

INTEGRATING MULTIMEDIA IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO OMANI LEARNERS

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Abstract. *This paper reports on the study recently conducted to shed light on the extent of multimedia integration in teaching English as a Foreign Language at Shinas College of Technology (ShCT), Sultanate of Oman. Carried out during the first semester of the 2014-15 Academic Year, the study was primarily intended to aid administrators in crafting policies related to teaching English as a Foreign Language. Using a two-part questionnaire, the study elicited data from 60 language lecturers. The results of the study indicated that the majority of the lecturers frequently integrated multimedia in teaching English, particularly in introducing a topic, providing enhancement activities, unlocking technical vocabulary, and providing listening activities. Data also revealed the following: the lecturers' key reasons for integrating multimedia, the factors that facilitate multimedia integration, and the challenges encountered by the lecturers in integrating multimedia in their English language classrooms. Finally, some pedagogical implications and recommendations for policy-making are shared based on the findings.*

Key words: *multimedia, multimedia integration, English as a Foreign Language (EFL)*

1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing availability of multimedia resources for classroom use has made a huge difference in the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Through the years, the successful application of multimedia technology in education has made teaching and learning English fascinating and challenging. As multimedia equipment, technical support and teachers' training on the use of technology in education have become more accessible to educators, the pressing imperative is: Do English language teachers integrate multimedia technology in teaching and use it to further the lofty goal of delivering quality language education?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Multimedia is defined as the combination of multiple forms of media - text, photos, audio, video and graphics - in a presentation (Schwartz & Beichner, 1999, as cited in Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). In academe, multimedia commonly refers to the use of PowerPoint or Prezi Presentations that usually include texts and other multimedia elements like audio, video, and graphics, which are ultimately aimed at reinforcing EFL learning.

A number of scholars asserted that the integration of multimedia in teaching EFL makes learning engaging, meaningful and effective (Mayer, 2001 as cited in Young 2003; Warschauer, 1996 as cited in Lin, 2001; Moqbel & Rao, 2013; and Gilakjani, 2012). Moreover, as multimedia provides meaningful experiences for the learners, integrating it in teaching a language fosters interaction among students, increases students' creativity and makes students intrinsically motivated (Fletcher, 2003; Astleiner & Wiesner, 2004; Yarbrough, 2001 as cited in Gilakjani, 2012).

Advancements in technology have encouraged language teachers to more fully integrate computer technology into the learning process (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). Several factors foster the use of technology, or multimedia technology in particular, in ESL/EFL classes (Boulter, 2007). Among these factors are modeling from other teachers, training in educational technology, providing technical support and access to equipment, and instilling the culture of technology.

As integrating multimedia in teaching English is challenging, lecturers encounter some barriers to the integration of multimedia in their classrooms. In her study in the Asia-Pacific Region, Boulter (2007) found out that English language university teachers are deterred from using multimedia technology in teaching by the following: lack of time, lack of training, lack of technical support, lack of equipment and working in an institution with no culture of technology.

Considering the regional contexts, Al Issa (2011) raised the fact that one of the concerns in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries - including the Sultanate of Oman - is the use of technology in language education. This concern seems enigmatic considering that higher education institutions in Oman showcase rich technological resources (Al Busaidi & Tuzlukova, 2013), while teachers and students are zealous in technology-based language education (Emerson & Tuzlukova, 2012; Scully, 2008). In the local context, the EFL classrooms of Shinas College of Technology (ShCT) feature impressive multimedia resources for classroom use as documented in the Inventory of Technological Resources (2015) prepared by the Educational Technology Center of the College.

3. THE STUDY

3.1. Purpose of the study

The study endeavored to ascertain the extent of multimedia integration in teaching the English language at Shinas College of Technology; whereas, the results shall aid in formulating college policies on the integration of multimedia in teaching English to Omani learners. Specifically, the study aimed to shed light on the following research questions:

1. What is the profile of respondents with regard to their age, and length of experience of teaching English as a foreign language?
2. What is the extent of integrating multimedia in teaching English at ShCT?
3. What is the extent of integrating multimedia in different classroom activities?
4. What are the respondents' primary reasons for integrating multimedia in teaching English at the College?
5. What factors facilitate the respondents' integration of multimedia in teaching English at ShCT?
6. What challenges/barriers have the respondents encountered in integrating multimedia in teaching English at ShCT?

7. Is there a significant difference in the respondents' extent of integrating multimedia in teaching English when grouped according to age and length of experience of teaching English as a Foreign Language?

8. Is there a significant difference in the extent of the frequency of integrating multimedia in the different classroom activities when grouped according to age and length of experience of teaching English as a Foreign Language?

3.2. Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between the respondents' age and the extent to which they integrate multimedia in teaching EFL.

2. There is no significant difference between the respondents' length of teaching experience and the extent to which they integrate multimedia in teaching EFL.

3. There is no significant difference in the extent of the frequency of integrating multimedia in the different classroom activities when grouped according to age.

4. There is no significant difference in the extent of the frequency of integrating multimedia in the different classroom activities when grouped according to length of experience of teaching English as a Foreign Language.

3.3. Methodology

The study used a descriptive survey conducted at Shinas College of Technology in the Sultanate of Oman during the first semester of the 2014-15 Academic Year. The study elicited data through the administration of the Multimedia Integration Questionnaire, which was designed by the researcher considering valuable input from Boulter (2007) and Gilakjani (2012). After it was piloted in September 2014, the Questionnaire was refined and eventually administered to 60 out of a total of 72 lecturers. These lecturers had been teaching at ShCT for at least three semesters or one academic year. For statistical analysis of the data obtained, SPSS for Windows version 17 was used.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data revealed that the majority or 56.67% of the respondents are 41 years old and above. This implies that the majority of the lecturers in ShCT are digital immigrants. In terms of length of teaching experience, the majority of the respondents have been teaching English as a Foreign Language for not more than 9 years; whereas, more than one-third of the respondents have been teaching EFL for 10 years and above. This may be attributed to the minimum hiring requirement of the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) of the Sultanate of Oman. It is noteworthy that the EFL lecturers recruited by the MOM have at least five year college teaching experience after finishing their master's degree; however, it should also not be underscored that some lecturers did not teach EFL in their previous workplace as they taught English to native speakers and/or English as a Second Language before coming to Shinas College of Technology.

Table 1 unveils that PowerPoint presentations and video clips are frequently integrated by the majority of the lecturers in teaching EFL. This finding may be attributed to the EFL lecturers' knowledge of the nature of their students, particularly on the need to motivate the Omani learners and provide varied meaningful multi-sensory experiences to make their

learning enjoyable and effective. As Gilakjani (2012) posited, teachers are using multimedia not only to find ways to teach efficiently but also to let students learn effectively.

Table 1 Mean extent of respondents' use of multimedia in teaching EFL

Multimedia	Mean	Qualitative description
1. Videos/video clips	2,75	Often
2. Movies	1,48	Never
3. PowerPoint presentations	3,08	Often
4. Prezi presentations	1,08	Never

The data in Table 2 show that the majority of the respondents frequently integrate multimedia in teaching EFL, particularly in introducing a topic, in providing enhancement activities, in unlocking technical vocabulary and in providing listening activities. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the EFL lecturers never integrate multimedia in silent reading activities. This finding lends support to the assertion of Warschauer (1996 as cited in Lin, 2001), Moqbel and Rao (2013), and Gilakjani (2012), that teachers integrate multimedia in varied ways to make the learning and teaching environments engaging, meaningful and effective.

Table 2 Mean extent of respondents' use of multimedia in different classroom activities

Classroom activity in which multimedia is integrated	Mean	Qualitative description
1. Topic introduction	3.38	Often
2. Enhancement activity	2.82	Often
3. Pronunciation models/ drills	2.45	Sometimes
4. Unlocking technical vocabulary	2.60	Often
5. Pre-writing activity	2.53	Sometimes
6. Listening activity	2.97	Often
7. Oral reading activity	1.90	Sometimes
8. Silent reading activity	1.53	Never

Table 3 reveals that the majority of the EFL lecturers in ShCT frequently integrate multimedia in teaching because they perceive that multimedia easily motivates the learners, provides variety, and facilitates learning EFL. Again, this finding supports the claims of Warschauer (1996 as cited in Lin, 2001), Moqbel & Rao (2013), and Gilakjani (2012) that multimedia makes learning interactive, meaningful, motivating and effective.

Table 3 Rank distribution of respondents' primary reasons for integrating multimedia in teaching EFL

Primary reasons for integrating multimedia in teaching EFL	Sum of ranks	Rank
a. It provides variety in the classroom.	139	2
b. It helps limit teacher-talk.	237	6
c. It easily motivates learners.	130	1
d. It provides authentic materials.	230	5
e. It fosters learner autonomy.	218	4
f. It promotes academic freedom.	279	7
g. It facilitates learning the language.	173	3

The data in Table 4 unveil that ‘access to equipment’ is the primary factor that facilitates the EFL lecturers’ use of technology in EFL classrooms. This is rightly so as the majority of the EFL classrooms at ShCT are equipped with desktop computers, speakers and LCD projectors, as documented in the ShCT Inventory of Technological Resources as of April 2015. Moreover, the availability of technical support and educational technology training also facilitate the use of multimedia in ShCT. It is noteworthy that technical support is available to the EFL lecturers through the Educational Technology Center (ETC) of the college that ensures the presence of technical staff who could assist the lecturers whenever they use the technological resources in their classrooms. This lends support to the finding of Boulter (2007) that EFL/ESL teachers who access technical support will use multimedia in the classroom more than those who do not access to technical support.

Table 4 Frequency and percentage distribution of factors that facilitate the use of multimedia in ShCT

Factors that facilitate the integration of multimedia in teaching EFL	Frequency	Percentage
1. Modeling from other teachers	29	48.3
2. Educational technology training	31	51.7
3. Availability of technical support	35	58.3
4. Access to equipment	37	61.7
5. Culture of technology in ShCT	27	45.0

Meanwhile, the ETC technical staff is always ready to help the lecturers in downloading videos for classroom use, and regularly conducts workshops on the use of the available technology like AktivBoard and Open Sankore to new lecturers. Again, this concurs with the following findings of Boulter (2007): 1) EFL/ESL teachers who collaborate with colleagues will use multimedia in their classroom more than teachers who do not regularly collaborate with colleagues, 2) EFL/ESL teachers who have received formal computer training and/or professional learning in technology will use multimedia in the classroom more than those who have little or no professional learning.

Table 5 reveals that ‘lack of time’ and ‘lack of equipment’ are perceived by the majority of the respondents as the challenges they encounter in integrating multimedia in teaching EFL. Lack of time may be attributed to the nature of preparing and/or developing multimedia resources being taxing and time-consuming. Hence, lack of time may be addressed if teachers collaborate by sharing multimedia resources like audio clips, video clips, PowerPoint and Prezi Presentations.

Table 5 Frequency and percentage distribution of the challenges/ barriers encountered by the respondents in integrating multimedia in teaching EFL

Challenges/ barriers encountered in using multimedia	Frequency	Percentage
1. Lack of time	35	58.3
2. Lack of training	22	36.7
3. Lack of technical support	19	31.7
4. Lack of equipment	31	51.7
5. Working in an institution with no culture of excellence	11	18.3

Meanwhile, lack of equipment in ShCT's context actually means 'unavailability of the technological resources' in some of the classrooms (specifically the Caravan classrooms). As documented in the ShCT Inventory of Technological Resources, the College has portable laptops, speakers and LCD projectors for the Caravan classrooms; however, these are not installed permanently in said classrooms as they are not provided with security cameras. As bringing the multimedia resources regularly into the classrooms is inconvenient, the majority of the English lecturers considered this 'unavailability of technological resources in the classrooms' a barrier to the integration of multimedia in teaching English.

The data in Table 6 show that regardless of age, respondents do not differ in the extent to which they integrate multimedia in their teaching of EFL. This may be attributed to the inclusion of 'use of technology in teaching' as a component of Teachers' Performance Appraisal, which is administered to the students at the end of every semester. It may be inferred then that EFL lecturers in ShCT are encouraged, or even compelled, to integrate multimedia in teaching, regardless of their age. Nonetheless, this finding runs contrary to the finding of Boulter (2007) in the Asia-Pacific Region that younger English language educators integrate technology more frequently than the older ones.

Table 6 Independent samples T-test for significant difference in the respondents' extent of integrating multimedia in teaching EFL when grouped according to age

Age group	Age group	Mean	Std. deviation	Computed t-test value	P-value	Remarks
Videos/ video clips	41 yrs and above	2.68	1.121	-0.516	0.608	Not significant
	40 yrs and below	2.84	1.119			
Movies	41 yrs and above	1.53	1.212	0.172	0.864	Not significant
	40 yrs and below	1.47	0.964			
PowerPoint presentations	41 yrs and above	2.91	1.215	-1.411	0.164	Not significant
	40 yrs and below	3.37	0.955			
Prezi presentations	41 yrs and above	0.97	0.834	-1.453	0.152	Not significant
	40 yrs and below	1.32	0.820			

Table 7 reveals that respondents, regardless of the length of teaching experience, do not differ in the extent to which they integrate multimedia in teaching EFL. Again, this may be attributed to the inclusion of 'use of technology in teaching' as a component of EFL Teachers' Appraisal. With that knowledge, both seasoned and new EFL teachers integrate multimedia in teaching EFL to the same extent. However, this finding runs contrary to the findings of Boulter (2007) in the Asia-Pacific Region that English language university teachers who have less than 10 years of teaching experience will use multimedia in the classroom more than teachers with more than 10 years of teaching experience. The different academic contexts in which the two studies were carried out may well explain the opposing findings.

The data in Table 8 reveal that respondents regardless of age do not differ in the extent to which they integrate multimedia in the different classroom activities in teaching EFL. This finding is not consistent with the finding of Boulter (2007) in the Asia-Pacific Region where she found out that younger ESL/EFL university teachers integrate technology more frequently than their older colleagues. However, given that the context of Shinas College of Technology is far different from the contexts in the Asia-Pacific Universities included in the study of

Boulter, the finding of this study may be attributed to the inclusion of ‘use of technology in teaching’ as a component of EFL teachers’ appraisal in ShCT. Thus with such knowledge, the EFL teachers at ShCT have come to embrace the regular use of multimedia technology in teaching EFL to their Omani learners.

Table 7 Independent Samples T-test for Significant Difference in the Respondents’ Extent of Integrating Multimedia in Teaching EFL when Grouped According to Length of EFL Teaching Experience

Multimedia used	Length of EFL teaching experience	Mean	Std. deviation	Computed t-test value	P-value	Remarks
Videos/ video clips	10 yrs and above	2.64	1.002	-0.306	0.761	Not significant
	9 yrs and below	2.73	1.126			
Movies	10 years and above	1.50	1.102	-0.051	0.960	Not significant
	9 years and below	1.52	1.064			
PowerPoint presentations	10 years and above	2.50	0.964	-2.924	0.005	Significant
	9 years and below	3.33	1.080			
Prezi presentations	10 years and above	1.09	0.971	0.280	0.781	Not significant
	9 years and below	1.03	0.637			

Table 8 Independent Samples T-test for Significant Difference in the Respondents’ Extent of the Frequency of Integrating Multimedia in the Different Activities in Teaching EFL when Grouped According to Age

Activity	Age group	Mean	Std. deviation	Computed t-test value	P-value	Remarks
Topic introduction	41 years and above	3.29	1.115	-0.775	0.442	Not significant
	40 years and below	3.53	0.905			
Enhancement activity	41 years and above	2.65	1.433	-1.221	0.228	Not significant
	40 years and below	3.11	1.049			
Pronunciation models/drills	41 years and above	2.26	1.136	-1.016	0.314	Not significant
	40 years and below	2.63	1.461			
Unlocking technical vocabulary	41 years and above	2.76	1.519	1.204	0.234	Not significant
	40 years and below	2.26	1.327			
Pre-writing activity	41 years and above	2.56	1.599	0.684	0.497	Not significant
	40 years and below	2.26	1.327			
Listening activity	41 years and above	3.03	1.167	1.243	0.219	Not significant
	40 years and below	2.58	1.427			
Oral reading activity	41 years and above	1.91	1.288	0.423	0.674	Not significant
	40 years and below	1.74	1.695			
Silent reading activity	41 years and above	1.62	1.206	0.702	0.415	Not significant
	40 years and below	1.37	1.300			

Table 9 unveils that there is no significant difference in the extent to which EFL lecturers integrate multimedia in the different EFL classroom activities when grouped according to length of teaching experience. This implies that both new and tenured ShCT lecturers

frequently integrate multimedia in the different EFL classroom activities, particularly in introducing a topic, in providing enhancement activities, in unlocking technical vocabulary and in providing listening activities. This finding contrasts the findings of Boulter (2007) that EFL/ESL teachers with less than 10 years of experience integrate multimedia technology than their colleagues who have been teaching for more than 10 years.

Table 9 Independent Samples T-test for Significant Difference in the Respondents' Extent of the Frequency of Integrating Multimedia in the Different Activities in the Teaching EFL when Grouped According to Length of EFL Teaching Experience

Activity	Length of teaching EFL	Mean	Std. deviation	Computed t-test value	P-value	Remarks
Topic introduction	10 years and above	3.36	1.049	.210	0.834	Not significant
	9 years and below	3.30	1.045			
Enhancement activity	10 years and above	2.36	1.364	-1.635	0.108	Not significant
	9 years and below	2.91	1.100			
Pronunciation models/drills	10 years and above	2.05	1.290	-1.578	0.121	Not significant
	9 years and below	2.58	1.173			
Unlocking technical vocabulary	10 years and above	2.50	1.504	-.352	0.726	Not significant
	9 years and below	2.64	1.342			
Pre-writing activity	10 years and above	2.27	1.486	-.770	0.445	Not significant
	9 years and below	2.58	1.393			
Listening activity	10 years and above	3.14	1.283	1.187	0.241	Not significant
	9 years and below	2.73	1.232			
Oral reading activity	10 years and above	1.55	1.057	-1.024	0.310	Not significant
	9 years and below	1.91	1.422			
Silent reading activity	10 years and above	1.55	1.101	.292	0.771	Not significant
	9 years and below	1.45	1.148			

5. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that both novice and experienced English language lecturers of Shinas College of Technology frequently integrate multimedia in their teaching. They do so to ensure variety in classroom activities, to motivate their students and provide them with varied meaningful experiences of learning. The main factors that facilitate multimedia integration are access to equipment, availability of technical support, and training in the use of educational technology. Definitive policies on the use of educational technology coupled with continuous professional development can further encourage lecturers to use multimedia in their teaching.

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