

Multimedia- A developing trend in language teaching

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At present European languages are available on the Internet and on computer software, however Tamil is not up to the standard of what is offered with other European languages to support language learning and teaching.

It is important to recognise and appreciate that children all over the world have access to the Internet, and global communications have been developed all over the world not in English but in all different languages. A community is able to communicate in their language all over the world.

Why do we use multimedia

"ICT expands horizons by shrinking worlds." by David Brown, Chairman, Motorola Ltd.

The effective use of multimedia in teaching and learning helps the children to develop a range of skills. It widens the knowledge and understanding of ICT (Information and Communication Technology). Children's writing skills improve as they write and rewrite. Editing tools make it easier for them to draft and redraft their work. Motivation is raised because children can write for a real audience and because the presentation of work is impressive. Use of different drawing packages helps them draw pictures and using the digital cameras, video recording and recording their own voices and adding them in their presentation makes this an enjoyable medium for them to work in.

The child can interact with the computer for as long as they wish. He or she will decide when they are ready to stop which makes learning easier for them. Children can revisit to the concept or theme and revise until they are familiar.

Multimedia books or e-books have the same layout as a normal book, with contents, index, chapters etc. However, multimedia books offers more. This is where learning a different language via multimedia excels. To help the children with pronunciation, the child is able to see the word, the picture and hear the sound. He/she is able to do this as many times as they wish.

The commentary can be in Tamil or English. If the child cannot understand the word s/he can always refer to the English. Most of the earliest versions of multimedia learning materials were

in English only. Multimedia Books are able to be tailor made using cultural stories with the language as opposed to direct translations of English books. This expands the child's vocabulary in the other language.

For example cultural lessons or religious teachings can be translated for the child in the language they are learning. Here the child is not only learning the language, but also the culture and teachings of the country of origin that goes alongside it. Again by clicking on the text one can activate the sound and make the pictures animated. This makes it fun for the child to use and creates motivation. Children can also print out the pictures and the texts. With this program the user is able to toggle between English and Tamil.

How do we use multimedia media

Technology has to be simple and understood by the user. This encourages the user to continue without becoming frustrated to point of giving up. Again the instructions and the links have to be clear and user friendly. If books are not available to a teacher, then they can use the computer. This applies even to group teaching using a projector or an interactive whiteboard. This can be used for a range of purposes. At the early stage a child can simply see the word, or character, and then is able to hear the pronunciation and see it being written by pen so as to be able to copy it themselves.

By being able to see a picture the child will find it easier to remember the sound by having two of their senses being used. In a group situation children can build up their words together, then structure simple sentences or phrases. By projecting it onto a larger screen the whole class can view their work and others can do the same by which they can celebrate their ideas.

Children can create their own stories by assembling pictures or words in order. The corresponding sounds will also be heard. By this method they can build up their spoken and written texts with support from the pictures. Children can answer the question on the stories. They can build up their own or use the template on the multimedia media program.

Authoring a book can benefit the child in great number of ways. For example, one class could be writing a book for a younger class, or another class in a different country. Here the children will have to create a story as well as use the new words they have learnt and be able to learn more. This can all be achieved using the multimedia package. Children can improve on a number of skills in doing this project. In creating their own story they can scan in pictures or use a digital camera, use clipart or draw their own pictures by using a paint program. They can also add in their own sound to the words.

An electronic story book can be created using Powerpoint. Once a story is planned and the images stored on the computer the words and images just have to be inserted for each page onto a new Powerpoint page and then linked with built in caption buttons such as Next and Previous.

You can include voice over or commentary via the Record Narration function on the slide show menu. As the files that will be created are large they have to be stored on another medium for example as a Zip drive or a write-able CD ROM.

This can also be mounted on the website. This offers the possibility for others around world to enjoy your work and also to link their own work on to your web site.

To achieve these aims one can use the following software.

The following software is not expensive and simple to use;

- Powerpoint
- Hyperstudio
- Fabula
- Storywriter
- Story maker

Some of the above software packages offer templates which make them easier to use. There is other software, available but it is very expensive and requires proper training before use, for example Micro Media and Dream Weaver.

Using an Intranet or the Internet children and adults can communicate easily exchanging views, sharing ideas and promoting a global relationship between their cultural identities.

The two major problems which many community schools face is a lack of appropriate resources and lack of contact time with students. Over a number of years I have sought to address these issues through the creation of multimedia materials. Although the opportunity to use such materials in class is currently limited, parents have been keen to purchase CD-ROMS so that their children have this as a resource to use at home. CDs often become a focal point for the family and friends.

I have created Multimedia activities for students at different stages in their learning. The most successful of these have been:

1. The Tamil alphabet chart. My aim here was, by means of colour and sound features, to facilitate the links of letter sound with their written form. When a student clicks on a letter they see it enlarged and also have a sound effect. Another aim that I had using the CD-ROM is to provide an effective way of children learning when compared to paper-based learning. By using Multimedia one can achieve the task of reading, writing, listening and speaking



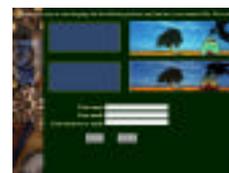
2. Vocabulary development. My aim here was to use HyperStudio to create a multimedia experience to enhance children's vocabulary development. The interactive game allows children to look at a picture, hear the word being pronounced, before selecting the correct vocabulary to describe the object shown.



3. Stories. My aim here was to create a multilingual, multi media story book. The children can experience both the written and the spoken version of the story simultaneously, encouraging further word recognition. They can also see the story written in English to facilitate comprehension.



4. Distance Learning. This feature encourages children to practice their multilingual skills through story writing. They are invited to create a script to accompany the pictures provided and e-mail it to their teacher. They are therefore not only practicing their Tamil literacy skills, but also using Tamil to communicate via e-mail.



It is clear that the potential for future development in this area is great. More and more families have computers at home, the software for creating multimedia resources has become increasingly sophisticated and user friendly. One project that I am currently developing is interactive learning via the Internet. It is hoped that this will facilitate the sharing of resources and good practice in the teaching of Tamil.

Conclusion

Creating teaching and learning materials can be easily created by using simple application programs like Powerpoint , HyperStudio and Clicker. It can be adapted to any curriculum subject and ability range. In the UK there is Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) schemes of work which show how to teach using Multimedia. It raises the standard of teaching and learning.

Before creating a Multimedia package the teacher has to focus on each child or group of children and their ability. Then s/he has to draw the lesson plan to achieve the goal. By using Multimedia teachers can create teaching aids to suit their classroom and the National Grid for Learning. Children are proud to show off their creative work to their parents and class mates.

Some of the WEB sites one can see the case study

www.learning-circuitry.co.uk

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/

www.becta.org.uk/inclusion/inclusion_lang/esol/esolmail/spring2001.html

www.cilt.org.uk/commlangs