

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 7. Issue.3. 2020 (July-Sept)

ISSN
INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

DIGITAL TEACHING TECHNIQUES TO PRESERVE RICH ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Article information

Received:11/09/2020

Accepted: 29/09/2020

Published online: 05/10/2020

doi: [10.33329/ijelr.7.3.265](https://doi.org/10.33329/ijelr.7.3.265)

ABSTRACT

From noble fragments to a rag-rhyme, the modern morphology with lost inflections - *with ongoing gradations, mutation, alternations* - has been the English of today since 600 AD. This magnificent language-group evolves today to link with English speakers of two generations hence. The erstwhile Teutonic, *spoken since 2000 BCE*, descended from the Celtic Britons and the Germanic tribes - *the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes* - to enjoy Caesarean peace for four hundred years before acculturating with Latin, Scandinavian, Norman French and French of Paris till 1500 AD, giving the most melodious literature to the mankind during the Renaissance and Reformation. Retracing that milieu, the vicissitudes of history also depict a well carved peninsula with rich soil of acculturation - *the Bhakti Marg with Islamic Sufi* - giving rise to two thousand dialects in the largest democracy of the world - 'INDIA'. English is the most functional lingua franca here today. Grammar translation, structural dominance and functional-notional movements sidelined literature. Can we preserve its heritage while maintaining plurality in its standards bringing rapid morphological changes?! The power of transnational messages have constructed new Knowledge Economy. New ablauts, derivations, abbreviations, portmanteau and compounds reduce to codes and encryption on hourly basis. Bibliophiles and critics acclaim the linguistic evolution and literary shift during the intervening years between 'Rajmohan's wife' and 'Harry Potter series', between 'The Tale of Genji' and 'The Testaments', and from Chaucer to Chetan - *all with modicum of their connectivity with the past literature*. In furtherance, technology has now upgraded literature to virtual platforms like kindle, audio books, biopics, graphics etc. Genres have changed to gran-lit, fanfic, cli-fi, minimalism etc. At this juncture, only a teacher can reconcile the long forgotten yesterdays and the promising tomorrows *still present in today's classrooms* by harnessing the strength of technological innovations for giving more than fifty shades of English literary heritage. It's hence obvious that the language teachers use the subtlest of their techniques to make students appreciative while both - *the teacher and the taught* - grasp the best of both worlds.

Keywords: Reviving classics, Teacher-Technology in literature, Techniques, Realizing Aesthetic Value of Rich Literature, Re-routing to Roots

INTRODUCTION

Auld lang syne: That cup of kindness today, is for the mentally opposite 'shades of literature', for the felicity of diction, liquid consonants, flawless versification, the poetic drama of 'small folk drawn into the pattern of fate', 'self-abnegation', 'conventional morality through Doolittle', 'grim, lively and intensely real theatrics', 'novelty of manners'.... more?... for the regalia of Chaucer, Malory, Langland, Lyly, Sidney, Spenser, Coleridge, Shelly, Keats, Marlowe and *at the top, the literary genius* - 'William Shakespeare'. They couldn't stand the on-slaught of digital screens, projectors and virtual platforms. Thespian art has now reduced its identity to silver screens and action-packed entertainment. The new genres, textual exegesis, neo-criticism, non-sensuous similarity, insufficiency and incongruous reality have eclipsed the lustre of original literature. With the advent of Forensics, DNA and digital footprints on the pages of Doyle, Christie, Forsyth..., the tactics and techniques of investigation have been redefined through 'Gunshot wound', 'Digital Weapon' and 'Countdown to Zero day' originating from thrillers and noir stories of *fine-dine and friendships disemboweling with violence, abuse and moral forfeit*. The creative commons empower us to restructure the dome without altering the pillars and the plinth of literature. The language and appreciation of literature in classrooms are limited to boring lectures to cover portion to score marks. Browsing novels, books and quotes have become a cry farther than kindles and digital libraries. On the contrary, the Homeric Question on oral saga about Iliad and Odyssey is still an arcane debate; the literary heritage in dramatic art which had started with catharsis in 'Poetics' also went through the spine of poets like Milton, Dryden, Gray, Wordsworth..., and dramatists like Ibsen, GB Shaw, St. Ervine, Yeats, Eliot..., are still admired by highbrows.

A proviso to the digital natives: Downloading literature is mere information dissemination. Scrolling the screen is harsher than flipping the pages because the former informs, whereas, the latter connects! A reader connects with the characters; emotions which get exalted through the page-dialogues compel him/her to read between the lines and to interact with the characters, to exercise imagination beyond the climax and to critically acclaim an author's work beyond author's imagination! There is no doubt that the last book stall would shut one day. Though digital natives miss the ecstasy in classics uploaded to technology-driven on-screen media, they wish to write books - hard and soft - which thence gives a clear proof to the writer of this paper that books will exist, writers will write, the classics will be the only cape of good hope and revival of the language.

"More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. - Study of Poetry, Mathew Arnold.

Aristotelean virtue of high and excellent seriousness must inform the matter and substance of poetry. Pope's 'The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot' heroic couplets must remind us as to why literature must be preserved and presented without attempting to break butterfly upon a wheel! A language teacher alone has the power to preserve it for the self and a past for posterity. It's become difficult to separate entertainment from information and education from visual slogan, jargon, copiously mimed lilt and indelicate light verse. Human interest bulletins have transformed readers' best choices in nemesis varying from good to fair - *sans theme, structure, imagery or rhythm*. A literature of jubilation, despair, exaltation, cooing and melodious rhythm has to be revived on-screen, if we wish to be ensconced in applauding IoT literature unto zSpace of augmented and virtual reality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To portray Estella or Thomas Becket, to draw parallels from the tragic end of Dr. Faustus, to appreciate the verse 'Gitanjali', to sing the song of the open road, to portray a melancholic Jacques, to enjoy clairvoyance of Tiresias or to understand the wisdom of Madame Sosostris in the emptiness of wasteland, and even to understand Indian mythology and literary texts like Mahabhyasa and Natya Shastra, the time has come to remodel those popular verses, sonnets and characters through unique styling and editing for on-screen joy. The language laboratories and white boards with hyperlinks must open our heritage for a melodious journey starting at least from the dawn of this language epitomized in the diamond in rough i.e. 'Chaucer'. Micro-blogging, mini-series and asynchronous or blended learning material must become a collaborative effort of

students and teachers. A thing of beauty must be the joy forever; a melodious work must be a source of eternal joy for all. Following are a few simple steps of harnessing support from the digital devices and platforms to connect with the literary competent world of the future. YouTube links have been given for few experiments done in some steps below:

1. Pod-casting: Concise scripting of extracts or the entire play/poems based on specifically targeted genres and themes like love, separation, catharsis, nature, goal-setting, etiquette, fashion etc., then recording and pod-casting them. The most effective and precision tool could be the concise works of eminent playwrights, poets and authors which are kept as showpieces in the libraries.
2. Video-recording: A step further to the point number one above, was to match teachers' audio files with the recorded scenes/ biopics/ recorded theatrical performances of the play/s or scenes in the background; recitations and genre details helped students to connect with numerous voices and appreciate shades of literature. Given below is a link to support point numbered 2. The video has been prepared by the author of this paper:

Song Of The Open Road Wal(ter) Whitman [1856]

Video 1: https://youtu.be/Z4L_azrBLj4

3. Making portfolios: Students' portfolios on a set of literary contributions in the form of book reviews, poems and dramas with at least one plot/situation as literary assignment/s throughout the year; to co-relate one poem with one prose and blending the presentation.
4. Recording and editing: A better version of the digital presentation was done by recording teacher's narrative of concise scripting along with the scenes/ biopics/ recorded theatrical performances of the play under Creative Commons licence / 'Made For Kids'. Three links to support points numbered 1, 2 & 4 have been given; *the videos have been prepared by the author of this paper:*

A. Video 2 : 'As You Like It' William Shakespeare [1623]

B. Video 3 : 'Little Women' Louisa May Alcott [1868]

C. Video 4 : 'Around the World in 80 days' Jules Gabriel Verne [1873]

<https://youtu.be/T5ZV8KAPmEY>

https://youtu.be/6LGEWOiO_LA

<https://youtu.be/te7OHS2plgs>

5. **Dramatization:** Students and teachers collaborated scripting of roles of a play or a scene by prior recognition of the roles fitting their respective humour and diction levels and scripting contemporaneous nuances/dialogues with native accents, phrases and contemporary metaphors suiting the plot, theme and setting. The teacher's role was also to enable the students to read with accurate and appropriate pronunciation, stress, intonation, pause and articulation in consonance with the type of literature passages/dramas and poems.
6. **Using a variety of approaches:** Stylistic approaches to pique the interests of the learners was the framework of the text on-line. Teachers must not forget to include aesthetic values and philosophical insights while scripting the scenes or appreciating a poem. Also, while portraying rhyme, rhythm, characterization, caricature and cohesion alongside the syntax, register of words and connotative meanings, students' presentation showed close resemblance with the texts. Thorough rehearsals must be done before the final take. Prelude to point 5:-
7. **Rehearsals:** *Recording average reading/speaking speed and gestures:* Students were shown the audio-video recording of their speaking/reading skills so as to self-diagnose errors; then were further assigned listening-reading exercises for graduating to newspaper-reading which obviously would post-graduate them to novellas, novels and the rich literature of the yore. A link to a rehearsal of 'The Wise Judge' drama.

Video 4: <https://youtu.be/HUXnalC8qks>

Pronunciation is the fulcrum on which meanings of a dialogue delivery adjust. Students were taught to eliminate the wrongly pronounced speech habits and to practice new sound units alongside stress and intonation in the process of articulation - fronting, gliding, lowering, backing, falling and centering diphthongs, extent of lip rounding etc.

8. **Graphic Organizers:** A thoroughly designed on-screen visual graphic focusing on syntax and situations helped them comprehend the literary text with proper recognition, structuring, interpretation and appreciation.
9. **On-screen short stories:** After watching the animated or dramatized version of a literary text/poem/scene...etc., on-screen, students were motivated to answer a few questions or essay the comprehended piece. The next step was sentence completion and chronological ordering of the acts, scenes and verses. This helped students to grasp the setting and diction. They brought local humour too.
10. **Chamber piece:** Presenting the narrative of a short story or scenes *with their re-scripted descriptions and dialogues* demonstrating students' acting and dialogue-delivery (including declamation), which can be fine-tuned in the classroom or on an idle stage after school hours. The rehearsed scenes can be presented in the class on the next day so that other students get motivated and participate. When rhapsody becomes a full-bloomed and matured action-piece, we can form several video clips and upload them on YouTube for greater audience and appreciation or at least for informal observations and discussions or criticisms for better output.
11. **Group discussions:** Assigning insightful literature related topics to respective groups *and video-recording*, engage them and let them acquire soft skills too. They choose the right words in their own scripts. The nuances of a GD can be uploaded in college websites and YouTube for others to acclaim and act.

A video link to support point numbered 11. The video has been prepared by the author of this paper.

Video 5: https://youtu.be/f3_3rOebu7k

12. **Quotes and dialogues from the classics:** Assigning students their turns to find the best quotes and dialogues of famous characters of popular plays or immortal verses from odes, elegies, satires, essays, panegyrics, epistles etc. and circulating them as 'Thought of the day' in morning assembly and through digital groups across the communities.
13. **Web 2.0 tools and Language Laboratory:** For a strong motivation and increasing participation enablers, the on-line content engage audience beyond boundaries. The first step is to mentor the students to publish blogs on texts and authors using rich text format of colours, icons, photos, symbols and hyperlinks. The community can connect to expand the work and give real time feedback. Tools like Crocodoc, Cue-prompter, Grammarly, Slideshare and Ted-Ed can be used extensively to connect and infuse the best content on-screen. Digital literacy is now transcending to digital sufficiency with multimedia language laboratories, *like FluentU and ORELL*, which enrich language learning. Customized e-lessons, e-boards, video quizzes, comprehension practice, pronunciation practice, phrasal verbs, lesson studios, Net Flick, video streamers, phonetics, assessment of speaking / listening, presentations, interviews, writing skills etc. enhance creativity.
14. Using social media to promote the artistic work and appreciation of theatrical or literary skills of author-students. They choose the best words of the best order obviously.
15. Dedicating a few days to food for thought on the birthdays of luminaries in the Poets' corner of Westminster Abbey, and by celebrating IBD and Book weeks to portray classics.
16. Sending collaborative e-content to DIKSHA, NROER and engaging popular thespians to suggest changes or to make further developments under Creative Commons.

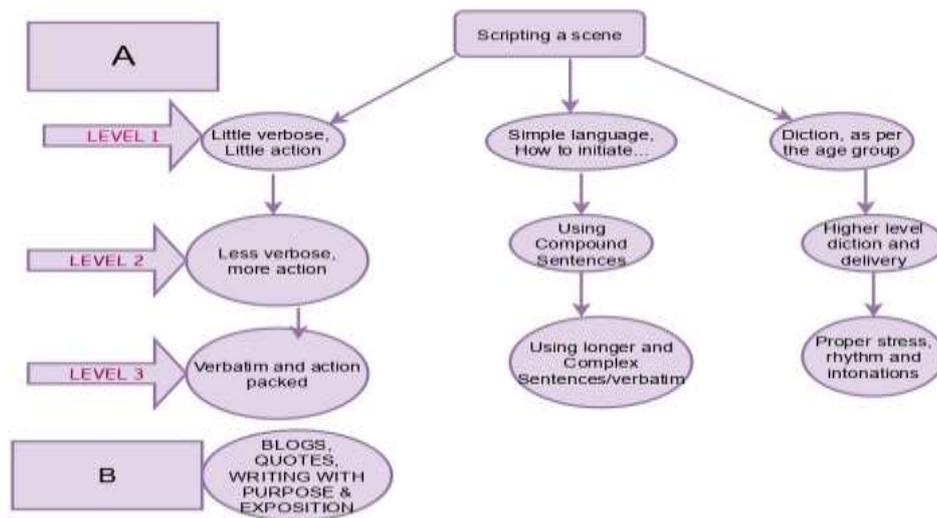


Figure 1: Tabular presentation to expand a work of creativity based on classical plays:

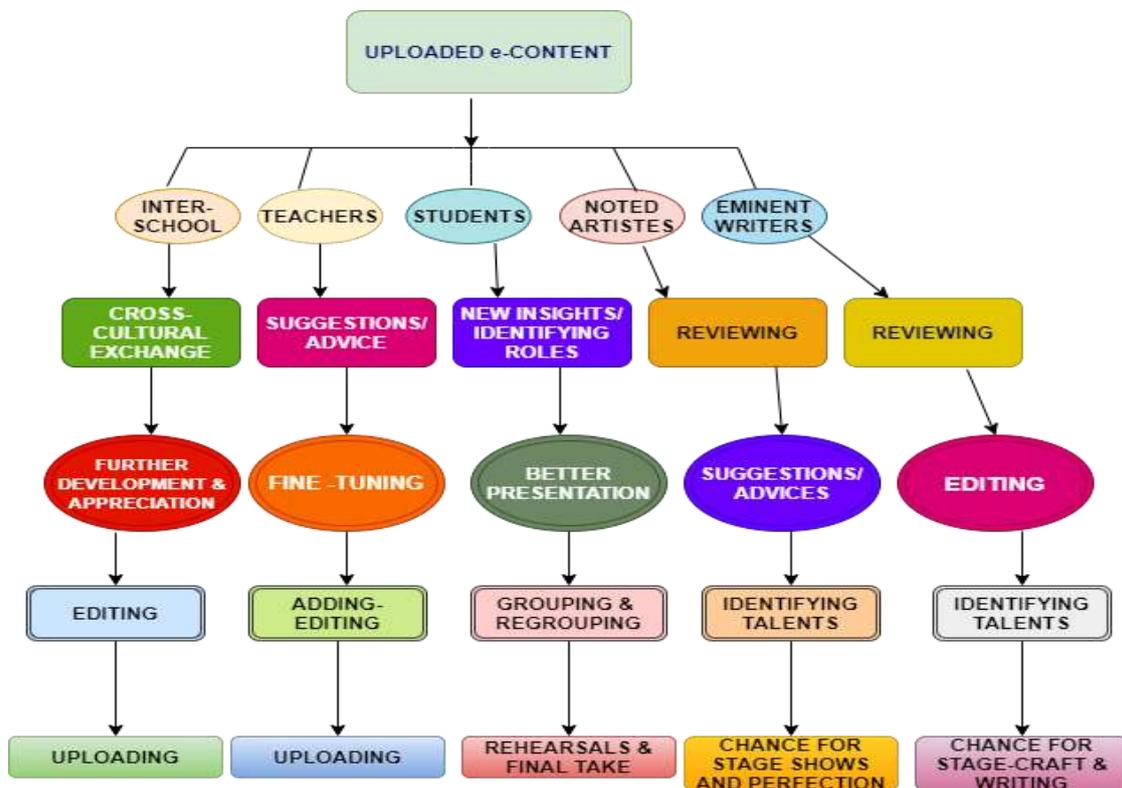


Figure 2: Tabular presentation to expand cross-cultural creativity and acclaim:

CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION

If classicism, romanticism and impressionism can't find respectable columns in the realism of the nihilistic modernism through Dadaism of Surrealism, it becomes the duty of a language teacher to blend exquisite melody of the yore with the technology driven contemporary literature of things embedded in virtual learning environments!

An on-screen chemistry of literary camaraderie for theaters like Drama School, Prithvi, Rang Shila etc., and plays like 'Arms and the Man' performed by legendary artistes like Naseeruddin Shah and Ratna Pathak,

can distill out the most exquisite dramatist personae for the schools of future. It was a dream come true *for the author of this paper* to see the legends enacting GB Shaw's play, *and who*, also saw great Bollywood directors sitting in audience and watching the play with great curiosity! An interview post in Mumbai Mirror dated 11/09/2020, at page 16 expresses the most noted and celebrated thespian Paresh Rawal, the Chairman of NSD, that he would reform theatrics by giving more space and quality to them - *[sic]* 'It's up to the actors to decide if they want to groom themselves better and enhance their craft, the way Pankajji, Omji, Naseer saab and Irrfan did.'

The idea of whole re-mobilization is to revive the forgotten literature by bringing it on-screen with animations and good diction. When OTT media services like Netflix entered the screen world, Bollywood and Hollywood were keen enough to welcome the change. This has still not given classics and theaters any respectable place. The day is not far when the viewers, *and not readers*, will forget to enjoy the aesthetic value of pristine literature, dramas and sacred texts archived in some drive, covered with some dusty carpet! Hence, by scripting the classics with contemporaneous diction and by mobilizing community, an English teacher can become the lynchpin as *hebendum-et-tenendum* OR *the mighty form of nature will be the music of deaf and pictures of blind*. Let's hold the mantle high so as to restore the classics which will remain the greatest source of motivation to the authors, playwrights, dramatists, thespians and poets of the future.

Acknowledgement:

I shall remain grateful to my parent organization 'Atomic Energy Education Society, Mumbai' for having given me an opportunity to use their resources (*to record videos-2 & 3 in point number '4', video-4 in point number '7' and video-5 in point number '11' in my Literature Review*) at my workplace i.e. Atomic Energy Junior College, Mumbai (under AEES, Anushaktinagar, Mumbai) to record some edu-videos for the benefit of students. The Asynchronous teaching/learning video links cited in my Literature Review above are my sincere efforts of the last several years which are gradually fruiting to good view and review. Students are appreciating the importance of good old literature and using its aesthetic value while communicating with the world.

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