Tell me and I forget. Show me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.

GENERAL ISSUES CONCERNING LANGUAGE TEACHING AND MULTIMEDIA

Every type of language teaching has had its own technologies to support it.

* Grammar-translation method: blackboard, then OHP (perfect for one-way transmission of information). The blackboard was the first example of multimedia


* Communicative method (1980s and 1990s): student engagement in meaningful interaction (learning by doing)

MULTIMEDIA AND INTERACTIVITY

Multimedia allow students maximum opportunity to be exposed to language in a meaningful audio-visual context. In addition, if there is interactivity, students retain information better.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF MULTIMEDIA

Always ask yourself whether it is worth investing time and money in producing multimedia:

* there needs to be a cost benefit in terms of hours (however, generally speaking, you need to put more time into a multimedia project at the beginning, but later it saves time. Think of computerised tests, for example!)

* cost efficiency: some multimedia projects can be quite costly in terms of software (e.g. authoring systems) and hardware required. In some case, however, they can be cheaper than photocopying! Don’t forget the cost connected with staffing and training

* multimedia is always available: students can use it any time at their own pace

* multimedia is easy to duplicate (CD-ROMs)
* students get an immediate response and so learn faster

There are two main types of multimedia specifically created for language learning:

A) **WEB SITES**: can be built by language teachers to enhance the course book

B) **MULTIMEDIA PACKAGES (CD-ROMS)**: require a range of skills and a lot of attention to detail. Usually team work is essential (subject specialist=language teacher, programmer, graphic designer, instructional designer)

**WEB SITES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING**

A web site can be easier to build than a multimedia CD-ROM, so let us see how to plan a good web site for language learning.

A well-designed website is more than a collection of links! It is a coherent structure

a) which is easy to navigate;
b) where any piece of content can be found with the minimum of effort on the part of the user;
c) which can be modified over time as content is added or removed.

Therefore, **design your website before you build a single web page**: think of how to organise your content before you put it onto a web page.

**GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR BUILDING A WEB SITE**

Every website should have a HOMEPAGE, i.e. the main (though not the only one) point of entry to the site, ideally with an easily remembered URL

The HOMEPAGE should be the main landmark in the site and the user should be able to go to the homepage from any point in the site with a single click.

The HOMEPAGE should be **simple** and **short**. Simple, that is not cluttered with images or links and short enough so that the user doesn’t need to scroll. It doesn’t need to contain too much content.

It is essential to have some sort of navigation aids for the user. Websites, like all hypertext systems of a non-sequential nature, can be dangerous mazes where the user can get lost after a few clicks.

- **basic navigation aids**: links to important landmarks in the site (homepage and entry points to sections of the site)
- **more sophisticated navigation aids**: site map, graphic diagram, index, site search engine in the form of NAVIGATION BARS positioned on one of the sides of the browser window or just links at the top or bottom of each document

**MORE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES**

1) Make your site usable by as many people as possible (users with older or different browsers, with or without certain plug-ins)

2) Make your site as fast as possible: fast-loading pages

3) Make your site easy to use:
   - keep the amount of clicking to a minimum
   - don’t clutter the pages with flashy animations (or ads!!)

4) Make your site useful:
   - provide content
   - create a site that fills a need
   - focus on one or few things and do them well (e.g. one or two skills)
   - make your pages printable (students may want to print them)
   - update links

5) Make your site friendly and fun to use

6) Use “cutting edge technology” only if there is a good educational reason, not just for creating special effects.