

Prezi as an Effective Tool to Teach Poetry-An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

In this digital age a language teacher has to assimilate new ideas and design classes to cater to a large number of learners with diverse learning styles to make teaching optimally effective. Inviting technology into language classroom has enabled erasing the impossibilities of blending functional language and literature texts possible. This is proved in an experimental study conducted using one of the online free learning tools. The empirical study emphasizes on blended learning and the use of Prezi as an effective tool to teach functional language aspects through poetry. Prezi as an online tool is used for this empirical study on blended learning for a complete and comprehensive focus on honing language skills through one literary genre, poetry. For this study, a couple of poems were taught to two groups, one using Prezi and the other by traditional method. A questionnaire and a checklist were prepared to evaluate student attitude and Data with written answers was collected. Informal discussions were held after the sessions. The findings of this blended learning are discussed at length where the data and responses from both teachers and learners are recorded.

Keywords: *Prezi, blended learning, functional language skills*

Learning poetry is critical for every learner of English language for not just the aesthetic beauty but also be able to understand the true meaning, reflect on the true value of English literature. Poetry enables students to learn different meanings of a word in different contexts and different words in a similar context - thereby enhancing their ability to appreciate the language, articulate their thoughts succinctly and unambiguously. Such an articulation of

students' thoughts and ideas into meaningful and clearly understandable language unambiguously is what we call as effective communication. Effective communication requires not only mastery with words but being able to communicate through a clear storyline that the listener can relate and resonate to what is being communicated.

teachers have given some attention to aesthetic reading, usually terming it development of literary appreciation, but many of the classroom practices used to foster that appreciation have been counter-productive." Instruction on comprehending and appreciating poetry has been especially regarded as ineffective. He also opined that the teaching of poetry was ineffective because many teachers have tried to teach poetry by providing meanings of different words and explaining interpretations of what the poet intended to infer or the context in which such interpretations were made.

The charm of teaching and learning poetry has lost amidst the race to reach academic goals and standard syllabus which requires updating, for diverse backgrounds and cognitive levels of learners. Traditional methods like the grammar translation and audio-lingual method of teaching still being followed in most of the schools and colleges is another reason for slower progress in language learning. Though government policies and Boards of education insist on the use of technical devices in educational institutions, poor communication skills is still a hindrance after 15-16 years of English as medium of education.

An English teacher not only finds her class large in number, but also a variety of minds' with different schemas, individual differences, personalities, mixed abilities and learning styles. In this digital age, a language teacher has to assimilate new ideas and design classes to cater to a large

number of learners with diverse learning styles to make teaching and learning optimally effective. Teachers' role changes from a content/subject teacher to a facilitator as they not only aim for good academic results but also help learner's acquire language skills to meet the learners' career needs and goals. With the latest technological advances and globalization, students have turned tech savvy and therefore, the dire need is to integrate blended teaching and learning in education. As a teacher for around 10 years in a UG and PG college we found it very difficult, with the time constraints adding on, to impart the meaning of the content and giving them the essence of the second/foreign language and cultural background.

As we move into the next century and more technologically sophisticated industry and service sectors, work becomes more abstract, depending on understanding and manipulating information rather than merely acquiring it. (Mezirow, J. (1997),)

Today the dire need is to blend traditional and advanced methods (use of technology) of teaching and also the right and apt teaching content to produce efficient and skilled workforce. Hence, at this juncture, the technology walking into our classrooms and traditional concepts and methods not having turned completely obsolete, there is a need to review the existing models of content based teaching to blend them with the need of the hour model. There are three models of *content based instruction* (Oxford, 2001), first is the *Theme based Model* which

integrates the language skills into a study of a theme. Second is the *adjunct model* which requires separation of content and language skills. Third model is the *sheltered model* where language is taught in simplified English tailored to the learners' proficiency.

The context in which this study is carried out required some model that can include traditional content teaching i.e. make use of authentic literary genres and enhance communicative competence of the learners to meet their career requirements. It is decided to try and execute *blended learning* model.

Blended learning is a new trend in ELT. Poetry which is involving, motivating and memorable gives an ample scope to genre transfer activities and exercises to develop language skills. A Prezi, thought to be apt and based on content based language instruction was designed to cover various aspects of language primarily to render the text as it is for its aesthetic beauty, about the writer and the theme. And additionally to discuss other aspects such as vocabulary, figures of speech, and audio visual included giving the learners a chance to listen to the native accent and pronunciation.

A brief description of Prezi as an effective and collaborative technological internet tool.

Prezi, launched in 2009, is an online presentation tool allowing users to create a large concept map (Schiller, 2011). *Prezi* has specific capabilities. By using *Prezi* with these capabilities in mind, teachers can

retain a higher level of student engagement (Settle, Abrams & Baker, 2011). Power point presentations have slides and follow a linear path. Slides have textual information, images, animations and hyperlinks. A Prezi has pathway points instead of slides and professionally designed templates which can be zoomed in and out. Another special feature of Prezi is the easy insertion of videos from YouTube. Since it is a cloud based service it can be stored online, changes saved almost instantly. Prezis can be saved as pdf files and printed for further use. Prezi is collaborative, students and faculty can work and share simultaneously.

In that context, this study will emphasize on the use of technology tools like Prezi, as an effective tool for language instruction fostering different ways of communication and articulation in both written and oral skill sets in the student's toolkit. Such a toolkit in our assumption is complete and comprehensive with focus on honing such skills by poetry and learning through the use of similar tools like Prezi even in the teaching poetry. This is an empirical study and is based on the data collected from students and teachers from a high school in Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh.

Methodology

The study was carried out in a school in Kakinada. It is an attempt to observe the use of Prezi and its impact on students and teachers. The main instruments used in the study are a prior prepared Prezi, a follow-up questionnaire, a checklist and informal interview with students and teachers. A

couple of poems were selected and taught to two groups. The first poem was taught using traditional method and the second poem was taught using Prezi. The study required the use of an LCD projector, and a computer with internet facility. A copy of the selected poem was distributed and taught in the traditional way. Questionnaire was given and data was collected. To another group a poem using prezi was taught and students were later asked to fill the questionnaire and an informal discussion with the teachers was held. Students and the teachers enquired about the procedure to prepare a Prezi and expressed that it would be convenient for them to use it in class.

Both the groups of students were asked to respond to two different communicative tasks:

1 speaking task

2 writing task

The speaking task included was group discussion on Tagore's poem *where the mind is without fear*. The topic given was "Discuss the theme of the poem *where the mind is without fear*". The writing task was to describe scenery in Indian context that is similar to what Wordsworth described in *Daffodils*. The students are expected to respond to these tasks applying their understanding of the poem. Tasks are general and specific; general because they do not need any particular skill or knowledge to respond to the task and specific because their complete understanding of the poem is a pre requisite to respond appropriately

to the task.

Findings

The analysis, (presented in appendix C), shows that 81% of the students felt that Prezi gave them a new learning experience. 58% of the students found that prezi was more appealing than the traditional method of teaching and the rest of the students expressed that there is less scope to interrupt and ask questions in the middle of the session in tech based teaching. 88% students found that the video helped them to get a better picture of the poem and the context. 92% students agreed that they could remember the poem well and that the audio had given them a chance to listen to the native accent and observe the reading style of the poem.

- The interest generated by the use of technology in class through *prezi* in the learners increased their involvement in the language learning process. As their motivational levels boosted up teaching learning environment is created. The learner started using vocabulary and expressions they learnt in the poem.
- As a context in which they need to respond to speaking and writing tasks is created and meaningful input is given to the students they do not hesitate to participate in the speaking activity that followed the *prezi* teaching session.

The responses to the writing tasks reflected their complete comprehension of the poem and also the use of certain expressions related to scenery that is described in the

poem. The other group that are in the traditional method failed to use the expressions in the poem daffodils and also respond to the speaking task appropriately. The reason they gave while interviewed was that they do not have enough understanding of the poem.

Conclusions

The attempt to assess the learner attitude towards the use of Prezi in this empirical study provided considerable evidence for learner's skill development, motivation and enthusiasm. The speaking and writing tasks proves that blended teaching helps in effectively enhancing knowledge and language skills in learners. *Prezi* as a tool can promote innovative ideas in teachers and design something **extraordinary** from an **ordinary** available material making the teaching and learning optimally effective.

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Appendix

A) https://prezi.com/-pannxdh6nyu/edit/#1_24309637

B) Questionnaire for students
Questions for the students

1. Did the use of PREZI give you a new learning experience?
2. Were you able to understand the poem better when taught using traditional teaching/ prezis?
3. Did the video help in remembering the poem? If yes how?
4. Did the poem help in learning pronunciation?

C)

