

The Effectiveness of Using Multimedia in Enhancing English Speaking Skills a Case Study in Advanced Programs at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry, Vietnam

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Abstract: *The aim of the study is to investigate whether the application of multimedia, compared to the traditional teaching method, is useful for enhancing students' English-speaking skills. Sixty students in the advanced-program at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry, Vietnam were selected to test if there was a significant difference between the effect of multimedia approach and conventional one on their English speaking skills. The study was conducted during the first semester of the academic year of 2018-2019, in which the students were divided into two groups and taught speaking skills in two different ways. The first group was exposed to the use of multimedia while the others still followed the use of traditional approach in the same time, then the researchers compared their achievements in terms of final speaking exam results and their engagement in speaking practice. It is found that the use of multimedia as an approach in communicative language teaching is effective for improving speaking abilities of the students.*

Key words: *multimedia, speaking skills, advanced-program, Thai Nguyen university of agriculture and forestry.*

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I. Introduction

Numerous studies have confirmed that English is, in comparison with other languages in the world, the most rapid form of international communication. In the context of globalization and integration, speaking English as the second language become a must for any university graduates. For a long time in Vietnam, teachers of English has made a great deal of effort to attract students' involvement in speaking activities, however, the results have not yet achieved as expected. In the era of high technology and its popularity in every corner of life, multimedia are widely known as the use of more than one type of communication tools in which any computer applications could connect all together such as text, graphics, animation, video, audio, or other methods of communication. Multimedia are different from televisions, books or cassettes because they allow us to interact with their applications, for example, when clicking on a word, it can be hyperlinked with a picture, or when you click on a picture, a video can immediately be started.

In education, both teachers and students are using a variety of multimedia forms to study English, for instance, students with interactive CD-ROMs could study at their own speed and explore topics by clicking on related links creatively or teenagers could learn some English naturally through playing some computer games. Further, multimedia applications could combine education and entertainment since they let the users visit virtual worlds or change the ending of any kinds of entertaining. Although multimedia is convenient, popular, and usable for teaching and learning English, most teachers and learners just take advantage of them for reading, writing and listening practice, but not commonly for speaking. It is also difficult for a lot of native English teachers and teachers of English to use its applications for designing students' speaking activities. One more important point is that the effectiveness of using multimedia has not been evaluated comprehensively from both sides of teachers and learners. When deciding to use multimedia at class, teachers at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry normally have such several questions to consider seriously as how to choose a kind of multimedia properly and how to apply it effectively for each specific lesson. Similarly, the goal of Vietnamese students in advanced program at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry is not only to pass examinations but to use the language for daily communication and interactions. Therefore, the changes in the aim of training consequently cause the changes in methodology of teaching, learning and researching. For example, the combination of the communicative approach and technological tools like multimedia seems to be outweighed the traditional method of focusing on grammar and translation. As a result, apart from experimenting new teaching methods, more and more universities, colleges and schools have been applying

modern technology to support language skill teaching and linguistic students with a view to foster better achievements.

The tools mentioned above include a network of computers and related software, VCRs (Visit Clearance Requests), cassette players and slide projectors linked together. It is said that multimedia have enthusiastically been praised by experts and academicians and have been considered as effective tools. Each computer has a monitor and headphones installed with the Tandberg TCL-3000 program, that allows the teachers to play cassette tapes, videos tapes, CDs, DVDs, Internet programs or media files in front of the room, and where the students can view and hear what the teacher plays. In turns, the teacher can also view, hear and monitor the students' work and communicate with students through a microphone on the headset or through class speakers. It is very advantageous that when the teacher is not running the program, the students can use their individual computers to run the program for pronunciation practice or other practice exercises. "Such video cameras and computers assist teachers in their job, bringing the outside world into the classroom, and, in short, making the task of language learning more meaningful and an exciting one" (Brinton, 2001). According to Stempleski and Arcario (1992), teachers around the world are experimenting with these communication tools in motivating learners to enhance their language lessons. Moreover, Brinton (2001) further emphasized that "Whatever in the approach, language teachers seem to agree that media can and do enhance language teaching". This study, therefore, aimed to investigate whether the application of multimedia, compared to the traditional teaching method, is useful for enhancing students' English-speaking skills at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry.

II. Research Framework

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Over the past century, teaching methodology of foreign languages has seen enormous changes. At one point, teaching students who know how to use the language is considered to be the most important and significant one. Previous researchers explored the pedagogical means for 'real-life' communication in the classroom. Prior researches showed that it was important to get learners to develop linguistic fluency, not just the accuracy that has so consumed in historical teaching journey. It was concerned with how to facilitate lifelong language learning among students, not just with the immediate classroom task but also with looking at learners as partners in a cooperative venture and in classroom practices which seek to draw on whatever intrinsically sparks the learners to reach their fullest potential.

As cited by a lot of researchers in the modern world, distance education likewise, allows an effective use of educational materials with visual, auditive, audiovisual and multimedia contents. Visual contents can be in the form of a text, drawing, image, graphic images and models. Auditive contents are verbal comments or speech, musical background or different sounds. Audiovisual content constitutes a combination of visual and auditive content, most often in the form of television shows, films or video records.

Multimedia content is a combination of text, pictures, sound, animation and video records. The reproduction of such multimedia content previously required the use of different means, while lately multimedia computer is most commonly used, aside from CD-ROMs or the Internet which are used for storage of such. Using multimedia is extremely important in distance education. In most cases, the lecturer is not physically present with the participants, so as not to attract their attention but motivate them to learn and explain the content in which they are having difficulty in understanding. Positive effects of multimedia are drawing the participants' attention; greater level of interest, motivation and satisfaction of the participants; a better understanding of the content and a more efficient learning of new notions; better memorization of the content as well as the possibility of application of the acquired knowledge in new situations.

Although it is easiest to prepare and present just textual content in distance education and count on high enough level of independence and motivation of the participants, using images, voice/sound and video records will significantly increase the learning results and the satisfaction of the participants. There are four important factors for the introduction of multimedia into distance education: (1) planning the necessary multimedia content according to appropriate pedagogical principles and available options; (2) developing of multimedia content, i.e. finding or developing images, audio records, animations and video records; (3) publishing multimedia content on the Internet/web; (4) connecting sufficient Internet speed for the use of the multimedia.

2.2. Conceptual framework

This part is the presentation of the conceptual model or the research paradigm, which identifies the dependent and independent variables. The independent ones are methods or techniques in teaching consisting of Multimedia approach and Traditional approach. Meanwhile, the dependent ones are the English speaking skill performance including Pronunciation, Grammar, Vocabulary and Intonation.

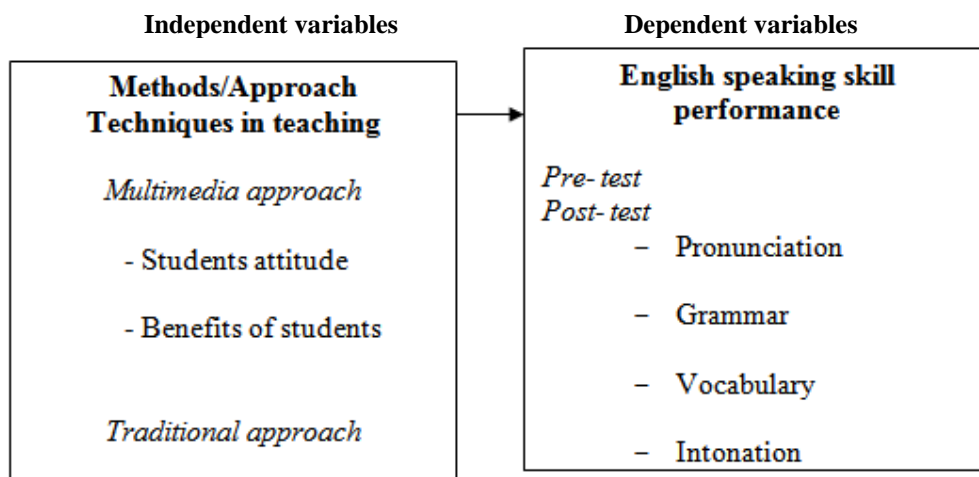


Fig1. Conceptual framework of the study.

In attempt to have an understanding of the use of multimedia in teaching English in Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry, Thai Nguyen city, Vietnam, the main goal of this study is to answer the following questions :

1. What is the status of multimedia approach in terms of student's attitude and benefits?
2. What is the mean level pre- test and post- test of English speaking using multimedia approach and traditional approach in terms of Pronunciation, Grammar, Vocabulary and Intonation ?
3. Is there a significant difference between the effect of Multimedia approach and the traditional method on enhancing English speaking skills of the students?

III. Literature review

Since the focus of instruction has broadened from the teaching of discrete grammatical structures to the fostering of communicative ability (Warschauer & Kern, 2000), Hartnett (2001) shared 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. Similar findings have been made public by Warschauer (2001). Brinton (2001) further emphasizes "Whatever the approach, language teachers seem to agree that media can and do enhance language teaching". A parallel view was taken in the evaluation of video teaching by Schrum & Glisan (2000), stating that video provides the context for a wide variety of communicative and interactive activities in the classroom. Exercises such as class surveys, problem resolution, video title and ending discussions, brainstorming, video summaries, information- gap exercises are just some examples.

Wright (2001) that "language teaching is a collective title for a variety of activities undertaken by different people in different circumstances. There is consequently no single medium ideal for language teaching as is often claimed". "Students who view videos demonstrate greater listening comprehension than do students who do not view them" (Schrum & Glisan, 2000). In March 2000, The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) supported the directions set out in the document Strategic Framework for the Information Economy in its statement Learning for the Knowledge Society: An Education and Training Action Plan for the Information Economy. The Education Network Australia (Ed NA) Schools Advisory Group has developed in its statement Learning in an online world, a school education action plan in keeping with the current policy of Government. Specifically, the document contains two overarching school education goals for the information economy:

1. All students will leave school as confident, creative and productive users of new technologies, including information and communication technologies, and understand the impact of those technologies on society.
2. All schools will seek to integrate information and communication technologies into their operations, to improve student learning, to offer flexible learning opportunities and to improve the efficiency of their business practices.

Early uses of information technology in the classroom mainly involved the use of stand-alone computers and simple data entry devices which did little to change the overall approach to teaching and learning in most schools. However, the emergence of the Internet in the 1990s, and the development of network environments encompassing a range of computer, multimedia and communications technologies, resulted in a much greater focus on interactive and connected learning experiences for students.

Both educators and researchers agree that potential of both existing and new technologies in supporting student learning is not in the technologies themselves but the ways they are used as tools for learning. (Valdez

& McNabb, 1999). However, the research on using technology for differentiated instruction is far from complete. In fact, according to Roblyer & Knezek (2003), the education field lacks research on both the implications of technology for teaching and learning, and on implementation methods for instructional technology. Findings reported in the recent research synthesis by Waxman, Connell, and Gray (2002) confirm the need for more and better research, and also call for more funding to conduct this research in the area of technology and learning.

Throughout the Tech Tips web site, we refer to the meta-analysis of more than 100 research reports on instruction done by Marzano et. al. (2001), which identifies the nine most effective instructional strategies, and discusses how these can be supported by educational technology features and tools along with recommendations for their use.

Several investigations have discovered that some researchers claim the use of technology has not demonstrated any significant advantage over traditional non-technology based approaches to learning. One of the factors influencing technology's effectiveness is implementation. Teachers are key in supporting the learning process, so when implementing new technologies into the curriculum, professional development and leadership are essential.

Meanwhile, the National Reading Panel (2000) concluded that there appear to be many students who benefit from multimedia instruction. Enhanced text materials incorporate many of the techniques that have been shown to enhance text comprehension.

In the recent history of language teaching, there have been three major theoretical movements, namely, the structural, the cognitive and the sociocognitive, all of which have greatly influenced CALL development. CALL developments over the past 30 years are accordingly categorized into three distinct phrases: structural CALL, communicative CALL, and integrative CALL respectively (Kern & Warschauer, 2000).

Networked computers and multimedia made both synchronous and asynchronous global communication possible and provided learners with unprecedented access to a wide range of authentic materials which were regarded as essential to learning a second language (Darhower, 2002; Warschauer, 2001).

Gruba (2004) refers to the teacher as a "mediator" between the computer and students throughout the learning process, serving the role of "keeping things running smoothly". The more progressive view can find support by many researchers, to name only a few of whom, Debski, Gassin, & Smith (1997), Chapelle (2001), and Wang (2004).

Warschauer and Meskill (2000) specifically mention the substantial startup expenses needed to implement new technologies in higher education contexts: For college language learning programs, such expenses usually include hardware, software, staffing, and training for at least one networked computer laboratory where students can drop in and use assigned software and one or more networked computer laboratories where teachers can bring whole classes on an occasional or regular basis.

Although in recent years remarkable progress has been made in speech recognition and artificial intelligence, the interactivity of the computer and language learners is still somewhat limited, and studies reported that the computer could not contribute very much to the development of speaking ability (Fleta et. al, 1999). As a consequence, CALL researchers began to seek other modes to develop collaborative learning abilities as well as oral and written competence. Substantial gains have been made. Webquests are frequently used for collaborative language learning (Goodwin-Jones, 2004).

Usually, a Webquest provides students with a whole range of topics for which they can gather information on websites. In the end, students are expected to create a document that collects, summarizes, and synthesizes the information gathered. For written interaction, Web-based tools such as e-mail (Stockwell & Harrington, 2003), Internet Chat Relay (Xie, 2002), SchMOOze (Sauer & Del Valle, 2002), Webchat and MSN (Wan, 2004) are frequently used and communications in these forms are reported to be effective in improving writing skills. Oral interaction is also made possible by audio conferencing tools, and although these require technical support, the findings of studies reporting on the use of such tools to improve oral ability are quite encouraging (Hampel & Hauck 2004; Hampel & Baber, 2003; Kötter, 2001). One of the most sophisticated forms of online interaction available at present is the oral-visual interaction described by Wang (2004). This offers an authentic learning environment, in which language learners can orally and visually interact with another human being in the target language in much the same way as occurs in face-to-face interaction.

Language instruction is now viewed not just in terms of providing comprehensible input, but also as helping students enter into the kinds of authentic social discourse situations and discourse communities that they would later encounter outside the classroom (Warschauer & Kern, 2000).

A review of the literature has revealed that the majority of the empirical studies on CALL have tended to evaluate specific areas of language learning such as pronunciation training, speaking ability, reading ability, vocabulary learning, grammar learning, writing ability, translation skills and distance language learning through technology (Wang, 2004; Hauck & Haezwindt, 1999).

IV. Methodology & Data Analysis

4.1. Research Design

In this part, the researcher used an experimental design that can work on how significant is the use of multimedia in teaching English in the Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry.

It is believed that an experimental design is a problem solving approach where the study is described on what certain variables are carefully controlled or manipulated. It is also the most frequently used method for advancing science and technology as well as research and development. Besides, it is the only design that can test hypothesis regarding cause – effect relationship.

According to Stempleski and Arcario (1992), teachers around the world are experimenting with media tools and using them to motivate learners and to enhance their language lessons. In this study, this kind of design was used not only to work out the effectiveness of using multimedia in teaching English but also on the comparison between it and the traditional approach which are applied nowadays. To carry out the research, two groups of the students were divided into, one is called control group, and the other is the experimental group. Some data collection instruments were applied in the pre-test and the post-test.

4.2. Subject of the study

The main respondents in this study are students from different classes in Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry, Thai Nguyen City, Vietnam for the first semester of the school year 2018- 2019, who were selected for the three-month study period.

4.3. Determination of sampling technique

Two classes of students were purposively selected based on their mental ability, age and gender. Each class contained 30 students out of the total number of 516 ones in the college.

4.4. Research Instrument

Numerous research instruments such as questionnaires, observations and interviews have been considered as valid and effective ones. In this study, such instruments are also suitable to apply for discovering the actuality of using multimedia in teaching English in Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry. During the process of working on the research, the researchers spent time on observing the students' attitudes towards learning. The questionnaires were designed for distribution to students for the research. In combination with the ones mentioned above, the pre-test and post- tests were administered to measure the ability of the students before and after the lessons.

4.5. Research procedure

As mentioned, the research was conducted during the first semester of the year 2018- 2019 in Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry.

At first, the researcher started preparing of the research instruments like the pre- test and post- test, as well as the questionnaires. Afterwards, the content validation was submitted to reputable experts in the field of the study. The tests were administered by the researchers to respondents and later the results or the data were collected from the students at the Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry.

Specifically, based on the timetable or the action plans which have been drawn earlier, the research was carried on by distributing the questionnaires to the students/respondents for both of the pre- test and post- test. They filled in the form by giving their own opinions for each statement after the lessons had finished. The selected students were from two different groups: K49 and K50. The traditional methods were conducted three times per week in the class of K50, and at the same frequency, the method using Multimedia was conducted in the class of K49.

Finally, the researcher sorted out and tabulated the mean scores of the tests for statistical computations through the assistance of a statistician based on the problems mentioned.

4.6. Statistical Treatment of data

This part stated the step- by- step analysis and indicated the specific statistical tool used for each analysis.

Table 1. Analysis and Statistical Tools

Analysis	Statistical tool
1. The mean level of English speaking skill using multimedia and traditional approach	- \bar{X} , SD
2. The marks of the students taught with MMA and TA in pre- test and post-test	- \bar{X} , SD
3. Significance of the difference of the speaking skills of the students taught by using MMA and TA	- t- test for unpaired samples
4. Frequency of learning English through multimedia	- Frequency, percentage
5. Mean benefits from speaking lesson	- Weighted mean, rank

V. Research Findings & Conclusions

5.1. Students attitude in terms of Frequency of learning English through multimedia approach

Table 2. Frequency of learning English through multimedia

Frequency of learning English through multimedia	F	%
5	2	6.67
4	4	13.33
3	5	16.67
2	11	36.67
1	8	26.66
Total	30	100.00

Among the respondents, 2 students (6.67%) selected the 5th frequency, 4 students (13.33%) chose the 4th frequency. With the 3rd frequency, 5 students (16.67 %) were counted. 11 students (36.67 %) ticked on the 2nd frequency, and 8 students (26.66%) chose the 1st frequency.

Table 3. Mean Benefits from Speaking Lesson

Mean Benefits from Speaking Lesson	Weighted Mean	Rank	VI
1. I get excited	3.1	1	Moderate
2. I have chances to apply theory on the actuality	2.67	7	Moderate
3. I am always active	2.73	5	Sometimes
4. I am attracted to the activities in class.	2.73	5	Sometimes
5. My teacher is always a good organizer and manager	2.87	4	Moderate
6. My teacher always gives me invaluable feedback	2.93	3	Moderate
7. My teacher makes us passive	2.47	8	Sometimes
8. My teacher always ignores when I have problems	2.96	2	Sometimes
AVERAGE WEIGHTED MEAN	2.81		Moderate/ Sometimes

The result of this particularly determined the benefits from speaking lesson of students to be moderate/sometimes with a mean of 2.81. It revealed that 1- *I get excited* was ranked first with a weighted mean of 3.1 described as moderate. Least-rated was item 7- *My teacher makes us passive* with a weighted mean of 2.47 described as sometimes. What have mentioned above imply that students act the most following the teacher's instructions in speaking lessons.

Table 4. The Mean level pre- test and post- test of the English speaking skill using multimedia and traditional approach in terms of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and intonation

Pre- test						
	Multimedia approach			Traditional approach		
	X	SD	VI	X	SD	VI
Grammar	1.55	0.50	Good	1.63	0.64	Excellent
Pronunciation	1.43	0.49	Good	1.07	0.58	Good
Vocabulary	1.28	0.52	Good	1.33	0.53	Good
Intonation	1.17	0.42	Good	1.13	0.43	Good
Post- test						
	Multimedia approach			Traditional approach		
	X	SD	VI	X	SD	VI
Grammar	1.83	0.36	Fair	1.78	0.34	Fair
Pronunciation	1.67	0.42	Good	1.62	0.34	Fair
Vocabulary	1.75	0.37	Fair	1.38	0.47	Good

Intonation	1.55	0.42	Good	1.12	0.39	Fair
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It can be seen from Table 4 that multimedia is really effectively applied with the higher results in the post- test than the pre- test. In the pre- test applied with multimedia approach , students got the result in Grammar with a mean of 1.55 while in the post- test, their result fall into a mean of 1.83. Authentic materials can help language learners not only in deepening their understanding of social phenomena within the target culture but also in modifying their communication in negotiation and interaction with others (Warschauer, 2001).

5.2. Significant difference of the speaking skills of the students taught with the Multimedia Approach and Traditional Approach.

Table 5.The significant difference of the knowledge gained by the students taught with the multimedia approach and the traditional approach.

Speaking skills	Mean	Stdev	df	Q- Stat	P- value	Decision	VI
Experimental Group	1.33	1.03	55	2.24	0.029	Reject Ho	Sig
Control Group	0.67	1.27					

The findings revealed that significant difference between the speaking s of the skills students taught with the multimedia approach with mean of 1.33 and the speaking skills gained of the students taught with the traditional approach with mean of 0.67; the obtained P- value of 0.029, respectively, being lesser than the threshold P- value of 0.05. This means that there was strong evidence against the null hypothesis. Thus, the null hypothesis which states there are no significant difference of the speaking skills of the students taught with the multimedia approach and the traditional approach was rejected.

This implies that the knowledge gained by the students taught with traditional approach had significant bearing on the knowledge gained by the students taught with the multimedia approach.

5.3. Conclusion

Based on the foregoing findings, it is therefore concluded that the multimedia as an approach in communicative language teaching is effective in improving the speaking abilities of the students. Authentic materials could help language learners not only in deepening their understanding of social phenomena within the target culture but also in modifying their communication in negotiation and interaction with others. Students acted the most effectively in speaking lessons with the teacher’s instructions.

There was a significant difference between knowledge gained of the students taught with traditional approach and that with the multimedia approach. This means that there was strong evidence against the null hypothesis. In another word, the null hypothesis which states there is no significant difference of the speaking skills of the students taught with the multimedia approach and the traditional approach was rejected. This implies that the knowledge gained by the students taught with traditional approach had significant bearing on the knowledge gained by the students taught with the multimedia approach.

5.4. Recommendation

The recommendations below are advanced based on the major findings and conclusions of the study:

Firstly, the role of teacher in a language class pressed the importance in terms of opportunities creation, activities organization, the instructions of the ways how to use modern communication tools safely and effectively.

Secondly, leaders of the researcher’s university in particular and management board of universities/colleges in general should pay more attention to the development of well- equipped class rooms and teachers with expertise in the fields of multimedia as well.

Last but not least, students should update their knowledge in the modern methods of education and adapt the advancement of technologies; moreover, their parents as well as teachers should teach and influence them to use multimedia remarkably and in good aims. Further studies might be conducted to determine the effectiveness of the research.

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