STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS INTEGRATING MULTIMEDIA TECHNOLOGY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT
The use of technology, especially multimedia, for foreign language learning and teaching has expanded quickly in all over the world. Therefore, in the realm of second language acquisition (SLA), the most recent effort to enhance the process of language learning has involved computer technology. For this purpose, a group of 40 male and female students majoring in nursing, and radiology at Semnan University of Medical Sciences were selected. This paper reports on a questionnaire – based survey and focuses on the attitude of Iranian students towards the integration of multimedia into a language learning program. The survey was related to the use of a variety of multimedia technology in teaching English to students. Data were analyzed using chi-square test with SPSS. The results of data analysis indicated that the vast majority of students had positive attitudes towards using the multimedia resources in their language learning and appreciated recording and saving their own writing and making use of multimedia resources in developing their reading skills.

KEYWORDS: Computer assisted language learning (CALL), english for foreign language (EFL), multimedia, technology.

INTRODUCTION

According to Tella (1992b) with the advent of computers the writing quality improved and writing changed from teacher sponsored and led to real – purpose writing with genuine audiences around the world and different modes of writing became popular, including not only the narrative and descriptive genres usually found in regular class, but also personal, expressive, and argumentative use of language. In the electronic realm there are also focuses on the ways in which writing changes, and if these changes can be beneficial or harmful to the teaching of writing. Warschauer (2007) also adds that there are three particular concerns about online writing: (a) that it is informal, (b) that it is graphic (rather than text) dominant, and (c) that it facilitates plagiarism. Warschauer (1996) claims that a technology- enhanced setting provides three common factors of student motivation: communication, empowerment, and learning:
"*Communication* is represented by the finding that student liked the ability to communicate with others and to engage in real, as opposed to contrived, communicative acts. *Empowerment* describes the finding that students felt empowered in the technology environment since they felt less isolated and were less afraid to contact others. The learning factor describes the finding that students believed the computer gave them certain kinds of control over their learning by enabling them to learn faster and more independently and to write more creatively (p.3).

Nowaczyk (1998) reports a number of benefits for students related to the general use of technology in classroom including: increased motivation, improvement in self- concept and mastery of basic skills, more student – centered learning and engagement in the learning process, and more active processing, resulting in higher – order thinking skills and better recall Additionally, it seems that there is a beneficial multimedia effect, especially for low achieving students, when it is used to illustrate concept and organize factual information.

According to Schoepp and Erogul (2001) the use of computer technology helps develop learner autonomy and independence as well as the growth of self-access language learning. Students gain confidence through "learning – by-doing" in an interactive environment. Cunningham (2000) states that when students are writing for real reasons tend to be more motivated communicating with a friend about a mutual interest, writing to a magazine, preparing information for a bulletin board, taking part in an on-line discussion or debate. He claims that there is a real audience, or readership in these situations, and the students as a writer will take care to address this readership appropriately, attractively or persuasively. Frommer (1998) also notes that " when computer are used appropriately, can provide meaningful contexts for language learning as well as the background information that learners need for understanding the cultural framework in which the target language is used" (p.211).

Recently multimedia and Computer-Mediated Communication have been utilized to affect a whole new learning experience. Many teachers and scholars have reported studies of the effectiveness of educational instruction on achievement and student' attitudes regarding learning with technology (Salaberry, 2001; Oladejo, 2001). The number of computer applications and communication technologies has grown at an amazing rate over the past 15 years, and many foreign language educators have embraced new technologies as useful instructional tools (LeLoup & Ponterio, 2003). Pow (1999) indicated that learners experienced the value of group work when they were engaged in interactive activities online. Fujieda (1999) stated that learners who were involved in group work had positive feedback to the application of technology. Students perceived the value of word processing, paid more attention to mechanics in writing and favored computer- based writing (Cunningham, 2000). Several researchers have reported an improvement in student writing skills through the use of networked computers (Cononelos and Oliva, 1993; Warschauer, 1996).

Beauvios (1998) found that students participating in a Local Area Network (LAN) writing project showed positive attitudes about learning in that setting. She concluded that students felt positive because the LAN represented a low-anxiety situation and because they had more control than in a traditional classroom. Additionally, Beauvios (1998) found more students –to- student interaction in networked classes than in traditional classes.

Another study on computer – mediated instruction for English writing skills by Hartman, Neuwirth, Kiesler, Sproull, Cochran, Plamquist, and Zabrow (1995) found that the use of technology can distribute teacher and classmate attentions therefore; less active students become more active participants in the class. They also concluded that networked sections showed more student- teacher communication than traditional classes. Warschauer (1996) in a more recent study on the relationship between CALL and motivational aspects of learners investigated the effects on student motivation of using computers for writing and communication in the language classroom. He reported that the subjects overall had a positive attitude toward using computers and that this attitude was consistent across a number of variables which included gender, typing skills, and access to a computer at home. In addition, he identified that self-reported knowledge of computers and amount of experience using e-mail correlated positively with student motivation. To sum up, Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is an important innovation for both educators and learners. In order to help promote language, teachers need to explore new avenues of learning. CALL can be an effective, efficient, safe and productive learning avenue.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was an attempt to investigate the attitude of EFL learners towards the integration of multimedia into a language learning program. In this chapter, some variables, such as the participants, instrumentation, procedure, design, and statistical analysis of the study are explained. To test the aforementioned question, a convenience sample selected consisting of a group of 40 male and female students majoring in nursing, radiology and medicine at Semnan university of medical sciences were selected. All participants were receiving two 90-minute classes of English instruction weekly, i.e. two hours in the classroom and the other one hour in the language lab where are individual audio devices for students (a headphone set, a cassette tape booth and a computer) and for teachers (a videotape player, a screen, a projector, and a computer). In order to carry out this study, the researcher used the following instruments in the study.
A 30 statement questionnaire with a four-point scale ranging from 1 strongly agree to 4 strongly disagree. The questionnaire was constructed to elicit student perceptions about the advantages and disadvantages of using computers, to determine whether they experienced difficulty learning to use the computer and to do word processing, and to gather some information about their writing behaviors during word processing. The multimedia language lab consisting of a headphone set, a cassette tape booth and a computer for each of participants and teachers' videotape player, a screen, a projector, and a computer.

Another material used in this study included slides for dicto compositions. Dicto composition is a dictation training that has been practiced for more than a decade. At the first stage, students are given two to four pictures and listen to the teacher's story once without writing anything down in the first listening. Then the teacher reads a couple of sentences three times and students concentrate on listening to the sentences, which they write down after the teacher finishes each section. The same process continues until the whole story is done. At the final stage, students may check their writing while the teacher reads the whole story again. This study employed a quasi- experimental procedure and observations as a major source for data collection, along with questionnaires as an auxiliary method.

The first session participants were scheduled to learn writing through dicto composition with which they were trained to listen to every sentence of passage, four passages chosen from their course book called Steps to Understanding by L.A.Hill (2006).They listened to every sentence of passages three times with the use of computer and headphones and they were also required write down (type) what they heard correctly so they could experience computer – mediated learning. A guideline was provided to the learners so that they could operate the computer on their own with less anxiety. Besides dicto composition, later participants were required to record their favorite passage. Thus, they could save their stories in the text file on the computer as well as a sound file on a tape. In the last session of the course, a questionnaire was conducted with instructions. The questionnaire contained 30 statements with which the participants were agreed or disagree. A 4-point scale was used (from 1= Strongly Agree to 4=Strongly Disagree). This questionnaire took place in the language lab and it took about thirty minutes. Afterwards, the collected data were run under SPSS for Windows.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Data collected from the questionnaire were qualitatively transcribed and quantitatively analyzed. The following table and graphs show the results of students' preference in terms of learning and multimedia application. The mean ratings to questionnaire items are in Table 1. Regarding the mean and standard deviation (Strongly agree=8.91, agree=20.53, disagree=7.31 and strongly disagree= 0.25) of students' responses towards their preference to multimedia application. All of them gave positive feedback as shown Table1.

Descriptive Statistics

Table1. The mean and standard deviation of questions

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
strongly agree	40	2	22	8.91	5.090
agree	40	13	26	20.53	3.337
disagree	40	1	14	7.31	3.874
Strongly disagree	40	0	3	.25	.620
Valid (list wise)	40				

Analysis of the data indicated that students, in general, felt that using word processing helped them to be more careful about grammar (e.g. word choice and organization). They also found that using word processing was valuable because they felt that they get better scores on papers written using the computer. They reported paying more attention to various aspects of the mechanics of their writing during word processing (e.g. spelling). They also felt that word processing helps them to get more individual attention from the teacher in the computer writing class than non-computer writing classes. They also pointed out that they paid more attention to choosing the right word when they use the computer. They found that using word processing made them less worried about writing because they knew they could make changes easily. They had positive attitudes toward writing on the computer because they believed computer can improve their writing abilities by increasing their willingness to write and revise, and to write and share their writing with others. They believed that writing on the computer was also less stressful because they were not required to answer question in front of class.

CONCLUSION
This study focused only on the students' attitudes towards multimedia technology use in language learning (e.g. dicto composition, story writing, story recording). Learners reported that technology - enhanced their learning. They also had positive attitudes toward writing on the computer because they believed computer improved their writing abilities by increasing their willingness to write and revise, and to write and share their writing with others. It is also concluded that in the new millennium, computers will play a vital role in learning. Unlike in the past, students should no longer depend solely on teachers. They will have to make good use of a variety of multimedia materials to enrich their language knowledge. This paper provided a chance for language learners to use multimedia resources in their language program, and they also appreciated recording and saving their own writing and making use of multi-media resources in developing their reading skills.

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