The Role of Media in English Language Development

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Abstract

The media in the English Language development establishes a link between the human resources and the non-human resources. They are the different kinds of things which the teachers and the students use in the teaching learning process. Institutional resources help to enhance the teaching ability of English Language teachers. They help to bridge the communication gap between the teachers and learners by assisting the teachers to explain concepts better. They help English Language teachers to reduce the amount of talking and thus make their teaching more interesting and successful. They provide opportunity for learners to see, hear and handle and thus create a high degree of interest in English language. They offer a reality experience which stimulates self-activity on the part of learners. They make learning more concrete, crystallized, practical, applicable and meaningful. They enhance the rate of retention of what students are taught. They change the role of the teacher as sole dispenser of knowledge to that of coordinator of learning experiences. They permit students to proceed at their own pace. They provide the learners with opportunities for practice. They stimulate thoughts and discussions of students. They inspire students to higher levels of achievement. Strategies that are being used for making instruction more understandable are the visual scaffolding, the realia, imaging, graphic organizers and the interactive. Maximum utilization of available instructional resources depends on how they are selected and employed by English Language teachers and learners.

Key Words: Media, Human resources, Non-human resources, Effective learning, Instructional resources, Social media.

Introduction: Any school English Language program, regardless of any complexity, requires special planning. Responsibility for execution of the various aspects of the program must be assigned. Cooperation of staff members is essential. Program goals and instructional techniques must be cooperatively determined by the involved personnel. In simple terms, instructional resources for effective English Language learning relate to both the human and the non-human materials that are involved in the transmission of information, knowledge, ideas, opinions etc. to the learner within a classroom situation.

The human resources include the teachers and other supporting persons in the process of communication; whereas the non-human recourses are the Instructional Technology Resources (ITR) or Information Communication Technology materials (ICTM), which the New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language (2004) has clearly defined as "the role of the media", serving as means of dissemination of information entertainment etc. These constitute such materials as books, newspapers, radio, television, motion pictures and magazines. To

these are added such means of communication that carry advertisements like the billboards, direct mails, catalogues, the radio etc.

According to Mezieobi (1997), instructional resources refer to all those materials, places and persons, otherwise known as information conveyors, which constitute an integral and vital component of the teaching learning situation that enhance teaching and learning of the English language. Kegan (1989) also viewed instructional resources as an array of materials, people, equipment etc; which can be used by the teacher to promote teaching and facilitate learning. Arisi and Umudhe (1998) stated that instructional resources refer to different materials and tools that teachers and students use in the teaching and learning activity in order to make the process more meaningful and productive. They opined that they are real things and representation of real things which stimulate one or more of the senses and which enrich the teaching and learning of English process.

From the foregoing views, instructional resources are a collection of human and non-human resources which could be used by both the teacher and the learner for effective classroom interaction. That is, instructional resources could be referred to as teaching resources, learning resources, educational resources, and curriculum resources among others, that enhance teaching learning activities. Thus, instructional resources make teaching, learning process interesting, effective, motivating, efficient and productive.

Developmental English language instruction: In the English language program, developmental instruction is offered to those who are progressing satisfactorily in the building of reading English Language program. Corrective and remedial instructions are offered to those who are experiencing difficulties. Primarily, there exists four major aspects of English reading instructions- basic reading skills, content area reading skills, recreational reading and remedial core reading areas:

i) To meet the basic skills needs of the students' conferences would be held and where the teachers would sometimes give specific skill instruction. Conferences could also be used to help students plan ways to share their reading experiences with their classmates. The English language committee would identify reading skills that they feel could be developed through the content areas. Then, they would arrange for in-service training sessions to help the content teachers learn to teach these skills in their subject areas. The skill areas identified would be vocabulary building, prefixes and suffixes, study methods, main ideas, following directions, locating information in textbooks, locating information in the library, developing flexibility of rate, sequence, context clues, drawing conclusions and making inferences, reading maps, reading tables, reading charts, reading graphs, detecting propaganda, recognizing fact and opinion and detecting the author's motives or bias.

ii) The content area teachers could learn how to teach directed reading lessons in their respective content classes. They learn to utilize study guides to direct the silent reading portions of the directed reading lessons.

iii) All content area teachers could be encouraged to make students aware of materials available for leisure time reading in their respective disciplines. The English teachers would decide to make available one day a week during their classes for recreational reading and the sharing of books and other materials for pleasure. In addition, all students would be encouraged to make use of the media center during their free periods.

iv)   No student would be forced to enroll in the remedial course, but conferences would be held with students who would need help and they would be invited to take part.

Importance of instructional resources in English language classrooms: The place of instructional resources cannot be over-emphasized in the teaching and learning of English language in secondary classrooms. They include the following (Nwaedozie, 2006, Oyedele, 1991):

a)   Instructional resources enhance the teaching ability of English language teachers in the learning environment.
b)   Instructional resources help to bridge the communication gap between the teachers and learners by assisting the teachers to explain concepts better.
c)   Instructional material, help English language teachers to reduce the amount of talking and thus make their teaching more interesting and successful.
d)   Instructional resources provide opportunity for learners to see, hear and handle, therefore creating a high degree of interest in English language.
e)   Instructional resources offer a reality experience which stimulates self-activity on the part of learners.
f)   The use of instructional resources make learning more concrete, crystallized, practical, applicable and meaningful.
g)   They enhance the rate of retention of what students are taught.
h)   They change the role of the teacher as sole dispenser of knowledge to that of coordinator, director and facilitator of learning experiences.
i)   They make explanations clearer
j)   They permit students to proceed at their own pace
k)   They sharpen or extend students' senses
l)   They provide the learners with opportunities for practice.
m) They stimulate thoughts and discussions of students.
n)   They inspire students to higher levels of achievement.

Criteria for maximum utilization of instructional resources in English language classrooms: The maximum utilization of available resources depends on how they are selected and employed by English language teachers in the secondary schools. The criteria to be employed in selecting and utilizing instructional resources include the following (Nwaedozie, 2006, Oyedele, 1991).
Instructional resources:

a)   must be relevant to the instructional objectives
b)   must be relevant to students' nature and characteristics
c)   must be relevant to students' background
d)   must be understood by the teacher
e)   must be suitable to the instructional strategies
f)   must be relevant to the content and concept being learned.
g)   must be motivational
h)   must be conspicuous

Strategies of using the media in qualitative teaching and most effective learning:

a) **Visual Scaffolding:** Is a technique where the instructional language is made more understandable by the presentation of drawings or pictorial illustrations that enhance the ability of students to hear English words and make connections to the visual images that are displayed.

Application and example:

Visual scaffolding can be used effectively at all grade levels and across curricular areas: Since Mr. Adamu recognizes the importance of visuals for his English language learners, he takes digital photographs of local community helpers and institutions such as the post office, postal workers, the neighborhood grocery store, the local grosses, the crossing guard at the corner, a local firefighter and a police officer. These are all places and people with whom his students are familiar. Mr. Adamu then downloads the photographs to his computer and prints them out on special transparency film from the local office supply store.

As he leads a discussion of community helpers where they work and on what they do, Mr. Adamu uses the transparencies to connect the discussion to local places and people, so that the vocabulary being used is identified with people and places the students know. Hard copies of the original photographs are printed and displayed in the room with written labels so that the students can begin to learn the written forms of the words.

Mr. Adamu and his students then take a field trip into the central part of town where the students are introduced to a supermarket. Mr. Adamu is busy taking pictures with his digital camera and the students join in the discussion back in their classroom as they compare the pictures of the supermarket with the one of their little neighborhood grocery.

Mr. Adamu then places the photos in the writing center and the students are writing about the sights they have seen on their bus trip to the supermarket. The photographs have expanded the students' understanding of their community. The photos have provided a source of verbal stimulation and comparison that lasts for many days. Integrating the use of visuals as a part of a lesson plan increases the effectiveness of the lesson for English language learners (Genesee, 1999).

Modern media sources useful for instruction: the electronic media, social media: The various forms of existing media resources can be judiciously utilized in rendering lectures and instructional material within and outside of the classroom. They are very potent in engendering active interest and participation on the part of students. The media can also be employed in developing the material being taught and presenting facts and data in very exciting ways. This enables students to assimilate and to develop a flair for the knowledge of the material that is being taught. It is remarkable to note that this novel approach while already in place in very many settings, often replacing the more traditional approach of that has been criticized as been too teacher-centric, where information is pushed to the learner (Collins, A., Neville, P., & Bielaczyc, K., 2000). The introduction of various media sources in the tutoring process provides a means for the teacher to facilitate the transfer of seemingly complex detail, expert knowledge and information in a manner that can be easily understood and appreciated even by novice learners. With the tremendous pace of technological advancements and the development of more sophisticated media devices, a vast array of options are now more readily available to teachers and students even in very remote areas.

The explosive proliferation of handy and very portable electronic devices has also contributed to the ease and growing popularity of the media as a veritable teaching tool in and outside of the classroom setting. Lectures can now be delivered through devices (Tess, P. A., 2013). For the nascent language learner, the study and practice of spoken English has been made a whole lot easier and practical (Bronack, S. C., 2011). Additionally, the development and widespread popularity of social media has significantly altered the way students prefer to learn and to share information. Networking sites provide an avenue for information exchange and where information can be accessed and by students at any time of the day, from any location, and as often as the students

desire (Li, N., Helou, I. E., & Gillet, D., 2012). Generally, the role of telecommunications and the internet in promoting quick transfer and dissemination of information has altogether reshaped the landscape of the learning endeavor and appears to have significantly shrunk the importance of the print media. In the present times, not being aware or non-compliant in adapting to these changes might be taken as a sign of unpreparedness on the part of tutors and instructors.

There are various media learning strategies that could be useful for enhancing the learning process. Practical examples portraying the applicability of media sources in learning are:

- Film clips - which could serve as a means of depicting rare and uncommonly seen events
- Songs
- Podcast of a lecture
- Or newspaper article.

It is noteworthy that students can also be more creative with their own learning. As an example, student video projects can provide an excellent and highly rewarding learning experience.

In spite of the numerous benefits of the media in enhancing the learning process, it also has the potential of being abuse by students and teachers alike. Excess media attention and focus can actually deprive and rob students of the required interpersonal interaction obtainable in traditional classroom settings. There are also the problems of harassment resulting from abuse of media privileges especially in the case of social media outlets (Li, N., Helou, I. E., & Gillet, D., 2012).. It can also result in the unfortunate scenario where many students lose touch with reality and are lacking in basic skills such as spelling, handwriting, and drawing, a situation that may develop from overreliance on media sources (Francke, H., & Sundin, O., 2012). It is therefore important for teachers apply strict criteria in adopting the use of media sources for the tutoring of students must understand their limitations, exercise judiciousness, and maintain a reasonable and balanced view of the media's role in the learning process.

Conclusion: The maximum utilization of available instructional resources depends on how they are selected and employed by English language teachers and learners. The criteria to be employed in selecting and utilizing instructional resources should include the following (Nwaedozie, 2006; Oyedele, 1991). Instructional Resources:

a) must be relevant to the instructional objectives
b) must be relevant to students' nature and characteristics
c) must be relevant to students' background
d) must be understood by the teacher
e) must be allocated appropriate time
f) must be suitable to the instructional strategies
g) must be relevant to the content and concept being learned
h) must be motivational
i) must be conspicuous

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