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# On the Advantages of Computer Multimedia-aided English Teaching

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## Abstract

With the development of science and technology, computer multimedia has been used widely in every aspect, especially in English teaching. With the combination of computer multimedia and English teaching, English class teaching is no longer boring but full of fun. On one hand, the computer multimedia-assisted English teaching can inspire students' enthusiasm of learning English, optimize the environment of English class. On the other hand, the computer multimedia-assisted English teaching can improve students' ability of listening and speaking, develop students' ideas in English, and improve students' enthusiasm for communication. Students can learn knowledge and skills in a good environment. The computer multimedia-assisted English teaching has become one of the highlights in English teaching. To make the students improve their ability in the process of learning English, its distinctive teaching characteristics and teaching environment has been welcomed by the majority of teachers and students. It is also a noticeable focus in the teaching reform, which plays an important role in students' learning English.

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*Key Words:* multimedia; English teaching; classroom application

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## 1. Introduction

Multimedia, a form of computer science, refers to the combination of two or more than two media. The fact is that multimedia is a unity of media and a reasonable coordination of media instead of a simple combination of a variety of media to show information and enhance people's understanding and memory of information.<sup>1</sup> There exists an amount of characteristics in multimedia, including diversity, integration and interaction. Among them, interaction is the most important one.

In 1950s, the computer was invented. At first, computers could only recognize the binary code, gradually developed into a certain system which can deal with tests and simple graphics and had the hidden abilities which

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could help people to settle down more complicated information. With the development of science and technology, in 1970s, there appeared the trend of the electronic media combined with broadcasting, publishing and computer, which rapidly created a good condition for the formation of multimedia. Computers can not only make the information processed in the means of standardization but also make the information processed in the way of diversification and humanization, especially in the fields where multimedia technology and network communication technology are combined.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the application of multimedia technology has been accelerated in economy, science, technology, education, health, culture, media, entertainment, music and other fields. Multimedia technology has already become one of the dominant technologies in the information society, and the combination of media technology and network communication technology has produced the video, phone and so on. The application of these technologies has changed people's lifestyles and habits, and it will continue to have an impact on human life, study and work. By the middle of 1990s, the multimedia as a new kind of technology has attracted people's attention in primary and secondary education, because by using multimedia technology, students' interest in learning can be improved and by using useful and auxiliary teaching tools, teachers' teaching tasks become much easier and teachers' passion in teaching is recalled.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, a new subject, computer multimedia teaching, is coming.

## 2. The Analysis of Computer Multimedia Technology

In 2002, China began a new era of English teaching reform and it is the most important part that the multimedia assisted English teaching in this reform. The multimedia not only played a role in our life, but also helped teachers teach the students.

### 2.1 The Multimedia Teaching

With the development of multimedia technology, multimedia-assisted English teaching has become an inevitable trend. It uses computer or other multimedia ways to assist English class teaching and uses pictures and videos to teach new knowledge so that students can get new knowledge and study great skills in a fun environment. Multimedia-assisted English teaching has its own specific definition and theories, which include: constructivism learning theory, cognitive psychology, humanistic psychology and so on.<sup>4</sup>

Constructivism learning theory: The environment of learning should be “a place where learners may work together and support each other as they use a variety of tools and information resources in their guided pursuit of learning goals and problem-solving activities.” By using multimedia, learners can cooperate with each other in the learning process, which can form an effective stimulation in learning process so that students can improve their quality of learning.

Cognitive psychology: The cognitive psychology emphasizes the internal psychological process of learners. It is a long process that students study English, so teachers need to be a leader of studying activities. Multimedia-assisted English teaching can create a good learning condition and environment for students. It stimulates learning motivation of students and provides reasonable strategies, so as to improve skills of English learning.

Humanistic psychology: The humanistic psychology explores language teaching from psychology. It emphasizes dignity and value of human. (1) The humanistic psychology can pay attention to the development of learners. (2) The humanistic psychology can advocate the process of learning. (3) The humanistic psychology can emphasize the importance of learning. The teacher's task is not to decide what the students should learn, but to discover and create a good atmosphere for students. Teachers should transfer their emotional factors to students, they promote students to learn actively.

These theories can make teachers understand multimedia well. In short, multimedia-assisted English teaching can help teachers find some good ways of teaching. What's more, it can make the learners have sufficient choice in time and content.

### 2.2 Characteristics of Multimedia-aided English Teaching

The multimedia-assisted English teaching has two important characteristics: visualization and concretion. They can make students study English well and improve their English skills.<sup>5</sup> They can serve for students better by making boring class become more interesting so that students will study English knowledge better.

### 2.2.1 Visualization

In traditional English classes, students can't focus on learning content all the time and their attitude towards learning English is so bad. They consider that learning English is so boring that they will not devote themselves to learning. However, multimedia can provide a new teaching method to overcome the drawbacks of traditional teaching for us. It can make boring and abstract content become more interesting and vivid. It can offer a variety of teaching situations and real communicative situations where students communicate with each other in a foreign language, so the process of English learning becomes more and more intuitive.

It is not exaggerated to say that multimedia-assisted English teaching is able to enhance interest of learning English and provide some vivid scenes for students. If students meet some difficult problems, the multimedia can solve problems and make students understand English pronunciation or errors well.

### 2.2.2 Concretion

As for traditional teaching, teachers are leaders in class, and students only follow their teachers to learn knowledge. This situation has a great influence on the interest in learning. Teachers will meet some difficulties and key points in teaching process. If the teachers just tell knowledge to their students, students can't understand knowledge well. However, to use multimedia to teach English is different, teachers can set the difficulty of the text into a situation in order to deepen the understanding of students. Also it can make a detailed interpretation for some of difficulties in teaching, so as to promote understanding of knowledge. As we know, students always use language in a special environment and achieve the purpose of communication. Different languages have different effects on the words, tone, rhythm and speech. Because of this, it is necessary to take English teaching in a special language environment so that students can make conversations with each other in special language environment and master new language.

## 3. Advantages of Multimedia-aided English Teaching

In English classes, the multimedia-assisted English teaching has its own special advantages. Firstly, it can change the abstract content into the concrete one, so students can understand more difficult knowledge easily. Secondly, it also can provide a large amount of information for students within limited time. The third advantage is to stimulate students' interest in learning. The last one is to highlight the main position of students in English teaching.<sup>6</sup> These advantages will offer students a good learning environment, so we can conclude that the multimedia-assisted English teaching has been used widely in English teaching.

### 3.1 Turning the Abstract into the Concrete

Teachers will meet some difficult problems or abstract content, which are difficult to explain when they give a lesson in class. Then, to use multimedia can make abstract content become more specific and take students into an image environment. Therefore, the application of multimedia in English teaching is so wide, and it can make students learn English quickly. As we all know, students like watching some interesting things and pictures which make them enhance their passion in English teaching. Multimedia-assisted English teaching can increase their enthusiasm and deepen their understanding about vocabulary or sentences. It helps students always keep a strong interesting in learning.

For example, in the textbook of Grade 7 Unit 7 "What does he look like?" Teachers should show some pictures of stars to students through multimedia. Students should master some new words about height, for example, short, medium height and tall. Teachers take the pictures of Pan Changjiang, Li Yong and Yao Ming to teach how to describe height. Students can master new words in this way, they can also understand the meaning of new words. Then teachers can teach other words.

Another example in the textbook of Grade 7 Unit 4 "I want to be an actor." This unit is formed by a lot of occupation nouns, such as doctor, actor, reporter and two important sentences: "What do you want to be?" and "I want to be an actor." The multimedia can provide a set of animation and help students to practice the conversation.

What's more, it also can provide some pictures about occupation. In this way, students can master new sentence patterns well and they will make a conversation with other classmates.

In the process of vocabulary and sentence teaching, multimedia-assisted English teaching can make students master new words and sentence patterns quickly and remember them firmly.

### *3.2 Providing Information Within Limited Time*

In junior middle school, the reading and writing teaching are so crucial and difficult that most teachers make great efforts on teaching; however, the effect is not satisfactory at all as they have expected. We all know that reading is an important way of obtaining information, which is precondition of cultivation of communicative competence.<sup>7</sup> As for reading lessons, students should know a great number of points about a passage, nevertheless, the time in class is limited, and therefore, in most situations they could not finish reading within the given time. Multimedia-assisted English teaching can provide a large amount of information in a limited time, which can help students understand the meaning of passage and learn the passage better.

For example, in the textbook of Grade 8 Unit 2 “earthquake” This passage is about earthquake. Teachers can find some videos or movie clips by multimedia. Before learning this passage, teachers can play the video or movie clips about earthquake for students. Students can understand the feeling when the earthquake happens. They will understand the passage well and get some information from videos or movie clips before their learning.

Besides, in junior English writing class, the multimedia changes the traditional situation where teachers control the whole class. Teachers will ask students to write a composition. Firstly, teachers will give a topic to students. Students will look for information from their brain. But it is so difficult to get more information in 45 minutes. So teachers can show some pictures or video to students, students can get information or ideas in limited time. In addition, teachers can give students a principle line about topic by multimedia so that students can finish a composition in a class. After students complete their writing, the teachers can show more good writing about this topic by multimedia, students can study more writing skills. Multimedia-assisted English teaching can improve students' skills of writing, give more information to students and help them get good experience of writing.

All in all, we can say that multimedia-assisted English teaching can increase the capacity of class and speed up the pace. Teachers will give some chances to students and students can get more knowledge.

### *3.3 Stimulating Students' Interest in Learning*

The purpose of English teaching in junior middle school is to expand students' ability of language learning and improve their interest in learning. To achieve this goal, many English teachers have tried almost all kinds of methods, however, the result is not good at all. In my opinion, interest is the power of English learning, stimulating students' interest is so urgent in present teaching process. The multimedia can stimulate students' enthusiasm and make students have a strong desire for knowledge. What's more, the multimedia can attract the attention of students and grasp their motivation to learn more English.

For example, in the textbook of Grade 3 Unit 2 “Lingling is better than Daming.” Students will learn new words about instruments, such as, erhu, guitar and so on. Teachers can play the voice of erhu and let students guess the voice. This can stimulate the idea of students about “I want to learn.” Students want to learn new words and they will remember them easily. In this way, teachers will teach other new words and students will keep a strong desire for knowledge so that students will remember the words easily.

Another case in the text book of Grade 8 Unit 1 “How often do you exercise?” Teachers can show some pictures about exercising and food by multimedia. Then students will have a discussion about this topic. Later teachers play some videos about sports, then ask students to read the passage. Students can understand the knowledge about sports well through multimedia. Next teachers give a blank on the screen and ask students to print it, through multimedia. Finally students will have enough interest to learn the passage so as to improve their quality of reading.

In brief, it can be reached that the multimedia can increase the enthusiasm of students in class and make the class atmosphere much more active. Students can focus on the passage and learn reading skills in an efficient way.

### 3.4 Highlighting the Main Position of Students

The education reform advocates that students should turn passive learning into active learning. Multimedia-assisted English teaching will highlight the main position of students and make students realize that they must study hard by themselves.<sup>8</sup> It can change the position of teachers and students. Finally students become the leader and the master of the whole class.

For example, in a reading class, in Grade 8 Unit 7 “Do you want to watch a game show?” This unit talks about cartoon character---Mickey. First of all, teachers will play a cartoon about Mickey and ask students to read the passage. Four students are in a group. They should find main idea of every paragraph. Then, students will have a discussion about this passage and find some difficult points. They will solve these questions within their group and choose one student to explain this passage, even they can do a report by multimedia. In this way, students can study the passage by themselves and will understand the meaning of passage well. It is multimedia that highlights the main position of students in class.

It is admitted that in primary school and junior middle school, multimedia-assisted English teaching changes the traditional situation where teachers control the whole class. In fact, students must be the leader of a class and express their own ideas and write down their ideas. Multimedia-assisted English teaching can make students become a master in the process of learning.

## 4. Conclusion

Human being's activities do gradually promote the development of society, while the development of society and technology can greatly put forward educational development. In such kind of information society, we should adapt actively, make full use of developing information technology to train students' creating and practicing ability. This is the way to improve teaching quality. Practice has proved that multimedia-assisted English teaching is much better than traditional classroom teaching. It teaches in the student-centered style. It is better for developing the students' independent learning ability. To teach by using multimedia courseware or disk can shorten the teaching time and offer more opportunity to stimulate the students' learning activity. All in all, the 21st century is a century that is full of opportunities and challenges. It is also a century in which English teaching can be improved and developed, multimedia application brings new activities for English teaching. At the same time, it is a new course for teachers to exploit and create many useful experience to meet the need of multi-methods in English teaching revolution and improve the quality of English teaching.

As an English teacher, we have responsibilities to involve the students in discussion, make learners feel a sense of security to use English to communicate and enhance students' confidence and self-esteem. We should provide more study ways for students and give them more space to develop their English skills such as listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills and writing skills.

The development of multimedia-assisted English teaching needs efforts from the whole society, including course direction, school administrators and parents ideas. The government should expand the scope of using multimedia, which can give support to some schools to develop their education. The parents should support their children to study hard by using multimedia. Only in this way can we create a relaxing environment for students and students can get knowledge more easily.

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