

## **A Plan Report Template: Teaching English Literature through the Interactive Web**

Atiga Y

### **Abstract:**

Interactive web tools seek to give the student a sense of ownership and a feeling of belonging which could work as catalyst to increase intrinsic motivation and generate independent learning and autonomous learners. It can be used to help the learners develop problem-solving, decision-making and critical thinking skills. The students of English language department at the college of education, Sudan University of Science and Technology have problems in the reading skill. To help solving these problems a blog will be used because it is interesting and motivating to teachers and students, besides, it has all the attributes that can be utilized to activate the potential of these students. Along with the blog there will be a rubric. That will give the students a mind map of what is required and how it will be assessed. Also it will provide them with opportunity to make self-assessment and peer-review.

### **The Key words:**

Blogs, assessment rubric, interactive learning, multiple resources, paradigm shift.

### **المستخلص**

إن الأدوات التفاعلية على الشبكة العنكبوتية تسعى إلى إعطاء الطلاب الشعور بالملكية والشعور بالانتماء الذي يمكن أن يعمل كمحفز لزيادة الدوافع الذاتية وتوليد التعلم المستقل. كما يمكن أيضاً استخدامها لمساعدة المتعلمين على تطوير مهارات حل المشكلات وإتخاذ القرارات والتفكير النقدي. طلاب قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية بجامعة السودان للعلوم والتكنولوجيا لديهم مشاكل في مهارة القراءة. للمساعدة في حل هذه المشاكل سيتم استخدام مدونة إلكترونية لأنه يمكن توظيفها لإثارة إهتمام ودافعية المعلمين والطلاب معاً، كما أن فيها كل الصفات التي يمكن استخدامها لتفعيل طاقات هؤلاء الطلاب. إضافة إلى المدونة سيكون هناك جدول معايير التقييم، والذي سوف يعطي الطلاب خريطة ذهنية لما هو مطلوب منهم وكيف سيتم تقييمه. كما أنه سيسمح لهم بعمل تقييم ذاتي بالإضافة إلى تقييم الأقران.

### **الكلمات المفتاحية:**

المدونات الإلكترونية، جدول معايير تقييم أداء الطلاب، التعلم التفاعلي، مصادر متنوعة، التحول النوعي.

### **1. Introduction**

Reading English literature provides many important intellectual gifts. It increases one's vocabulary, general verbal sensitivity and sophistication. Moreover, it increases knowledge in an active, intellectually challenging way. It provides

knowledge of the literary heritage (local, regional and international) while at the same time increases the student's awareness of cultural values, history, sociology, psychology, and almost every branch of human knowledge (University of Wisconsin, Department of English and Philosophy, 2015).

English language students, at the Education College at Sudan University of Science and Technology have reading problems, and they don't have enough reading resources. Therefore, the use of technological tools would help to solve these problems as it can help fostering more practice reading English outside the classroom and providing enough variety of materials so all students can read something they can understand and enjoy. Thus, a blog will be used to provide the learners with links to resources on the Internet e.g. link to short/simplified stories and online dictionaries. There will be assessment rubric to assess and evaluate their work, remind them with what is required and give them a clear idea of how their work is going to be evaluated. All this will be done according to a template that was provided by the American English Institute at the University of Oregon, United States of America.

## **2. Methodology of the Study:**

This study used a hybrid method; descriptive analytical method. The descriptive approach aims to describe situations and sample to determine what something is. While the analytical approach aims to evaluate facts and information to find out critical details, add new ideas, and supporting evidence to make the work more reliable (The Writing Lab, 2011).

Therefore, the descriptive approach was used to describe the learners, the context, the learning setting and the circumstances which affect the use of technology so as to define the problem clearly. It was combined with the analytical approach to explore the problem in-depth, by asking questions about: why the level of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year students of English language department at the Education College at Sudan University of Science and Technology is weak? How/why they became like that? How can we improve their language?

The mixed method was used to increasing the validity of the study, offset biases and help in providing a complete picture of the study problem.

## **3. Tool of the Study**

This study used a "Plan Report Template" that was provided by the American English Institute at the University of Oregon during the course: Building teaching skills through the interactive web, winter 2015 (for the template see appendix 1). The training course was for English language Teachers (ELTs) all over the world. Its objective was to train the teachers on how to teach with technology to enhance the learning environment and outcomes for the students, and offer opportunities to share real-world applications of technology tools and practices. Besides, deepening the understanding of the theory and applied use of CALL principles and practices in the

EFL classroom. Moreover, it provided the teachers with support and problem-solving mechanisms as they implement technology so that they can move forward after the course with realistic distribution plans (University of Oregon, 2015).

The goal of the template was to create a pedagogically sound technology change by making a project based on the students, the course goals and on a clearly identified and targeted problem. Ideally the plan should be able to offer evidence on how successful the technology experiment would help in addressing the original class problem –and in improving it (University of Oregon, 2015).

The template was used in many countries for planning and conducting technological learning project and it was reported successful. This study will briefly demonstrate three of these studies which were carried out in educational institutions with roughly similar context to ours e.g. the students' age, the poor English level, and the traditional way of teaching (no technology involved and the students were sheer receivers). In addition to the lack of motivation and absence of English practice outside the class.

*Tendouinde Bruno, (2010), American Language Center, Burkina Faso.* The majority of the learners were from low-class background. Their ages were between 17-24 years old. Their English was poor; they couldn't hold a short conversation or write a short paragraph in English. No technology was involved in the teaching/learning process; and the teacher was always in tight control of the teaching process from the beginning to the end. The learners felt more comfortable and confident with this teaching method because they were used to it. Moreover, many of them couldn't even imagine a situation in which the learner is given autonomy and responsibility for his/her learning.

After using the technology the learners' English language became much better than before because the resources and tasks were varied. Also, this experience trained them on cooperative learning and autonomous learning. Yet, a few learners didn't understand the rationale behind the project-based learning, but, this was expected because it is difficult to have full support or acceptance from everyone.

*Aleyda Linares, (2010), National Pedagogical University, Houduras.* The learners were under graduate; their ages were between 19-30 years old. They were good with oral communication but their writing was not good. They had difficulty dealing with electronic communication mechanics. Also, they lack intrinsic motivation and they didn't practice their English outside the class. At the begging the learners were confused and complained that it was a lot of work to do, but gradually they became more motivated to learn with the class blog because it provided them with a variety of resources and exercises.

After using the technology the learners writing improved and they were happy with the innovative methodology because it was learning and at the same time having fun. Moreover, the project helped in creating bond with the class the thing which was difficult to establish during class time due to the short period and class activities.

*Zlataka Dyankova, (2010), Private High School of Language an IT, Bulgaria.*

The learners didn't like speaking and writing in English. They lacked concentration and motivation to be the active part of the learning process. They needed to be guided in developing skills of autonomous learning to achieve higher results and raise their motivation. Although the school is equipped with computers still the teachers didn't use it in their teaching because they were not trained enough so the traditional way of teaching is still prevailing.

After using technology the learners get the opportunity to express their ideas, feeling and experience in writing. As a whole the students enjoyed working cooperatively. They were more communicative than before and the research reported they did better than their previous written work. Nonetheless, not all of the students were happy with the change, but changing is a process which needs time.

These studies revealed that utilizing technology tools in the teaching/learning of English language not only improve the students' language but also improve their motivation and train them on new ways of learning e.g. cooperative learning and autonomous learning and this would result in making less teaching and more learning. This constitutes the paradigm shift we are looking for. However, it also revealed that not everybody will accept the change and that some people will be skeptic and lag behind. Those laggards will need much time and more evidences and improvement results to join the innovative change.

The template included the following items:

### **2.1. Background**

- *Who are the learners?*

The target of the study is the 3<sup>rd</sup> year learners in the English language department - College of Education - Sudan University of Science and Technology. They are 50 students. Their ages are approximately 19-20-21. Their English language level is the low intermediate level i.e. they can make simple sentences and can understand the main points of a conversation but need much more vocabulary (London school of English, 2015).

The great majority of these students are coming from the same social, cultural and economical background. They come from working class families; many of them don't have a PC/laptop or smart phone of their own. Nevertheless, socially and

culturally it is acceptable to work at your cousins', friends', neighbors' etc. devices. Also the internet café price is affordable to them (once or twice per week).

- *The setting*

The students are used to traditional teaching i.e. Indoctrination and no technology is involved to enhance learning. They are surrounded by an environment which can be called "English-phobic". For them learning English is like fighting "air mills". So it is not teaching students who have neutral feeling toward English language, it is teaching students who believe English is an impossible language. This is very frustrating for them because they know that being good at English is one of the most important requirements for getting a good job (English and computer).

Access to computers and Internet is very limited at school; the students only have access to computer labs at the second and fourth semester (2 hours per week). Access for technology is easier for me and them outside the school (at home, Internet cafe or via mobiles).

- *Why are the students studying English? What will they use English for in their lives?*

Those students are studying English as specialization field; they are the English language teachers of the near future. Most of them will work at the basic schools and secondary schools and a few of them who will graduate with first class degree will work as "teaching assistants" at universities. Thus, they will use English language to make their living, and they should take this seriously because after the number of the educational colleges has been tripled the competition became very high.

- *Describe anything else that is significant or relevant about the course that may potentially relate to the plan*

The teaching staff studied in, and graduated from the same environment. They use the strategy of teacher controlled class and they haven't experienced the advantages of utilizing technology in their learning and accordingly haven't used it in their teaching. Nevertheless, there are some individual initiatives from some young teachers. They use search engines (mainly Google), PowerPoint presentations (non-interactive), and some of Microsoft programs to do their administrative work e.g. preparing lessons and keeping records of the students' degrees. Although there is no actual technology implementation now, but, just having a positive attitude towards the use of technology in education is a good and important step. According to what was mentioned here the paradigm shift is crucial and equipping our students (our future teachers) with technology tools is essential to break the chain of the traditional learning.

- *The course goals:*

- a. Expose the students to interactive learning that is rich with multiple resources.
- b. Enrich the students' vocabulary and build up their words power.
- c. Maximize the learners' potentials to generate autonomous learners.

- d. Generate learners who have positive feeling towards the English language through improving their learning abilities.
- e. Generate “*future*” teachers who have positive feeling towards the use of technology in education.

## **2.2. Issue or problem to be addressed that technology can help with**

The majority of the students of the third year of the English language department, at the Education College, Sudan university of Science and Technology have reading problems i.e. they don't read and accordingly they are bad at reading. This is because they don't like reading, they don't have variable accessible resources and they lack motivation both intrinsic and extrinsic. And this is affecting their whole learning process.

## **2.3. Specific technology solution**

A class blog will be used for the teaching/learning process of the reading course.

- *The goals of blogs:*

Blogs have the attributes that can be utilized to activate the potential of the students and as well as solving their reading problems. According to Glenco (2006), blogs can be used to:

- a. Motivate the students, especially those who otherwise might not become participants in classrooms.
- b. Provide excellent opportunities for students to read and write.
- c. Provide effective forums for collaboration and discussion.
- d. Provide powerful tools to enable mentoring and scaffolding learning to occur.

The class blog will be used to provide:

- a. Links to short stories.
- b. Introduction/summary to the short story to help the student choose the story they want to read.
- c. Questions which the learners should answer after the reading.
- d. Link to the assessment rubric.
- e. Links to more interesting reading resources.
- f. Links to dictionaries (monolingual and bilingual).

The class blog will be used to make the students:

- a. Provide the URL of their blogs in a comment on the class blog so they will know the blogs of each other.
- b. Post comments/questions about the stories. This will help in creating discussions and even debates.

The students will make their own blogs to answer the reading questions and to comment on each other work.