A PICTURE PAINTS A THOUSAND WORDS: DEVELOPING ANIMATED SLIDE SHOWS FOR MALAYSIAN LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' LITERATURE LEARNING (NOVEL)

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DEDICATION

To all educators

*Intelligence plus character –
That is the goal of true education.*

- Dr Martin Luther King, Jr.
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ABSTRACT

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This project paper aims to develop a set of materials for the use of literature learning among Malaysian lower secondary school students for the novel Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe. The main objective for the development of materials is to offer ESL literature teacher an alternative way and method to present literary work such as novel to their students in a more engaging and meaningful manner. The materials developed are presented via MOODLE (online Content Management System) for the benefits of all ESL, literature teachers and students at the nation’s level free of charge. Future development of the project includes the execution of the suggested lesson activities and the evaluation of the effectiveness for such presentation of literary works upon students’ performance in ESL literature class.
ABSTRAK

PEMBINAAN PERSEMBAHAN SLIDE BERGERAK BAGI PEMBELAJARAN KARYA SASTERA (NOVEL) UNTUK PELAJAR-PELAJAR PERINGKAT MENEGAH RENDAH DI MALAYSIA

Wong Woei Ling

CHAPTER 1

1.0 Introduction

This opening chapter intends to provide an overview of the project. First, the background of the study is discussed. Following closely is the elaboration of the statement of problem which identifies issues arise from the background of the study. The description of the research objective will form the framework of the project and the significance of the project shows the overall view of the rationale for the project to be carried out. The scope of the project is spelt out in the identification of target group of learners. Due to the nature of the project, its limitations are also discussed briefly. Finally, the definition of key terms used throughout the project aims to provide a clearer picture to the audience for the understanding of the project.
1.1 Background Of The Study

English language is a compulsory subject for all Malaysian students. Malaysian English Syllabus for the secondary school is developed with the main interest of cultivating learners' abilities in everyday usage of English in an ESL environment. The component of literature is introduced into the Malaysian English Syllabus since 1970s. The main objective of including the literature components into the syllabus is to develop in learners the ability to express oneself creatively and imaginatively in the target language. It also aims to help learners to cultivate the sense of appreciation, the aesthetic value of the written literary works in the target language. Hence, the introduction of literature into the Malaysian English syllabus strives to develop learners' higher level thinking, the expression of learners' synthesis and evaluation of the information presented to them using their own words.

In general, the teaching of literature components in Malaysian context employs the integrated model for teaching literature, which takes into adequate consideration of the linguistic, methodological and motivational aspects (Duff and Maley, 1990). In the KBSM curriculum design, literary texts are viewed as artifact which generates the study and exposure of language learners to different cultural aspects of the target language. Literary texts are also used as a resource in language learning with prime focus on the linguistic components such as through the
teaching of literary devices. In addition to these, language learners are also expected to develop their abilities in enjoying literary texts at a level suited to their language and proficiency. They are also expected to learn how to express their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and feelings creatively and imaginatively which view literary texts as stimulus for motivational purposes and the achievement of cultivating aesthetic value among the language learners. This is done through the introduction of different genres such as poem, short story and novel of different levels. The KBSM syllabus for literature components reflects the adopted model by stating the following Learning Objectives:

3.1 Listen to, read, view and respond to literary works by:
   a. Understanding and retelling in one’s own words the story, play, poem and song heard and read and the film viewed and giving one’s opinion of the text,
   b. Recognizing elements in a story such as characters and events,
   c. Explaining the message the writer is trying to convey and discussing how this relate to one’s life,
   d. Understanding other peoples’ cultures, traditions, customs and beliefs,
   e. Reciting poems with feeling and expression.

3.2 Express themselves creatively and imaginatively by:
   a. Dramatizing texts and role-playing characters.
b. Retelling a story from a different point of view and presenting it in another genre.

c. Composing simple poems, stories and dialogues.

(Curriculum Development Centre, 2000)

To achieve these desired learning outcomes, it is suggested that technology to be integrated into the literature lessons. This is in parallel to what Malaysian Curriculum has proposed, the integration of technology across curriculum. The integration of technology across curriculum is spelt out as one of the Educational Emphases where learners are expected to develop language skills in relation to ICT competencies.

"In line with globalization and the ICT age, skills relating to ICT are incorporated in the learning outcomes. These skills include the use of multimedia resources such as TV documentaries and Internet resources as well as the utilization of computer-related activities such as e-mail activities, networking and interacting with electronic courseware" (CDC, 2000)

Furthermore, Carter and Long (1991) give credits to the incorporation of technology in enhancing the literature learning experience as "novel is usually a much-used source for films and television series" (ibid). In addition, Landow (1997) also advocates the idea of technology integration by recognizing the differences between the traditional way of literature learning, in which printed text is static while hypermedia ensures the fundamental changes in reading and writing. Similarly, radical changes are said to be in prospect for learning: the introduction of the
technology will force teachers to rethink their practices, while empower students to learn in new ways. The combination of both technology and literature as powerful pedagogy tools can maximize the language learning experience of the L2 learners. As a result, literature learning process becomes more student-centered and offering language learners more opportunities to communicate in the target language.

1.2 Statement Of The Problem

Ideally, introduction of literature components in Malaysian English syllabus helps to develop awareness among the learners’ of the aesthetic value of the literary works in the target language. Learners are also expected to extend their appreciation of the target language by increasing motivation in learning the target language. As such, learners are expected to answer a question on their views of the literary work learned (novel) in Section C, Paper 2 in the standardized examination – Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR). The assessment method is a written work of not less than 50 words in expressing their opinions regarding chosen literary components.

The reading list suggested by the Malaysian Curriculum Development Centre (2000) is as follow:

Form 2 (NOVELS)

1. *Potato People* by Angela Wright

2. *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe
3. *Phantom of the Opera* by Gaston Leroux

(Learners are to select one of the above novels for study)

However, English teachers generally think that it is an immense responsible to introduce literature to their students due to many factors. Previous studies showed that the most common problem faced by teachers was the difficulties in relating the cultural elements in the literary texts with the learners’ background knowledge. The second most mentioned problem was the failure of existing material in helping teachers to create motivating and interesting learning activities (Norfahana, 2003).

As what Russel and Pratt (1980) termed as “aesthetic needs”, the aesthetic value can be developed by deliberate training in both abstract concepts and ways of seeing. It follows that the teacher has an obligation to provide learners with sufficient training in this area, especially in regards of how these learners should approach a literary work, so that they can begin to identify those art forms that are personally most rewarding. The use of conventional teaching materials in printed forms such as the novel, handouts and reading notes fail to cultivate interests and motivations among literature learning learners, let alone to cultivate aesthetic value of the literary works. A better and possible approach may be the use of graphics and pictures, still these two-dimensional materials do not apply to the multi-senses of the learners.

Severin (1967) stresses how memory plays a crucial role in the retrieval of information when “the higher the quality of the image – that is, the richer and better integrated it is – the more easily we will be able to get
back one part of it when we encounter another part”. Therefore, it is generally accepted that if an image gets into the brain through a number of different pathways, the image is likely to be richer than it gets in through only one pathway. The image will thereby be much stronger and much more easily accessible, since it will have more connections into the network. Similarly, if information gets into the brain through a number of different pathways, the information is likely to be richer than it gets in through only one pathway. What a two-dimensional material can presented to the learners is restricted to what can be seen in comparison to what a multimedia can present the learners with, a combination of images and sounds.

In the light of this, the integration of technology is essential as it will not only offer more alternatives for learners to approach the literary work; it is also a source of motivation for learning. As what Dede (1998) proposed, the use of technology in education can help improve memory retention, increase motivation and generally deepen understanding. Even so, the problem arises when there are no readily usable alternative medium for the works of literature crossing media boundaries. The realization of technology integration into a literature lesson will impose a vast change in the conventional way of teaching-learning. Despite the massive amount of costs involved, language teachers may not welcome the idea as what Samson (2004) concludes from his study that most Malaysian English teachers are not competent and ready to incorporate technology into the process of teaching and learning. For that reason, teachers are in a tricky
situation trying to achieve the objectives of the literature lessons using effective techniques, but not knowing how.

1.3 Project Objective

In reference to the statement of the problem, the researcher aims to:

1. propose an alternative method to presenting the novel in animated form for lower secondary school students – Form 2;

2. propose an alternative method to presenting the novel, Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe (edited version) in electronic form, as aided material for the learning of literature for lower secondary school students – Form 2;

3. suggest an alternative way, which does not require high-end users of technology, in the organization and presentation of materials to the target learners via MOODLE (CMS) over the internet.

1.4 Significance Of The Project

There are also numerous websites offering study notes and electronic materials for the study of the novel. There were about 264000 web sites offering study guides and notes for the study of the novel “Robinson Crusoe”, with some of the most famous notes among literature
studies such as MonkeyNotes (2007), CliffNotes (2007), and SparkNotes (2007). All these three websites are developed by online study resources companies. These companies imposed different amounts of access fees upon learners. No doubt, learners can obtain help and assistance for their studies in the novel, but paying for the materials would not be quite appropriate unless learners possess the ability to do so. There is also one website offering free online study guides, GradeSaver (2007), which offers complete and comprehensive notes about the novel. The website also includes some quizzes for learners to test out their understanding.

There are also non-profit organizations such as websites developed by Florida Arts Council (2007), Web English Teacher (2007), Bibliomania (2007), The Ludwig von Mises Institute, and Axis Theatre Society (2007). These non-profit organizations offer scripts of dramatizing the novel and also some study notes for the novel.

Despite the ease of browsing these websites for information, much have to be considered in the context of Malaysian ESL learners. First of all, the novel suggested by CDC is a modified and simplified version. It maintained the original narrator (Robinson being the narrator of the novel), the different events happening in Robinson's life and the minor characters Robinson encountered in the novel. However, the original novel has vocabulary of a wider array and the analysis of the novel is not appropriate for Malaysian Form 2 English learners.

In depth analysis of the novel could provide learners with better understanding and insight, it could as well do the opposite. In this case,
language learners who are first introduced to the novel genre in a foreign
language should not be over burdened by the analysis task, but rather to
 encourage these learners to learn how to appreciate foreign literary work
by reading, understand the foreign culture introduced in the novel and to
relate the experience with their daily ones.

All these websites are prepared or constructed by foreign authors. The researcher failed to find a website regarding the study of the novel developed by local author, taking into considerations the local context. The reason for taking into considerations of the local context is due to the fact that learners’ schemata or background knowledge played significant roles in helping them to be engaged in the training of aesthetic value toward a foreign culture. As mentioned earlier, existing materials do not help learners to build adequate background knowledge for the foreign culture they are going to encounter. These materials are developed for learners with English as their mother tongue of first language. The process of learning the target language as a second language is quite a different matter.

One of the ways to improve the situation is through the use of multimedia in the teaching-learning scenarios. To date, available multimedia for the teaching of the Form 2 novel is movie. However, adopting the existing movie as the immediate medium for the teaching of novel in a Form 2 ESL classroom is not feasible due to the issue of commerciality. Existing movie is more concerned with the entertainment business. In the production of a movie, many original features of the
literary texts may be altered and the movie does not follow closely to the literary texts presented to the learners. As a result, it may create confusion among the learners. In addition, the use of authentic movie to teach the selected literary texts is seldom possible in practice. This is because few institutions are fortunate enough to have the film available at exactly the right time.

One alternative solution identified by the researcher to all pertinent problems is the use of animated slide show which is more flexible in manner and closely represents animated movie, or, generally known as animation. Animation is the rapid display of a sequence of images in two dimensional work forms in order to create an illusion of movement. Images in two dimensional work forms can take any forms of pictures, photographs, scanned images and still pictures. The production of animation lends itself to the producer a vast amount of freedom, where producer gets to choose and arrange the story line just as they wanted with far more lower cost than the production of a film while sustaining most of the features of a film such as sound and movements. A simpler form of animation will be animated slide show, which a sequence of slides (taking the place of images) is displayed with preset timing to show the ‘movement’ of the story board -- from one slide to another.

The effectiveness of incorporating animated slide show as an instructional medium is centered on the theory of multiple-channel communication. The information presented to the learners is done "...through different sensory channels which will provide additional
stimuli reinforcement” (Dwyer, 1978: 22). This is in parallel with what Severin (1967) had stressed on the higher possibility to access the memory for the retrieval of information when there are more connections available. His finding also asserts that learning will be increased when stimuli containing information are presented because they reinforce each other. Hence, it is proven that, with the use media, it is proven to be influential on learning and it promotes metacognitive skill (Kozma, 1991; Cates, 1992), which will in turn generate critical and creative thinking among learners.

The potentials of animated slide show in the literature instructions should not be overlooked. This is because technology application, such as those in the form of media, tends to connect language learners better to the real world. As what Charney's (1994) view of that the use of it “may hinder the needs of the learners who depend on linearity to sequence the flow of ideas through focal attention”. In the real world, often concepts or ideas, do not lend themselves readily to the language learners in a linear flow. Therefore, language learners should not be fixed into one specific frame/route in the quest of knowledge as this will limit their potentials and capabilities in making association between the literary text and their own experiences.

However, Smith (1992) stated that no one media product is best to suit educational purpose because they are not designed to elicit increase understanding. Furthermore, the main criticism of media productions is that the possibility of the occurrence where learners are sensory
overloaded (Seels, 1994; Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2000). This is because the change in achievement is not due to the media used, but also a change in the instruction techniques. "...Basically, the choice of vehicle might influence the kind or distributing instruction, but only the content of the vehicle can influence achievement" (Clark, 1983: 445; Galligan, 1995). Kozma (1991) makes it clear by stating, "whether or not a medium’s capabilities make a difference in learning depends on how they correspond to the particular learning situation - the tasks and learners involved - and the way the medium’s capabilities are used by the instructional design". Due to different learning situations and learners' differences, the effectiveness of media in language learning varies as well. In short, learning with media needs to take into considerations of "whom, when, where, how and why" (Galligan, 1995) these materials are used to have a greater impact on learning outcomes.

1.5 Target Group Of Learners

The project is for the benefits of Form 2 English language learners. This project can be used in school settings within Malaysian context which consist language learners using the target language in an ESL environment.

Language learners are given the choice to choose one novel for their study over a period of one year. The popular choice of novel is Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe. Schools usually set aside a forty
minutes lesson each week for the teaching of literature components. For Form 2 learners, the average number for total literature lesson is around 37 per year.

At Form 2, learners are introduced to one novel, a literary text which is a bit longer than the short stories they encountered in Form 1. However, learners are expected to attend Form 2 literature class with existing knowledge by mastering the following skills (CDC, 2000):

**Level 1**

i. Reciting a poem with feeling and expression and with correct pronunciation, intonation, stress and rhythm,

ii. Finding out the meaning of unfamiliar words by using contextual clues and the dictionary,

iii. Retelling the story or poem in one's own words,

iv. Acting out sections of the text,

v. Retelling the story as one understands it and writing a short paragraph.

**Level 2**

i. Giving the sequence of events,

ii. Talking about the place and time the story took place or the place the poem describes and writing a simple paragraph on it,

iii. Talking about characters in a story and writing a simple paragraph on one or two characters.
iv. Making simple predictions as to what might happen next.

v. Talking about values found in the text.

vi. Telling how events, characters and values in the text is similar to one’s life.

vii. Saying what one thinks about the text and writing a simple paragraph.

viii. Changing the text to another form.

**Level 3**

i. Talking about the theme and writing a simple paragraph about the theme of the story.

ii. Talking about the message the writer is putting across and writing a simple paragraph on it.

iii. Understanding some figurative language in the text suitable to students’ proficiency level.

iv. Composing simple poems, stories and dialogues at a level suitable to learners.

**Added skills which learners have to master in Form 2 are:**

**Level 1**

v. Retelling a story from a different point of view and presenting it in another genre.

**Level 2**

vi. Saying what one thinks about the text and writing a paragraph or two.