DIGITAL TOOLS AND TRADITIONAL MEANS FOR STORYTELLING: BALANCING IN THE ESL CLASSROOM

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Abstract

The text discusses the fundamental role of storytelling in education and highlights the evolution of storytelling techniques from traditional to digital methods. It emphasizes the need for a balanced approach that combines digital tools with traditional linguistic and extra-linguistic means. The author proposes a model that incorporates the use of five human senses for storytelling, presenting an illustration of sensory experience aspects. The author advocates for a strategic application of digital tools, with traditional methods used during the preparatory stages of storytelling and digital tools integrated as the story develops. Examples of digital tools such as Storyboard That, Canva, Storybird, Sway, Adobe Spark, and video editing software are provided, demonstrating their potential to enhance visual and audio storytelling. Additionally, story mapping tools like Twine and StoryMapJS are mentioned for creating interactive maps and timelines. The text emphasizes the engagement of audio tools, such as Natural Readers and Youtube audio libraries, for natural reading in the classroom and the creation of audio stories and podcasts using software like Audacity, GarageBand, and Adobe Audition. The importance of aligning tools with storytelling goals and engaging students effectively is underscored, positioning digital tools as supportive elements to enhance storytelling skills rather than replace traditional methods.

Keywords: digital tools, storytelling, sensory experience, activity, balanced model, audio and video applicaions.

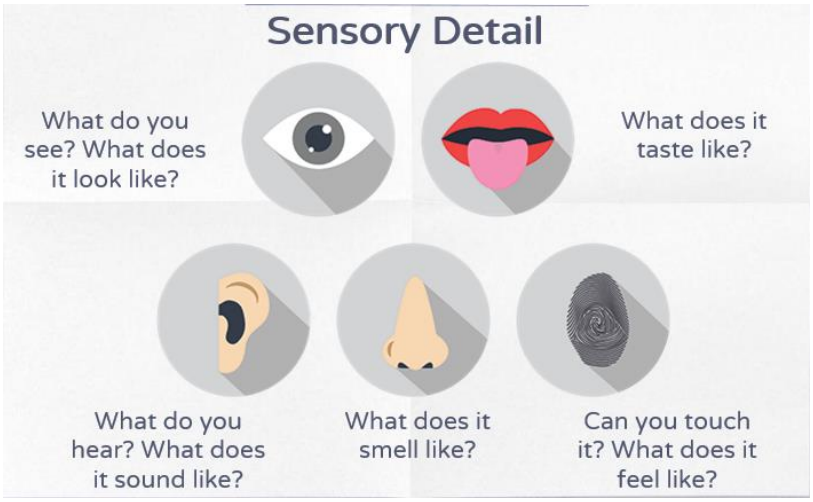
Storytelling is a fundamental activity that is quite engaging for students of all ages as it naturally merges with skills and competences from the childhood. Those times their creative endeavors were developed on the basis of perceived fairytales, cartoons, film and everyday talks of adults etc. This activity is a vivid interplay of imagination, characters, events and plots. However, nowadays students are more into technologies and it is absolutely obvious that storytelling goes hand in hand with digital tools which help to boost and realize the whole potential of all sensory experience the students can reveal in their work.

The issue of introducing digital storytelling has been vividly developing since 1990s when first digital tools started merging with traditional storytelling techniques. Such authors as Bernard

R. Robin (2015), Ballast, K. (2007) has focused their attention on the learning potential of a range of modern tools for revealing stories in the classroom. Their methodological potential has been also studied by Shelby-Caffey, C., Úbéda, E., & Jenkins, B. (2014), Smeda, N., Dakich, E., & Sharda, N. (2014). Still, the problem of finding some balance between the application of digital tools along with traditional ones remains uncovered. It is topical as extensive application of the state of the art possibilities reduces the amount of writing the students have to practice in the ESL classroom. Thus, this paper targets at revealing a balanced model of application of digital tools along with traditional linguistic and extra-linguistic means, which could be employed by teachers and students to develop stories.

In this article, we apply the definition of digital storytelling provided by Robin, B. R. "using computer-based tools to tell stories" [1: 429]. The idea of the balanced model comes from the possibility of adequate use of modern and traditional ways to tell a story relying on 5 human senses and sensory experience which are presented in the illustration below.

Illustration 1. Aspects of sensory experience which could be used for storytelling with digital tools along with traditional ones.



According to the illustration, visual / video and audio tools could be used for storytelling, which correlate with sight and sound. It means that these two senses could be revealed directly with digital tools along with some textual information while other three – smell, taste and touch – could be realized indirectly with the help of visual and audio tools, linguistic and extra-linguistic means. We can exemplify this principle with the following activity.

Activity 1.

Practice describing the state of your character with direct/indirect linguistic means then show it, after that provide a video/photo depicting this state.

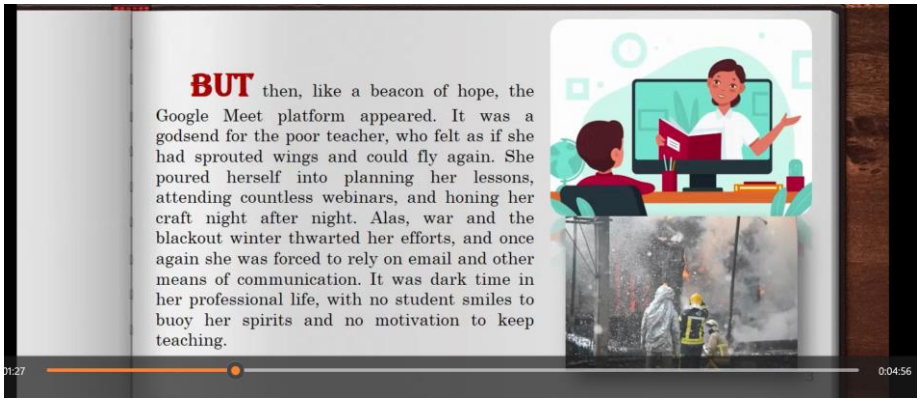
Direct linguistic means	*Direct linguistic means*	*Video/photo*

He was excited.	He laughed out loud and jumped up and down, clapping his hands in delight.	

This activity provides an example of how written, spoken language and extra-linguistic tools (e.g. mimics, gestures, etc.) can interchangeably be used with visual and audio means while developing a story. An activity example illustrates how language and multimedia tools can interchangeably describe and depict a character's state, showcasing the integration of various communication methods.

So, a teacher can regulate the dose of digital tools applied. Traditional ways could be used at the preparatory stage of storytelling while brainstorming, discussing the ideas and writing the first drafts. At the stage of developing a story some written pieces could be also adjusted to the video or pictures. As an example of balancing various tools we provide a screenshot of a student's electronic book.

Illustration 2. A student's electronic book.



If to regard the first group of tools which could be employed for visualization, a teacher can use the arsenal of *Storyboard That* and *Canva* (the latter is quite popular among educators). These applications offer pre-designed templates and customizable options to create digital storyboards with scenes, characters, and dialogue. Besides, there are some more digital tools that can enhance students' storytelling. Such platforms as *Storybird*, *Sway*, and *Adobe Spark* encorporate both visual and audio options. They allow creating visually engaging and interactive stories using multimedia elements such as images, videos, and audio.

On the other hand, video editing software like *Adobe Premiere Pro*, *iMovie*, and *Filmora* enable both teachers and students to edit and enhance their storytelling through video. It is possible to add special effects, transitions, and captions to make your story more captivating for potential audience.

Moreover, story mapping tools like *Twine* and *StoryMapJS* enable the students to create interactive maps and timelines that enhance their storytelling by visualizing the plot, character journeys, and key events in stories.

It is quite engaging to apply audio tools for natural reading in the classroom. For instance, *Natural Readers* permit to upload a written story and convert it into an audio file as if presented by a native speaker. Such experience can be quite captivating and enchanting for students. Another resource to be used is *Youtube audio libraries* which help create appropriate atmosphere for the story with the help of some background music. Apart from that, audio editing tools can help create audio stories and podcasts that have gained popularity in recent years. Software like *Audacity, GarageBand*, and *Adobe Audition* provide capabilities for recording, editing, and enhancing audio elements, allowing you to create compelling audio-based stories.

Both video and audio tools can can assist and enhance the process of story writing, making it more organized, efficient, and enjoyable for instructors and students. We should keep in mind that these tools are meant to support and enhance students' storytelling skills. It is crucially important to choose the tools that align with your storytelling goals and engage your students effectively.

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