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## The Effectiveness of Multimedia-Based Instruction in Developing the Sixth Grade Students' English Ability

Pudsadee Kaewchawee

### Abstract

This study was an experimental study examining the use of multimedia based instruction (MBI) to enhance the English ability skills of Thai sixth grade students. The aim of study also investigated the attitudes of the students towards their English lessons during learning through MBI. The participants of the experiment were 50 students, selected by the convenience sampling procedure at Tessaban 1 "Buriratdarunwittaya School" in Buriram province. The English ability skill tests were used to collect data from the participants and were administered to the group before and after learning through MBI, as a pretest and posttest. Meanwhile, the questionnaires were distributed to students after the posttest. The students were taught with MBI lesson plans for eight weeks, a total of 26 sessions. The data collected from pretest, posttest and questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The results indicated that the English ability skills of the students were significantly higher than before learning through MBI at the level of .01. Additionally, the attitudes of the students toward MBI after the experiment indicated a high level of satisfaction.

**Keywords:** multimedia- based instruction, the use of MBI, communicative skills

### 1. Background of the Study

English has played a very important role in many developing countries where it has been used both as a second language (ESL) and a foreign language (EFL). In Thailand, like in many other countries, English has been taught as a foreign language for many decades. Thai students are required to learn English as a compulsory subject from primary school to university levels. However, Thai people use only one official language, Thai, so most Thai students cannot communicate in English fluently and successfully (Wiriyachitra, 2002) like students in ESL contexts. Thai students lack opportunities to communicate in English in their real life situations and in daily activities outside the classroom (Techa-Intrawong, 2003). It is apparent that Thai students cannot fulfill the communicative goals of learning English. Therefore it is teachers' responsibility to think critically about how to improve their teaching techniques and skills to help Thai students become successful in English language learning and be able to communicate in English effectively. Wiriyachitra (2002) points out that Thailand will be left behind in the competitive world of business, education, science and technology if English language teaching is not improved to develop Thai students' English ability.

With the advancement of technology and the digital revolution such as the Internet and computer software, the demand for language learning and teaching English through computer and new media has increased (Wiriyachitra, 2002). Multimedia is increasingly accepted as a means of English language teaching (Fang, 2006). Fang states that more English teachers who have attempted multimedia instruction agree that teaching English with multimedia makes English classes more active than the teacher-centered model. In addition, "compared to the traditional methods in which students are usually passively spoon fed with large amounts of grammar rules and vocabulary, multimedia has shown its superiority" (Fang, 2006, p. 1). In traditional English classroom, teachers have to spend time writing important language points and information on the board. Conversely, in multimedia classrooms, teachers can press a key on a computer to show significant content in a few seconds as long as he or she can operate the multimedia (Gilakjani, 2012). Learning through multimedia has also proven that students can be easily exposed to sounds, videos, visual images and

animations of authentic target language. Students are able to get involved with authentic language, so their use of authentic language can be improved through integration of text, sound, graphics, animations and images presented in the multimedia (Fang, 2006). Moore (2012) states that multimedia has become an important classroom teaching tool because it can integrate all the sensory learning methods and it can address an individual student's needs by requiring total interaction and response. Furthermore, Moore points out that multimedia language programs interest student with visual effects, audio effects and interesting real life situations. Consequently, students become enthusiastic and wish to participate more in the language learning process. Many researchers have come to the consensus that learning English through multimedia can be one attempt to solve the problem of unsuccessful English classes and help develop a new teaching approach to encourage students' interest in English language learning.

Multimedia refers to computer-mediated information that is presented concurrently in more than one medium; it consists of text, graphic images, motion graphics, animations, hypermedia, photographs and sounds (i.e., songs, music). Multimedia has the potential to create high quality learning environments, with the capacity of creating a more realistic learning context (Nusir, Alsmadi, Al-Kabi, and Sharadgag, 2012, p.18). Nusiret. al. further explain that multimedia allows a learner to take control of their own learning process. Interactive multimedia can provide an effective learning environment for different kinds of learners (Margie and Liu, 1996, cited in Nusir et. al., 1996). It also helps teacher take better control of a classroom especially in large class. According to Mayer (2001) "the principle of education is to help people learn. Whether it is for education or training, the goal of a teacher is to plan for "effective, efficient and appealing instruction" (Moore, 2009, p.12). Hence, one of the most influential learning theories in effective instruction is the use of multimedia as a teaching tool that helps make instruction effective and efficient (Plass, Moreno and Bruken, 2010).

Many studies have discussed the benefits of multimedia for learning a foreign language. Among these are studies by Mayer (2001, 2003); Fang (2006); Fang and Yang (2008). These studies have demonstrated the positive results of the use of multimedia in English learning and well-designed multimedia helps learners build more accurate and effective mental models than reading text alone. Mayer (2001, 2003) also points out the potential benefits of multimedia. Given that humans possess visual and auditory information -processing capabilities, multimedia, he explains, takes advantage of both capabilities at once. These two channels process information quite differently, so the combination of multiple media is useful in drawing on the capabilities of both systems. Meaningful connections between text and graphics potentially allow for deeper understanding and better mental models than from either source alone. Fang (2006) also describes the advantages of multimedia and network-based language teaching in four aspects: providing authentic language environment, promoting students autonomous learning, providing flexibility, and realizing individual teaching.

In consideration of research studies described above, the researcher also proposed two sub-problems for the main research objective to examine the effect of MBI on learning four basic skills of English: listening, speaking, vocabulary and grammar and to determine whether there is a significant difference in overall mean scores as well as four different skills in the effect of MBI between high and low proficient students. The study also examined the students' attitudes toward English language learning through Multimedia. The research results can be utilized for teachers looking for techniques to improve their teaching methods and increase their students' English ability.



## **2. Objectives of the study**

The study explores the communicative skills of sixth grade students and their attitudes towards multimedia-based instruction. The main objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the effectiveness of Multimedia-based instruction on the sixth grade students' English ability.
2. To examine students' attitudes towards learning English through Multimedia –based Instruction.

## **3. Research questions**

This study addressed two main research questions as in the following.

1. Is Multimedia-based instruction effective in enhancing the sixth grade students' English ability?
2. What are the sixth grade students' attitudes toward learning English through Multimedia-based instruction?

## **4. Research methodology**

### ***Population and sample groups***

The population of the study was 200 students of the sixth grade students at Tessaban 1 Buriratdarunwittaya School, Buriram province. The participants were 50 of the sixth grade students in the second semester of academic year 2012, selected by the convenience sampling procedure.

### ***Instrumentation***

The research instrument used to collect data were the pre-test and post-test of English communicative skills, and the questionnaire on the learners' attitudes towards their English lessons after learning English through multimedia-based instruction.

### ***English Ability Skills Pretest and Posttest***

The tests were designed and constructed to test English ability skills. The same test was used for the pre and posttest. There were three parts of the pretest including listening, speaking, vocabulary and grammar. In the listening part, students were listening to the audio which included the three short stories then choose the correct answer. Meanwhile there were two parts of information gap for the speaking part. Students worked in pair as A and B, they were asked for information with their partner. Then the latest part, vocabulary and grammar test was a 30-item multiple choice test with three alternatives a, b and c. It was constructed to determine students' cognitive achievement in English. The test content of the items covered the topics which were taught during the eight- week lessons. The administration of the achievement test took 50 minutes.

### ***Rubric of Speaking Ability***

The rubric of the speaking ability was adapted from Phisutthangkoon (2012), Phuphanpet (2004). The components of the speaking rubric focus on fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and communication strategy.

### ***The Questionnaires Regarding Learning English through Multimedia-Based Instruction Attitudes***

The questionnaire was designed to obtain information on the sixth grade students' attitudes towards the multimedia-based instruction activities used in classroom. The questionnaire consisted to two main parts. The first part contained ten Likert-type items which consisted of five levels. The students rated each statement based on their satisfaction and feelings towards Multimedia-Based Instructional learning in classroom by using the five point scale ranging from "highest" to "lowest". The questionnaire was constructed in order to explore the attitudes of the students regarding learning English through MBI. The questionnaire was created in Thai with two parts. The first part consisted of ten questions used to measure the attitudes of the students towards the film clips and their impact on their communicative skills. The mean scores of the questionnaires were rated as 4.51 to 5.00 = highest, 3.51 to 4.50 = high, 2.51 to 3.50= neutral, 1.51 to 2.50 = low and 1.00 to 1.50 and lowest. The students rated each statement in accordance with their opinions. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions. This provided students opportunities to comment on their experience of learning English through MBI including their ideas, concerns and feelings.

### ***Multimedia-Based Instructional Lesson Plans***

The participants were taught English through MBI lesson plans by the researcher. The researcher constructed eight lesson plans. Each lesson plan consisted of two or three periods, each period was 50 minutes long. The research took 26 periods excluding the pre- and-post-test. The lesson plans based on Presentation, Practice and Production approach (PPP) The teacher presented the target language and then gave students the opportunity to practice it through various multimedia activities. The final stage of the lesson gave the students the opportunity to practice the target language. Students acquired listening, speaking, vocabulary and grammar learning through Multimedia in the form of Multimedia Instruction Software (MIS), short stories, PowerPoint Presentation ,clips, Images, audio. Therefore, they attended the class with visual aid and were in the computer room when they learned through websites.

### **5. Findings.**

The first objective of the study was to examine the effectiveness of multimedia based instruction to enhance the English ability skills of the sixth grade students. The pre-test and post-test scores of the English ability skills tests group were calculated using descriptive statistics and standard deviations. Then the mean scores were of both pretest and posttest were compared to determine whether or not there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the participants before and after learning English through MBI by using dependent *t-test*. The results indicated that there was a significant difference at the .01 level, in terms of the overall means of the pretest and posttest results of the students. Table 1 shows the results of the overall means of the students.

Table 1

*Differences in the Overall Mean Scores of the English Pretest and Posttest of Students*

Students	N	Pretest Scores		Posttest Scores		<i>t</i>	<i>p-value</i>
		<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>		
Experimental group	50	12.06	1.99	20.96	3.20	14.563	0.000**

\* Significant at the .01 level ( $p < .01$ )

As shown in Table 1, there is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest mean scores of the students in the experimental group at the .01 level ( $t=14.563, p<.01$ ). The posttest mean scores ( $M=20.96, S.D.= 3.20$ ) is higher than the pretest ( $M=12.06, S.D.=1.99$ )

The differences in the mean scores between the English pretest and posttest of the students in the experimental group are also illustrated graphically in Figure 1.

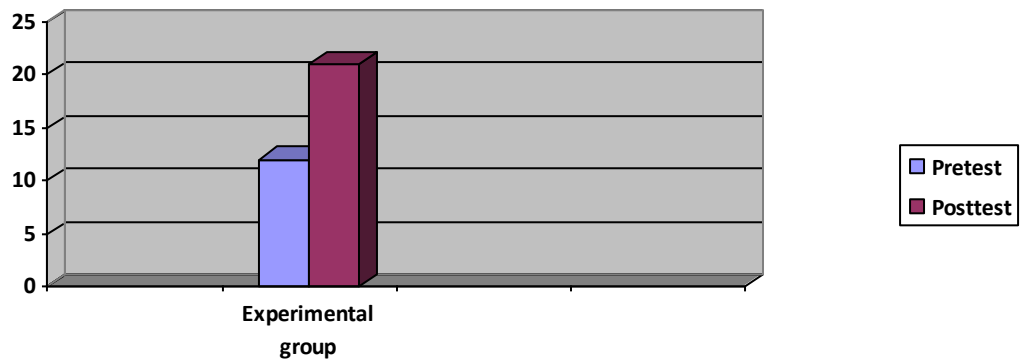


Figure 1. The Comparison between the Overall Means of the Pretest and Posttest of the Students

To support the results of the first objective, the mean scores students’ English ability on pretest and posttest in four skills were also compared. The results showed significant differences between the pretest and posttest of the four skills at the .01 level. The posttest mean scores were higher than those of the pretest in all skills. The highest mean score of the posttest was vocabulary skill ( $M=5.56$ ), which was higher than the pretest ( $M=3.65$ ). The mean score of speaking skill ( $M=5.40$ ), was higher than the pretest ( $M=2.96$ ). The mean score of English grammar ability ( $M=5.06$ ), was higher than the pretest ( $M=2.78$ ). The mean score of listening skill ( $M=4.94$ ) was higher than the mean score of the pretest ( $M=2.66$ ).

Table 4 shows the comparison of the mean scores in terms listening, speaking, vocabulary and grammar skills.

Table 2

The Differences in the Mean Scores of Listening, Speaking, Vocabulary and Grammar of the Pretest and Posttest of the Experimental Group

English Skills	n	Pretest		Posttest		t	p-value
		M	SD	M	SD		
Listening	50	2.66	0.52	4.94	0.79	-26.01	0.000**
Speaking	50	2.96	0.88	5.40	0.95	-30.06	0.000**
Vocabulary	50	3.65	0.83	5.56	0.93	-25.01	0.000**
Grammar	50	2.78	0.76	5.06	0.98	-24.14	0.000**

\* Significant at the .01 level ( $p<.05$ )

The differences in the mean scores between the English pretest and posttest in terms of four skills; listening, speaking, vocabulary and grammar of the students in the experimental group are also illustrated graphically in Figure 2.

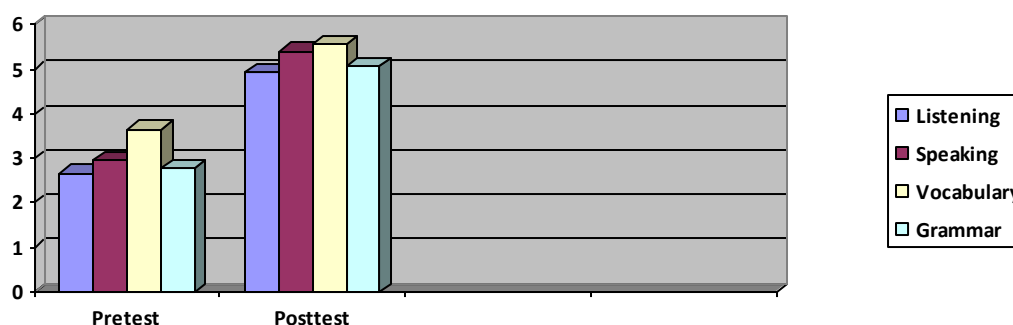


Figure 2. The Comparison of the Mean Score Between the Pretest and Posttest of the Four Skills of the Students

### ***Students' attitude towards Multimedia-Based Instruction***

The overall mean scores of students' attitudes toward learning English through MBI were highly positive with a mean score of 4.60. The result showed that students had positive attitudes towards the use of MBI. Learners had the highest positive attitudes towards items 1 ( $M=4.78$ ). They liked learning English through computers. The next highest positive mean score was item 7 ( $M=4.78$ ). They responded that learning through multimedia helped them gain knowledge. However, four items yielded positive mean scores. In items 10, 11, 15 and 17, they thought they were not pretty good language learners ( $M=4.49$ ) and people would laugh at them when they said something wrong ( $M=4.40$ ). Item 15 showed that students believed English music was more enjoyable music in any other language ( $M=4.40$ ). They also felt that use of English in many careers (item 17) helped getting things done easily ( $M=4.42$ ).

### ***Students' opinions towards Multimedia-Based Instruction from open-ended questions.***

The research focused on students' views towards learning English in general and their opinions toward learning English through MBI during the 8 weeks of the research project. Students 95% commented that they enjoyed learning English through PowerPoint presentations and video clips because they understood the lessons more clearly. Four students commented that they gained more knowledge about English vocabulary and grammar through a variety of multimedia. They also reported that they learned to communicate better. Two students reported they enjoying learning through computers. The results showed that they gained more knowledge of English through the MBI. They explained that the PowerPoint presentation and the visual clips displayed words and pictures, so they remembered and understood the meaning of words more easily. In addition, the voicing of new vocabulary on the websites allowed students to hear how to say words correctly. They could also see how the words were used in sentences. Moreover, they did exercises by themselves by utilizing their technical abilities and experience of using computers. The students thought that MBI was beneficial and helped them to develop their English ability.



## 6. Discussion.

### ***Discussion of the finding related to the effectiveness of Multimedia-Based Instruction***

The main research question of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of MBI on students' English ability, specifically listening, speaking, vocabulary and grammar. The results revealed that students improved their English ability after learning through multimedia. They also had high scores in all four skills on the posttest. This confirmed that the multimedia contributed to their English learning achievement. This was true for both high and low proficiency students. However, the high proficiency students gained higher scores in all four aspects. To confirm the result, differences in the mean scores of the four skills were compared. The findings showed that the mean score of the English ability posttest of the experimental group ( $M=20.96$ ) was higher than the pretest. This indicated that the English ability of the students taught through the multimedia-based instruction was significantly higher. The findings were consistent with Camel et al. (2003). who indicated that ICT tools in teaching can lead to increased students' learning competencies. Moreover, the multimedia can provide a sensory and real learning experience; it presents a greater potential for learning (Lindfors, 1987). There are many advantages of using multimedia tools in the classroom. These include more active learning, diversified teaching methods, better student attention, less time and energy for professors, and visual stimulation. However, there are some downfalls to using technology when teaching the courses. They are equipment failures, need for back-up plans, anxiety for teachers, time spent learning new technologies, etc. (Dale, 1969).

### ***Discussion of the finding related to students' attitudes towards multimedia-based instruction***

The result showed that their satisfaction with learning English through multimedia-based instruction was highly positive. Furthermore, this study revealed that multimedia-based instruction could successfully improve the students' English ability at the .01 level. Therefore, the result of the study was in line with the study by Al-Jarf (2005). Al-Jarf's study found that students learning vocabulary and grammar online had positive attitudes because the way of learning with computers and the media online heightened students' motivation and self-esteem. It also created a warm climate between students and teacher and among students themselves; therefore, they enjoyed working and doing exercises with computers. Moreover, according to Gardner (1985), positive attitudes lead to improved student language proficiency and play a very important role in language learning. This might be because the MBI satisfied the students in all aspects; listening, speaking, vocabulary and grammar.

## 7. Implications of the Study

The results indicated that MBI could successfully improve students' English ability. Some implications for the English teachers to consider when using multimedia, particularly for primary students including the role of the teacher and the role of multimedia.

First, multimedia learning emphasizes individualized learning, so teacher should be aware of the different proficiency levels of students. Teachers should walk around the class as a facilitator to help the low proficiency students. Teachers have to be patient and encourage them to understand what they have to do. They might have the technical problems about computers or language problems.

Moreover, MBI should be applied as a teaching tool for Thai students from the primary level to higher education levels of students to meet the requirements of the digital age. This effective tool provides students an opportunity to develop their learning ability in English and it also helps develop positive attitudes.

In addition, selecting the media with the best characteristics for communicating information is very important. For example, graphics help students to retain spatial information better than text. Also, the methods and techniques, and ways of teaching should be varied according to students' needs and interests.

Finally, promote students to learn successfully, the media elements should be also presented together so that they support each other. Presentation of multimedia should use both verbal and visual channels so that students could integrate content with prior knowledge.

As for the role of the teacher, teachers need to encourage students to actively process and integrate rather than receive passively: allow them to control and work out on the multimedia material and give them the feedback and appropriate assessment for multimedia learning that matches the presentation of media.

Finally, teacher should present new media in the English class with other components of language and encourage students to work on their own and devise some language activities.

## 8. Limitations of the Study

Although this study clearly contributed to English teachers' understanding of multimedia learning, there were limitations to consider.

First, the focus of the implementation of the study was not long enough to obtain in-depth results of the benefits of using multimedia in the classroom technical problems occurred while using the computer. Moreover, the study tested for statistical significance, a mixed research design combining qualitative data should be conducted to observe students' behavior while learning, practicing and doing exercises through the computer. The period of the experiment was limited because of school. During the experiment, an annual sport event took place. After that, the students had to attend school tutoring for future education for two weeks. Thus, the period of experiment was forced to extend beyond the planned schedule. Finally, the students' questionnaire in this study was only open-ended comment. If a semi-structured interview were conducted, the study would yield more profound data and results that would have better the effectiveness of using MBI.

## 9. Recommendations for Further Studies

The results of the study showed the effectiveness of MBI on developing students' English ability as expected. However, in developing EFL students' English ability through multimedia, the following recommendations are made both for teachers and researchers.

1. Further studies should be carried out to investigate the effectiveness of multimedia for different groups of students at various levels of education, primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

2. This study was limited to 8 weeks of MBI integrating listening, speaking, vocabulary and grammar. Therefore, longer study should be conducted and regular time is recommended to investigate separate skill or combine listening with speaking and reading with writing.

3. This study was designed as a single group pretest-posttest design. Further studies should be carried out to compare between a control group and an experimental group.

4. Qualitative study such as observing students using CALL, CAI, or online learning should be conducted. This kind of research is might be beneficial and shed light on other techniques involving multimedia.

5. A similar study could be conducted taking teachers' attitudes, and students' perception into consideration. This would be useful for teachers in developing students' motivation to learn.

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