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"HISTOMEDIA: A MULTIMEDIA PROPOSAL FOR UNDERSTANDING HISTORY OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES I IN PURSUIT OF INTERCULTURALITY"

**SIMPOSIO INTERNACIONAL "DESARROLLO HUMANO,
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**HISTOMEDIA: A MULTIMEDIA PROPOSAL FOR
UNDERSTANDING HISTORY OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING
COUNTRIES I IN PURSUIT OF INTERCULTURALITY**

***HISTOMEDIA: UNA PROPUESTA DE MULTIMEDIA PARA LA
COMPRESIÓN DE LA HISTORIA DE LOS PUEBLOS DE HABLA
INGLESA I EN POS DE LA INTERCULTURALIDAD***

Arianna Hernández Arregoitia¹. BA. UCLV, Cuba. (harregoitia@uclv.cu)

Juana Idania Pérez Morales². PhD- Head of the English-Language Department. UCLV,
Cuba. (juanap@uclv.edu.cu)

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Abstract

The effective acquisition of a language entails the understanding of history as a cultural component. This is particularly vital for English Language specialists, who rely on their view of the Anglophone world to establish the imminent intercultural communication. However, in the academic degree course English Language with French as a Second Foreign Language at the Universidad Central "Marta Abreu" de Las Villas, it has been evidenced some shortage concerning the basic and complementary bibliography of the subject History of English-Speaking Countries I. This research, therefore, reports on the design of multimedia HistoMedia as an ICT tool to improve the existing bibliography of the abovementioned subject in an attempt to support its teaching and learning process. The study used a qualitative methodology, by means of which an analysis of needs based on students and professors' observations made possible to confirm some limitations regarding quantity, quality, and variety of bibliographical resources. We found that these deficiencies resulted in poor motivation for the contents of the subject. The Multimedia proposal was



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evaluated by experts on the teaching and learning of the subject United Kingdom History taking into consideration its didactic and technological design. These experts agreed that HistoMedia would be a practical and enriching alternative for the improvement of the teaching and learning process of the subject.

Key words: intercultural competence, bibliography, Multimedia, History of English-Speaking Countries, Information and Communication Technologies

Resumen

La adquisición efectiva de una lengua implica la comprensión de la historia como componente de la cultura. Esto es particularmente valioso para los especialistas en lengua inglesa, quienes dependen de su percepción sobre el mundo anglófono para establecer la inminente comunicación intercultural. Sin embargo, en la carrera de Lengua Inglesa con Segunda Lengua Extranjera: Francés en la Universidad Central “Marta Abreu” de Las Villas, se han evidenciado algunas deficiencias con respecto a la bibliografía básica y complementaria de la asignatura Historia de los Pueblos de Habla Inglesa I. Esta investigación, por tanto, informa sobre el diseño de la multimedia HistoMedia como herramienta de las TICs, para mejorar la bibliografía existente en pos de apoyar el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje de la asignatura anteriormente mencionada. Este estudio utilizó una metodología cualitativa mediante la cual, a partir de un análisis de necesidades basado en las observaciones de estudiantes y profesores, se constataron algunas limitaciones en cuanto a cantidad, calidad y variedad de recursos bibliográficos. Se confirmó que dichas deficiencias provocaron una falta de motivación por los contenidos de la asignatura. La propuesta de multimedia fue evaluada por expertos en la enseñanza de la Historia de Reino Unido, quienes tuvieron en cuenta el diseño didáctico y tecnológico de la misma. Dichos especialistas coincidieron en que HistoMedia sería una alternativa práctica y enriquecedora en el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje de la asignatura.



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Palabras clave: competencia intercultural, bibliografía, multimedia, Historia de los Pueblos de Habla Inglesa I, Tecnología de la Información y las Comunicaciones.

Introduction

English has become increasingly dominant as a world language for communication in higher education. According to Warschauer, M., the simultaneous impact of globalization, the spread of English and technological development have transformed our learning and teaching of English as a lingua franca in an unprecedented way (Warschauer, 2004). Consequently, being able to speak English has become crucial in the current professional world. That is why students, whose mother tongue is not English, often have to develop a high level of competence in this language to pursue their studies. This requirement is especially imperative for students majoring in English as a first language, who will have to perform as translators and interpreters in different contexts such as tourism, business, commerce, international affairs, academic programs, and science, among others.

However, a good command of English also entails the understanding of history as a parameter of the culture of English speaking countries, in order to acquire a more complete overview of the Anglophone world. Kramsch said in her book *Language and Culture*: “...there is only one way of viewing culture: one that examines cultures from a historical aspect” (Kramsch, 2000). The contributions that occur in an environment of this nature enrich and bring both cultures closer together, making people empathic beings, more open, respectful, and it implies knowing a different vision, another worldview. It is necessary for students to identify, get involved and value the cultural legacy of the English-Speaking countries. This will not only enrich their perception of the Anglophone world, but will also enhance the imminent intercultural communication. In this dialogue of cultures, where the comprehension of historical processes plays a fundamental role, true interculturality arises. Thus learning the English language is seen from a perspective of recognition, and respect of



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other peoples' history, aspects that promote the assimilation of the intercultural competence.

Furthermore, the increasing development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has led to the dominance of English as a lingua franca in many contexts. Terms such as e-learning, mobile learning, blended learning have been emerging now in educational environments. This last modality of learning, according to Javier Ibáñez, is conceived as “learning models that combine traditional classroom practice through ICTs in and out of classroom contexts with e-learning solutions” (Ibáñez, 2012). ICTs can improve the quality of education and bring better outcomes by making information accessible to students, helping to gain knowledge and skill easily and making trainings more available for teachers (Milea, 2013).

However, in the context of the teaching and learning process of the subject History of English-Speaking Countries I, devoted to the study of British History, taught in the degree course English Language with French as a Second Foreign Language, some difficulties concerning the bibliography have been evidenced. Thus, both teachers and learners demand more bibliographical resources and interactive environments to eventually enable life-long learning. In the light of this problem, the present paper focuses on a study to propose a multimedia (HistoMedia) to support the teaching and learning process of the subject History of English- Speaking Countries I in the degree course English Language with French as a Second Foreign Language. This multimedia includes more and varied bibliographical materials, as well as a set of self-assessment tasks, to support the teaching and learning process of the subject.

The following specific objectives guided the study:



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- ✓ To determine the theoretical and methodological foundations of the use of ICTs and Multimedia as a tool for the improvement of in the teaching and learning process of History of English-Speaking Countries I.
- ✓ To diagnose the needs concerning the bibliography of the subject History of English-Speaking Countries I and also the availability of ICTs resources in the research context for both professors and fourth year students of the degree course English Language with French as Second Foreign Language.
- ✓ To design Multimedia including a more varied bibliography to support the teaching and learning process of the subject History of English- Speaking Countries I in the degree course English Language with French as Second Foreign Language.
- ✓ To assess multimedia proposal according to the criteria of specialists from the area of the United Kingdom History.

Methods

The research process mainly adopted a qualitative research perspective. This method was deemed the most appropriate in social sciences supported by the dialectical-materialistic method from which some theoretical, empirical and statistical and/or mathematical methods are derived:

Development

✚ Theoretical Considerations about Information and Communication Technologies and their Implementation in the Teaching and Learning Process.

1.1 Defining Information and Communication Technologies

ICTs are often associated only to computers; however, it actually involves a wider variety of technological means. The UNESCO (2007) referred to ICTs as: “... forms of technology that are used to transmit, process, store, create, display, share or exchange information by



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electronic means, which include radio, television, video, DVD, telephone, satellite systems, and computer and network hardware and software, as well as the equipment and services associated with these technologies, such as videoconferencing, e-mail and blogs” (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2007). In this sense, there is no doubt that ICT is deemed an essential tool of the 21st Century, whose major aims entail the improvement of efficiency and a more sufficient access to knowledge.

1.2 Features of the Multimedia

In respect to the main features of Multimedia in the educational field, Nemetz (1998) and Mactavish (2004) considered its properties.

- It is multi sensorial: it uses a lot of the user’s senses while making use of Multimedia, for example hearing, seeing and talking.

- It is flexible: being digital, this media can easily be changed to fit different situations and audiences.

-Naturalness: it has the potential to make more appropriate and efficient use of human perceptual and cognitive capabilities, by making the interaction more natural (F. Nemetz, 1998).

- Interactivity: one of the properties of Multimedia is the interactivity or the programming that structures for the viewer’s experience. Some level of interactivity is assumed in any computer-based work, but by this definition interactivity becomes a defining feature that helps weave the multiplicity into a whole (Mactavish, 2004).

✚ Research Methodological Approach and Needs Analysis in the Context of the subject History of English-Speaking Countries I.

2.1 Document Analysis:

Syllabus of the subject History of English-Speaking Countries I:



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History of English-Speaking Countries I is taught on the second semester, in the fourth year of the academic course English Language with French as a second foreign language. It includes the History of Great Britain and the British Commonwealth, which it is delivered in 48 hours of both lectures and seminars. According to the Syllabus, the main objective of this subject consists of the development of students' capacity to consolidate their scientific formation of the most relevant events in matters of economy, politics and culture of the English in history. Students must be able to enrich their linguistic and socio-cultural competence on the Anglo-Saxon World from a historical point of view. The methodological guidelines state that it is advisable for the professor to use videos, movies, books, recordings, pictures, maps and other visual and technological resources as a way of stimulating students' learning process.

2.2 Survey to the students (See Appendix. 1)

A survey was applied to 17 students in order to determine the situation regarding the bibliography of the subject History of English-Speaking Countries I. The results revealed that most of the students (13 students), who represented 76 % of the total recognized that there is complementary bibliography in the subject's folder. However, it caught the research's attention that 3 students that 3 students (24%) seemed to believe that the subject's folder included its basic bibliography. 82% of the respondents considered that the bibliography is not enough and only 18% affirming that it is in fact sufficient for the development of the teaching learning process. When asked about the possible solutions to this problem, most of the students (52%) agreed to include more instructional materials from different sources. Some other students (29%) granted to incorporate interactive activities for self-assessment and conscious learning for each content studied in the subject History of English-Speaking Countries I.

2.3 Interview to professors (See Appendix. 2)



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A well- structured interview was applied to the department authorities. (See Appendix. 2). The purpose of this interview was to know professor's insights with respect to the importance of History of English-Speaking Countries I in students' professional development. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for a detailed analysis of the information. The obtained verbalizations can be seen in Appendix. 3.

✚ The Proposal of the Multimedia for History of English-Speaking Countries I. The Elaboration Process.

3.1 Technological design of the HistoMedia multimedia

The home page of the HistoMedia multimedia (See fig. 1 Appendix. 4) is the first web page displayed in the program. It has the name and a menu with the different historical periods included in the subject Syllabus. These period sections display inner information, which include maps, videos, pictures, texts, and links to web pages related to the period in question. Each period page also provides a section up to the right, where users may search for additional audiovisual materials (See fig. 2 Appendix. 4), and a section for webquest activities in which students' comprehension is evaluated. (See fig. 3 Appendix. 4).

3.2 The instructional design of the HistoMedia multimedia

The content structure is simple and easily accessible, which allows the user to find the materials effortlessly. The material is organized by the content of each unit of the subject syllabus. The selection of materials was made using the following criteria:

-Pictures and Maps: were selected taking into account the quality of the image.

-Videos: The videos were downloaded from YouTube. Most of the videos selected were taken from prominent historical channels such as BBC History, Baz Battles, 10 Minutes of History, and History Time.



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-Texts: were taken from online encyclopedias, and publications of well-known authors in web pages, in addition to the information taken from the basic bibliography (British History by Harold Schultz), as well as some complementary bibliography like The Oxford Illustrated History of Britain by Kenneth Morgan. The aforementioned encyclopedias, among them, Encyclopedia Britannica and Ancient History Encyclopedia, in addition to respected historical web pages such as English Monarchs, the BBC webpage, and History Today; were selected due to their consistency and validity by the international community of historians.

-Webquest activities from the Task Section: Each period's content is evaluated through open-ended questions using the format of webquest activities.

3.3 Assessment of the HistoMedia multimedia by the specialists' criteria from the area of the UK History (See Appendix. 5)

After designing the HistoMedia multimedia, the proposal was presented to specialists from the area of History of English-Speaking Countries to be assessed. In the survey, the specialists had to select in a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 was the lowest category and 5 was the highest. The descriptors taken into consideration were the following:

Validity: 100% of the sample marked 5 in this category, agreeing that HistoMedia successfully meets the objective for which it has been created.

Content and Consistency: after a thoughtful analysis of the materials and exercises provided in the HistoMedia multimedia, and taking into account both the syllabus of the subject and students' needs, these categories were assessed with 5 by 100% of the specialists.

Organization and Reliability: both categories were assessed with the highest value showing the quality of the materials incorporated in the HistoMedia multimedia, which come from updated and reliable sources, as well as the coherent and articulate organization of the information in the software.



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Applicability: 100% of the language specialists also marked 5 in this criterion.

The results obtained resulted in the consideration of the multimedia HistoMedia as a valid proposal for the improvement of the teaching and learning process of the subject.

Conclusions

1. Multimedia is a digital, organized and comprehensive collection of information represented in human-computer interactions that facilitate the teaching and learning process.
2. Both students and professors agreed that the bibliography of the subject History of English-Speaking Countries I should be improved and complemented with new resources in order to enhance students' comprehension of the Anglophone world. Hence, the information and materials included in the HistoMedia multimedia were taken from reliable sources, taking into account the subjects' syllabus.
3. Although the HistoMedia multimedia is about to be implemented in the course English Language with French as Second Foreign Language, the specialists from the area of United Kingdom History considered the proposal as a valid contribution for the improvement of the teaching and learning process of the subject.

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Appendix. 1: Questionnaire to students. Objective: To diagnose the students' needs of bibliography in the subject History of English-Speaking Countries I.

Dear student, this questionnaire is designed in order to diagnose the elements regarding the bibliography that is used the teaching and learning process of the subject History of English-Speaking Countries I. It is anonymous and we ask you to answer as close to the reality as possible. Thank you very much.

1. The subject History of English-Speaking Countries I has:

- Basic Bibliography (the textbook)
- Complementary bibliography (texts of exercises, videos, mp3 files, etc.)
- None of the previous ones

2. From your point of view, how do you characterize the bibliography of the subject?

- Sufficient (when it satisfies all the needs of the subject)
- Insufficient (when it does not satisfy the basic needs)

2.1 If insufficient, choose any of the following limitations:

- The bibliography is not enough for the teaching and learning process in the subject History of English-Speaking Countries I.
- There is only one textbook for the subject.



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___ The access to the original sources of information is limited.

___ The bibliography is not properly organized.

___ There are no complementary activities related to the different contents of the subject.

If there is any other limitation in respect to the bibliography, mention it:

- 3. Do you consider that these limitations may affect students' motivation towards the subject History of English-Speaking Countries I?**

___ Yes ___ No

- 4. What could be the best solution to these limitations? Choose any of the following solutions:**

___ Arrange existent bibliography according to the contents studied in the subject.

___ Incorporate more instructional materials (from different sources) for the contents studied in the subject.

___ Incorporate more activities for autonomous learning and self-assessment (from different sources) for the contents studied in the subject.

If there is any other solution, mention it: _____

Appendix. 2: Interview to the former professor of the subject History of English-Speaking Countries I, the current main professor of subject*, the professor of English Literature*, and the department authorities. (It is the same person).

Interview guide:

1. The subject History of English-Speaking Countries I is essential for the enrichment of students' linguistic and socio-cultural competence in the academic course. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?
2. Do you consider that the subject History of English-Speaking Countries I is closely-related to the subject English Literature?



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3. Are you familiar with the current situation regarding the bibliography of the subject History of English-Speaking Countries I?
4. Do you think this bibliography is sufficient or insufficient?
5. What kind of instructional materials, activities or auxiliary resources would you include in the subject in order to improve its bibliography?
6. From your point of view, what would be a more efficient and proper structure for the bibliography?

Appendix. 3: Table 1. Verbalizations of the professors concerning the interview.

	Categories	Verbalizations
1	Importance of History of English-Speaking Countries I for students' professional development.	<i>"The subject History of English-Speaking Countries I contributes to the enlargement of students' knowledge, which is vital for their further development in the different professional profiles of the academic course" " This subject allows students to acquire a more specialized vocabulary related directly to historical events, while enriching the socio-cultural competence of each pupil."</i>
2	Knowledge about the existing bibliography in the subject History of English-Speaking Countries I.	<i>"The bibliography is only digital, the text books are out-of-date."</i> <i>"The number of textbooks in a printed version is quite limited in comparison to the number of students."</i>
2.1	Suggestions for improvement.	<i>"It is essential to include recent studies, documentaries, and scholar findings."</i> <i>"A chronological arrangement through documentaries and maps could be a suitable way to systematize students' general comprehension of the subject."</i>



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Appendix. 4:

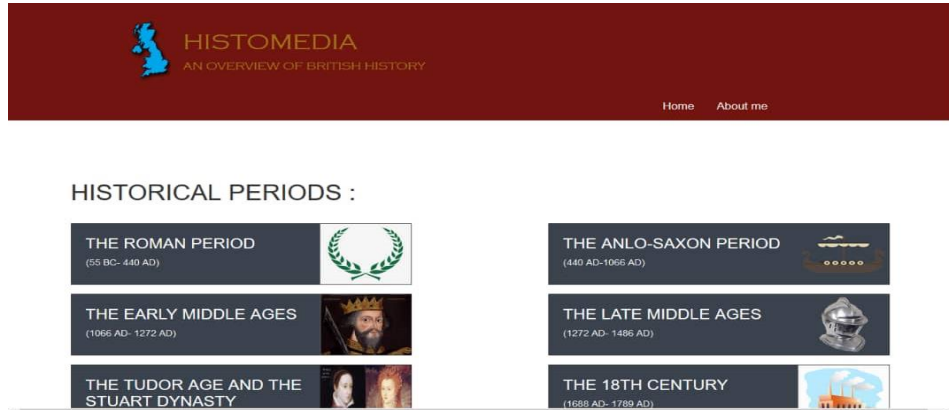
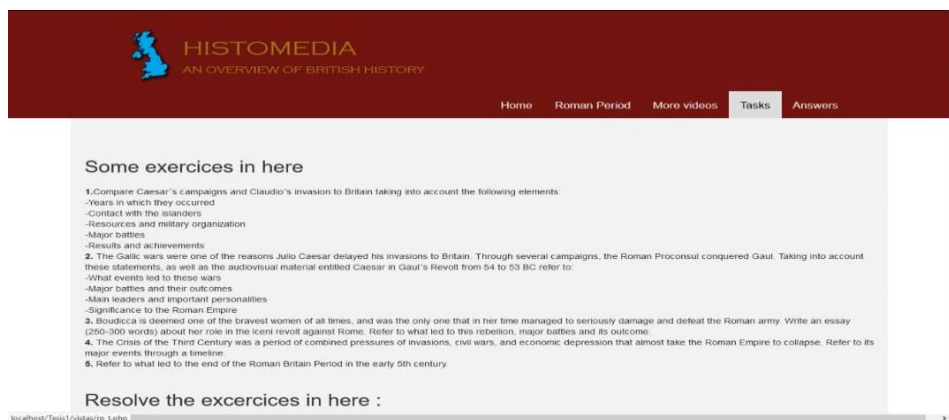


Fig. 1: Home page of the HistoMedia multimedia



Fig. 2. Section for additional audiovisual materials of the Roman Britain Period





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Fig. 3. Webquest activities from the Task section of the Roman Britain Period

Appendix. 5: Survey applied to the specialists from the area of History of English-Speaking Countries I for the assessment of the HistoMedia multimedia

Dear professor,

You have been chosen to participate as a specialist in this research work. Therefore, we kindly request your collaboration in order to assess the proposal of the Multimedia for the subject History of English- Speaking Countries I. If you are willing to participate, assess the Multimedia by marking a cross on one of the given assessment criteria. The scale is rated from 1 to 5 (considering 5 as the highest value, 1 the lowest). If your evaluation is less than 4, please express your reasons and suggestions for improvement in the Observations column. Thank you very much for your attention.

Assessment Criteria	1	2	3	4	5	Observations
Validity (if HistoMedia meets the objective for which it has been created)						
Content (if they meet students' needs in respect to the subject)						
Organization (if the contents are logically and coherently organized according to the units and skills of the Syllabus)						
Consistency (if the books and the activities are consistent with the contents of the Syllabus)						
Applicability (if HistoMedia can be used to manage the information related to History of English-Speaking Countries I and contribute to develop language skills)						
Reliability (if the bibliography is from reliable sources)						