

Post: Terri_Krause_Week2_DQ_The_Possibility_of_Multimedia

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An example of a personal learning experience that involved multimedia; types of multimedia used, context, kind of learning defined by Mayer)

I have been around quite awhile, so I have lived to experience the chalk and talk era, the introduction of television, slide carousels, the overhead projector, 8mm projectors, VHS tapes, Beta, DOS games, you probably get the picture. I may be getting close to the time some of you made your entry into the world. Given all of that, it seems like it might be difficult to choose a medium, context, and so on. But, in truth, what stands out is the Encyclopedia Britannica and Funk and Wagnall dictionaries.

My father threw our television out three months after he brought it home because he said we were watching it too much. This was in 1959 when we had to sit watching a screen saver of sorts until the programming would start. He then purchased a set of Encyclopedia Britannica that came with a two volume set of dictionaries. Those wonderful books were filled with black and white illustrations, even the dictionaries. I got to keep them when I became an adult and have spent many hours over the years pouring over them; in recent years comparing the information with new data; and, yes, still studying the dictionary.

The learning would fall into Mayer's cognitive active learning category, and precipitated knowledge construction. It was deep, meaningful and transferrable. I was referred to related and ancillary subjects and learned information that many years later has come into play, or sparked further research. I honestly think the reason I find so many relationships between disparate subject areas is because of how I spent my childhood. This was multimedia at its simplest form, words and pictures, which we often dismiss as too basic—lacking real power. But, for me it was instruction at its best.

Can you identify certain principles that were purposefully incorporated or possibly incidentally incorporated that helped or hindered your learning?

Difficult concepts and processes were illustrated. There were photos (black and white) of peoples and places far across the world, which I truthfully doubted at that time that I could ever see in person. There were cross-references to related materials, and in the dictionaries—to related words. The information was organized alphabetically so I could easily search out a topic of interest. I remember researching light, and ended up studying sound and electricity as well. It was an interesting and unexpected route I took, but, I could see the similarities in the way energy was transmitted and I was able to compare the qualities and limitations. The structure of the material was very intentional, offering visible evidence for difficult concepts and cross-referencing for scaffolding and further exploration.

Ponder on what the possibility of multimedia means for learning, do some of these basic principles of MM speak to you? How? Can you see yourself applying them in a particular context? Or is it all just bunk?

I really believe that part of what made/makes multimedia effective for me has to do with the planning and organization of the information. An issue I see with today's soundbyte multimedia experiences is that while they may facilitate information acquisition (Mayer, 2014, p. 18), they are hard pressed to engender knowledge construction.

That being said, multimedia as defined by Mayer can (and has for me personally) facilitated deep cognitive learning and knowledge construction. I do believe given we are living in the digital native generation, we have to be amenable to the notion that learners are used to fast moving, exciting animated sequences and may not be attuned to simply reading or studying a good book or listening to a stimulating lecture. I think one of the reasons my learning experiences were so beneficial is because I had the materials at my fingertips for hours on end, any time of the day or night, and I could follow my thoughts through to discover and make new connections. The internet can provide this experience for learners today; but, the distractions and inaccurate information are as plentiful as sound data and facts. Our challenge is capturing and retaining attention long enough for meaningful learning to occur.

I love the idea of creating interactive experiences that offer learners control of their learning, and provide an environment for authentic and deep learning experiences promoting higher level thinking (Mayer, 2014, Chapter 6). But, I think that in the design of these experiences must be built time for reflection, so that learners will stop a moment and take the time to make the connections and look for the meaning.

Competing with all of the media a learner experiences in a day seems like a formidable task. We have to know how to design engaging experiences in which we use the media to scaffold, facilitate attention and absorption, provide practice, and provide a venue to make connections both to prior learning as well as a variety of ancillary applications. And, I fear the most difficult part of that may be designing the engaging experience...

Citation

Mayer, R. E. (2014). *The Cambridge handbook of multimedia learning* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.