Blending Folklore with Technology as Language Teaching and Learning Tools: Role and Impact

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ABSTRACT

Folk literature or folklore is considered as the earliest form of literature across all human cultures. It encompasses all the wonderful traditions, mostly oral in nature, practised by cultures and subcultures. Whereas technology is the driving energy behind almost everything in the current time. In terms of language teaching and learning, innovation is the keyword to go. Empowering language learners with a variety of innovative and integrated tools and techniques is the acknowledged practice within the current academic periphery. It includes practices such as multicultural and diversity education, folktales in the language classroom, technology-driven classroom activities and other collaborative learning tools. The present study aims to explore the possibilities of blending folklore with technology as language teaching and learning tools while highlighting the role and impact of such a blended approach on language learners in higher education. It particularly attempts to explore the possible ways of generating content and learning materials for language learners using this blended approach.

Keywords: Folklore, Technology-Driven Education, Collaborative Learning, Blended Learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

Folk literature or folklore is considered as the earliest form of literature across all human cultures. It encompasses all the wonderful traditions, mostly oral in nature, practised by cultures and subcultures. The folklore of a social group contains oral practices such as tales and proverbs, and other traditions such as rituals, fine arts, dance forms and other cultural artefacts. Whereas technology is the driving energy behind almost everything in the current time. Current developments in the use of Web 2.0 have revolutionised education both at school and university levels enabling to engage technologically savvy learners in different educational activities (de Ramirez, 2010). Empowering language learners with a variety of innovative and integrated tools and techniques, such as multicultural and diversity education, virtual classrooms, mobile learning, and so on, is the acknowledged practice within the current academic periphery. The present study aims to explore a blended approach of integrating folklore, particularly of Malaysian culture, with technology as a language teaching and learning tool while highlighting its role and impact on content generation for language learners in higher education.

2. OBJECTIVES

The current study includes the following objectives:
- Integrate folklore into language teaching and learning environments
- Implement collaborative learning tools in language teaching

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- Explore the role and impact of this blended approach in content generation and learning materials for language learners

3. METHODS

The current study aims at investigating into the relevance of a blended approach of Malaysian folklore and technology to generate content and learning materials for language learners in higher education. The research will adopt a qualitative approach. The study is primarily based on the following:

- Review of previous literature related to folklore-technology driven language teaching and learning environments
- Semi-structured interview with the artists and practitioners of Malaysian folklore, particularly the ones dying or fading away from mainstream
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The current study will conduct analysis of the above and then try to develop a teaching and learning framework which will help Malay and English language educators to integrate folklore-technology driven content and learning materials into language courses. Further, the framework will be adopted for developing teaching and learning modules for students of higher education.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The current study has delved into the recent literature on the integration and implementation of blended learning (Pinto-Llorente et al., 2017; Banditvilai, 2016; Vandika, 2016; Hung, 2015), folklore (Chatterjee et al., 2019; Charitonos et al., 2016) and collaborative learning tools (de Ramirez, 2010) into language teaching and learning. Blended learning has already become a common and crucial practice in education systems that integrate technology into learning environments. The use of technology-driven learning strategies in parallel with traditional classroom teaching methods can benefit language learners with improved language proficiency, autonomous learning and learner motivation (Banditvilai, 2016). For instance, a flipped classroom is a useful technique for engaging ELLs in active learning which effectively impacts their academic performance, learning attitudes and participation (Hung, 2015). Particularly, knowledge and use of asynchronous tools such as podcast and online forums in a blended learning environment can be pertinent in improving language learners' grammatical competence as well as self-learning and self-assessment (Pinto-Llorente et al., 2017).

The concept of language learning is further associated with culture, language being the crucial 'vehicle' for generations in transmitting knowledge across societies and communities. In the face of growing globalization, language helps maintain cultural diversity as well as encourages communities for intercultural dialogue and mutual respect. In the light of this argumentation, it is significant to have cultural contexts in language learning for interpreting the forms of cultural diversity. The presence of folklore or folk literature in a language learning setting can facilitate cultural knowledge and language proficiency (Charitonos et al., 2016). Use of technology can further help generate an interactive teaching and learning environment for language educators and learners with more learning activities and engaging participation.

The study by de Ramirez (2010) advocates the relevance of Web 2.0 tools in content generation for a global audience, particularly English language learners (ELLs), which benefits them with improved language proficiency and skills, as well as thoughtful consideration of the learners' cultural norms. Further, it discusses the crucial skills highlighted by the 21st century technology-

driven education including learning and innovation skills (e.g., creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, communication skills, etc.), technology skills (e.g., information, media and ICT literacies), and life and career skills (e.g., adaptability, self-direction, cross-cultural skills, leadership, etc.). A language classroom in the present-day scenario is usually multilingual in nature with learners from various socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It is not strange for a 21st century learner to demonstrate basic, and sometimes even advanced, operational skills in using various technological tools. Digital storytelling is a useful web-based learning tool where digital technology, such as graphics, audio, video and webpages, is combined with the conventional art of storytelling. Researchers have implemented it to engage language learners in learning environments, enhance their cultural knowledge, and develop digital content such as edublogs (Chatterjee et al., 2019; Hernández, 2018). In the light of the above discussion, it is significant to have a blended approach of culture and technology in language teaching and learning environments which can further levitate learners' cultural awareness, communication and collaboration skills, and language proficiency.

The current study has also conducted semi-structured interviews with the artists and practitioners of Malaysian folklore, particularly the art forms dying or fading away from mainstream culture (e.g., Awang Batil, Alu Bunyih, etc.), and gathered responses on queries related to time, frequency, techniques, significance, revival methods and used technologies of the practices. Based on the analyses of previous literature, interviews and findings, the current study has developed a folklore-technology integrated teaching and learning framework for Malay and English language educators (see Table 1 below). The framework adapts the following:

- Levels of cognitive skills from the revised Bloom's Taxonomy
- Cognitive Rigor Matrices (CRMs) (Hess, 2013; Hess et al., 2009) for effective instruction, assessment, engagement and learning used by educators across countries

Table 1 Language teaching and learning framework

Revised Bloom's Taxonomy	Reading Matrix	Writing Matrix
Understand Construct meaning, paraphrase, illustrate, explain, summarize	**Recall & reproduction** Identify/describe the cultural elements **Skills & concepts** Identify central ideas of folklore Explain/summarize cultural artefacts **Strategic thinking** Explain, generalize or connect art forms using supporting evidence Write multi-paragraph composition on the cultural practices	**Recall & reproduction** Describe details of cultural elements Write appropriate words with simple sentence structures Write 'fact statements' on a topic **Skills & concepts** Explain/summarize cultural artefacts Describe steps in a process (e.g., the rituals to perform Awang Batil) **Strategic thinking** Explain, generalize or connect art forms using supporting evidence Write multi-paragraph composition on the cultural practices
Apply Apply a concept to a familiar or unfamiliar task	**Recall & reproduction** Use language structure to determine meaning of words **Skills & concepts** Use context to identify meaning of words	**Recall & reproduction** Apply rules or use resources to edit grammar, vocabulary **Skills & concepts** Use context to identify meaning of words

	Apply organizational structures in writing **Strategic thinking** Revise final draft for meaning Apply word choice, point of view, style to impact readers' interpretation of a text	Apply organizational structures in writing **Strategic thinking** Revise final draft for meaning Apply word choice, point of view, style to impact readers' interpretation of a text
Analyze Distinguish, focus, select, organize, outline	**Recall & reproduction** Identify specific information from graphical representations **Skills & concepts** Categorize cultural elements, events Distinguish between art forms, genres **Strategic thinking** Analyze information within datasets Analyze interrelationships among concepts, cultural practices	**Recall & reproduction** Select appropriate text for readers (e.g., compare-contrast, relevant-irrelevant) Determine keywords for conducting web search on researching a topic **Skills & concepts** Analyze cultural elements, events Distinguish between art forms, genres **Strategic thinking** Analyze information within datasets Analyze interrelationships among concepts, cultural practices
Evaluate Make judgments, detect inconsistencies	**Strategic thinking** Describe, compare and contrast cultural elements Justify or critique the relevance of cultural practices	**Strategic thinking** Describe, compare and contrast cultural elements Verify or critique the relevance of cultural practices
Create Reorganize, generate, design, plan, produce	**Recall & reproduction** Brainstorm reviving ideas, concepts related to cultural practices **Skills & concepts** Design and produce composition based on prior knowledge and experience of cultural elements **Strategic thinking** Develop a model with culture revival plans	**Recall & reproduction** Brainstorm reviving ideas, concepts related to cultural practices **Skills & concepts** Design and produce composition based on prior knowledge and experience of cultural elements **Strategic thinking** Develop a model with culture revival plans

5. SUGGESTION

The current study has delved into the recent literature on folklore-technology driven language teaching and learning environments and discussed the relevance of a blended approach of combining folklore and technology (collaborative learning tools) for language learners in higher education. The qualitative study also conducted semi-structured interview sessions with artists of Malaysian folklore. It developed a language teaching and learning framework adapting the revised Bloom's taxonomy levels and Hess' CRMs for Malay and English language learners. The framework can be useful in generating folklore-technology based content and learning materials for language learners. Integrating cultural content into language learning environments can be a crucial practice among language learners for enhancing their a) language proficiency, b) cultural awareness and competence, c) technological competence and d) overall academic performance. The study further suggests to use the framework to develop course

outlines, syllabi, teaching-learning modules and other learning materials for language courses in higher education.

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