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Dr. Vathana Fenn

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Creating a Grammar Friendly Classroom through Technology

Ms. S. Sugapriya, M.A., M.Phil.

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Abstract

Media keep us informed about what is happening in the world. They extend our knowledge and deepen our understanding. Nowadays information is abundant and it comes through different sources. This paper talks about how a teacher can properly integrate technology and effectively use this technology for communication. Media promotes students' grammar indirectly by various means.

Important Role of Media in Language Learning

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Nowadays, we are living in a period of rapid technological changes in mass communications. Through Internet, we are now able to access thousands of newspapers and magazines worldwide. Internet has increasingly become a major source of newspapers and magazines for language teachers; just find the web site and click. But we should be very careful while choosing suitable newspaper materials for the students.

Media today has an enormous impact upon students. They have become so important that it has become impossible to live without them. Students wake up most mornings with some music in the background or play a tape to keep their day happier. Someone may run to the PC or laptop to check the mail or the news. On the way to work one may grab a newspaper and have a look at the headlines, visit a library or consult books and magazines. At home, we may watch the television for a while. Each of these experiences puts us in contact with a medium, or channel of communication.

Radio, books, records, tapes, newspapers, magazines, movies, television, on-line media, and new media comprise mass media. They reach out to many people at the same time. Now- a-days, mobile phone plays a vital role in the lives of the students. The word games enrich them with vocabulary and grammar exercises indirectly.

Teachers and Students Should Use Mass Media for Language Learning-Teaching

In the years to come, media will become more pervasive. As mentioned above, everyday, everyone is affected by the Mass Media in some way or another. The collective effects on society by the media are tremendous; despite the criticism of the mass media, most thoughtful persons agree that mass media do a superior job in reporting the news and informing the public. It's our task as teachers to help students and pupils understand this information and transmit it to the upcoming generations and try to use it for education purposes. Mass media provide students with a lot of language practice through activities using newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, movies, books, Internet, etc, and tasks which develop reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. They also provide students with lots of inside and outside classroom activities, promote extensive reading by giving students the confidence and ability to continue their reading outside the classroom and above all they enhance motivation. Media keep us informed about what is

happening in the world. They extend our knowledge and deepen our understanding. Nowadays information is abundant and it comes through different sources. We should try to benefit from this information, by learning about specific issues, becoming aware of problems, opportunities and resources, finding issues we are interested in, identifying the issues that have some impact on us, etc.

Newspapers and Language Learning

Newspapers report real-life events, and this arouses the students' curiosity. Newspaper-based activities in the classroom may engage the interest of the students and encourage their further reading. Newspapers are an invaluable source of authentic material for teaching Grammar. The more students read, the more they want to explore. There are several ways of making newspaper materials usable for the various levels of students, by selecting interesting newspapers and the students will be interested in reading them without skipping some difficult expressions.

• Give the students the materials before the lesson; ask them to look for vocabulary at home

• Explain any key vocabulary in the materials

• Summarize the newspaper item

• Ask the students to brainstorm what they know about the newspaper item

• Tell the students the headline and show any accompanying photograph

• Before reading, write on the board and explain the key vocabulary

• Ask the students to predict the story-line

• Allow your students to use a dictionary during the activity

• Encourage your students to go for the overall meaning of a text, rather than understanding every   word.

• Encourage your students to bring to their reading their own world knowledge

• Try to help the students in understanding the ***grammatical complexity of the text***, facilitate to assimilate the density of the information, guess the low-frequency vocabulary, etc. for example the first paragraph of THE HINDU never ends with simple

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sentences. The first line will compile the whole message in it; a teacher can help them to make that as separate sentences to teach Grammar.

Newspaper Activities

The newspaper *activities* might be a lot interesting and multidimensional. They might be about the headlines, headline combinations, articles, categorizing articles, news flash, putting it back together, exchanging the news, ranking articles, press conference, filling in the gaps, news in brief, photographs, predicting photographs, famous faces, photo stories, moving pictures, putting the picture in the story, advertisements, classifying adds, role-plays ads, job interviews, horoscopes, problem page letters, TV guides, cartoons and strip cartoons, acting out cartoons, strip cartoon stories, weather forecast, predicting the weather, matching weather forecasts, newspaper reading corner, find someone who… special interest groups, newspaper puzzles, crosswords, and many others.

New Role for Teachers

Today the role of the teacher has changed a lot. Traditionally a teacher's job had been "to fill" the minds of students with "true" knowledge. The teacher was the only authority who gave information. Students were supposed to give their knowledge back to the teacher through retelling and reporting. But today the teachers should be aware of their new role and responsibilities that high technology requires from them. Today students are supposed to conceptualize ideas, work as part of a collaborative team, solve problems, and take action. In today's world, the teacher must go beyond knowledge transmission. The change of the role of the teacher is conditional by the development and implementation of new technology in the classroom. Once the computers have been found the classroom environment should be changed. This brings another dimension to the role of the teacher, that of a facilitator and a manager. The classroom becomes a multidimensional environment. It is difficult for the teachers to manage this multidimensional environment. It is essential for them to make the students able to use the computer and at the same time deal with other activities such as researching for information from books and magazines, collecting data from observations, gathering information from a videotape, or conducting an experiment, etc. etc. This type of environment is student-centered, very active

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and requires careful planning and cooperation from the students. The students should not only be able to use computers but also manage the extra resources required by technology as well.

The Time has come that Internet be considered as a tool to promote learning. The success of this tool will depend on students' and teachers' ability to only examine and make sense of the information they encounter, but also to evaluate this information. We all know that nowadays a teacher is no more the only source of information. Among other roles, the teacher today is a kind of a 'conductor' of the orchestra, where musicians (students) are different and play (learn) differently (Lawrence Tomei, 2002). Media being multi-dimensional realize this mission successfully and differently.

Use of Multimedia

Multimedia helps us teachers make teaching and learning visual (easy for visual learners). A picture not only tells a thousand words but it also helps students improve their thinking and observation skills, promotes imagination, etc. Playing the video with or without the subtitles enhances visual learners. Radio (playing the audio) helps auditory learners learn better. Listening to the tape and then having the script is a clear combination that helps visual and auditory learners. By using various kinds of Media in the classroom we can enhance students' understanding and promote it where necessary. The use of audio and video with student teachers is crucial also in giving feedback and training, in Reflective Teaching, in analyzing and synthesizing, in tracking students' progress over time, in editing certain options, in testing, in peer coaching, etc.

Media can help with many issues such as: motivation, clarity, recycling, drafting, revising, editing, variety, mixed-ability classes, updating information in the textbook, giving life and color to classroom procedures and methods, thus at the same time helping the students improve accuracy and fluency. There are a lot of issues that can or cannot be solved by media. Internet has three main educational uses. It serves as a source of information, a place for collaboration, and a place to learn and publish. Some years ago it was thought that the computers would substitute the teachers but it did not work. Learning and teaching through computers is an alternative approach that stresses the student's use of computers to solve real-world problems while learning. But however sophisticated it might be, teachers will never be replaced.

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Music in Aid of Language Learning

Music is another way to help students learn a language and get grammatical rules indirectly into their heads. Traditionally, teaching was done by rote learning. Nowadays, this method is seen by many as simply being somewhat rigid and old fashioned. In certain cases it does work, but there are much easier ways. Finding a song which has simple tenses in it in order to help the class absorb it easier is pretty simple. In fact, this has frequently been proved to be a better method by which students can understand how grammar works. If you have access to the Internet, then it might be possible to put YouTube on and click the song. Make printouts of the lyrics, and hand them around to the students. If the students happen to be studying for an examination which requires grammatical analysis, then it might be a good idea to test them. Play a few lines of a song, and quiz them on what tenses are being used in it. This can often produce some very good results.

The Internet

The Internet has become an almost invaluable means of communication today. Rather than calling on the telephone, one can speak face-to-face with people who are on the other side of the world. As a result, the world of online teaching has also been opened up to people. Learning time does not necessarily have to be restricted to the classroom. Skype, You Tube and other websites offer video hosting which help students and teachers with abundance of material to work with. However, one needs to be sure of how to properly integrate it and effectively use this technology for communication**.**

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