Multimedia resources and their incidence in the English speaking skill

Jonathan Javier Cárdenas Gómez

ABSTRACT

In this era of educational technology, the English language is more than ever the world language, and the speaking skill is considered the most important skill that students need to master, because its main goal is communication. However, to acquire this skill is not easy, and may present difficulties, especially for students of English as a second language. Teaching this skill plays then a crucial role, and modern techniques and methods are prevailed. The use of technology and multimedia resources come to replace traditional methods to grab students' attention, increase their motivation in the classroom and to succeed in classroom goals. The present research work analyzes the incidence of multimedia resources in the English speaking skill, focusing on students of basic general education (EGB) at a private school in Guayaquil, which experience lack of technological resources to help teachers and students in the process of language teaching and learning, particularly in the development of the speaking skill. The elaboration of a multimedia resources guide is proposed to assist teachers and help students improve their speaking skill.

KEY WORDS: NTICs, Multimedia, Resources, Speaking Skill, Mechanics, Functions.

Summary

In this age of educational technology, English is considered more than ever the global language, and the skill of speech is the most important and the one that students need to master most acutely, since its main objective is communication. However, acquiring this skill is not easy, especially for students who learn English as a second language. Teaching this skill plays a crucial role, and modern techniques and methods prevail in this process. The use of technology and multimedia resources replace traditional methods to capture students' attention, increase their motivation and succeed in learning objectives. This article examines the impact of multimedia resources on English language proficiency, focusing on basic general education students in a private school in Guayaquil, which experiences a lack of technological resources to assist teachers and students in process of teaching and learning languages, particularly in development of speech proficiency.

1. INTRODUCTION

English is considered the world language; the one that dominates the world as no other language does. Several authors have affirmed that its dominance is superior to any other language as never before, and currently an important portion of the world's population is able to use English to communicate in some degree at least. On the other hand, speaking is the skill that students of English or any other language are meant to master first, as it is essential for communication. This generates concern, due to the fact that it will not be able to achieve without the appropriate practice and dedication, and as a consequence, its acquisition can be hard. Teaching the speaking skill is then a very important part of teaching English as a foreign language, due mainly to the fact that nowadays there are more learners that want to use this language spontaneously to communicate.

The technological revolution has changed the world and education, and makes easier to teach and learn any foreign language. Traditional classes can be improved with the application of multimedia-based programs that turned a classroom based session into a face to face online session, proving to be a powerful teaching medium (Hartsell, 2016). It is possible to believe then that the use of multimedia-based programs in traditional ESL and EFL classes is a successful technological medium to increase students' motivation to learn. It cannot be denied that multimedia has changed teachers' practices and the way students learn. (Rossi, P. & Fedeli, L., 2017).

1. TECHNOLOGY AND THE SPEAKING SKILL

Among the previous studies that have covered the use of multimedia in language teaching, Bahadolfar and Omidvar's (2014), highlights the importance of the use of technology in teaching speaking skill. For them, technology is the vehicle to modernity and a resource that cannot be avoid in educational sectors (p. 9). In addition, Navas (2006) states that "any language programs with a communicative goal should focus on appropriate audio-visual equipment and the quality of the input and output skill tasks, based on authentic materials" (p. 1). Egbert & Hanson-Smith (as cited in Borges, 2014), explains that some of the benefits of using this resource in language teaching are, among others, a multimodal practice, in which feedback is included; individualization, especially with large classes; pair work and also a small group work based on projects; and the inclusion of at least one fun factor (p. 21). What is more, Borges affirms that the growing of multimedia in Education has caused that language teachers no longer consider grammar as the most important target when using a computer in a language class. Instead, the trend is to use computers for communicative teaching. The author also says that there are still many drill programs available directed to improve grammar and vocabulary, which in fact are very useful, but that those programs have been contextualized and incorporate graphics, audio recording and playback, and video (Borges, 2014, p. 22).

Contreras, Charry & Castro (2016) examined the way multimedia resources foster the speaking skill development in students of ESL. In this work the authors stress the difficulties teachers face in the development of students' speaking skills due to the context, which leads to the need of improving their classroom practices. This paper proposes the use of podcasts, videos and Power Point Presentations in order to develop learners' pronunciation, vocabulary and fluency in English language. Butler-Pascoe & Wiburg (cited by Contreras et al., 2016), affirm that interaction increases with the application of technology, and presents students' language in a graphically and linguistically enhanced manner" (p. 3). In this way, Contreras et al. also affirm that applying multimedia is a great source of motivation that can improve students' performance, and at the same time develop their speaking (2016, pp. 3-4).

Multimedia resources include a great variety of elements that can be used in the educational field. Besides the resources mentioned in the studies above, a research study carried out by Felix Castellanos, titled "The use of gamification and videogames in second

language learning", suggests a new trend in the use of multimedia to teach a language: gamification (2016). The main objective of his work is to explore the way in which multimedia, in the form of videogames, influences the development of language skills, among them, the speaking skill.

2. EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

Technology is considered a powerful tool that can transform teaching and learning. It is a useful tool to strength relationships between teachers and students; it can promote new approaches for collaboration, and give teachers the chance to adopt and adapt learning experiences to satisfy students' needs.

One important concept for the development of the present study is educational technology. Lazaro (2014) states that educational technology results from applying educational theories directed to solve those problems and specific situations that may appear in the teaching and learning process, and that are supported by ICTs (information and communication technologies). This concept has been defined by John King[1], as one of the most relevant issues in educational technology, because it brings students a wide range of opportunities (King, 2017). Educational technology has been defined as a well-organized process in which technology is applied, with the purpose of improving education. This is an issue of great importance in teaching, with an essential role in language learning, especially because information and communication technologies are considered in the process, including the material needed, the methodology applied. All these aspects are known as teaching resources (Stosic, 2015, p. 111).

However, it is important to consider that currently there is not a complete consensus for the use of educational technology in a classroom. Several opinions against its use have caused a slow implementation in schools, where electronic technologies for teaching have been reduced or eliminated. A clear example of this is the use of mobile phones or tablets. The acceleration of educational technology, then, could be not enough for its application in the classroom.

---

1 U.S. Secretary of Education.

3. NTIC'S IN EDUCATION (NICT)

Incorporating new technologies in education results in promoting and creating new academic environments that affects in a direct way both the actors of the teaching-learning process and the scenario where it takes place. This new environment, created by the new technologies requires new and different kind of student, that is, a student more concerned about the process than about the final product. In short, those students should be prepared for self-learning (Hawkridge, Vincent, & Hales, 2017). Its usefulness is based on its application in the learning of languages, and in turn on the ease of communication between teachers and students who create, process, disseminate information that breaks any barrier that limits the acquisition of knowledge by teachers and students (Stephenson, 2014).

The NICT, in any of its forms have generated enormous interest in all areas of our society. Its use in the educational field, in addition, has produced a great interest in research. What is more, it has caused new approaches in Education, including the learning of English, since today's students have the need to learn and apply this foreign language as an intercultural communication tool. The application of Information and Communication Technology is considered by developed countries as a must. The US Department of Education (2017), states that people can succeed in life and also in their workplaces with paths directed to get expertise and find ways to create meaningful connections with others in the educational field.

4. MULTIMEDIA RESOURCES

Multimedia is defined as a digital technology of communication, constituted by the sum of Hardware and Software (Gunawardhana & Palaniappan, 2016). The use of multimedia in the educational field impacts positively in the development of instruction and also the methods by which teachers give information to students. Rongchun (2013), states that the role of the multimedia teacher is, first, to be a person who controls the amount of information at the moment of creating the courseware. The author asserts that the knowledge teachers have and control, must be at least a little bit better and higher than the level students have. In this case, students will fill motivating of having challenges, and they will be likely to go straight to get succeed in their goals (Rongchun, 2013).

5. THE SPEAKING SKILL

Speaking is so important that several authors suggest that, English classroom should be considered a place where this foreign language is used all the time, and in which the four skills are practiced and developed. Only in this way students will be able to connect their previous and new knowledge, building their own perceptions about the foreign language learning. This is the reason for Ur comments, in the sense that it is common to see non-native English learners with a great expectation of improving their speaking (1984).

CEFR gives details about the different levels that a student can get in speaking activities and strategies (Council of Europe, n.d.). Speaking is a language skill that needs to be carefully considered. When individuals produce spoken language, they need to articulate sounds in a natural way. However, it is hard to master this skill because que cannot see the words and sounds we produce. Bygate (1987) affirmed that it is an open door to gain distinction in society, especially by showing solidarity and to succeed professionally. By learning English, culture is also learnt, and a very important portion of language is acquired.

Bygate (2001) states that when an individual produce spoken language, there are four processes involved: conceptualisation, formulation, articulation, and self-monitoring. In fact, those processes are produced at high speed. While conceptualisation happens at a regular speed, the last three are mainly automatic for learners. In addition, speaking is reciprocal. It means that people's responses to others are immediate. They way speaking is produced is face to face. In other words, English speakers will articulate their utterances to the others, without the chance of being able to check if there were mistakes.

The British Council (2019) affirms that every teacher needs to plan the class according to students' capacities and needs. In that way, the activities included will fit students' needs. On the other hand, when teachers develop activities or lessons, there are 3 areas of knowledge that speaking needs to consider: mechanics, which refers to those parts that make possible speaking, and include pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and word order; functions, which describes the speaking uses; social/Cultural rules and norms, which refers those subtle cultural values, such as turn taking, social norms, roles of participants, etiquette and social register etc.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The use of multimedia resources in English language teaching is an important approach in education because of the opportunities to achieve class objectives. Nowadays, it is common to see that educators take hand of several technological devices in the procedure of language teaching and learning, because such resources make language learning more productive, effective, and communicative.

The following conclusions are drawn:

- Educational technology is growing fast in modern times, because it has got acceptance in the educational community. The internet availability and the technology students can access make possible to believe it is a good resource to improve students' skills in a Language class.

- Despite the popularity of technology in Education, it cannot replace the cognitive learning theories. Under these circumstances, teachers cannot set aside such theories, especially at the moment of designing instructional materials. Multimedia learning theory, which affirms multimedia works better when it addresses both visual and verbal processing systems, is an important resource for educators at the moment of designing class material.

- Speaking is considered the most important skill in language teaching and learning. However, the importance given in the classroom is not always coherent with this statement. The English curriculum of many institutions give more importance to the receptive skills, leaving aside or giving less time dedication to the development of the speaking skill. A common practice among teachers is to focus time and dedication to grammar points.

- Students usually consider technology part of their lives and are likely to explore any new resource it brings, as it motivates them, especially to learn a language. This behavior us getting more popular in young learners because of the free access they have to the Internet and other kind of technologies.

- Multimedia resources support language teaching and help to encourage individual motivation in teachers and students, as they provide opportunities to experience authentic use of the target language. Students' motivation is a primary issue in language learning, and it can be encouraged with resources that students accept and prefer, such as multimedia.

- Students have little contact with multimedia in the classroom due to lack of technological resources and teachers' time limitation to prepare appropriate material. Sometimes the access to multimedia is restricted to the use of audio files or slide projections, turning classes boring. Important resources such as online Subject Samplers, Hunts, or Web Quests, are not considered among the resources.

REFERENCES

Bahadorfar, M., Omidvar, R. (April de 2014). Technology in teaching speaking skill. *Acme International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, Volume – II, Issue – IV*, 9-13.

Borges, V. (January-June de 2014). Are ESL/EFL Software Programs Effective for Language Learning? *Ilha do Desterro No. 66*. Florianopolis, Brazil: SciELO.

Borges, V. (January-June de 2014). Are ESL/EFL Software Programs Effective for Language Learning? *Ilha do Desterro nº 66*, 19-73.

British Council. (20 de June de 2019). *Overcoming classroom problems.* Obtenido de https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/teaching-speaking-skills-2-overcoming-classroom-problems

Castellanos, F. (2016). The use of gamification and videogames in second language learning. La Rioja, España.

Contreras, L., Charry, S., & Castro, A. (January-June de 2016). Speaking Skill Development through the Implementation of Multimedia Projects. *Gist Education and Learning Research Journal No 12*. Colombia.

Council of Europe. (n.d.). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment*.

Department of Education. (January de 2017). *Reimagining the Role of Technology in Education.* Washington, D.C., U.S.: http://tech.ed.gov.

Gunawardhana, P. D., & Palaniappan, S. (2016). Possibility of using Multimedia Application for Learning . *GSTF Journal on Computing (JOC), 5*, 7. doi:10.5176/2251-3043_4.4.356

Hartsell, T. &. (2016). Video streaming in online learning. *AACE Journal, 14*, 14.

Hawkridge, D., Vincent, T., & Hales, G. (2017). *New Information Technology in the Education of Disabled Children and Adults* (1st Edition ed.). London: Routledge. doi:https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429486890

King, J. (2017). *Reimagining the Role of Technology in Education: 2017 National Education Technology Plan Update*. U.S.: US Department of Education.

Lazaro, H. (2014). *Ga Blog*. Recuperado el 20 de 01 de 2019, de https://generalassemb.ly/blog/what-is-edtech/

Navas, C. (8 de August de 2006). The Language Laboratory and the EFL Course. *Revista Electrónica "Actualidades Investigativas en Educación, Vol. 6, No. 2*, 1-25.

Rongchun, Y. a. (2013). *Role of a Teacher.*

Rossi, P. & Fedeli, L. (2017). *Integrating Video into Pre-service and In-service Teacher Training.* USA: IGI Global.

Stephenson, J. (2014). *Teaching & Learning Online: New Pedagogies for New Technologies.*

Stosic, L. (2015). The importance of educational technology in teaching. . *International Journal of Cognitive Research in Science, Engineering and Education (IJCRSEE)*.