

Using ‘Photostory3’ as a Pedagogical Tool to Teach Prose in ESL Context

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Abstract

Integrating technology to augment language teaching is gaining momentum globally. This paper aims to explore the feasibility of developing a technology embedded pedagogical tool to support English as a Second Language (ESL) learning material. It is based on the assumption of a problem that teachers have difficulties in integrating technology into ESL instructional materials. These pedagogical tips highlight instructional strategies from a selected prose piece as an example. The authors describe the use of incorporating digital tools such as Microsoft “Photo story3” and explain how it can be embedded in an ESL classroom to teach prose to enrich student engagement.

Keywords: Digital tool, Ms Photo story3, prose, ESL

1. Introduction

Even before the advent of the digital era, Dewey (1859-1952), succinctly put it, “if we teach today’s students as we taught yesterday’s, we rob them of tomorrow”. During this unprecedented situation of stay-at-home COVID-19 pandemic, exploring user-friendly digital tools to engage the present generation of learners is a critical element. Integrating technology to support teaching has become a mainstay in the ESL landscape. The presence of organizational support through instructional technologists or e-learning content developer is a prevalent practice. But many institutions cannot afford to offer such support. Apparently, ESL teachers face several challenges to find tech-driven resources to encourage the present generation of learners. Indeed, teachers always are in a quest to offer the present generation of student’s excellent learning experience.

The present generation of students is referred to as ‘digital sapiens’, ‘digital natives’, or ‘digital immigrants’ (Prensky, 2009). These digital natives learn differently (Thompson, 2013). Charisma & Khomarudin, (2019) claim that students are motivated, active, and interested if technological tools are used to support teaching. Moreover, their accessibility to technology and digital media is greater than that of the previous generations. In the ESL context, millennials will be intrinsically motivated to learn a language if Information Communication Tools (for e.g. Photostory3, MovieMaker, and Voki) are integrated in ESL teaching (Svendsen et al., 2014).

Using digital tools to enhance students’ learning experiences is in vogue. Educators are adopting digital tools rather than using ‘simple texts’ to teach (Yee & Hargis, 2012). But, while choosing digital tools it is of utmost importance to consider its utility and their cost rather than novelty (Brooks et al., 2006). This study discusses the deployment of free

software, *Microsoft Photo Story* (Ms Photo Story) to teach a prose text as a case exemplar. Various studies have focused on the use of digital tools software in different contexts for meaningful student engagement (Hocks, 2003), (Kang, 2018). Some studies delineate the effectiveness of Ms.Photo Story in various ESL teaching contexts((Tan et al., 2018)(Widodo et al., 2017).

Photo Story is, “the form of presenting photo images taken based on the topic or event needed so that it is arranged and each photo can “tell” to make meaning in those images” (Charisma. D, &Khomarudin2018). This digital tool is a software that can be applied to produce stories using digital photos, effects, soundtracks, and narratives or descriptions that come from users’ recorded voice. Instructors hesitate to incorporate digital tools into their everyday teaching mainly because of scripted curriculum, fear of uncertainty of digital tools, lack of experience, and knowledge with technology (Kang, 2018). This could be overcome if we become aware of the available tools and to learn the ways to explore it.

Digitally driven pedagogic tools embedded through ‘flipped classrooms’ strategies are advocated by researchers to enhance students learning experience and improve learners performance (Hsieh et al., 2017),(Akçayır & Akçayır, 2018). The concept of the ‘Flipped Classroom’ learning model has given the students a chance to access the online video content of the lesson that is to be taught in advance. Learners utilize the available resource either during their personal study time or during their leisure. Since they are aware of the content a valuable time can be spent with the instructor or facilitator on discussion, and they can seek support to complete the related activities which they feel difficult to accomplish or they can even get their doubts cleared on the associated concepts. Furthermore, the flipped classroom is an educational philosophy that is gaining momentum with the unprecedented situation of stay-at-home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This paper aims to assist ESL instructors to incorporate a cost-effective multimedia tool to support teaching that could run in an offline mode as well.

2. Methodology

With the various available digital tools, interesting and insightful e-contents could be created as a source of teaching. These tools are user friendly and highly suited for online teaching. One such tool that is adapted to suit the content delivery in an engaging way is Ms Photo Story - a free, downloadable tool that could be operated offline too. As a case of exemplar, a prose lesson is presented through linear slides.

Step: 1

The link of the prose piece <http://www.booksatoz.com/witsend/tea/orwell.htm> is given for silent reading.

Step: 2

Introduction to the prose lesson along with the gist of the text illustrated in Text Box-1 is given to the students.

Text Box 1: Outline details of the text

Title of the lesson: A Nice Cup of Tea by George Orwell
Original Name: Eric Arthur Blair 1903-1950
First publication: Evening Standard, 12 January 1946
Mode of writing: Essay
Original language: English
Other Famous works: Animal Farm(novel), Nineteen Eighty-Four (novel).
Famous Quote in the text: "Tea is one of the mainstays of civilization in this country and causes violent disputes over how it should be made"- Orwell
The highlights of the lesson are provided through the photo story e-content.

Creation of E-content using Photo Story.**Steps to follow:**

The story creator needs to read the text (prose lesson) in detail.

The pictures associated with the main points could be browsed and downloaded.

Steps to download the pictures:

- i. In Google search, type the picture you intend to download.
- ii. Select images: click the dropdown menu 'Type' and decide which type of image you prefer e.g. any type/clip art/line drawing/GIF.
- iii. The most important aspect is to click the dropdown menu 'Usage rights' and click labeled for non-commercial usage/ with modification.
- iv. Choose the appropriate pictures, download and convert them into JPEG or PNG images, and save them in a folder.
- v. Download the free version of *Microsoft Photo story3* and installs in your mobile/Pc/laptop.
- vi. Create a cover story in a slide or the plain text and save the same as JPEG/PNG.
- vii. Now open the Photo story app and start importing the pictures that have been pooled in the folder in order of preference.
- viii. It can even be interchanged, edited, deleted, added n-number of times by simple dragging/deleting, and editing.
- ix. Once all the photos are imported click 'next' and add text to each photo in the place provided for the same and transition could be done at any stage of creation.
- x. With the addition of text to sequential pictures click NEXT, to record voice.
- xi. Creators' commentary could be recorded using headset attached microphones in a noise-free surrounding.
- xii. If background music needs to be incorporated it could be downloaded from Ben sounds and saved in the folder (without copyright infringement).
- xiii. Select the music or create your own music and add it to the segment.
- xiv. At every stage, the project may be previewed, or the same could be done after adding the music.

- xv. Additional editing /corrections/transition could be done by navigating from back to next.
- xvi. With the completion of the project click the save project option. It is advisable to save after each compilation says: importing images, adding text, mixing recorded audio, music, and so on.
- xvii. The project can be shared as a link or as an attachment in an e-mail or saved in Google cloud as a Windows Media Video(WMV) file for multiple viewing in future. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xDe2gumXLv2VoqqHQnOeoLPWHI5-ZVyD/view?usp=sharing>.

The whole story presented in the video strip is converted into a JPEG image for a glimpse as shown in Box-2. The transition of the story with sound effect will certainly get imprinted in the minds of the learners.

Box 2. Images of the video strips from the selected prose piece.



The language skills pertaining to the prose piece are vocabulary, grammar, reading, and writing. When vocabulary and listening to the reading passage could be done effectively with the same Photo Story app, writing activities could also be presented by the preference of the facilitator.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Applying technologically driven pedagogy at every stage becomes crucial. The present paper has attempted at breaking the text into smaller sections to sensitize learners on the views of the author. An ESL instructor is quite aware of the fact that effective teaching of prose involves breaking the text into smaller sections to allow the reader for multiple close reading. This will also involve critical thinking to comprehend the author's style of writing. ESL instructors must understand that we are in a transition stage of teaching-learning processes and it becomes mandatory for every facilitator to keep themselves updated with hands-on experience in various fields of technology associated with ones' profession.

Importantly, the present worldwide education scenario is passing through a paperless phase through e-text, online evaluation, learning, and practicing through online worksheets and filling online forms. BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) had already become a popular strategy with many schools. At a juncture when there is difficulty with students attending classes regularly, education technological tools reach out to teachers and serves as the best alternative. When online platforms are becoming popular sources of learning, teacher-created digital content will have its own credit. Essays, news articles, biographies, research articles are some examples of prose that can be adapted into 'Photostory' that needs an intensive and extensive reading to understand the views of the author and gain the intended language skills. If teachers bring in the best of the online resources and present an e-content through a cost-effective offline tool, which a learner can access at his convenience without any constrain of the internet, the learners will have the essence of learning that will apply to the level of learners.

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