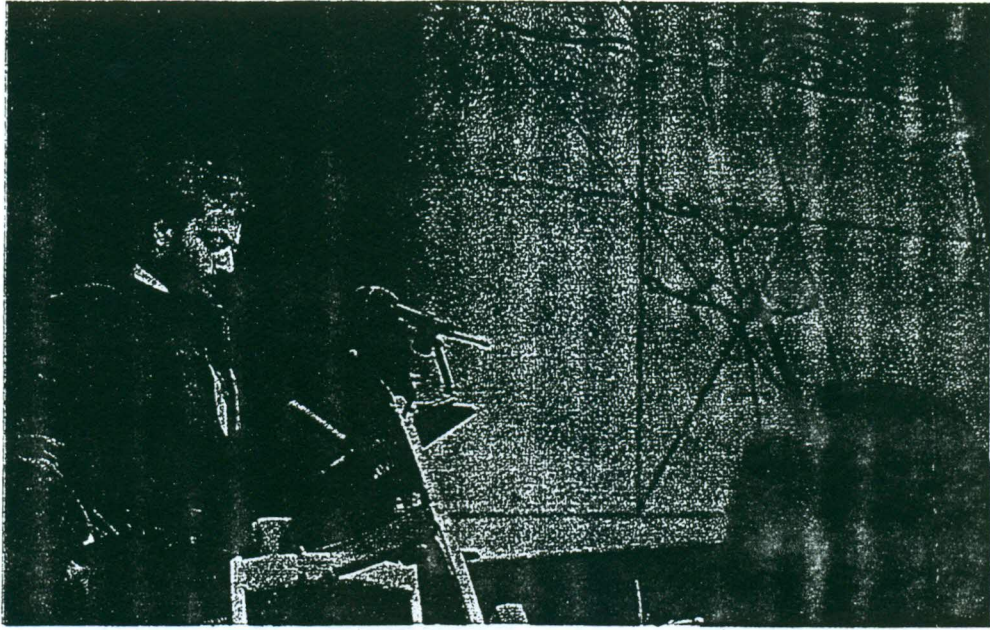


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Active Learning is, in essence, participatory learning, which integrates the learner, learning content, and the access tools. In the purest form of active learning, the learner inevitably loses awareness of the tool and ultimately becomes absorbed in the learning content, the objective of one's learning.

Multimedia systems have made a presence in the classroom, the workplace and the home. However, contemporary tools separate the learner from the learning content. They provide surface level access to the content. Therefore, in order to unite the learner and the content through appropriate access tools, we, as multimedia researchers and as designers of multimedia documents, will need to re-"vision" multimedia tools for active learning.

Therefore, we use the term active learning to mean learning systems that provide the learner with "deeper" access to the learning content, as well as appropriate interaction modes that bridge *tool* and *content*.

LEARNING AND COMMUNICATION

Multimedia documents are becoming commonplace in the work-place, the classroom and the home. While modern multimedia tools have provided learners with increased access to vast quantities of information and improved display media, they have not improved the qualitative dimensions of learning.

One of the central goals of active learning research is to explore tools and processes that will improve the *qualitative dimensions of learning* — tools which, as defined earlier, provide the learner with "deeper" access to the learning content, as well as tools which provide appropriate interaction modes that bridge *tool* and *content*. The qualitative dimensions are intimately related to the communities of practice in which the learning is situated. Tools must reflect the subtle values of a community.

TRADITIONAL CULTURAL LEARNING MODELS

Today, the learning spectrum consists of experiences ranging from modern multimedia information presentation systems to the live experience of learning under the tutelage of a traditional master in the master-student apprenticeship.

An average multimedia information system is concerned mainly with the transmission of facts. Underlying the presentation of facts is a model of learning which considers learning as a process of information transfer between teacher and student. Here the learner is dormant, passively receiving the content through symbols, diagrams, classrooms, or syllabi. The transfer model is by definition limited, as it addresses symbol-making and manipulation activities, and leaves out experience in the world.

