

Teaching ESP via Instructive Media: a Complementary Structure

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Abstract:

Due to the advancement of the means of communication and technology, TEFL has witnessed sharp progress at the level of teaching materials. Instructive media (or audio-visual instruction) is considered among the most effective tools of developing the learners' language skills in the FL classroom. Television, radio, video systems, recorded tapes, overhead projectors, and other teaching materials can encourage them to take part in the learning situation. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) as a complex, extensive, and intensified domain needs necessarily these materials as a support to facilitate the teaching/learning process: technical words of each speciality could be easily acquired by the learners if they were able to activate their aural and visual senses via pictures, videos, and the computer. Multimedia facilities can also provide teachers with the opportunity to vary their teaching methods and techniques. In the light of this, this article deals with the problematic of how EFL teachers/learners can exploit effectively visual materials in the ESP classroom. It also aims at raising the Algerian university teachers' awareness of the importance of these means for improving the language skills of their students.

Keywords: ESP (English for Specific Purposes), instructive media, technology, television, radio, video systems

Introduction :

Teaching English for non-native speakers is not an easy task. The process can be more difficult in the case of ESP classroom because the EFL students are in contact with new technical terms of a new speciality. Here, the teachers have to be familiar with the specialized courses in addition to the vocabulary and the target language different contexts. To achieve this goal, the ESP classroom needs to be supported by various and novel teaching materials: the audio-visual aids can ensure a successful teaching/learning atmosphere as the learners can see and hear the technical terms that can be easily stored in their minds due to the stimulation of their aural/visual senses.

In the light of this, the present paper raises the following problematic: how can EFL teachers/learners exploit effectively visual materials in the ESP classroom? So, the sub-questions below are dealt with:

1. What is visual instruction and its relation with TEFL?
2. Are visual materials beneficial in the ESP classroom?
3. How can visual materials be integrated in the ESP classroom?

To answer these questions, the following points can be hypothesized:

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1. Visual instruction provides a support to the TEFL context.
2. Visual materials can be effective in the ESP classroom.
3. Visual materials can be used via adopting the various teaching methods.

This paper aims at highlighting the importance of instructive media in teaching languages, especially English. It also raises the teachers' awareness of the necessity to integrate these materials in their classrooms. Hence, in this article, the visual instruction, with all its types of materials, and ESP are defined. Also, relationship between visual instruction, TEFL, and ESP is highlighted in details. Furthermore, the successful techniques of using them are explained.

1- What is Instructive Media?

“Audio-visual aids,” “audio-visual material,” “interactive media,” “audio-visual media,” “communication technology,” “educational” or “instructive media,” “multimedia facilities,” “multimedia technology,” and “audiovisual instruction” are terms related to the use of audio-visual materials in teaching FL. The terms differ, but they are closely related.

In the widest sense of the term, audio-visual techniques include everything used in teaching except the textbook. There is first, the real experience of the child, which may appeal to all five senses. Then, there is the contrived experience—models, objects, exhibits, pictures, charts, etc. – which is largely used in school. In this category might be included demonstrations in the classroom and tips outside of school. In a more limited sense, however, one can think of “audio-visual” as designating those devices, techniques, and materials which appeal directly to the ear and eye of the learner. The simpler ones, in everyday use in the classroom, consist of pictures, charts, diagrams, and maps. The more elaborate ones are the phonograph record, radio, the tape recorder, the motion picture, various types of films, and television. Different combinations of the mechanical devices in one unit constitute the laboratory¹.

Using technology as a supplementary tool to support learning among students is a teaching strategy that continues to gain popularity today. Recently, audio-visual aids have been considered among the most effective tools of transmitting ideas and experiences in the FL classroom. Illustrations in books and in wall charts were utilized, generations ago, by teachers to present human activities and socio-cultural environments. Pictures, both singly and in series, were also used to teach the meaning of structural items and patterns.

The purpose behind this is to facilitate conveying meaning as an alternative to restoring translation, definition, and description via relating FL learning to context and via establishing a direct association between language and image. Hence, technology has provided education with useful aids that can serve to enhance the teaching/learning process. Television, radio, video systems, recorded tapes, overhead projectors, and other teaching materials encourage the learners to take part in the learning situation.

FL students can benefit from many type of visual material—display cases, posters, flannel boards, wall charts, books, flashcards, overhead transparencies, television, chalkboards, flip charts, handouts, still pictures, filmstrips, slides, films, models, and teaching machines. The still or flat picture can prove to be a rich resource in the FL classroom. This type of material can easily be obtained from magazines, newspapers, books, catalogs, calendars, posters, advertisements, coloring books, comic books, postcards, prints, and travel brochures. It may be commercially made or made by the teacher or student. Teachers can create picture files from which they can readily select the visual material to fit a particular need².

Instructors are currently using various forms of technology to help improve understanding of their course content. Trends in technology have indeed altered the educational landscape and have caused changes in the way courses are developed and delivered. Although Smith & Ayers (2006) are of the view that technology hinders learning, contrary findings on this topic suggest that when used appropriately, technology helps enhance various aspects of learning³.

One area in which the effects of technology integration have been realized is in the education of students learning English as a second language (ESL). A report from the National Center for ESL Literacy Education discussed how some professionals use technology such as audio and video tapes, cameras, overhead projectors and software programs to enrich their instructional activities. Empirical research conducted to examine the influence of this approach showed that the use of technology helped motivate ESL learners to develop strategies for successful learning.

Although the findings from past studies have demonstrated that technology usage may lead to positive learner experiences in ESL classrooms, it must be pointed out that most of the studies were conducted in situations where simplified materials designed for ESL learners was used. The question still remains as to whether this trend will persist when literature is included in the ESL curriculum.

Audio-visual materials are defined as those, which help in completing the triangular process of learning, i.e. motivation, classification and stimulation: because of them, the learning process may be encouraged or carried on through the sense of hearing, or sense of sight.. So, they represent any device, which can be used to make the learning experience more concentrate, more realistic, and more. According to De Kieffer (1965), audio-visual aids refer to "*Experiences and devices used in a teaching situation which employ the use of sight and/or sound.*"⁴

Language learning is a complex process: in this process, language teachers can't be far away from technology, which is the application of scientific knowledge to practical tasks by organizations that involve people and machines. It is a fact that technology cannot be separated from society. Machines have social origins and they emerge from the needs of society. Therefore, teachers need technologies relevant to the teaching learning situation. If the educationalists want children to be technologically equipped, all the changes and preparations ought to be done within the curriculum, school, architecture, teaching organization and finance.

It is a well-known fact that audio-visual materials are a great help in stimulating and facilitating the learning of a FL. According to Wright (1976), many media and many styles of visual presentation are useful to the language learner. That is to say, all audio-visual materials have positive contributions to language learning as long as they are used at the right time, in the right place. In language learning and teaching process, the learner uses his eyes as well as his ears; but his eyes are basic in learning. Rivers (1981) claims that this contributes to the understanding of another culture by providing vicarious contact with speakers of the language through both audio and visual means⁵.

It is a fact that most students who have taken English courses formally remain insufficient in the ability to use the language and to understand its use, in normal communication, whether in the spoken or the written mode. The problem arises not from the methodology itself but from the misuse or incomplete use of it. That is to say, teachers still evaluate student performance according to the sentence structure and situational settings. In addition, teachers have to take into consideration their performances in terms of

communicative acts. But this not necessarily means that teachers should pay full attention to only communicative acts in the preparation and presentation of language teaching materials.

In recent years, the use of video in English classes has grown rapidly as a result of the increasing emphasis on communicative techniques. Being a rich and valuable resource, video is well-liked by both students and teachers. Students like it because video presentations are interesting, challenging, and stimulating to watch. Video shows them how people behave in the culture whose language they are learning by bringing into the classroom a wide range of communicative situations.

Another important factor for teachers that makes it more interesting and enjoyable is that it helps to promote comprehension. We know that deficiencies in vocabulary can make even a simple task very difficult for our students. Video makes meaning clearer by illustrating relationships in a way that is not possible with words, which proves a well-known saying that a picture is worth thousand words. Two minutes of video can provide an hour of classroom work, or it can be used to introduce a range of activity for five minutes. A ten-minute programme can be useful for more advanced students. Less advanced students may wish something much shorter because their limited command of the language also limits their attention span⁶.

It is obvious that non-native speakers of a language rely more heavily on visual clues to support their understanding and there is no doubt that video is an obvious medium for helping learners to interpret the visual clues effectively. According to a research, language teachers like video because it motivates learners, brings the real world into the classroom, contextualizes language naturally and enables learners to experience authentic language in a controlled environment. Moreover, in this issue, Arthur (1999) claims that video can give students realistic models to imitate for role-play; can increase awareness of other cultures by teaching appropriateness and suitability⁷.

Video with its great advantage provides authentic language input. Movies and TV programmes are made for native speakers, so in that sense video provides authentic language input. That is to say, it is obvious that the practical implications of video in the classroom in any classroom environment it can easily be used; teacher can step in the process whenever he wishes; he can stop, start and rewind to repeat it for several times where necessary. Any selected short sequence from the programme can be utilized for intensive study.

To pay special attention to a particular point in the programme it is possible to run in slow motion or at half speed or without sound. Besides, the learner can concentrate on the language in detail and interpret what has been said, repeat it, predict the reply and so on. The learner can also concentrate in detail on visual clues to meaning such as facial expression, dress, gesture, posture and on details of the environment. Even without hearing the language spoken clues to meaning can be picked up from the vision alone. Using visual clues to meaning in order to enhance learning is an important part of video methodology⁸.

The other point that should be focused is that in FL to interpret attitude is very difficult owing to the fact that the listener concentrates himself on the verbal message, not the visual clues to meaning. Video gives the students practice in concluding attitudes. The rhythmic hand and arm movements, head nods, head gestures are related to the structure of the message. Moreover, the students have a general idea of the culture of the target language. It may be enjoyable for the learners to have something different for language learning apart from the course books and cassettes for listening⁹.

2- The Audio-visual Materials in the ESP Classroom:

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) describes language programmes designed for groups or individuals who are learning with an identifiable purpose and clearly specifiable needs. According to Johns and Price-Machida's (2001), it is a movement based on the proposition that all language teaching should be tailored to the specific learning and language use needs of identified groups of students - and also sensitive to the sociocultural contexts in which these students will be using English¹⁰.

ESP is goal directed in nature. It is based on needs analysis, and it is discipline and context-specific. ESP builds on language and skills of specific disciplines. Also, it is adults-centered and involves homogenous learners. ESP is aimed at all four language skills. In addition, it follows a distinct methodology.

The term "variety" in ESP, refers to registers of language use, such as English in banking, English in medicine, English in academic settings, and everyday conversation. According to Bloor and Bloor (1986), there are two perspectives on the term "language for specific purposes." One is that a specific-purpose language is based on and extends from a basic core of general language (the common core plus). The second is that all language exists as one variety or another and that there is no basic core (general-purpose) language¹¹.

So, all these varieties in ESP need an eclectic teacher who is able to choose his/her teaching materials that can facilitate the process of FL teaching/learning. Visual aids can be an effective support to textbooks in teaching ESP courses. Here, the learners can visualize and listen to the specific terms related to any domain so that they would be able to easily remember them.

In other words, television, radio, video systems, recorded tapes, overhead projectors, and other teaching materials encourage the learners to take part in the learning situation. ESP as a complex, extensive, and intensified domain needs necessarily these materials as a support to facilitate learning FL: technical words of each specific branch could be easily acquired by the learners if they were able to activate their aural and visual senses via pictures, videos, and so on. Multimedia facilities can also provide teachers with the opportunity of varying their teaching methods and techniques.

Salvadores *et al.* (date unknown) believe that audio-visual instruction ensures motivation, interaction, improvement of messages (combination of sounds and images), facing the students all the time, oral communication enhancement, cultural background exchanges, reusable materials, classroom time saving, promotion of learner-centered systems¹².

Tuttle (1975) and Aukstakalnis and Mott (1996) think that attractive visual materials, whether still or flat graphics, can be a rich resource for ESL learners. They add that one of the greatest challenges facing educators is to present foreign concepts to L2 learners in forms that achieve clarity and understanding¹³.

Radio and TV are considered as the main part of teaching FL. The novelty of sound radio lays not so much in the fact that it created its own appropriate forms of presentation, as that it possessed practically unlimited possibilities for the diffusion of its message due to communication through electronic radiation. Its primary feature is its "ubiquity," i.e., the omnipresence of its broadcasts, whether in the form of original radio programmes or of

concert relays. Hence, the main feature here is its reception at the greatest possible number of places simultaneously. The TV screen is characterized by an adaptability which is unlimited. This is why it is the richest and most versatile of the mass media when it comes to presenting a photographic and auditory picture and interpretation of the universe¹⁴.

So, the basis of all learning is experience. The best way for effective learning is to provide firsthand experience like showing real objects, e.g., chair, table, boy, apple, etc. But you cannot be all the real things in to the classroom. The teacher would like to tell the students about distant lands, deserts, wild animals or events which happened in the past. To make these experiences near reality, he/she need the help of visual aids like flash-cards, charts, diagrams, maps, the globe, pictures, masks and puppets. With the advancement of technology in the field of education, we are now able to get video cassettes which provide great support to classroom teaching.

However, the teacher must remember that a mere collection of audio-visual aids cannot make teaching effective and meaningful. They are only aids and not a substitute for the teacher. We should know what material is available and when and how it is to be used. While using audio-visual aids, teachers should make the best use of the things available in the classroom or things that are available in the locality. To teach effectively and for effective communication teachers need to seek the help of audiovisual-aids.

Film was widely used in many different fields, such as science, literature and foreign teaching. In the western countries, a lot of linguists have paid more attention to this audio-visual method and studied it, which connects sound with pictures. This teaching method is very helpful and useful for beginners to understand language skills and to remember contexts or new and complex patterns and words. Many FL teachers using the audio-lingual method have wished for some improvement or modification of the accepted methodology. Although teachers find the memorization and pattern practice exercises useful for the early stages, they feel a need to build a bridge from those highly structured activities to the freer, more creative use of the language at the intermediate and advanced levels¹⁵.

Teaching ESP using video clips can be beneficial for students. Firstly, video can give students realistic models to imitate for role-play and they can increase awareness of other cultures by teaching appropriateness and suitability. Moreover, it is stated that only 7% of information is sent through words; the remaining 93% of communication is non-verbal. Swan (1996-1997) proposed videos display a range of verbal and non-verbal behaviors that may make the material more meaningful to learners.

Likewise, Gower, Phillips, and Walters (2005) stated that additional information, provided by facial expressions, gestures, and physical backgrounds, makes the material easy to understand. In addition, when watching videos, learners can become more inquisitive and intellectually stimulated. Videos are also useful for group work, for tasks from which learners can apply appropriately what they have learned with higher cognition skills. EFL learners can enrich their knowledge of culture when viewing authentic communication among native speakers. Generally, video clips are a useful medium to help expose learners to the target language, from which many aspects of the language, including conversational strategies, could be acquired efficiently¹⁶.

Film, radio and television are usually discussed under the heading of the customary educational and teaching aids, i.e., on the same level as abaci, wall maps, sand trays or sets of pictures, for the reason that films and tape recordings can be used in education in a way similar to the projection of slides. However, to lump them together with the traditional aids

is to mistake completely their true importance and to ignore the social and psychological value of mass media in present-day civilization. A revision of thinking about modern mass media is needed. Far from existing somewhere on the fringes of modern educational thought, they are right at the center.

Television, for example, is not just an alternative method of demonstration, but an independent and organically complete educational institution, like the school itself. It should be regarded as such and not simply as a vehicle for entertainment, political propaganda or commercial advertising. Educational subject-matter of the most varied kind falls within its range to a far greater extent than is generally realized. It is significant that most television organizations are themselves aware of this.

So, FL teachers have always been ahead of the curve in integrating technology in FL instruction and learning, seeing the benefits of technology even without an extant research database to confirm their judgment. The number of computer applications, communications technologies, and sheer volume of offerings on the Internet has grown at an amazing rate over the past 15 years, and many FL educators, heeding instinct, common sense, and anecdotal information, have embraced these new technologies as useful instructional tools. There is, however, a small but increasingly vocal cadre of second language acquisition researchers who question whether the use of new technologies in language instruction furthers second language acquisition.

Teaching FL with video can be learner-centered and teacher-centered at the same time. The former is a criterion that enables the student to watch the video individually whenever needed out of the class: he/she can concentrate on the language in detail and interpret what has been said, repeat it, and predict the reply. The learner can also concentrate deeply on visual clues to meaning, such as facial expression, dress, gesture, posture, and on details of the environment. Even without hearing the language spoken, clues of meaning can be picked up from the vision alone. The latter means that the teacher is responsible for preparing and selecting the appropriate video contents that suit his/her objectives, the students age, and the learning situation.

Thus, the teacher role is very important in teaching with video. He/she can be a controller, an assessor, an organizer, a prompter and a participant as well: as a controller and an organizer, he/she controls what the learners must do, and decides when they speak and watching the video film. Also, at the end of the activity, the teacher can evaluate the learner's outputs. Moreover, he/she can act as a prompter by encouraging the learners to participate when he/she remarks a silence viewing among them as a sign of being confused about what to do next. Furthermore, the teacher participates in the activities presentation while teaching the FL. He knows about all the details of the materials which help the learners feel comfort and facilitate learning. As a result, He/she must be familiar with the video materials before they are used in class, and develop a plan for each video unit to encourage active viewing.¹⁷

When watching video films, the students should be active not like passive TV viewers. That is to say, the teacher should encourage the learners to watch the films actively via using the supplementary materials, such as worksheets prepared by him or supplied with the films. They should participate in the activities; they can themselves set up some projects in the TL by recording their own activities as speaking, interviewing, reporting, etc.¹⁸

Hence, integrating visual materials in the ESP classroom can be adapted to any teaching method. For example, in the case of the "Audiolingual Method," the teacher can make the

students listen to recordings of technical words related to a given speciality where they can listen and repeat. For “Communicative Language Teaching” (CLT), videos are very useful where dialogues about a given topic related to a specific branch, especially medicine or economy, can be displayed and the students role is to analyze and to discuss their contents either in pairs or groups.

The use of visual materials can also be useful after the class sessions through homework tasks where the learners can get copies of the videos or the recordings. Here, the teacher can exploit the role of technology where the students can send their tasks via emails. The teachers assessment can also be provided via specific videos or pictures of the topic. Hence, audio-visual materials can be adapted to any teaching method or context.

Conclusion:

To conclude, via the visual instruction, ESP teachers can vary their teaching materials instead of depending on the textbook only. However, they have to select them according to the age and the level of the learners. Visual materials can provide the teacher with the opportunity of being creative in designing his/her lessons. Here, the teacher needs to be eclectic via deciding the appropriate material related to each course contents and to the studied specialty of course.

With the rapid growth of technology, the teaching profession can allow the possibility of developing the processes of teaching and evaluation. Since scholars emphasize that learning to speak a FL is important, this has led to the wide use of mechanical devices for recording and producing sound. Depending on such aids has affected the teaching methods and the way of thinking about the nature of language itself. So, the Algerian teachers at the university have to be familiar with the use of these materials for teaching ESP.

Footnotes :

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³ Traore, M. and Kyei-Blankson, L.K. (2011). Using Literature and Multiple Technologies in ESL Instruction. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2(3), 561-62

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⁵ Cakir, I. (2006). The Use of Video as an Audio Visual Material in Foreign Language Teaching Classroom. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 5(4), 67

⁶ ibid (p.68)

⁷ ibid

⁸ Ibid (p.69)

⁹ Huebener, T. (1967). *Audio-visual Techniques in Teaching Foreign Languages*. New York: New York University Press, (p. 32)

¹⁰ Basturkmen, H. (2006). *Ideas and Options in English for Specific Purposes*. London: SAGE Publications, (p.08)

¹¹ Ibid (p.15)

¹² Salvadores, C., Torrecillas, J. and Trujillo, F. (date unknown). *Materials and Resources for ELT*. Retrieved in November 2014 from C:\Users\BENYAHIA\Downloads\Documents\resources.pdf, (p.09)

¹³ Faris, S. E. (2002). *The Impact of a Language Learning Context on Chinese Students Learning English*. Retrieved in March 2016 from

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¹⁴ Heimann, P. (1963). *Film, Radio and Television as Educational Forces in Modern Civilization*. Retrieved in October 2015 from www.ipedr.com/vol68/003-ICLLL2013-A00010.pdf, (p.07)

¹⁵ Ibid (p.16)

¹⁶ Mai, L.T.T, and Nguyet, N.T.M. (2012). *Teaching Conversational Strategies Through Video Clips*. Retrieved in June 2014 from

http://www.camtesol.org/Download/LEiA_Vol3_Iss1_2012/LEiA_V3_I1_04_Nguyet_Mai_Teaching_Conversational_Strategies_Through_Video_Clips.pdf, (pp. 33-34)

¹⁷ Cakir, I. (2006). The Use of Video as an Audio Visual Material in Foreign Language Teaching Classroom. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 5(4), 69

¹⁸ Ibid

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