

## Ms. PHOTO STORY 3: INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY IN WRITING CLASS FOR EFL STUDENTS

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**Abstract:** The objective of the study is to investigate the students' perceptions of using a Ms. Photo Story 3 for writing practice among EFL learners in an English for senior high school class. This research employed descriptive qualitative techniques. Thirty eight senior high school students in writing class were introduced to the Ms. Photo Story 3 for writing practices. After using the application in class, students completed a survey questionnaire and ten students were selected for follow-up interviews based on their writing proficiency. Survey results showed that the majority of students held favorable attitudes towards using Ms. Photo Story 3 as a writing tool. The evidence obtained from a multiple choice question in the survey showed that a majority of the students benefited by using the Ms. Photo Story 3 to increase their writing. Moreover, interview data revealed that the Ms. Photo Story 3 had a positive effect on writing skill development. Finally, eight of the ten interview participants suggested that Ms. Photo Story 3 could be utilized in future writing classes. Further discussions of the benefits of adopting Ms. Photo Story 3 writing software such as increased learner motivation and learner autonomy also indicate that this kind of software can be a useful support tool in the EFL classroom.

**Keywords:** Ms. Photo story, writing skill, and EFL learners.

### BACKGROUND

Today's students learn differently than they did even a decade ago. The teachers are expected to do more than just teach the curriculum. The current generation of students, known as digital natives, has grown up with technology their entire lives; they have never known a time without texting, social media, or internet access at their fingertips.

It is undeniable that digital technologies have helped in the creation of a new way of sharing knowledge. Today, developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) have become an integral part of our personal and social lives and also influence our professional career. This advancement has led teachers, syllabus and material designers to consider the possibility of integrating technology into the mainstream curriculum development. The Kaiser Family Foundation found in a 2010 study that teenagers spend an average of 7½ hours per day consuming media, including watching TV, playing video games, surfing the web, using mobile devices, and listening to music (as cited in Banitt Justin et al, 2013).

To many, including politicians, teachers, educational theorists, and neuroscientists, this always connected, digital environment has changed the way students learn today. Consequently, approaches to teaching, learning, and student engagement must correspondingly change as well to embrace and harness the technology rich environments that have become the norm and that 21st-century digital natives have come to expect.

Due to the fact that students today are digital natives, they often seem bored with traditional lessons and pedagogical techniques, presumably in part because of the lack of

technology access and integration in the classroom. Buckingham (2007) notes that a digital gulf often exists between students' in-school and out-of-school lives (as cited in Banitt Justin et al., 2013). Outside of school, students actively engage and interact with technologies providing them with 24-hour access to games, social networking, and information.

One of the main goals of any language organization and institute is to make language teaching and learning become more flexible and make students' learning become more individual and more autonomous. To reach this goal, they are trying to use technologies such as computers, cell phones and etc. to break the constraints of time, space and conditions in learning. The author argue that the implementation of technological resources is directly related to the way teachers perceive their use and functionality, it is necessity that teachers have positive attitudes towards a certain technology to adopt it efficiently in his/her working activity. Students who participated in the study were engaged and gained confidence in their communicative skills by the end of the project. Throughout the process of story building, they developed how to organize, cooperate and work together to reach their goal (Nassim, 2018). The author propose the use of Ms. Photo Story 3 in writing digital storytelling for English Language students. With the guidance of this suggestion, the present study explored the responses for these questions: What are the response of the senior high students of English as Foreign Language (EFL) in the use of Ms. Photo Story 3 for writing class?

### **Ms. Photo Story as a Technology Media**

According to Leidner and Jarvenpaa in (Bagheri et.al, 2013), one of the fundamental premises of the technology for language learning is the degree to which it supports a particular model of learning. Since the role of teachers is essential to counterbalance between their pedagogic and students' needs, they must be ready to upgrade with more up to date technology. Teachers are now not allowed to employ traditional methods or teacher-centered learning anymore; the students need studentscentered learning which requires them to have more active, realistic communication skills, and technology is one and the most suitable means to fulfill students needs (Nunan, 1999).

Grabe cited in (Bagheri et al, 2013) stated ICT is now being used to assist students to learn more effectively, and to help teachers to do their teaching tasks more efficiently. ICT in education in general and language learning in particular has made it possible for students, teachers, specialists and researchers to collaborate with each other in diverse ways. Moreover, ICT can also play various instructional roles such as making learners feel more relaxed to learn a language, and also make learners active because they learn by using technology rather than by being directly 'instructed' by it.

A digital story is a 2- to 5 minute movie-like digital production that learners create using one of several readily available software programs. The story may recount an experience that a learner had, but it could also be the telling of an imaginary story or a story told through the eyes of another character. Learners write a story, turn it into a shorter script, and then record it in their own voice. They can illustrate the story with digital images (e.g. photographs) and enhance it with music that they have picked out. The creator can add text onto the images, and the images can be manipulated to appear as if there is movement,

much like a movie. For English language learners, producing a digital story engages them in creating, using, and perfecting all of their emerging language skills in remarkable synergy (Judith, 2009).

Digital storytelling, simply writing, is the use of digital technology to tell stories, it combines traditional storytelling with modern technology (Lowenthal, 2009). Digital storytelling of the Microsoft Photo Story 3 for Windows is a branch of storytelling that uses digital media to tell a story. "Stories are expressed through art, oral history, creative writing, writing, photographs, music, news clippings, digital video, the web, graphic design, sound engineering, or animation" (Heo, 2009).

To teachers, it seems that today's students demand new, innovative learning methods that bridge the digital divide between their in-school and out-of-school lives. For educators, this means fusing proven pedagogy and curriculum with technology integration in innovative, meaningful, and engaging ways. Teachers have the sense that technology integration must be a focus and priority in today's 21st-century classrooms.

The digital storytelling of Microsoft Photo Story 3 for Windows has many benefits both for teachers and students. Gils (2005) suggested that by integrating Photo Story 3 for Windows more variation than traditional methods in current practice can be achieved: personalization of the learning experience; more compelling explanations or the practicing of certain topics; creation of real life situations in an easy and cheaper way; improvement in the involvement of students in the process of learning.

Based on the theories above, the writer assumes that Microsoft Photo Story 3 was chosen to develop the stories into digital. The free version of Photo Story 3 is easy to use and has recording feature with slide effects and background music option. This program brings new life to traditional picture slidehows by allowing users to customize motion, include voice narration and add music. The final product can be saved as a video. The students can scan their writings into the computer and import into Microsoft Photo Story. The students then develop and record the narration to accompany the story. The final project includes the Microsoft Photo Story as well as a transcript of the narration.

## Writing

Everyone of us has a story to tell and we all like to read or listen to stories. Stories are expressive, magical, creative, touchy and powerful sometimes. Storytelling has been with us since we started to communicate with each other and it has been part of our every day life since then and it didn't take us long to discover the importance of storytelling in education. The traditional storytelling has a new face with the growing technology today: Digital Storytelling. This is one of the new twists of the technology. It refers to using new digital tools to help ordinary people to tell their own real-life stories.

Writing is an important medium for students to communicate their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs (Graham & Perin, 2007). With the development of new media using technology, writing is necessary for many tasks of daily lives, such as for communicating with family members and friends via websites, e-mails, and social media via Facebook. Although developing writing skills is a challenge, the acquisition of these skills is important for students with ASD in a variety of contexts to express their idea and enhance their function in school. For example, they may need to write a note for direct requests, engage in social

conversations, create compositions to express their feelings, and to communicate with others using a written format.

Herrera Ramirez in Sidury (2016) noted that when students collaboratively created digital stories, students began to develop behaviors that helped them become autonomous writers and users of the writing process approach, allowing students to be independent and lifelong language learners. Digital stories are most effective for language learning when they are embedded in a language-rich curriculum that provides varied and abundant opportunities for learners to acquire new vocabulary and structures. Indeed, there is a danger in the use of this fascinating technology: Teachers must remember that the production of a digital story itself is not the goal but only one of several vehicles through which students can practice language and showcase what they can do with it.

### **EFL Students**

Christiansen & Koelzer (2016) stated in the EFL classroom, teachers do not only face the challenge to help their students develop the necessary reading, writing, writing, and listening skills in their second language (L2), but they also face the challenge to provide learners with meaningful and authentic opportunities to apply and practice such skills in the classroom as they lack direct contact with the English culture. Technology, including digital literacy, can increase students' contact with the English culture and language. However, since not every teacher is familiar with the technological tools that the students utilize to communicate across different platforms, it can be a challenging task for EFL educators to provide classroom instruction that draws on these digital resources to meet students' language learning needs and goals (Bloch, 2008). Despite this fact, teachers can overcome such challenges in the classroom environment with interest and an open mind towards different technological tools.

### **METHOD**

This study was done by observing the teaching and learning writing process and giving questionnaire to the students. So that, descriptive qualitative has been chosen to be the research method. The writer described both the result of the questionnaires to know the use of Ms Photo Story in students' writing as digital storytelling as their digital experiences, the result of interview to know the students' perception in using Ms Photo Story as their digital storytelling.

The instruments conducted were questionnaires and interview. Interview is a technique of collecting the data by closely asking and interviewing the students' perception in the use of Ms. Photo story 3 in their writing experiences. While, the questionnaires were given to the students after they produced Photo Story projects as a digital storytelling, and included the following questions; (1) Does Ms Photo Story help you in learning writing skill? (2) Does Ms Photo Story facilitate you to explore in describing pictures/photos which imported into the software? (3) Does Ms Photo Story help you in writing skill through photos you have imported? (4) Does Ms Photo Story help you in arranging photos to be told systematically? (5) Does Ms Photo Story allow you to write the story easily?

A total of students taught in the writing class were 38 students at the eleventh grade of senior high school Mafatihul Huda Depok Cirebon. The digital storytelling software adopted in this study was Ms Photo Story which developed by Microsoft.

## FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### Research Finding

Utilizing Ms Photo Story in writing class to be students' digital storytelling by using Microsoft Photo Story 3 can be done by following steps;

#### a. An Overview of Microsoft Photo Story 3

Microsoft Photo Story 3 is a software program that can be used to create digital stories using digital photos, special effects, sound tracks, and recorded narration. Users can start creating their own video stories by simply choosing "Begin a new story" (Figure 1 below).



Fig. 1. Begin a new story

#### b. Importing Pictures

In "Import and arrange your pictures," select the pictures you want to use in the story and arrange them in the correct order on the film strip (Figure 2). To edit a picture, select the picture and click "Edit." Then, select "Add Effect" in the Edit Pictures dialog box and choose one of the effects to apply to that picture. Check "Apply the selected effect to all of the pictures in your story" if desired.

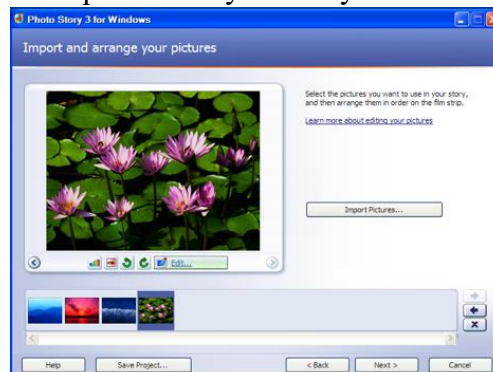


Fig.2. Import and arrange pictures

#### c. Adding a Title

After importing the pictures, the next step is to add a title or texts to each picture in "Add a title to your pictures." Simply select a picture and then type in text to add a title. The font, font style, size, color, position, and orientation of the title or text (left,

center horizontally, right, top, center vertically, or bottom) can be changed in this step (Figure 3).



Fig.3. Add a title to pictures

#### d. Narrating Pictures and Customizing Motion

The activity that can develop students' writing skills in digital storytelling is to narrate their stories. In "Narrate your pictures and customize motion," we can narrate our stories by clicking the record button. Users move through the pictures by clicking each of them on the film strip as they narrate. After narrating the story, the motion of the digital story can be changed by clicking "Customize Motion" (Figure 4).



Fig.4. Narrate pictures and customize motion

In the "Customize Motion" dialog box, select "Motion and Duration" to specify the start and end position of motion, and to set its duration (Figure 5). Also, the transition between pictures and the duration of the transition can be added by selecting "Transition" (Figure 6).

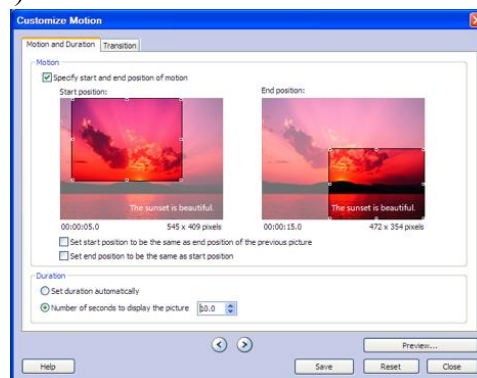


Fig. 5. Customize motion and duration

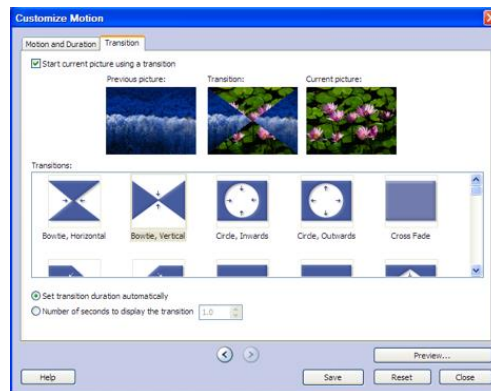


Fig. 6. Customize transition

#### e. Adding Background Music

After narrating the pictures and customizing their motion, the next step is to add background music to the digital story. Users can select the picture they want the music to accompany and then click either “Select Music” or “Create Music” (refer to Figure 7). We choose “Select Music” if we want to select a saved music file from our computer. One interesting feature of Microsoft Photo Story 3 is that we can add customized music to our story by selecting our preferred music properties in terms of its genre, style, band, mood, tempo and intensity. To customize the music, choose “Create Music” in the “Add background music” dialog box (Figure 8).



Fig. 7. Add background music

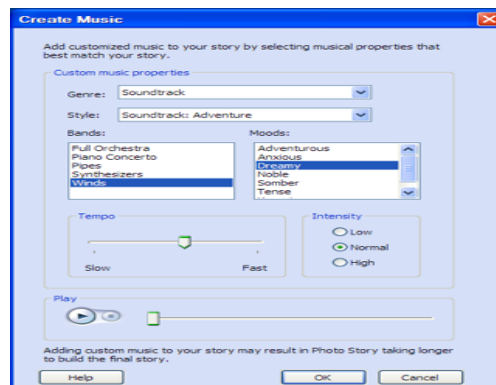


Figure 8. Create music

#### f. Saving the Story

The final step in creating a digital story with Microsoft Photo Story 3 is to save the story. Choose one of the options in “Activities” (e.g. “Save your storybook for playback on your computer”). Then, specify the location and file name for the story. After that, clicking “Next” takes the user to a screen titled “Completing Photo Story 3 for Windows.” From here, to see the completed product, the user clicks “View your story” (Figure 9).

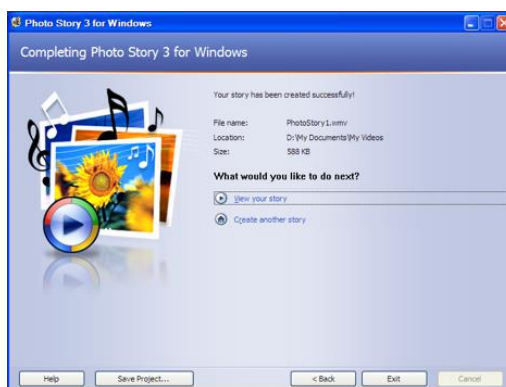


Fig. 9. Completing Photo Story 3

### Research Analysis

Findings showed from questionnaires were; (1) The students were relatively easier in finding ideas to write through pictures or photos they selected to describe (2) The students could make the good writing by writing through narrating the describing sentences to make sure that their writing was good enough (3) The students got digital experiences in writing skill which motivated and enhanced their abilities in using ICT tools.

The result of the interview shown that since selecting the good students' own pictures or photos then describing them through writing their own pictures was considered as an interesting media to be applied as instructional material which produce a digital storytelling, the majority of students, participants of this study, were more enjoy and interested in writing class. The students got the new writing way through computer software program. The students were also active in the new writing atmosphere while teaching and learning writing process through Ms Photo Story as students' digital storytelling.

From both instruments, questionnaires and interviews the writer concluded that Ms Photo Story not only gave the students digital experiences in writing and enhanced students' information and communication technology knowledge, but also improved students' motivation, activeness and interest in writing class. Students' digital storytelling were the good projects of using technology in writing. Bringing about a chance with respect to the role of ICT may, to a considerable degree, change the way schools and classroom-learning function as well as the role of teachers and learners.

### CONCLUSION

Microsoft Photo Story 3 is a software program which is suitable for use in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom for learners of diverse language proficiencies, in



particular for intermediate-level learners. It is freeware, which means that students can download and use it both at school or at home. In addition, it is so user-friendly that even those learners who have limited computer knowledge can use it to create their digital stories without much difficulty, as users are guided by the software in a step-by-step manner.

Apart from these, digital storytelling with Microsoft Photo Story 3 can be used as a writing activity in an EFL classroom. Through creating digital stories, students' creativity can be developed. In language learning, the students' writing and writing skills can be enhanced through writing the texts of their digital stories and narrating the stories. The students also can do the writing exercises outside the classroom.

Dealing with the development of technology information, it is strongly recommended for the teachers to use it and enrich their knowledge in using technological tools for educational purposes. Ms Photo Story, the computer software program, can be used to change the conventional writing class to be a digital storytelling.

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