

Why A Multimedia Approach to English Education?

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To make a long story short I made up my mind to experiment with a multimedia approach to my classroom presentations two years ago because my ways of giving instructions bored the pants off me as well as my students. My favorite ways used to be sometimes referred to as classical or traditional ones, heavily dependent on the three elements: teacher's mouth, books, and chalk. Some call it the 'MBC method'. To top it off, I tried audio-visuals such as tape recorders, cassette players, VTR, pictures, and you name it, that could help improve my teaching method. And yet I have been unhappy about the results by a trial and error approach. I was determined to look for a better way that would ensure my satisfaction in the first place.

What really turned me on was a multimedia CD ROM title, ELLIS(English Language Learning Instructional Systems) developed by Dr. Frank Otto. This is an integrated system of learning English based on advanced computer technology.

Inspired by the utility and potential of such a multimedia system for regular classroom or lab instructions, I designed a simple but practical multimedia language learning laboratory in 1994 for the first time in Korea(perhaps for the first time in the world). It was high time that the conventional type of language laboratory(audio-passive) at Hahnnam be replaced because of wear and tear. Prior to this development, in 1991, I put a first CALL(Computer Assisted Language Learning) laboratory equipped with 35 personal computers(286), where students were encouraged to practise English typing, word processing and study English grammar, English vocabulary, and English composition.

The first multimedia language learning laboratory was composed of 1) a multimedia personal computer(486DX2 then, now 586), 2) VGA multipliers that enable simultaneous viewing of the screen at control of the instructor, 3) an amplifier, 4) loud speakers, 5) student monitors, 6) student tables to seat three students(a monitor for two students is more realistic, though), 7) student chairs,

8) an instructor table, and 9) cables. It was augmented later with an Internet hookup. The beauty of this type of multimedia language learning laboratory is the economy of furnishing and maintaining it. There is no need of darkening the facilities, which is a must when an LCD/beam projector is preferred in the laboratory. It is headset free, which proved to make students exasperated when worn more than twenty minutes.

In the previous semester I taught three different subjects: Freshman English Lab, English Phonetics, and Listening Comprehension Intermediate. I used CD ROM titles like *ELLIS*, *Master Pronunciation*, *English Tripple Play Plus*, *English Arcade*, *Living Books*, *Q-Steps*, *English Discoveries*, *Compton's Encyclopedia*.

On the other hand, I managed to put all teaching materials into *PowerPoint*, where letters, photo, graphic, animation, audio, and video files are orderly stored in terms of slides. It takes time for me to prepare my teaching materials via *PowerPoint*, but it is a wonderful tool for the sake of presentations. And it is worth trying as long as I can entertain my students in such a way. Once everything is put into the computer, I feel relaxed and a bit excited watching my students enjoy my presentations. It appears to be great fun for students because they have never experienced this type of instruction. This is how I freed myself from having to manipulate a cassette tape player, VTR, and write on the board. The student monitors in front of them seem to help them concentrate on what they see, combined with what they hear. All I have to do is to simply click a mouse to give presentations and explanations, when necessary. I use a remote mouse, which prevents me from sitting at the instructor table. Instead, I can walk around in the room and enjoy freer interactions with students. Using this instrument, I can also have my students participate in the presentation. In particular, I invite my students to manipulate the computer using the remote mouse from the student's seat not from the instructor's seat.

Every student appears to be fascinated with my multimedia approach to English teaching because of its unique nature as a new teaching tool as we face the 21st century. They all agree that the multimedia way is an interesting and fascinating way of learning to satisfy their needs. Above all, it helps lighten their drudgery in the classroom. They feel other subjects taught by other teachers should be treated in the same fashion.

A multimedia approach to education is impossible without the advent of hi-tech

computers, of which multi functions are integrated into a unified system, i.e., a personal computer. If you have computer-phobia, make quick friends with it; the sooner, the better. It can be a wonderful assistant to you.

It is the Internet that I pay close attention to in conjunction with the multimedia approach to English education. Via e-mail system, I encourage my students to write to me in English. I encourage them to enjoy chatting with people all over the world. I also encourage them to visit the sites where they offer study courses in English conversation, vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, reading, and writing. I help them search any subject they want to via World Wide Web. Some day in the near future it will be the hub of learning for everybody. It will eventually free students from books, teachers, libraries, classrooms, and boredom. I will keep exploring better ways to give satisfying instructions to my students who deserve my entertainment.