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Final Project

Multimedia in ESL and EFL Teaching

I am doing my project based on principles related to the use of “authentic materials” in language learning classrooms. Here I will compile a suggested list of reading and listening materials such as newspapers, magazines, webs sites, music and television and develop activities for their use. I will discuss practical application of multimedia materials for both second language and foreign language classrooms and look at how each may be different. First, allow me to beginning by speaking from personal experience for a bit, to give you an idea of why I am so interested in using these resources to teach and why I think it is so important. When I was in elementary school I had the chance to take a year of French, German and Spanish. The things I remember from French and Spanish, which I didn’t take past that introductory year, are all things which the teachers put to music. When I was in junior high school I took German, but the teacher did not feel that multimedia was a necessary part of teaching so she only used the text book and work book. I learned a lot about verb conjugation but I didn’t learn *German*. When I got to high school I had two teachers who used all sorts of resources to teach language. Both Frau Silpala and Herr Ronay used music, movies, TV, magazines, and the internet to enhance our learning experience. As a result I learned to love German class and came to have a better understanding German language and culture. As an ESL or EFL teacher I would hope to give the same positive experience to my students.

Newspapers and other printed media.

Books are an obviously wonderful source for teaching materials, but other printed media can greatly enhance the learning experience. Newspapers, magazines and the like help provide an interesting context for learning. Context is important when learning a new language and current events which the learner can relate to their own life. They would be best used with students who already have a basic grasp of the written language so that the focus may rest mostly in comprehension. Older students who are fairly advanced may be able to use a daily news source such as the Star Tribune where as for younger or less advanced students a publication like Scholastic News would be more ideal. The Scholastic company sells magazines specifically for the classroom and offers materials for many different reading levels. They contain interesting and current stories specifically designed for kids, as well as suggestions for discussion questions. The opportunity for discussion is one of the benefits of current printed media. Teachers should encourage students discuss article they have read, not only to check comprehension but also to get the student to practice their verbal English skills. For ESL and EFL students discussion of current events can help them better understand American culture and perspective. It can also help ESL students to comprehend some of the things their American-born peers talk about in day to day life.

Teachers can also use the newspaper as a template for the students to create their own publication, to practice their writing skills. They could report of school events or

even summarize things they have read in a “real” newspaper. This activity can be fun and encourage creativity while the students practice their language skills. Most programs such as Microsoft Word have template futures to help people give their documents a “newspaper” look.

Music and Radio

Music can be an amazing teaching tool if it is well presented and used. It can engage the students in a fun and interesting way while helping to reinforce language and teach culture. They say you can’t learn a language without learning culture and music is an essential part of culture. Everything from folk songs, children’s songs, and modern, popular music can teach a student about the target culture. For ESL students knowing and understanding popular music culture is an important element to assimilating into the social fabric of America. Music can also greatly help people learn new vocabulary. It is easier to remember new words when put in music and rhyme. So it’s not surprising that teachers often use song to teach. When a teacher is using music they have to make sure that the songs not only easy to understand but also appropriate for the students. For younger students “camp” songs or music from children’s movies are more appropriate than the things you would find on MTV. “Camp songs” is what I call the type of goofy or folk-like songs that American kids would sing at summer camp. The lyrics are generally very simple and repetitive. Many of the songs also include gestures which help get the meaning across. An example of a simple camp song is one called “Boogaloo” which I sang when I was young at the YMCA Camp Christmas Tree. The lyrics for one verse are:

Let me see your funky chicken!
What did you say?
I said, let me see your funky chicken!
What did you say?
I said, cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck!
One more time!
Cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck!
Boogaloo!

During the clucks children flap their arms like chickens. This song can be sung forever with everything from chickens, to river trout, to Richard Nixon (although I think that is more for the amusement of the adults). It can be modified for the age of the kids and they really get into it. With a few simple phrases they can incorporate a wealth of vocabulary. For younger children there are also albums by Raffi or Wee Sing, which often come with song books and have fun lyrics and catchy tunes. Songs from Disney movies as well as musicals like *The Sound of Music* can be used for students of any ages. For EFL students, especially younger ones, English versions of familiar songs are also useful, as they are easy to introduce and teach easy to remember vocabulary. As an example, I have learned the song *Head Shoulders Knees and Toes* in Japanese, French, German and Chinese and it helped in all of them.

For older students pop songs may be more appropriate and will better hold their attention. Here is it even more important for teachers to make sure that the song has a positive message and is appropriate for the classroom. Songs which address problems that are familiar to students will best catch their interest. The best way to find these songs is by looking at singers who are in high school or junior high such as Avril Lavigne, Jojo,

and Mandy Moore. An example of a clear song which may seem relevant to high school social situations is *Leave (Get out)* by Jojo, a 13 year old pop star. The lyrics are:

I've been waiting all day for ya babe
so won't you come sit and talk to me
and tell me how we're gonna be together always
hope you know that when this late at night
I hold on to a pillow tight
I think 'bout how you promised me forever
I never thought that anyone could make me feel this way
now that you're here boy all I want is just a chance to say

get out (leave) right now
it's the end of you and me
it's too late (now) and I can't wait for you to be gone
cause I know about her (move)
and I wonder (why) how I bought all the lies
you said that you would treat me right
but you were just a waste of time (waste of time)

tell me why you looking so confused
when I'm the one that didn't know the truth
how could you ever be so cold?
you go behind my back and call my friend
boy you must've fall and bumped your head
because you left your number on her phone
so now that after all that you've said and done
maybe I'm the one to blame but
to think the one that you could be the one
well it didn't work out that way

get out (leave) right now
it's the end of you and me
it's too late (now) and I can't wait for you to be gone (you to be gone)
cause I know about her (move)
and I wonder (why) how I bought all the lies (all the lies)
you said that you would treat me right (you said that you)
but you were just a waste of time (waste of time)

I wanted you right here with me
but I have no choice you've got to leave
because my heart is breaking with
every word I'm saying, I gave up everything I had
on something that just would not last
but I refuse to cry
no tears will fall from these eyes (ohh, ohh)

get out

get out (leave) right now
it's the end of you and me (you and me)
it's too late (now) and I can't wait for you to be gone (you to be gone)
cause I know about her (move)
and I wonder (why) how I bought all the lies (how did I ...)
you said that you would treat me right (you said that you)
but you were just a waste of time (waste of time)

get out (leave) right now
it's the end of you and me (hey yeah)
it's too late (now) and I can't wait for you to be gone (you to be gone)
cause I know about her (move)
and I wonder (why) how I bought all the lies
you said that you would treat me right (treat me right)
but you were just a waste of time (waste of time)

get out (leave) (you and me)
it's too late (too late) (now)

about her (now) (why)

you said that you would treat me right
but you were just a waste of time (ohh)

With a song like this you can create a lot of different activities to practice English besides just listening. You can give the students copies of the song with blank spaces and have them fill in the missing words. Then once they have all the words you can talk with the students about the meaning of the song. With EFL students you could have them translate the song into their own language. Teaching them the song and having them be able to sing it is also a good way to get the new vocabulary from the song engrained in their head. Music can also be used as templates to have the students express their own thoughts in the target language. The students should choose a topic to write about and then a tune for them to apply their lyrics to and have them write their own songs. This could be a short or long-term assignment based on how strict the guidelines on the topic and tune you give them. You can show them examples of this type of music writing by playing them some songs by Weird Al. He writes songs with humorous lyrics to the tunes of other songs. As an example, he took the tune of *Lola*, changed it to *Yoda* and made a song about the Star Wars character. It would be both challenging and fun for students to do this sort of project.

Another project would be to have the students work on their own radio programs. If the school cannot air the programs you could record them on cassette tapes. Students could work in small groups, plan a music selection as well as discussion topics for on the air. You could also have them stage a call in session to get them thinking on their feet.

Music Videos and Karaoke

Music videos have the same benefits of music but they add a visual level which can help some learners better understand the lyrics. Music videos or karaoke which has the lyrics to the songs running along the bottom of the screen can help the student make connections between the sound, text and meaning of the words in a song. For older students there are pop music videos that you can buy online on DVD, such as Avril Lavigne's *My World*, which you can buy online at MTV.com. Although most music videos don't have the lyrics running across the bottom, many of the DVDs give you that option. For younger kids, Disney has a line of videos that are sing-a-longs. The videos have clips from various Disney movies (usually the animated ones) with the words on the bottom with a bouncing Mickey Mouse head to help you follow along. Raffi and Wee Sing, which I mentioned before, also sell videos but they don't have the lyrics.

Karaoke "videos" could also be a fun and useful classroom tool. They are a little less practical than the music videos because they normally require a special karaoke machine. They also might propel the students too far into the spotlight for their own comfort if they are required to perform alone. But in many situations they can be fun. At Chinese camp we found a strange and unique way to use them, we would watch an English karaoke video but sing the words in Chinese, like an on-the-fly translation game. It was kind of insane but it was really fun and it got people thinking on their toes. Of course this is only for advanced language students, and you would have to have karaoke discs in their native language, but I think it is a creative exercise.

Movies and Television

There are many ways to use movies and TV for language learning. Movies which are in the target language seem the most obvious. These movies can also be subtitled in either English or the learners' native language. Children's movies or movies that the students are already familiar with (perhaps they are dubbed from the student's native language into English) would be the easiest to use without any subtitles, or perhaps only with English subtitles. More difficult movies could be used with subtitles in the student's native language. In this case the student may not be paying as much attention to the language itself but they are able to understand the cultural significance behind the film, which is also valuable.

Some companies make videos specifically designed for second language learners, and these videos are useful, however in my experience the students, especially the older students, get more excited about "real" shows and movies and are more likely to pay attention to them. When teachers bring in a video for their students to watch they have to make sure they have properly assessed the students' ability level and know what they want the students to get out of the experience. In my high school Japanese class Michiko-sensei would often have us watch clips of *Totoro* at the end of class. *Totoro* is a Japanese animated movie that is very popular in Asia. Because we were beginning students and we had no familiarity with *Totoro* the un-subtitled video was completely worthless. The teacher should also prepare some follow-up questions or activities so ensure that the students comprehended the video. Worksheets, re-enactments and organized discussion are only a few of the follow-up activities that can add to the benefits of the video itself.

A large and fun project that can be done with videos is a class-created video project. Say, for example, the class has been regularly been watching parts of a TV show, the class could script and shoot their own episode of that show. This way they don't have to worry about creating their own characters and can focus on the specific plot of one episode. If the teacher has access to video recording and editing equipment the students can produce something that they can take home and show their families. This could be used by both ESL and EFL teachers, if they have the proper resources available.

Computers and web pages

Computer programs that are created by educational software companies are valuable tools. Living Books, Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego, Oregon Trail, Spuer Munchers, these are all programs which promote reading. Some of the programs are good for individuals, such as Super Munchers and others, such as Carmen Sandiego can be used in pairs or small groups. But I do not promote students being mindlessly stuck in front of computer for long periods of time. These programs are useful, but shouldn't be over-used.

The internet is a part of multimedia that I am reluctant to touch. There are undoubtedly many good things on the internet, but there are also many bad things out there too, things you wouldn't want in the classroom. But there was one good experience I had in language class with the internet and that was creating a German website. We used a program that allows you to publish websites without knowing html and we were allowed to work in pairs. The school let us up our sites up under their domain. This is a fun project for older students who can exercise some self-control in front of a computer.

Conclusion

In conclusion multimedia and other authentic materials can be immensely useful to an ESL or EFL teacher. Newspapers, magazines, television, music and computers all can contribute creatively to the learning environment. I have seen them used throughout my language learning career and were I to teach language I would certainly utilize them as well.

List of Possible Resources for Teachers

-Newspapers and Magazines

- The Star Tribune (<http://www.startribune.com>)
- The New York Times (<http://www.nytimes.com>)
- Scholastic Press (<http://teacher.scholastic.com>)
- Highlights for Children (<http://www.Highlights.com>)
- Nickelodeon Magazine (http://www.nick.com/all_nick/nick_mag/index.jhtml)
- People Magazine (<http://www.people.com>) Includes Teen People.
- Time Magazine (<http://www.time.com>)

-Music Artists, Videos and Other Resources

- MTV.com (<http://www.mtv.com>)
 - Avril Lavigne
 - JoJo
 - Mandy Moore
 - The Back Street Boys
- Raffi (<http://www.raffinews.com>)
- Wee Sing (<http://www.liveandlearn.com/weesingaudio.html>)
- Disney (<http://www.disney.com>)
- Broadway Kids (<http://www.broadwaykids.com>)

-Television Programs and Movies

- The Simpsons (<http://www.foxhome.com/simpsons/>)
- Sesame Street (<http://www.pbskids.org/sesame/>)
- Reading Rainbow (<http://gpn.unl.edu/rainbow/>)
- Arthur (<http://www.pbskids.org/arthur/>)
- Disney (<http://www.disney.com>)
- Star Wars (<http://www.starwars.com>)
- George of the Jungle

Computer Games and Programs

- Carmen Sandiego (<http://www.carmensandiego.com>)
- Oregon Trail
- Super Munchers
- Living Books

(Much of these are also available on Amazon.com)