Innovative Tools That Will Give Sizzle and Pizzazz to Your Teaching

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When learners enter a classroom, whether it is an online classroom, a traditional face-to-face classroom, or a blended combination of the two, they quickly develop an opinion about the class material, the professor and the school. Today more than ever, instructors are challenged to create meaningfulness with the information they display as they compete for their students attention. They also develop an expectation of what they will learn from the class in the first few seconds after entering the classroom. Therefore, it is important to make the classroom sizzle by using multimedia tools to add pizzazz that will cause learners to develop a positive attitude about the class and the professor in those first few critical seconds. This paper will discuss several multimedia tools that can be used in the online, traditional face-to-face, hybrid, and blended classes to create excitement and enhance learning. Practical examples of using multimedia applications such as TokBox, Voki, VoiceThread, Tiny Chat, Twiddla, Widgets, Video on Demand (VOD), Internet Protocol TV (IPTV), and others will be demonstrated. The use of multimedia enhances the learning experience by presenting content in a combination of audio, video, graphics, and text in a manner that addresses the different learning styles in a way that helps learners maximize their learning potential. (Vaughn, 2003) Many instructors are intimidated by the term “multimedia tools,” however, the tools are not necessarily complex or difficult to use. It may be something as simple as Microsoft PowerPoint to create a multimedia presentation or it can be one of the more complex tools. Either can be used effectively to increase learning and make the class an exciting and fun place. When instructors use multimedia class content can be formatted in a manner that holds learners’ attention by engaging them and maintaining their interest.

Gladwell (2005) discusses rapid cognition and the type of thinking that happens in the blink of an eye. He asserts that the first time a student is introduced to the instructor or reads the first few sentences of printed material they take about two seconds to make their initial impression. This assertion is supported by a study done by psychologists Nalini Ambady in the study which introduced learners to a few seconds of a video tape of an instructor with the sound muted. The study concluded that it takes about two seconds for students to develop conclusions about the instructor’s effectiveness in the classroom. The study also looked at the evaluation of the instructor at the end of the term and found that the rating were essentially the same as the ones that they developed after the first few seconds. (Gladwell, 2005, pp. 12-13.) This demonstrates the importance of using multimedia for the learners’ first exposure to the classroom and the instructor.

This paper will present concepts and practical applications that instructors will be able to use immediately in their classroom. A number of new and innovative multimedia tools will be discussed. Because of the rapid development of multimedia applications which is expected to continue in the foreseeable future, instructors need to be aware of how these new applications can be applied in the classroom. Exposure to multimedia applications helps instructors to be more effective in the dissemination of information to their learners. Instructors need to be able to incorporate multimedia into their classrooms as a way to increase learner satisfaction.