Online Oratory®:
A Technology Enhanced Learning Method
to Improve Student’s Oral Skills

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ABSTRACT

New ITCs have proven to be useful tools for implementing innovating didactic and pedagogical formula oriented to enhance students’ and teachers’ creativity. The up-and-coming massive e-learning and blended learning projects are clear examples of such a phenomenon. The teaching of oral communication offers a perfect scenario to experiment with these formulas. Since the traditional face to face approach for teaching ‘Speech techniques’ does not keep up with the new digital environment that surround students, it is necessary to move towards an ‘Online oratory’ model focused on using TEL to improve oral skills.

Keywords: Blended Learning, Internet, ITCS, Online Oratory, Rhetoric, Speech Techniques, Video Blog

1. INTRODUCTION

This article summarizes the main aspects of the subject ‘Técnicas de Expresión Oral’ taught in the ‘Advertising and Public Relations’ degree at Valladolid University during the last four years. This subject is officially called ‘Speech techniques’, but ‘Online oratory’ could be a better title because of all its technological implications. A series of notions, examples, activities and dynamics will be given in order to illustrate the innovations achieved concerning the use of TEL to improve students’ oral skills.

Back in 1982, the Grunwald declaration was unanimously issued by the representatives of nineteen nations at the UNESCO’s International Symposium on Media Education. This pronouncement was the first step toward the assumption of the importance of Information and communication technologies in society. Since an increasing number of people spent a great deal of time watching television, reading magazines and playing records, they urged society not to underestimate the role of communication and the media in the process of development, and
instead, to promote in their citizens a critical understanding of the process of communication.

Regrettably most informal and non-formal educational systems do little to promote media education or education for communication. Too often the gap between the educational experience they offer and the real world in which people live is disturbingly wide. But if the arguments for media education as a preparation for responsible citizenship are formidable now, in the very near future with the development of communication technology such as satellite broadcasting, two-way cable systems, television data systems, video cassette and disc materials, they ought to be irresistible, given the increasing degree of choice in media consumption resulting from these developments.

Grunwald Declaration, UNESCO’s International Symposium on Media Education, 1982

The Grunwald declaration manifests the need for an education in communication to prepare citizens to act responsibly in society. On one hand, it refers to the importance of educating society in the new symbolic and visual languages and codes, and on the other hand, in the proper use and understanding of the new communication technologies. Media literacy was defined as the ability to identify, understand, comprehend, interpret, create and communicate via the media that involves a continuum of learning to enable and individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential (lifelong-learning) and to fully participate in a wider society. The same definition can be applied to what we know today as web 2.0 literacy (digital media): the only difference is the evolution of the technology.

Responsible educators will not ignore these developments, but will work alongside their students in understanding them and making sense of such consequences as the rapid development of two-way communication and the ensuing individualization and access to information.

Grunwald Declaration, UNESCO’s International Symposium on Media Education, 1982

In this context, Pedro Salinas (2004) points out that the institutions that used to monopolize the transmission of information and knowledge, such as universities, must now adjust to the new situation, in which they have ended up being another node in the ITC’s universe. The current students more often disregard the traditional processes of learning and choose a more transversal education based on new technologies. The new students’ mentality requires restructuring the rigid methodologies and spaces of the conventional learning processes into others based on flexibility and interconnection. These new technologies also demand new ways to understand literacy. The greatest issue stems from the fact that some teachers are no longer literacy experts when it comes to digital media and web 2.0. As Vilches (2001) suggests, these changes entail the professional retraining of those teachers not yet familiar with the ITC’s. If educators want to have their students motivated to learn, they have to keep up with the latest technologies.

The realistic piece of it is that we are dealing with students that are in that technology age. They are used to instant messaging and watching movies in their ipods... so anything that we can bring into the classroom similar to that I think is going to help us... as opposed to the
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