

Embracing Digital Tools to Design Materials for a New Humanity

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Abstract

Digital technologies have developed rapidly today in all fields. It is beyond doubt that it has impacted education too. This paper will explore some of the digital tools that can be used by the teaching faculty in designing teaching materials which will provide learning experiences of the new generation.

Digital tools are revolutionizing education and fostering innovation. Usage of these tools to design teaching materials for a traditional classroom fosters the development of essential 21st century skills like critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration.

This paper will also focus on how the successful implementation of AI tools like twee in material design can enhance teaching for a new generation. Effective use of such tools will empower the teachers to make innovations in teaching methods.

Keywords: Twee, AI

Introduction

Material Designing using Digital Tools

Material designing in ELT refers to the creation and usage of teaching materials following the language acquisition theories and the best practices in pedagogy. The designing materials should be relevant to the learners' needs, interests and goals which will make their learning experience very meaningful. The materials should have authentic language in both written and spoken forms based on real life situations so that the learners are able to relate themselves in situations. The material should also touch upon the cultural contexts and surroundings of the learners. Design materials should be purposeful and meaningful for language production. There should be a variety in the tasks designed and provide number of opportunities for the learner to reflect and give feedback. It should be cognitively challenging and help them raise their grades in the exam.

The integration of the LSRW skills helps in the overall development of skill acquisition. The designed materials should help the teachers to modify the content based on the specific needs of the learners. More importantly it should provide opportunities for feedback through self-assessment, peer assessment or teacher feedback. This will help understand the progress of the students and find out the areas for improvement.

Online courses, virtual learning and interactive learning apps have made transformative revolution in the field of education in the 21st century. Digital education encompasses digital tools that fosters engaging the current generation with information and communication.

Mucundanyi, et al (2021) state that technology can assist instructional designers and teachers in meeting the needs of learners in traditional classrooms and virtual course environments. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many teachers and instructional designers began looking for resources they could use for hybrid and online course delivery. Many found that the cost of some technology tools was well outside of their financial means to assist them in meeting student learning outcomes. However, some digital tools like Kahoot, Edpuzzle, Starfall provide free access for educators and are beneficial to students.

Review of Literature

Robinson, et al (2019) in their study found that over one-third of teachers either teach themselves or use their existing knowledge to support digital pedagogy. According to them teaching management systems are used overwhelmingly by teachers to distribute materials. They also perform a range of teaching tasks with both digital and non-digital tools.

Genova (2019) discussed the importance of implementing alternative teaching and learning methods of instruction in the 21st century FL classroom with the focus on integrating specific digital tools and resources in teaching English. The aim was not only to foster students' skills to interpret texts through traditional medium of instruction, but also to foster technology-rich instruction regardless of time, place and electronic devices.

Suwartono, & Aniuranti (2018) discussed how teachers used a laptop with certain learning materials which were prepared prior to teaching and an LCD projector and/or speakers on the desk. According to them their teaching and learning seemed to be more interesting due to technology touch. They created an image of being creative, and above all, innovative.

Zahn & Carmen (2010) proposed an integrated approach to technology-enhanced learning and collaborative problem solving in the classroom. They took an example of constructivist learning, that is, learning by actually constructing video material with digital video technology.

Having reviewed some existing literature on the benefits of using digital tools in education and how teachers can effectively design materials using them, the following points provide benefits of digital education:

- Lifelong learning becomes a reality as individuals can engage in continuous education throughout their careers.
- Digital education allows for personalized learning experiences.
- Digital education facilitates global connectivity, enabling students to engage in cross-cultural collaborations and exchange ideas with peers from diverse backgrounds.
- Students learn to navigate information in a digital age, evaluate sources, and develop a positive approach to technology.

Theories of Digital Learning

Digital learning theories and approaches, such as RAT, SAMR, TPACK, Digital Blooms, Connectivism, Design Thinking and Peeragogy, help teachers develop curricula that gets students to use technology to research, annotate, create, innovate, problem-solve, collaborate, campaign, reform and think critically.

This paper will focus on the Connectivism learning theory with which the author has designed a lesson plan using the AI digital tool twee.

Connectivism Learning Theory

In this digital age Google Assistant, Siri, Alexa, and other digital information assistants, are used by people in their quest to search answers. In contrast some twenty five years back, students were

referring to encyclopedia and dictionaries for answers. Today the advent of Android phones have made life much easier for students. They no longer go the libraries to refer to books. They look for learning material online and look up for a word's meaning in online dictionaries.

The increasing use of technology created the need for new methods to keep up. The theory of connectivism seems to be the solution to fill this gap.

Connectivism was first introduced in 2005 by two theorists, George Siemens and Stephen Downes. Connectivism is a new learning theory that suggests students should combine thoughts, theories, and general information in a useful manner. It accepts that technology is a major part of the learning process and that our constant connectedness gives us opportunities to make choices about our learning.

Key Elements of a Lesson

When teachers design materials they have to consider learner factors like age, range, proficiency level and first language. Understanding the target audience is very important. Teenagers are hard to please and often do not like the materials that books provide; Teenagers enjoy rebelling against a prescriptive approach and often get bored quickly. They crave for independence and often have stronger opinions about life than many adults.

Principles of Designing Materials for Teenagers

Teenagers usually appreciate materials that are relevant (e.g.) related to their lives in some ways, affectively engaging (eg) funny, surprising, scary, raise self-esteem and confidence. They expect the materials to be cognitively challenging, meaningful and useful in raising scores in exam.

Components of a Lesson

Objectives of learning outcome

- Introduction
- Anticipatory set or hook-That is engaging students with a brief activity, question or statement related to the lesson to stimulate interest.
- Direct instruction- that is using various instructional methods
- Modeling-by showing examples
- Guided person-Allow students to practice new skills
- Independent practice
- Checking for understanding
- Closure-Summarize key points of the lesson
- Reflection
- Homework
- Materials and resources-List any material or textbooks
- Differentiation-Provide options for different learning styles and abilities
- Assessment
- Flexibility-Be prepared to adapt the lesson based on student responses.

AI and Lesson Planning

- Creating mini-lectures on a topic with examples
- Creating rubrics
- Offering feedback

Twee as an AI Powered Tool for English Teachers

In my quest to try some new AI tools after exploring Chatgpt to prepare lessons for my class, I came across twee. Twee is an AI-powered online platform designed to help English teachers quickly and easily create lessons, worksheets, activities and more. It utilizes advanced natural language processing to generate content tailored to their needs. To use Twee, teachers simply enter a topic, level, and activity type. Twee's AI then instantly creates relevant content that is customized for your needs.

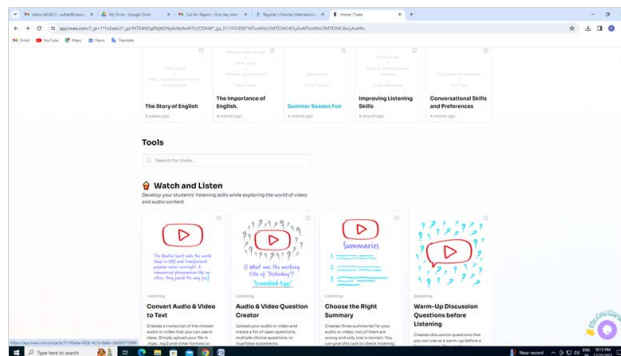
Some Examples of what English Teachers can Generate with Twee

- Reading comprehension texts and questions
- Dialogues and role plays
- Target vocabulary lists and exercises
- Essay and creative writing prompts
- Discussion questions
- Grammar fill-in-the-blanks

Key Features and Benefits

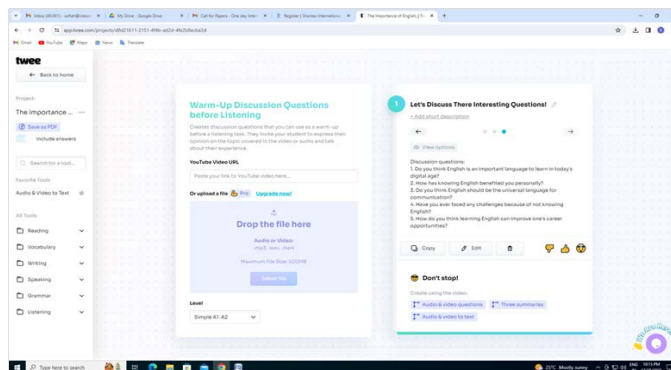
Twee aims to save teachers time and energy by automating repetitive and time-consuming tasks like creating questions, texts, dialogues, and more for any topic or level.

- From the following link, the twee page can be accessed.
- <https://app.twee.com/tools>



Screen Shot of a Twee Page

Lessons can be created on the four language skills. Videos can be uploaded from the YouTube.



Screen shot of a teaching project created using twee

I created a lesson using twee for my First year B.A. English class. The features are user friendly and I was able to create a lesson within half an hour. It saved much of my time.

Using Twee to Design a Lesson

Teaching Time – 1 Hour

This template is flexible and can be modified according to your teaching style. You can add exercises, links to videos, QR codes, teaching content, quiz items, etc.

Topic (Specific Language Item From Syllabus)	English in the Digital Era
Learning Objectives	By the end of the lesson, students will be able to 1.To examine the origin , evolution and growth of English Language
WarmUp Activity (10 minutes)	Design any hook activity/leading inactivity to grab the attention of the learners Watch the video on English in a digital age and answer the questions: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOwTgnG016g&t=5s Discussion Questions: Do you know anyone who speaks English? Why do you think English is important in today’s world? Have you ever used English to communicate with someone from another country? How do you think learning English can help you in your future career? Do you find it difficult to learn English?
Introduction of the Topic (5 minutes)	The Internet has changed the way we communicate. We send text messages, emails, and chat online, but there are new rules for writing in English. Nowadays, more and more people are writing in English as their second language. In fact, only about 360 million people speak English as their first language, but over one billion people speak English as their second language! So, it’s important to write clearly and use simple vocabulary. And remember - practice makes perfect!
Main Content Presentation (15 minutes)	Mini-Lecture/ PPT Here are five tips to help you write better English in the digital age. Use short sentences In the past, people wrote long letters with long sentences, but now we use short sentences and paragraphs. Use linking words To make your writing clear, use linking words like ‘and’, ‘but’, ‘so’ and ‘because’. For example, instead of writing: I didn’t go to school today. I had a headache. Write: I didn’t go to school today because I had a headache. Use contractions Contractions like ‘I’m’, ‘you’re’, ‘he’s’ and ‘they’re’ are very common in spoken English, and now they’re also used in written English. For example, instead of writing: I am really sorry.

<p>Main Content Presentation (15 minutes)</p>	<p>Write: I'm really sorry. Use punctuation Punctuation is very important in digital writing. It helps the reader understand what you want to say. For example, look at these two sentences: A woman without her man is nothing. A woman: without her, man is nothing. Use emoticons Emoticons are combinations of characters that show how you feel. They are often used in texts, emails and chats. For example, :-) means happy, and :- (means sad. But be careful - don't use too many emoticons in formal writing!</p>
<p>Practice Exercise (10 minutes)</p>	<p>English is a global language. It is spoken by around 375 million people as a first language and used by around another 375 million as a second language. It is the language of business, science, technology, sport, pop music and the internet. But where did English come from? And how has it become such an important language in the world today? The story of English begins in Britain over 1,500 years ago. The country was invaded by different groups of people, including the Romans, the Vikings and the Normans (from France). These invasions brought new words and expressions to the language. For example, the word 'street' comes from the Romans, 'cake' comes from the Vikings, and 'government' comes from the Normans. In the 16th century, when England began to explore the world, English changed again. The British met many different peoples and cultures and borrowed words from their languages. They also brought back new things to Britain, like potatoes and tomatoes. Today, over 60% of all English words have been borrowed from other languages. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the British Empire grew and so did the use of English. People from different countries learned English so that they could communicate with each other. In India, for example, English became an important language for trade and government. As the empire grew, English spread to North America, Australia, Africa and the Pacific islands. In the 20th century, two world wars and the influence of American culture helped English to become a truly global language. After World War II, the USA became the most powerful country in the world. American films, music and books were very popular, and so was the English language. Now, in the 21st century, English continues to change and grow. New words are added every year, and more and more people are learning English as a second language.</p> <p>Choose the correct answer:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How many people speak English as a first language? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Around 375 million Around 750 million Around 1 billion Around 1.5 billion

<p>Practice Exercise (10 minutes)</p>	<p>2. What is English considered the language of? A. Business, science, technology, sport, pop music, and the internet B. Literature, history, and mathematics C. Politics, law, and medicine D. Art, music, and theater</p> <p>3. When did the story of English begin in Britain? A. Over 1,500 years ago B. Over 2,000 years ago C. Over 500 years ago D. Over 3,000 years ago</p> <p>4. Which of the following groups invaded Britain and brought new words to the English language? A. Romans, Vikings, and Normans B. Greeks, Celts, and Saxons C. Egyptians, Persians, and Greeks D. Vikings, Saxons, and Normans</p> <p>5. What percentage of English words have been borrowed from other languages? A. Over 60% B. Over 40% C. Over 80% D. Over 90%</p> <p>6. Which century saw the growth of the British Empire and the increased use of English? A. 17th and 18th centuries B. 19th and 20th centuries C. 16th and 17th centuries D. 18th and 19th centuries</p> <p>7. What helped English become a truly global language in the 20th century? A. Two world wars and the influence of American culture B. The growth of the British Empire C. The spread of English in India and Africa D. The popularity of British literature</p> <p>8. How does English continue to change and grow in the 21st century? A. New words are added every year B. It is spoken by more and more people as a second language C. It is influenced by technology and globalization D. All of the above</p>
<p>Formative Assessment (10 minutes)</p>	<p>Technology is making it easier to learn English. Do you agree? Social media has a positive impact on our English skills. Do you agree?</p>

Formative Assessment (10 minutes)	Some people believe that technology is making us lazy in learning English. What do you think? Is traditional classroom learning still important in the digital age? Online language learning platforms are becoming more popular. Are they better than traditional classes?
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Other AI Tools for Lesson/Material Preparation

INK Talks (like TED talks), invideo.io/ai/, quizizz-ai, Natural Reader, NAI Voice Generator, gamma.app are some of the AI tools which teachers can use to create lessons.

Conclusion

As we embrace digital education for this new generation there is a need to address challenges related to digital equity, privacy, and ethical considerations. By overcoming these challenges thoughtfully, we can exploit the full potential of digital education to empower a generation of learners who are equipped with the skills, mindset, and values needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.

Hadi Salehi and Zeinab Salehi (2012) mentioned that there are two types of barriers in implementing technological tools in the classroom: teacher-level and school-level barriers. The first barrier includes the lack of teachers' confidence to use technological tools, lack of time and the second type of barrier includes lack of access to resources.

Only we as teachers should fall in line and keep up with the emerging trends in education and have the mindset to learn and explore new digital tools .

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