

Multimedia Pedagogy among Literature Lecturers in Two Universities in Uganda post COVID-19

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Abstract: Multimedia pedagogy embodies the use of text materials, photography and other still images, audio files, video presentations and forms of animation, which are all excellent vehicles for Literature teaching.

Prior to COVID-19, most lecturers in the selected universities had used multimedia to watch literature films but not to conduct entire lectures. After that pandemic, when schools reopened, the ODEL (Online Distance Education Learning) department's pleas to lecturers to continue with some online courses fell on deaf ears. This study undertook ethnographic research to establish the reasons for the apparent reluctance by both lecturers and students to interface using multimedia during creative writing classes. The observations and interview findings revealed that subject specifications and psychological factors influenced the lecturer and student more than the economic factors against the use of multimedia during lectures.

The study recommended retooling teacher trainers in multimedia pedagogy because a person cannot effectively conduct online lectures unless taught how to.

The study concluded that human beings are social beings drawn to learning using methods that involve close interaction between the teacher and the taught, and the elaborateness of literature with its genres consists of the teaching of intangible interactions between words and listener, demand for physical interface between teacher and teacher trainee to chisel and polish the genre specifications.

Index Terms: Multimedia, creative writing class, pedagogy, lecturers, literature teaching.

1. Introduction

Two universities were chosen on the basis of one being public and the other private. In Uganda, there are differences in practices among lecturers of public and private universities, and it influenced the selection of the two varied universities. While private universities quickly adopted online lectures during the COVID-19 pandemic, government universities had to go through the bureaucracy of the government system. Some private universities continued running smoothly and even conducted examinations and graduation online [1]. The objectives of the study were to: establish the benefits of multimedia experienced by the lecturers and learners, the differences in lecturer usage of multimedia in the two universities and the reasons for lecturer reluctance to use multimedia after COVID-19.

Lecturer attitudes are mental opinions that cannot be seen physically, but their effect is visible. Consequently, the study relied on qualitative methods like observations, interviews, document analysis, and recorded online lectures. The underlying factor was to establish the cause of lecturers' negative opinions on technologies that enhance the teaching and learning environment.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Multimedia

Multimedia has been used to teach various subjects in different parts of the world. When we talk about multimedia, we refer to anything that incorporates text with audio, video and graphics.[2,3]

Multimedia has been defined by different scholars differently. However, they all agree that it is a form of technology meant to communicate the message more clearly. [4] Defines multimedia as a field concerned with the computer integration of text, graphics (video), drawings, and still and moving images where every type of information

can be stored and transmitted digitally. The characteristics of multimedia include the requirement that it must be computer controlled, the data is represented digitally, interactive and integrating all multimedia components, namely audio, video, text and graphics. And [5] defines multimedia as the integration of text with pictures and convergence of various media platforms like words, text, audio, music, images, infographics, videos and animation to communicate to a wide range of people using different devices. They further state the popular multimedia applications, including creative industries, commerce, entertainment, education, educational technology, social work purposes, communication, journalism, engineering, medicine, and research. They emphasise that teachers and students can interact and exchange informative ideas in virtual classrooms without stepping outside or sitting in class.

Multimedia is important in deepening student understanding, heightening emotions, giving a broader world view, and exploring and is a source of vast information. [6,7] the benefits include saving time and costs, and for the lecturer, this meant travelling to and fro the university. While using multimedia, the lecturer and students stay in the comfort of their homes while attending the lecture.

2.2 Historical perspective

Previously before COVID, there was a lot of talk about using multimedia, but it was ignored as a foreign pedagogy, and most teachers in Uganda never dreamt of conducting a lecture remotely. Then came the COVID-19 pandemic, when students and lecturers were forced to remain indoors. The only means of communicating with the world or your immediate neighbours was through multimedia, especially for city dwellers. In the rural areas, it was business as usual, only that the children were home all the time and could go to the garden and get more work done than they would have if they had been at school. To them, COVID-19 was a sickness they heard about on the radio or watched on the few village television sets. When the government announced online lectures, many people were apprehensive because, before the lockdown, not many universities had conducted courses online. Administrators felt more comfortable seeing the lecturer physically around the university because the lecturer is expected to be available for the students to consult on academic matters and seek counsel on social issues. These duties were scheduled to be conducted physically. COVID-19 changed not only the way we think but also the way we teach. Many lecturers were thrown into the deep end during the pandemic because they had never used a computer to communicate with their friends through social media platforms, let alone conduct online lectures. Students, too, were apprehensive because they had never sat in an online class nor been taught how to attend a lecture online. One would expect that students at the university level who are always communicating with their friends using multimedia would not panic, but the reverse was true.

After some initial resistance by staff and students to online lectures, teachers and the taught gave in when they saw that the lockdown was extending beyond months. Teachers embarked on a persuasion campaign to get the students online for the lectures.

2.3 Benefits and disadvantages of multimedia

Document analysis of the benefits of multimedia was done to establish a basis for using multimedia pedagogy. Numerous scholars have expressed several advantages of using multimedia in the literature class. [8,9,10] The advantages which were cited included:

- Provides Opportunities for English Teaching outside the Classrooms,
- Creates a Conducive Teaching Environment in the Classrooms
- Enhances Interaction among Students and between Teachers and Students
- Improves Teaching Efficiency
- Widens Students' Knowledge about the Culture of English
- Develops Students' Communicative Competence
- Motivates Students to Learn English

The interview guide was drafted using these advantages to establish the extent to which they were applicable in the university language classes.[11] suggested the benefits of multimedia teaching as an environment that enables the simulation of outcomes and increases student understanding of concepts.

The study conducted in Oman [12] stated that mental perception was one of the barriers to embracing multimedia technology, and some lecturers did not believe that multimedia could benefit the teaching-learning process. In most cases, the responsibility to learn online was left to the vigilant students while the rest faded into the background.

Multimedia is useful in education because graphics make the lecture attractive, video adds a personal touch and a bit of the speaker's personality, audio grabs attention and can be used for instruction, and animation gives an interactive simulation.[13]. Multimedia has been used in various parts of the world to teach languages [14,15] dealt with the skill of speaking using multimedia and concluded that multimedia-assisted teaching needed concerted efforts from all stakeholders.

The disadvantages of multimedia include information overload, limited interaction, and requires huge investment.[7] Other research was done among professors [14] and identified a major problem of a gap between multimedia teaching and traditional teaching and recommended cooperation between the two. [16] the study on the

impact of technology on college students' performance revealed that it positively impacted their performance in the second year of medical school.

3. Methodology

Ethnographic research was undertaken using observations and interviews with the focus groups to establish the lecturers' and students' psychological perceptions and attitudes to the pedagogical applications of multimedia to conduct lectures. A comparative analysis of a descriptive cross-sectional study design was also employed as an observational study design aimed at measuring the effect of age, educational level, gender and income on the lecturer's interaction with and use of multimedia.

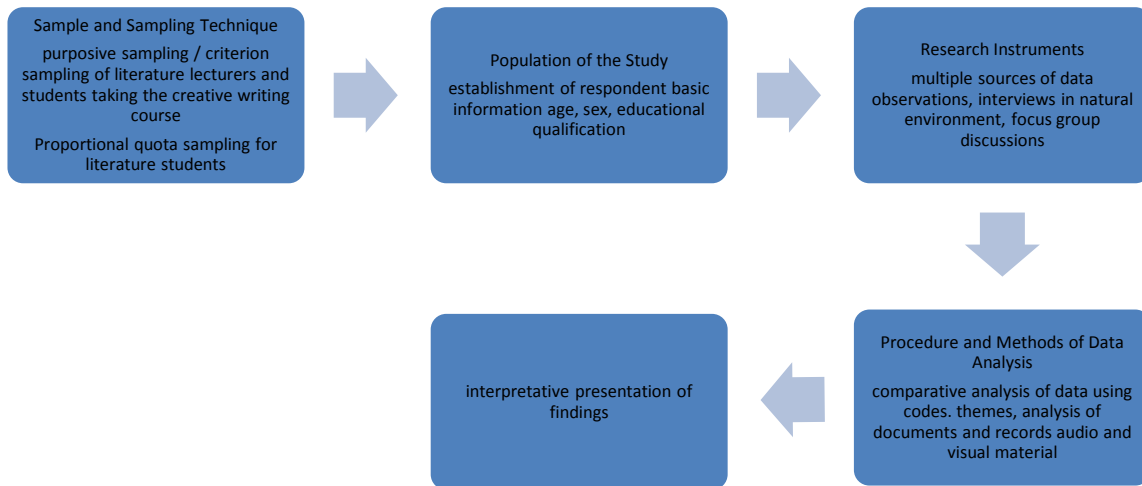


Fig. 1. Graphic presentation of the research process

A survey method was used to collect students' opinions on learning using multimedia.[17]. A sample was selected among the students, and they were interviewed privately in a relaxed atmosphere where students did not feel pressured to express their genuine opinions. Interviews among the lecturers were conducted to crosscheck whether the findings gathered in the observations were tallied with lecturers' views on the use of multimedia as a teaching tool. Proportional quota sampling was done for literature students from the first, second and third years with the aim of establishing student opinion on online lectures received.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Differences and Similarities in lecturer usage of multimedia from the two universities

The findings were discovered using qualitative methods because the study was aimed at establishing attitudes and opinions, which are emotional and psychological aspects of human beings that are best expressed and exposed using close interaction with the subject under study.

Table 1. Lecturer specification

		Univ. 1	Univ. 2
Age	25-40years	04	0
	40-60years	01	05
Gender	Male	02	02
	Female	03	03
Educational level	Masters	04	03
	PhD	01	02
Income	Government	01	04
	Private	04	01

The descriptive cross-sectional study design was aimed at establishing the effect of the variables below on the lecturers' willingness and quantity of use of multimedia for their lectures. The population of participants consisted of 10 lecturers and 120 students taking literature, among whom were 14 students from Univ.1 and 9 students from Univ.2, all in their third year taking the creative writing course. The details of the respondents are captured in the table below.

The table above explains the specifications of the lecturers who were observed and interviewed on their use of multimedia. In terms of income, they have been classified as government and private depending on who pays their salary. The government salary scales are often higher for university staff, meaning they are more likely to have the necessary equipment to conduct online lectures and be able to afford data.

Table 2. Selected Literature student participants

	Univ.1 Government	Creative Writing class	Univ.2 Private	Creative Writing class
First year	20	0	20	0
Second Year	20	0	20	0
Third Year	20	14	20	9

Proportional quota sampling was used to select the student population because the researcher needed equal numbers of students from each group to establish a relationship between student opinions and observations of lectures conducted online.

4.1.1 Multimedia Usage for Lectures

It was observed that the lecturers' income did not affect their use of multimedia. All 10 lecturers had laptops, and they used them during their lectures. And all lecturers, whether government or private, complained alike regarding the lack of budget to buy data for their classes.

The educational level in university 1 did not affect the lecturers' use of multimedia. While in university 2, those with PhD were the most multimedia users.

Gender did not play a significant role in the lecturers' choice to use multimedia in both universities. Both male and female lecturers preferred real-time lectures to online lectures. And male and female lecturers quickly abandoned online lectures when their universities reopened for physical lectures.

It would be expected that the younger lecturers would be more into teaching with multimedia, but observations in both universities 1 and 2 proved that lecturers over 40 years are the ones who were more willing users of multimedia and continued once in a while to use multimedia for their lectures.

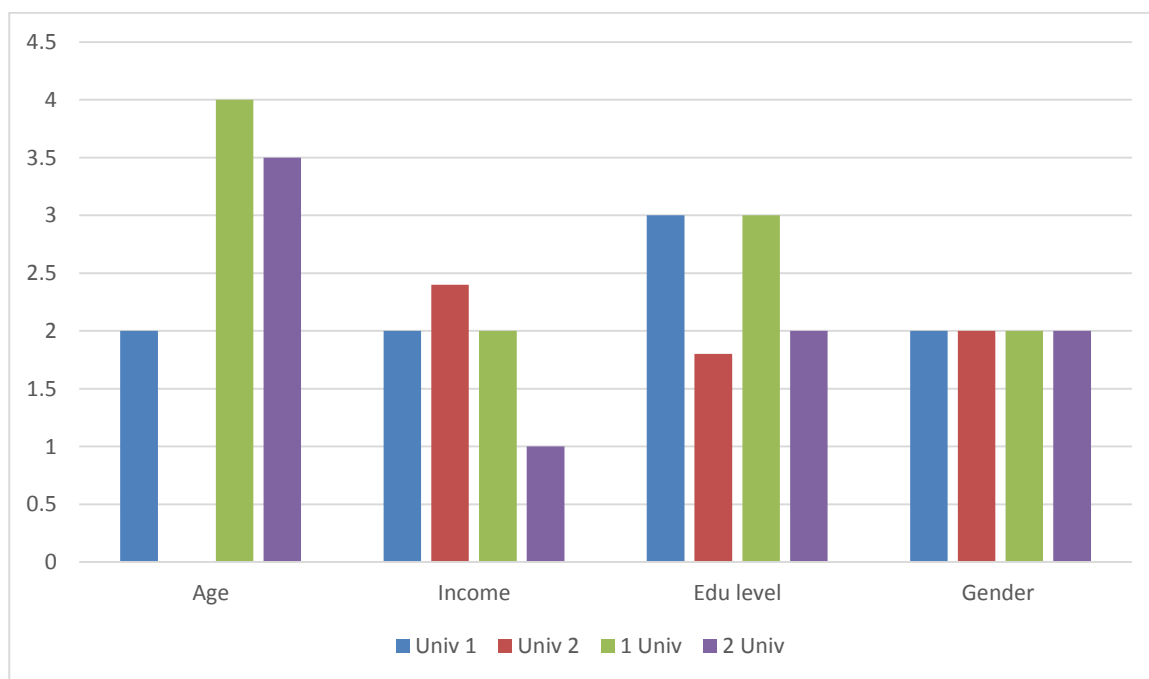


Fig. 2. Use of multimedia for lectures

Key

Univ. 1: lecturers from Government University.

2 Univ.: lecturers from the Private University.

4.2 Benefits of Multimedia Experienced by the Lecturers and Students

4.2.1 Benefits of multimedia in Interview responses from Lecturers

Interviews were administered to 10 lecturers from 2 universities and 120 students divided into students from years 1,2 and 3 from the two universities. Observation guides were also used to observe the practices of the lecturers.

The Interview Guide for lecturers sought to establish lecturers' opinions on whether multimedia:

- i Provided Opportunities for English Teaching outside the Classrooms,
- ii Created a Conducive Teaching Environment in the Classrooms
- iii Enhanced Interaction among Students and between Teachers and Students
- iv Improved Teaching Efficiency

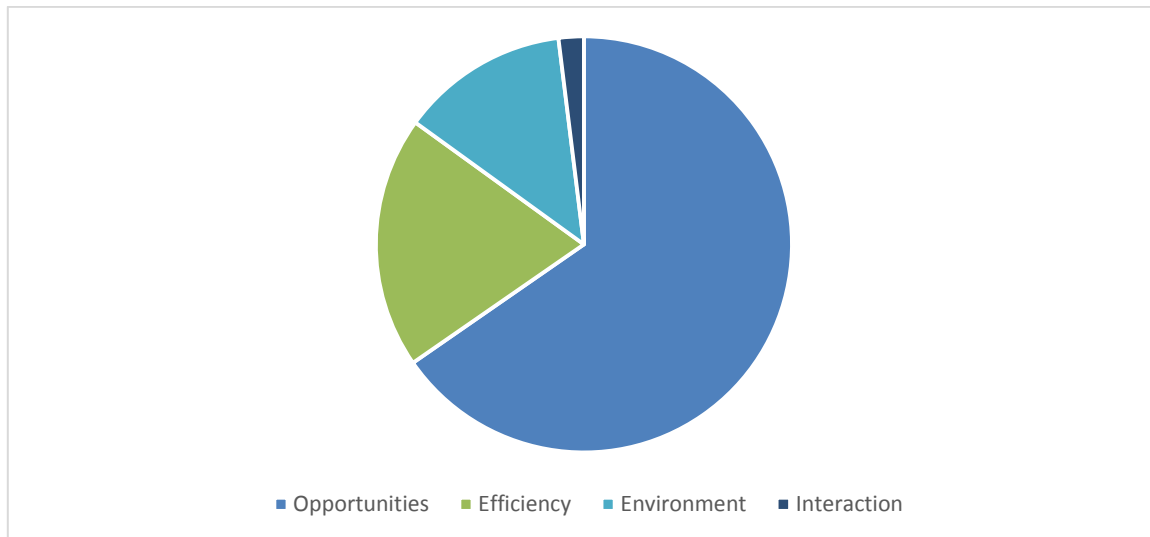


Fig. 3. Lecturers' responses to the interviews

All 10 lecturers agreed that multimedia provided them with opportunities to teach outside the classroom, as had been the case during the COVID-19 lockdown when movement was restricted, and they had been able to conduct lectures online. They all talked about that season with an appreciation for multimedia technology and its ability to keep them in touch with their classes.

In response to whether multimedia was effective in improving teacher efficiency, only 3 lecturers acknowledged that it was sometimes efficient, while the 7 lecturers could not say for sure whether multimedia had been effective in delivering their lecture content to the students. The 7 lecturers said they felt unable to express themselves fully through a device that required them to always be within camera focus.

Only two lecturers agreed that multimedia created a conducive environment for conducting lectures, and they qualified it by adding that it was sometimes not always. The 8 lecturers did not feel that multimedia created a conducive lecture atmosphere because of the numerous interruptions in the students' backgrounds. Either there were children crying or loud music or people holding loud conversations during lectures.

Although 3 lecturers responded that multimedia sometimes allowed for interaction between teacher and student, they quickly added that these interactions were very artificial and did not capture the opinion of the students. The other 7 lecturers out rightly stated that multimedia did not foster interaction between teacher and student and student to student.

Table 3. Detailed lecturer interview responses

	Opportunities	Environment	Interaction	Efficiency
Lecturer 1	Yes	No	No	Not sure
Lecturer 2	Yes	Rarely	Not really	Sometimes
Lecturer 3	Yes	Sometimes	Not really	Sometimes
Lecturer 4	Yes	Sometimes	Not really	Sometimes
Lecturer 5	Yes	No	No	Not sure
Lecturer 6	Yes	No	No	Not sure
Lecturer 7	Yes	No	No	Not sure
Lecturer 8	Yes	No	No	Not sure
Lecturer 9	Yes	No	No	Not sure
Lecturer 10	Yes	No	No	Not sure

Lecturers 2, 3, and 4 were multimedia advocates and continued using online lectures once in a while after the lockdown. While lecturers 1,5,6,7,8,9,10 were not pleased with the concept of online lectures and had fully resumed exclusive physical lectures, they had valid reasons.

4.2.2 Benefits of multimedia on Interview responses from Students

The interview guide for students sought to establish the advantages they had experienced from using multimedia:

- i Widened Students' Knowledge about the Culture of English
- ii Developed Students' Communicative Competence
- iii Motivated Students to Learn English
- iv Enhanced Interaction among Students and between Teachers and Students

Student respondents were taken from the first year (Y1), second year (Y2) and third year (Y3) from each of the two universities (U1 and U2).

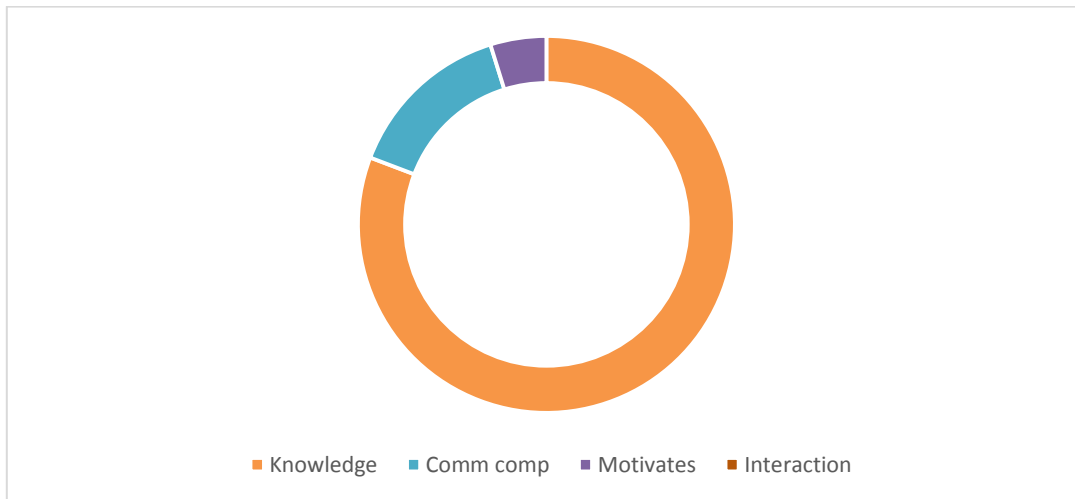


Fig. 4. Students interview reponses

According to the chart above, 84% of the students responded that multimedia widened their knowledge of English or the target culture. Only 14% responded that multimedia improved their communicative competence. Yet, smaller still was the percentage number of students who felt the multimedia motivated them to learn English or the topic being taught. All 120 students agreed in unison that multimedia did not foster interaction amongst themselves and with the teacher during the lectures.

Table 4. Detailed Students' interview responses

		No of students	Knowledge	Communicative competence	Motivates	Interaction
U1	Y1	18	Yes	No	No	No
	Y1	02	Yes	No	No	No
	Y2	12	Yes	Rarely	Not really	No
	Y2	04	Yes	No	Not really	No
	Y2	04	Undecided	No	No	No
	Y3	03	Rarely	No	No	No
	Y3	17	Yes	Sometimes	Not really	No
U2	Y1	14	Yes	No	No	No
	Y1	03	Yes	Rarely	Not really	No
	Y1	03	Undecided	No	No	No
	Y2	16	Yes	Rarely	Not really	No
	Y2	04	Rarely	No	No	No
	Y3	05	Rarely	No	No	No
	Y3	05	Yes	Rarely	Not really	No
	Y3	10	Yes	Sometimes	Not really	No

Most students responded that multimedia increased their knowledge of different cultures when they watched excerpts from various language users, especially native speakers of English. Some were undecided about the effectiveness of multimedia teaching culture. Two said that since most of the multimedia is staged, the things they saw on screen were acted. However, they did not feel motivated to learn using multimedia. To the students, multimedia was a tool for relaxation, not conducting serious lectures. Some even said that making them study using Whatsapp reduces their enjoyment of the application.

Most students felt multimedia helped improve their communicative competence when they saw how other people expressed themselves in the target language. It helped them improve their gestures, facial expressions and pronunciation.

4.3 Reasons for Lecturers and Students' reluctance to embrace multimedia after COVID-19

4.3.1 Reasons for lecturers not embracing multimedia

- a) They felt that online lectures denied the lecturer a full command of his class because they had to trust the students to be attentive when they were supposed to be, unlike a physical lecture where the student was forced to be physically present, and the lecturer could look into their faces and see those who are not paying attention and those who had not understood.
- b) These lecturers also felt that multimedia created an artificial world around the lecturer, denying them a physical space for interaction.
- c) Online assessment of creative writing was sometimes difficult since students could get someone else to write for them a piece they presented as their assignment.

4.3.2 Reasons for students not embracing multimedia

- a) The students felt multimedia created a great rift between the lecturer and themselves. They felt they were alone in the great big world of technology. There was no physical interaction. They heard the lecturer's voice on the screen but had no physical interaction, making them feel more alone.
- b) It was difficult to ask questions online because they feared being recorded when asking foolish questions showing their ignorance. They said that in a physical lecture, no one records, so it is safe to ask questions without fearing that your question will be replayed later for the whole class.
- c) They said that multimedia provided limited communicative competence because they were mostly on the receiving end watching other people speaking English. They noted that the absence of a teacher to correct individual errors made learning difficult.

4.4 Other variables involved in online lectures

Observation guides also provided information on the available resources for the lecturers and students who were expected to interface using multimedia during lectures.

These were used to gather data on how the online lectures were conducted and the lecturers and students' tools used for the lectures.

4.4.1 Gadgets used

All 10 lecturers owned laptops which they used together with their mobile phones. Of the students observed, 96% used smartphones to attend the lectures, while only 4% had laptops. However, not all the 120 respondents owned phones or laptops; one-third of the number shared their colleagues' gadgets.

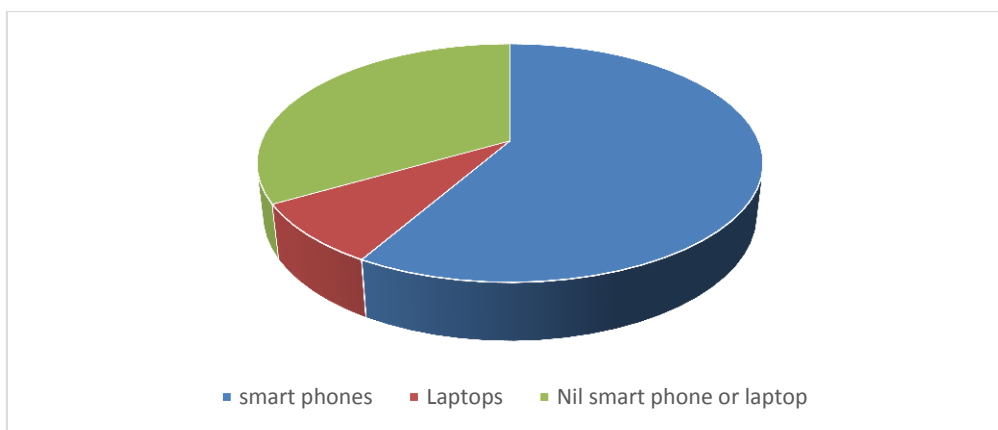


Fig. 5. % of students with gadgets

Looking at the above percentages would explain why most students did not enjoy the lectures online because they had to share the gadgets, which made them feel disadvantaged. In extreme cases where students lived far apart, some missed the online lectures altogether. The lecturers resorted to sending the students notes online and requested students to make printouts and take them to their less advantaged colleagues.

4.4.2 Use of the Video feature

Only the three lecturers who liked using multimedia taught using the video function. This meant that 70% of the respondents did not use the video function. The other seven lecturers who did not use the video function had a variety of

reasons. Some said it slowed down the internet speed, while others claimed they did not like using the video function because it distracted the students from following the lecture shared on the screen.

All these point to the fact that the negative attitudes arising from the lectures conducted during COVID-19 were not a result of a lack of equipment per se but a lack of knowledge on how to employ multimedia in the preparation of online lectures

5. Conclusion

Teachers and students went back to physical lectures once the mandates were lifted. They agreed that in future, they would use online lectures if their circumstances do not allow them to meet physically. Otherwise, their first alternative was physical lectures. Even in the cases where the lecturers enjoyed using multimedia, they did not employ all the features available for use in multimedia.

People are social beings. Literature is a social subject that deals with society and people, so it cannot be taught fully online. It, too, has practical sessions and its practical aspects are difficult to teach online. Students need to see physical demonstrations and responses from the audience when they make positive and negative statements. These are difficult to observe online.

And, even though creative writers compose in isolation, they require a physical audience to motivate, encourage or critique their work.

6. Recommendations

Teaching using multimedia is a new phenomenon for literature teachers. There is a need to train language teachers in effective ways of using multimedia and retrain those who are already using multimedia in better ways of conducting online lectures. [9,10] Once the teacher learns to make the online class interesting and interactive, the students will get interested and involved.

Teacher training institutions should also embrace multimedia in their classes so the teachers in training can have practical experience in using multimedia and adapt themselves to it. It is important for the National Council for Higher Education in Uganda and the Ministry of Education bodies responsible for teacher retooling to urgently introduce in-service courses on the use of multimedia if the lecturers are to fully embrace and utilise multimedia technology.

While the literature subject enjoys certain benefits of multimedia, it has been observed that some course units like creative writing require physical interaction between teacher and student to understand the impact of aspects like diction, stage, theatre and techniques like a soliloquy, asides, and irony. These should be taught using physical lectures and multimedia embedded for emphasis and graphic illustration.

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Author's Profile



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