Reaching out to an audience: Using Movie Maker in Nurses' English class

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Abstract

Educating and creating public awareness about health should stimulate and impact. This paper shall discuss the use of a task-based approach by exploiting technology, explicitly the use of Movie Maker in an ESL classroom among nurses at college, as a valuable alternative in reaching out to the public. As a part of their English language assessment, 70 first year student nurses from Kuantan Nursing College (Malaysia) enrolled in a one-day workshop in producing their own movie. In groups of three to four, the students were given the autonomy to choose topics related to a disease, and to be prepared beforehand. At the end of the 2-hour preparation, members of each group got the chance to explain the disease with the help of the movie of their creation. Through questionnaires and interviews, the sample found the effort significant to them as it has helped them to make the explanation not only more interesting but more vivid with the help of moving pictures, relevant sounds and bold or highlighted important words. Despite their acceptance of the technology the sample found that they need to be more careful with their choice of words, especially in treatments, in order to make more impact on their audience.

How Windows Movie Maker Enhances Teaching and Learning in English Class

Technology today promises various opportunities for English teachers in making their classes to be interesting and enjoyable. Even if they are not technology savvy, teaching and learning can be enhanced

through collaboration with their fellow students in coming -up with technology- assisted project. Thus, with the intention to make English classes more appealing to nursing students in Kuantan Nursing College, it is felt that teachers' endeavor in maintaining 'lively' classes and of interest to students, is to encourage the latter to use technology gadgets which they enjoy and 'versed' with. Richardson & Rodgers (2005) cited in Keeble, P (2008) imparted that Task-based learning and teaching is a methodology which utilises specific and meaningful tasks as the principal unit of lesson or curriculum planning and is based on the constructivist paradigm of the psychology of learning.

It is also with the believe that the new millennium students are familiar with gadgets in the hand such as mobile phones, video cameras tablet and laptops, and a project like making a movie can stimuli students' motivation and interest to produce creative outcomes for English classes. The media applications in the latest brand of hand phones also enable students to use the in-built cameras, voice recordings, video folder, music folder, images folder and graphics folder to prepare movies using Windows Movie Maker. The combination of folders in the form of sound, graphics, images and recordings can be put together for an English Movie Maker Project known as "Reaching Out to An Audience". The remaining content of the discussion is based on one- to-one basis of a teacher-researcher point of view s and therefore may not yield the reflections of other practices in the use of Windows Movie Maker.

What are the theories that support teaching – learning using Windows Movie Maker?

Theories are important to support the pedagogy of teaching- learning in the production of movies using Windows Movie Maker. Collaborative Learning and Social Constructivism theories are used to support teaching- learning using Windows Movie Maker since they are consistent with observed fact (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2008) within which students need to use the programme to produce movies in English classes. Collaborative Learning theory as posited by Piaget emphasises the importance of collaboration among peers where interaction between them is equally shared in the learning environment (Kumar, 1996). Moreover, the kind of activities involved in producing movies using Windows Movie Maker, promote learning through social interaction in which learning become more effective when students can converse with one another; grilling and contributing (Naismith, Lonsdale, Vavoula & Sharples, 2004) their ideas to produce the movie. In producing the movie, students share their previo us knowledge by trial and error of using the programme and teachers on the other hand, facilitate them in making sure that the movies consists the elements of Windows Movie Maker comprises of collections, media files, projects and movies. Almost similar to Collaborative Learning theory, the social constructivism theory developed by one of the theorists in Social Constructivism; Vygostky states that knowledge is increased following students' construction of new understandings using what they already know (Hoover, 1996). Thus in the "Action & Cut" Project, students who possess prior knowledge on the use of Windows Movie Maker are able to add their skills in using the programme by producing more creative products (movies) compared to "amateur" students. In this learning environment also, they create active rather than passive participation because their works need to be 'pleased as punch' before being submitted to the teacher. It makes them deal with their understanding of using Windows Movie Maker in light of what they encounter in the new learning situation , and thereby can change to accommodate new experience (Hoover, 1996).

For the teacher, her roles are to exploit the inconsistencies between learners' current understandings and the new experiences (Hoover, 1996). She needs to enter into a dialogue with the students, trying to understand what students want to do in coming - up with their own movies using their prior knowledge as well as new knowledge of using the programme. She instils meaning to the content of the movies and minimise difficulties that students face in using Windows Movie Maker, so that the movies correspond with her expectations. Thus, teaching- learning is a subject of a joint enterprise between the teacher and students by helping the latter to create or construct new meanings to their knowledge (Atherton, 2005).

The Project

The heading below discusses on "Reaching out to an audience" Project by describing the class, students' experiences of using Windows Movie Maker, grouping students for the project and the process of making a movie using the programme.

The Class

"Reaching out to an audience" Project involves students taking English for Professional Communication as a compulsory English course in the ir fourth semester. The course exposes them to public speaking skills, meeting skills and the principles of effective communication. In public speaking skills, they are exposed to three major components of English proficiency tasks: Public Speaking, Meeting Skills and Principles of Effective Communication. For the first task, they are introduced to types and purposes of speeches, methods of delivery, and preparing, organizing, writing and delivering speech es. In the second task, focus is on the implementation of successful meetings (in the form of role-play) as well as writing minutes of meetings. Finally, the third task focuses on components of the communication process and communication problems. Apart from that, they need to organize and participate effectively in group meetings lasting not more than 20 minutes and demonstrating, based on communication issues or problems and how to handle the situations.

The English proficiency level of 51 students from the Electrical Engineering Faculty in the project is determined by their score in the Malaysian University English Test (MUET). The majority of students totalling 35 students in the class are categorised as modest users where they are able to function moderately in the language. Another 11 students are limited users in which they lack expressiveness, fluency and appropriacy when using the language. In some occasions, it is also observed that they express inaccurate use of the language resulting in breakdowns in communication. However, there are five competent users of English who are able to function satisfactorily in performing tasks given by the teacher.

The mixtures of language competency of these students sometimes create boundaries to perform multiple tasks inside and outside the class . This is because on occasion a group may consist of limited users only whereas another group may consist of three competent users, and three modest users or limited users of English. It is observed that interference from the teacher in determining group members is not necessary since students can identify who they are comfortable working with. Hence, it is felt that having the opportunity to select members in their group, enable them to be more responsible and motivated in carrying out the tasks given by t he teacher.

Working in Groups

To prepare the movies, students are assigned to form groups consisting of three to four members. Leaders are selected in each group to act as mediators wherein the teacher meets only leaders every once a week for consultation . The tasks of these leaders include updating the teacher on the progress of the group in terms of reporting on group discussion (held outside classrooms), deciding on the topic for the movie, discussing scripts, e-mailing scripts, editing scripts and sending the completed versions of the movies in CD formats on its due date. Members including leaders are also required to prepare scripts, edit scripts after they are reviewed by the teacher, find suitable locations to shoot the movies (in and outside the campus), prepare necessary equipment and compile the movies. For off screen roles, holding the cameras or mobile hand phones, picking songs and graphics and directing (Hite, 2008) are some of the roles students take working in the group.

The requirements above are necessary so as to depict formal meeting and informal meeting, illustrating suitable work -related issues such as lack of trust among employees, miscommunication, misunderstanding of using non verbal communication and etc. that lead members in the organisation to organise the meetings. In presenting the situations whether it takes place on or off the campus, they are required to organize and participate effectively at group meetings lasting not more than 20 minutes. For the purpose of the movie however, they are required to maintain approximately a 10 minute movie after it is edited and trimmed.

The Process of Producing Movies using Windows Maker

Students preparing movies using Windows Movie Maker involve three essential steps that are import, edit, and export (Brinker, 2008). Before starting to make movies, students need to familiarise with the basic menu in the programme. Figure 2 shows the Windows' panels in Windows Movie Maker.

Figure 1: *Screen shot of Windows of Windows Movie Maker*
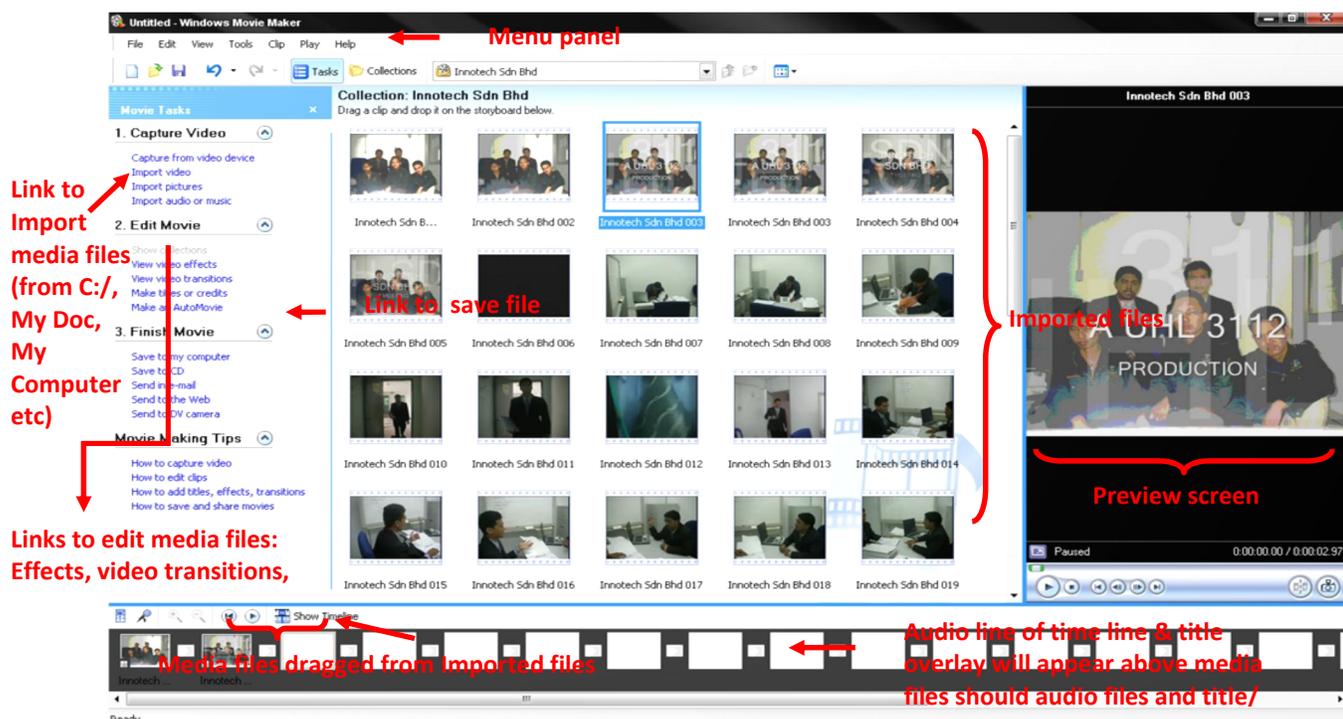
In importing the movie, they need to retrieve their saved- files i.e. collection of media files in My Doc/ My Computer/ Desktop/ Removable Drive. The videos which have been imported automatically go to Collection s at the left-hand side of Windows Movie Maker's window. Apart from that, they have options to import pictures, audio or movies from My Video Files, My Picture Files, Audio and Video Files from their own computers or other locations depending on the suitability of the movies. Having all the media files, they can drag them onto the storyboard to begin making the movie.

Editing a movie involves inserting effects, transitions and a title or credits. Effects such as grayscale, water colour, smudge stick, threshold and others can be inserted into the movie. Using video transitions in their movies , however, enables them to choose various video transitions : dissolve, diamond, pixelate, whirlwind and etc. Inserting subtitles to the movie for audience's convenient viewing is a requirement for this project . This can be done in the Edit Movie Pane after students had already identified the locations of whether they need to be at the beginning/before/ after/ on a selected media files on the storyboard. Likewise they can make credit s at the end of the movies if they feel necessary.

After completing the two above phases, the final phase is to export the movie, making it as a finished product into a file that can be played by anyone on any video-playback software (Brinker,2008). For the purpose of the project, students are required to opt for Recordable CD saving option that enables them to save their movie for playback on a recordable or rewriteable CD (CD-R or CDRW) by following the steps in the Save Movie Wizard. Movies that are saved in this form using Windows Movie Maker are supported by Microsoft High-performance Media Access Technology (HighMAT™ technology) where it can contain audio, video, and pictures (Microsoft, 2009).

The Challenges to the teacher

This section discusses how Windows Movie Maker can enhance teaching and learning in English language classes. The basis of the discussion follows the teacher's experiences in conducting the project, and may therefore "discriminate" other factors that contribute to the way Windows Movie Maker is used in other language proficiency classes.

Knowing the learning objectives and goals before deciding to use technology

Teachers need to know the purpose of using technology before giving students a task. Warschauer (1997) suggests that goals of the teacher, programme (course), needs of the students, and the materials should be decided before looking for the available technology. In relation to the use of Windows Movie Maker for "Action & Cut" Project, the teacher's objective of adopting the programme is to assist students not 'comfortable' acting in front of class or rather shy to act using video cameras or hand phones. Having mutual agreement between the teachers' objective and students' need to perform formal meeting and informal meeting in English for Professional Communication, enables both entities to work on the materials for instance scripts and props, among others. Finally, the knowledge of using Windows Movie Maker for both groups of individuals to certain extent, enables the availability of appropriate technology for the project to be decided.

Monitoring students' projects

Students should be given the time to do their work independently. However, this does not mean that the teacher just have to wait for the final product. Instead they should be monitored from day one that the project is given. Putting students into group s offers teacher the opportunity to supervise them more

easily. According to Hite (2008), by doing this, it can indirectly add a sense of community to the classroom. This is because all students work together as team s in order to create a movie (Hite, 2008). In the project, leaders are assigned to meet the teacher at least once a week outside class hours reporting their respective tasks as well as group members' progress. It is necessary since the in- progress media files taken on screen (or collection of shots), may be shown to get feedback from the teacher. Discussion done this way can make improvements to be decided more easily.

Editing Scripts

Editing scripts written by students for English proficiency class as in the "Reaching to an audience" project generally requires the teacher to look at the language and content of the written works. The consultation hours that is provided every week enable students to discuss on t he content and the accuracy of the language use for the presentation. Milton (2001) suggests that "written feedback on the accuracy, fluency and effectiveness of the students' dialogues (in this case scripts) are essential". This is because "errors provide teaching opportunities, and are evidence of involvement in genuine communicative acts, rather than the mere completion of academic exercises in error avoidance" (Milton, 2001). Moreover, the script is important since it can be read by audience at the bottom of the movie. Thus, checking the appropriacy and accuracy of the dialogue is an important stage as to ensure it goes together with the utterances of actors and actresses in the movies.

Evaluating the Process as well as the Product

The entire process of making movie s starts from writing the scripts to the compilation of the movies as can be seen in Figure 3. Evaluation for minutes of meeting presentations involves the third phase of the overall processes. It is divided into group and individual performances. For the former, as a whole the teacher assesses suitable opening of the meeting in terms of greetings, purpose of the meeting, apologies for absence, minutes from previous meeting and matters arising. In content, the students must choose suitable or relevant work -related issues. They also need to show that the items in agenda are well-discussed. To conclude, they need to summarise the decisions and actions to be taken before closing the meeting. Among others, effective and appropriate language expressions for meetings are also assessed in this context.

On the other hand, individual presentation is assessed by how well a student performs his or her role as a chairperson or member of the meeting, displays appropriate nonverbal messages (appearance, facial expressions, intonation) , uses correct grammar and pronunciation and shows fluency. Evaluation for the movie should be made on the entire use of Windows Movie Maker by taking into account the phases in Figure 3. The first phase of producing the movie requires the teacher to look at how well media files are imported onto the storyboards. Determining the effects, video transitions and use of titles or credits come next as the teacher sees the combination and arrangement of these elements in editing the movie. Finally, the teacher has to make sure that the movie is compiled into CD form and not another medium as the requirement for the project.

Figure 2: *Overall phases of making movie*
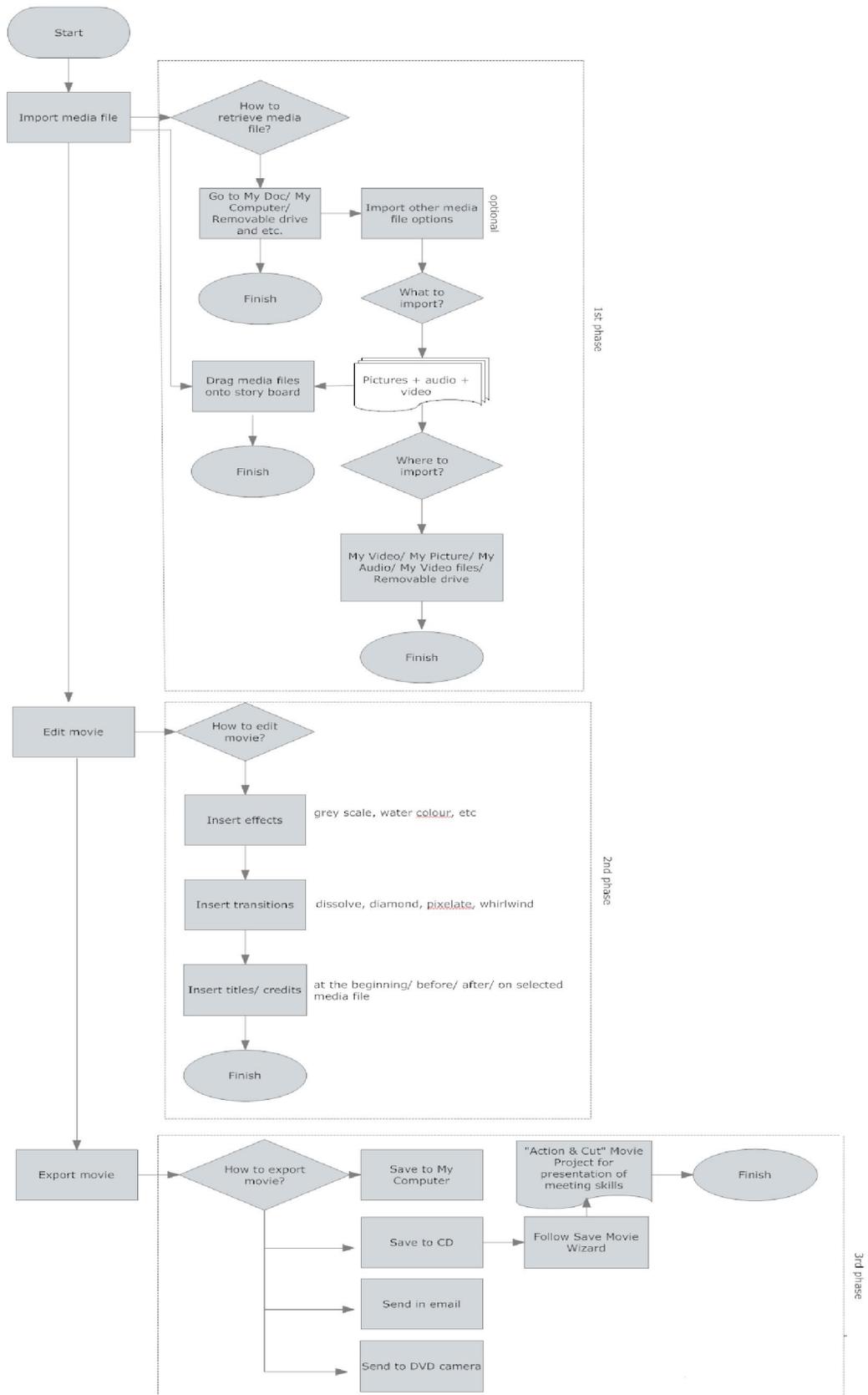
Conclusion

"Reaching out to an audience" Project shows that using Windows Movie Maker can enhance teaching-learning in many ways. It is observed that students in English classrooms can have enjoyable language learning experiences because of the availability of technology . For the teacher personally, it is felt that using Windows Movie Maker can promote two -way learning experience between students and herself. There is opportunity to learn from students who are skilful in this programme as well as other technology or IT equipment. Students, on the other hand, learn the language in the context of meeting in the scripts submitted to their teacher.

In terms of improving their English proficiency in the context of meeting environment, consultations that are outside class hours help them to identify the appropriate language use in the area. Indirectly, having their dialogue s (or scripts) to be corrected can build their confidence when they act in front of the camera s. On the whole, it can be said that using Windows Movie Maker has helped the teacher to "turn a group of clock -watches waiting for the end of class into a room of dynamic English- speaking butterflies" (Hazzard, 2006).

The hassle that students go through to prepare the movies is something worthy of their effort. The dynamics of the group is observed when students work late at night to edit and compile the whole storyboards to make their movies. The settings are almost real where chairs and tables are arranged to depict meeting situations. They even "sweat" to carry all props, laptops, boxes and other stuff to make the room at the back of Multimedia Language Labs and other locations- Students' Representative Councils' meeting room and discussion room in the library as their meeting venues.

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