, the whole marks was given and there was no negative marks for the wrong answers.

Mean Scores of the Multimedia and Conventional Groups

Sl. No.	Group	Sample	Mean
01.	Multimedia Group	40	26.15

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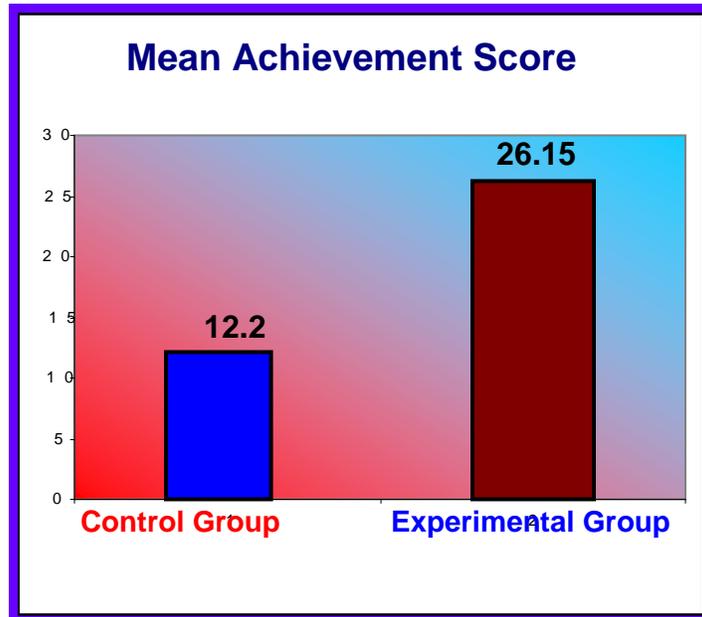
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02.	Conventional Group	40	12.20
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Comparison of the Mean Scores of the Experimental Group and the Control Group



Standard Deviation of the Groups

Sl. No.	Group	Sample	Standard Deviation
01.	Multimedia Group	40	2.38
02.	Conventional Group	40	3.37

Qualitative Analysis

Simulated Situation: The prime goal of the study was to enable the children, acquire the new vocabulary of English with complete ease. In the traditional class room both the teacher and the students are consciously aware of the fact that English is a second language. This is also emphasized by explaining the new English words through mother tongue equivalents. There would be little connection between the experience and the expression.

But with the help of Multimedia Courseware Package, the researcher simulated the real situation in which the words could be used with the help of both animation and the pictures. This technique aided the children to learn the words naturally as in the case of mother tongue. At the same time, when they would happen to come across the same situation in real life, they would

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certainly associate those newly learnt vocabulary with the context, since those words were introduced in meaningful situations.

Real Usage of New Vocabulary: Even after the experiment was over, the investigator could find out that the students were using the new words in their regular conversation with their friends, which was the ultimate goal of language learning. The Multimedia Courseware Package which was developed by the investigator was not only helpful for students to enhance their vocabulary power but also made to retain them in long time memory. As the words were taught in association with simulated situation, they were everlasting in students' memory.

Increased Attention: With regard to the interest of the children, all children showed enormous attention towards the class. Since they were captivated by the colourful pictures, interesting examples and colourful animation, the investigator could establish genuine interest among the learners to learn the words.

Meaningful Situations: Language learning takes place only in meaningful situations. In traditional class rooms, the teacher can produce only verbal situation and pictures or models are used rarely. But with the help of the Multimedia Courseware Package, real situations could be created which ignited unconscious learning of the second language. The children had real enthusiasm towards learning English language.

Suitable to Slow Learners: Since the lesson was presented in the format of animation, the children with less imagination skill were greatly benefited. Without efforts, they could understand the concept and were able to associate the words and structures in the appropriate context. Moreover, the PowerPoint presentation did reinforce the comprehension of new vocabulary and motivated the children to use those words in their own sentences.

User Friendly: The Multimedia Courseware Package, developed by the investigator is learner centered. It is user friendly, since the student could stop at anywhere in between the animation and continue. In case of PowerPoint presentation, it is totally learner controlled. They can proceed further only after attaining mastery over the last part. There is also the facility of going back to the previous stage or slide.

Role of the Teacher: The practical complexities of the teacher of second language were largely lessened with the assistance of the Multimedia Courseware Package. His / Her role was reduced in terms of creating situations verbally, explaining the concept and ensuring a thorough comprehension. It would be enough to monitor the students while they listen to and watch the animation. While explaining the new words, PowerPoint slides helped with apt pictures and explanations. Even the teacher with less than expected normal language proficiency would create an English atmosphere with the help of this Multimedia Courseware Package. At any rate, the human teacher cannot be replaced with any technology. But this package would be a supplementary material and would ensure effective and enthusiastic language learning.

Enhancing the Basic Language Skills

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Listening Skill: As the animation was accompanied by total voice background, it was highly helpful in enhancing the listening skill of the students. They could play any number of times and ensure the correct pronunciation.

Speaking Skill: When students listened to the animation for the second time, they were tempted to speak along with the animation. This would instill a genuine quest for speaking. As the recorded voice was with the standard pronunciation, it led to the acquisition of correct speech pattern.

Reading Skill: Along with animation, the sentences were also shown in the screen, which developed the reading skill of the students. In PowerPoint presentation also, there was enough scope for the students to read.

Writing Skill: After learning the words and example sentences, the students were also encouraged to frame sentences of their own following the model sentences in the screen. Thereby they had the opportunity for the improvement of writing skill.

Major Findings and Implementation

1. The Mean achievement score of the Experimental Group (Multimedia Group) was double the score of the Control Group (Conventional Group) which showed the abundant improvement in the achievement of students when the teaching learning process was aided with technology like multimedia.

2. The standard deviation of the students of multimedia Group was at minimum level which was the evidence of equal distribution of the achievement of all students, including the students of average and below average level.

3. Apart from the scholastic achievement, the students evinced genuine interest in learning English. This was possible by creating simulated situation in the class room with the help of multimedia.

4. The prime objective of learning a second language is to improve the basic language skills thereby enhancing one's communication competency. This aim was effectively achieved in Multimedia Group with the assistance of Multimedia Courseware Package.

5. The objective of the study, (i.e.), improving the pupils' vocabulary power in terms of spelling, pronunciation, meaning and use in sentences, was achieved at the end of the study.

6. The students' perception of the multimedia courseware approach was positive and they welcomed similar approach for learning other aspects of language learning such as grammar, poetry, composition, etc.

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To Conclude

On the whole, the Multimedia Courseware Package was an able partner to enhance the language skills of the students and made easier the way to attain the objectives of second language learning. The final insight that the investigator got at last was the immediate need for applying technology to English Language Teaching in order to create a real situation where one can learn a language with real urge and interest. Though in many aspects English differs from the regional language (Tamil), the teacher would be successful in teaching English by creating English atmosphere in the class room with the able help of technology like multimedia. When the students are familiar with this kind of technology aided language learning, definitely they would be able to survive in the future by drawing benefit from online language learning which lays great emphasis on self-study.

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