



## From Text to Hypertext: Manipulating New Media in the Classroom

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Received: 01.02.2015; Accepted: 05.05.2015

**Abstract.** Encouraging learning is a very delicate and intelligent effort. When teachers enter a classroom, they are stepping onto a stage. For managing this stage where the students play the roles of novice learners and for encouraging them to elevate in their roles certain advancement is needed. With the careful transformation from just text-based way of teaching to computer-text/hypertext and manipulating new media strategies, teachers can engage students highly and control the learning environment very actively. Indeed, contemporary literature is influenced highly by digital technology and for this reason utilizing computers and texts with multimedia elements is an inevitable task for keeping the teaching processes updated. However, how teachers can incorporate computer skills and multimedia subject matters to express the lessons within them depend on a very deliberate awareness and knowledge of how to use and manage them in the classroom, which will be the main focus of this paper.

**Keywords:** Digital literature, Multimedia, Classroom.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching in the digital classrooms relies on finding a precise balance between immersing and motivating students by introducing digital lessons like digital poetry or hypertext fiction and further by engaging them to interact within those virtual environments. N. Katherine Hayles describes electronic literature as the first generation digital object created on a computer and meant to be read on a computer (Hayles, 2008). Indeed, for creating interesting and collaborative learning space, teachers are required to change themselves in advance by becoming proficient computer users according to the subjects which they are going to teach. It is a really essential decision to reconsider their abilities and reshaping their teaching techniques to make a greater educational environment. Therefore, when teachers enter to the class and assign digital literary works, they can turn questions upon students and stimulating them with audio and visual elements to find the answers by their interactivities. This way of teaching with multimedia technology is a sort of thoughtful remedy for passive and inactive students to encourage their curiosity and playfulness and subsequently develop their learning abilities. In their article *Malaysia perspective: Designing interactive multimedia learning environment for moral values education* Norhayati Abd Mukti and Siew Pei Hwa claimed that the exponential growth of multimedia technologies and applications has presented society with unprecedented opportunities and challenges, and this advancement has the potential in transforming traditional classrooms into a world of unlimited imaginary environment (Mukti & Hwa, 2004: 143). Therefore, to make the classroom comfortable and amusing space teachers should not just follow with their chalkboard and giving notes, nonetheless, conveying lessons via colorful and

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stimulating digital subjects is highly effective. These will construct students' identities to evolve at the end of the term, because they have been influenced by the computer-human interactions. In fact, pedagogical flexibility communicates to students that their presence and contribution are important to push the class. Subsequently, by equipping them with computer tools and taking enough time to understand their specific needs teachers can migrate from the sole player of the class.

## **2. TRANSFORMATION FROM TEXT TO HYPERTEXT**

It is significant to know that in 2011, new works of electronic literature were published at least every week, and in January 2012, the ELMCIP Knowledge Base (Electronic Literature as a Model of Creativity and Innovation in Practice) had fifty eight records of creative works of electronic literature published in 2011. Additionally, there are records of more than thirty creative works every year from the year 2000 onwards (Rettberg, 2012: 4). This survey solely in itself indicates that many academic institutes around the world have entered and started their contributions in the electronic literature studies. Therefore, it is crucial to know that how these digital subjects along with their multimedia tools play the powerful role in the classrooms.

First of all, appropriate syllabuses are where the transformation must begin. Because, the syllabus is the first and most-consciously manipulative of the interaction we have with students (Rorabaugh & Stommel, 2012). Beginning there, authorities must acknowledge that there should be a kind of transformation from the old texts to potential and significant computer texts/hypertexts in order to extend the meaning of literature in other dimensions.

On the second level, the best way not to let these transformed syllabuses unsettle the learning process is to be understood and comprehended about how they operate and function in the classrooms and what instruments and instructions are needed to renovate the traditional class into the interactive multimedia learning space. Indeed, teachers can create new opportunities for students' lives by allowing them to participate in the teaching processes through encouraging them to recreate the literary texts via digital practices. In fact, in order to evoke students' responses, whether that is wonder, self-confidence, curiosity, fear, or activity, teachers should bring a sense of theatre to the classroom via multimedia setting and by appointing students as the main players.

Therefore, with the emergence of the new literary genres like digital poetries and hypertext fictions which are the result of the combination of literature, computer and the internet (Shepherd & Watters, 1998) teachers can initiate their multidimensional teaching in a hybrid and progressive classroom alternative to the traditional one. The purpose here is to reframe the conventional humanities into digital humanities with the aim of achieving more collaborative than consumptive pedagogical curriculums. Literature is changing and the way we interact with it also changing. New modes of reading are necessary in digital texts to be comprehended. For instance, additional interactivity is needed from our eyes, ears, hands and over all our brains to experience and engage the digital texts for making connections and meaning. In this way, first of all, teachers should challenge themselves to be updated with digital pedagogy, and later they should demand their students to be engaged with them.

## **3. INANIMATE ALICE AS AN APPROVED DIGITAL WORK FOR TEACHING**

Analyzing a digital work as a sample for illustrating the combination of texts with other multimedia elements is essential to show that what electronic tools and computer abilities are

needed for teaching in a contemporary digital classroom. This paper has chosen the interactive and not very complex digital fiction *Inanimate Alice* by Kate Pullinger and Chris Joseph. It has been created to draw attention to the issue of electronic literacy and has been regarded as a good resource for teaching. It is incorporated into digital humanities of academic courses of United States and Australia. In 2012, it was named as the Best Website for teaching and learning by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL, 2012).



<http://www.inanimatealice.edu.au/>

It has been written in various episodes, and the first episode was released in late 2005. It offers a stimulus for interaction with the text, and to provide opportunities for teachers and learners to explore and develop aspects of literacy (Pullinger & Joseph, 2005). *Inanimate Alice* depicts the life of a young girl growing up in the early years of the 21st century through her blog and episodic multimedia adventures that span her life from childhood through to her twenties. The first two episodes are good for primary users, who are not acquainted with new media studies at all, but the latter two episodes are appropriate for upper secondary schools and specifically for students whose first language is not English. It is the interplay of text, images and sounds for meaning making in which students should interact to progress the story.

Teachers should provide the necessary electronic tools such as computer, speakers, headphones (preferably), mouse and internet access to download the episodes. Further, they should not attempt very activity and let the students to start with it. Indeed, teachers' interruption is recommended where it is preferred by students. The level of interactivity starts out low in episode one, increasing with each subsequent episode in order to reflect Alice's own growing abilities. Educators like *Inanimate Alice* because students from primary to post-graduate level find the work engaging. It is easily assimilated into learning environments; its use of multimedia content (images, sounds, text, and interaction) enables students to see storytelling in a new, multi-sensory light. It is a new media fiction that allows students to develop multiple literacies (literary, cinematic, artistic, etc.) in combination with the highly collaborative and participatory nature of the online environment. Indeed, the student's interactivity becomes a representation of any creative agency, and as such has a strong persuasive quality (Szczęsna et al., 2013, 236).

Moreover, in between of students' interactivity, teachers should ask them particular questions to check whether they come to certain facts in Alice's story and whether they consider the literary points, questions like,

- What do they know about Alice so far?

- What will they predict to happen in the further episodes?
- What do they comprehend about images and sounds?
- What do they know about different settings, for example, China and Russia?
- Do they like to add more episodes?
- How do they think about the art and design of multimedia elements in the episodes?

In fact, group discussion of such questions in the class provokes students for creative writing and learning computer skills in the realm of the digital phenomenon of literary studies and subsequently, their former aesthetic experiences about literature will be updated and renovated. Therefore, teachers are responsible for providing the widespread opportunities for them to challenge their interactivity and comprehension while encountering audio and visual literary studies.

#### **4. REASONS FOR MANIPULATING MULTIMEDIA IN THE CLASSROOMS**

The movement of information into knowledge is never stable, every day a new digital component expands the canon of students and provides a great policy in job opportunities for those who are responsible for making such digital literacies experimental in a temporally and visually dynamic environment, and it is this eventfulness that will teach us what we should do for creating such circumstances in order to elevate an educational level in schools and universities of Malaysia, Iran and other Asian countries. Indeed, as the contemporary society has converted to information society, it makes sense to interpret connections between computer technology and literature to tackle the adaptation of texts with the new media. J. H. Murray affirms that digital media by offering an expansive, detailed, and complete experience making something happen in a dynamically responsive world (Murray, 2002).

There are certain significant reasons as to why teachers should use multimedia in their classrooms, which can be listed as follows:

- Help students to visualize complex concepts
- Shift students' imaginary reality understanding to virtual reality experience
- Make teaching alive and interesting
- Encourage teacher-students collaboration and empower students
- Promoting self-studies and reflect on students' future academic learning
- Advance the students' independent personality and help for future career

As it is evident from these ideas, academic authorities and teachers are responsible for providing a beneficial atmosphere for students to guarantee their future goals. It is inarguable that aligning instructions and arranging multimedia tools need peculiar time span, planning and expenditure, but in the long run, students will gain many benefits and can take their own creative potentials for keeping their countries technologically advanced.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

Nowadays, there is a great connection between literature and technology, and transformation of literary texts into electronic environments has many implications. One of the most important and profound implications of digital literature is that it challenges teachers to reshape and negotiate conventional ways of teaching within the new multimedia classrooms and create a dramatic impact on students' learning process. The fact that digital technologies have been so

widely accepted in both industry and the pedagogical curriculums around the world has another implication for incorporating digital syllabuses in schools and universities. In fact, new electronic teaching environments should be taken as the starting point for continuing, extending, and modifying the history of the literary studies. This paper intensified the need for promoting Asian teachers and students to contribute in the electronic literature studies in order to be up to date in educational advancements.

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