

Digital Storytelling Grant Report

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I happily report that the project was completed on time and within budget. In the application to the grant, I explained that the Arabic faculty already embarked on reshaping the Arabic program to adhere to the proficiency standards set by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) as well as the communicative approach to language teaching, universally used by peer intuitions. I explained that this change of approach made the program a rigorous one and brought it to the level of projected proficiency boasted by peer institutions. But it has also meant that the students are now faced with a different approach to a more difficult language. One of the major problems we face as a program with new students is lack of knowledge of how to study Arabic. The project was meant partly to address this last problem by encouraging students to use digital storytelling techniques in order to provide handy advice on how to study Arabic at Kenyon. The students and I have successfully completed the three videos we mentioned in the grant application: “Your First Week with Arabic!” “How I’ve Become a Good Language Student!” and “So You Think You Can Grammar?”

The project has been a valuable learning experience for me and the students. Upon receiving the grant notification, I contacted the Career Development Office (CDO) in order to explore the ways by which this project can be even more meaningful to the students. Based on feedback from the CDO, I structured the student team in a way that resembled an internship project. We agreed on a management structure for the team, based on organizing diagram laid out in Appendix One below. I defined the roles for each of the participants—the definitions are available in Appendix Two. The students and I met regularly to work on video ideas, script modifications and to assess the progress of the project. We used a simplified Gantt chart to track

progress and clarify role distributions. Each video segment began with a team meeting to brainstorm for ideas. The two script writers would jot down those ideas and communicate with the project manager and myself to finalize a first draft. Each draft was then checked and modified by the two team leaders (who have experience with video production and postproduction) in order to ensure the script is doable from a production point of view. (See example of a script in Appendix Three.) The two film students, along with the project coordinator, would consequently draw a shot list for the vide (see example in Appendix Four). The students impressed me with their dedication.

Looking ahead, there are two further projects that the students and I would pursue. First, I have learned the educational value of digital storytelling. I will incorporate digital storytelling elements in my upcoming classes. For example, I will require the students in my beginner language class to design a semester-long digital project. The students will work in groups to produce a script, which will be revised repeatedly throughout the course, and a short video to submit at the end of the semester. We already have the equipment from the digital storytelling project for these class projects. The second project that the student team from the digital storytelling project and I are considering is a 5-minute, high-quality video about Kenyon in Arabic. We are not set on the exact idea for the vide yet, but we are considering a virtual tour of campus and interview with key administrators.

Appendix One: Management Structure



Appendix Two: Role Descriptions

Title	Duties
Project Manager	Overall responsibility for the successful initiation, planning, design, execution, monitoring, controlling and closure of the project. Establishing and managing deadlines. Acting as the main liaison to faculty.
Team Leader 1	Co-leading the creative aspects of the project, including storyboards, script editing, set design, video editing, etc. <i>In full charge of the post-production segment of the project</i> , organizing footage and editing audio/video elements of the project. Helping oversee pre-production and production phases. Supervising Script Writers.
Team Leader 2	Co-leading the creative aspects of the project, including storyboards, script editing, set design, video editing, etc. <i>In full charge of the production segment of the project</i> , including giving on-set instructions to cast and crew and managing production design. Helping oversee pre-production and post-production phases. Supervising Script Writers.
Project Coordinator	Carrying out the role of a producer for the project. In charge of location scouting, bookings, location arrangements, set up, etc. Serving as project ambassador to external collaborators and partners. Supervising Project Assistants.
Script Writer	In charge of brainstorming and collecting ideas for each video story. Soliciting ideas from language learners and faculty. Writing the full script for the three 5-minute videos. Ensuring scripts are pedagogically sound (by consulting with faculty) and pointedly entertaining (by incorporating feedback from team).
Project Assistant	Assisting with the various phases of the project and providing support to team. The project assistant's help is especially crucial during pre-production and production phases. Proofreading the scripts. Providing administrative and logistical support.

Appendix Three: Script Example (Video#1)

INT. CLASSROOM - MIDDAY

Students are standing in groups of two apparently completing an activity. We focus on STUDENT ONE, who is holding a small strip of paper that says "ahlan wa sahan" on it. The audience should know this. STUDENT ONE reads the paper aloud. STUDENT TWO tries to read in response. Neither is sure they are doing it right.

STUDENT ONE

Ahlan wa sahan

TEACHER approaches the group trying to listen and gestures for STUDENT ONE to repeat.

STUDENT ONE

Ahlan wa sahan

TEACHER

No, ah-lan

STUDENT ONE

Ahlan?

TEACHER

Ah-lan wa sahan

STUDENT ONE looks over to their STUDENT TWO, who shrugs.

STUDENT TWO

Ahh-lan?

TEACHER

Close, close keep going.

Class ends.

TEACHER

Keep practicing. Don't forget first AT this afternoon. Ma'a Salama!

STUDENT ONE begins packing up their things, and heads toward the door of the classroom,

frustrated/overwhelmed/unclear but feeling some things.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF BUILDING- RIGHT AFTER CLASS

STUDENT TWO is walking ahead of STUDENT ONE but notices them approaching and slows down.

STUDENT TWO

Am I the only one who heard absolutely zero difference between what we were saying and what the professor was saying?

STUDENT ONE

Not even. I'm real life considering dropping. This is just a lot.

STUDENT TWO

Already it's a lot. This is the first week.

STUDENT ONE

And I can't tell if its that kind of class that starts easy or gets easier as you go.

The students slow down in front of the library as STUDENT TWO appears to be heading inside.

STUDENT TWO

I don't know. I'm gonna go study a little. You wanna..? (gestures toward the door of the library)

STUDENT ONE

I actually have a meeting but good luck

STUDENT TWO

Yeah. yeah have a good meeting.

STUDENT ONE

Ma'a salama

STUDENT ONE walks on toward town and STUDENT TWO heads to the library.

INT. LIBRARY - MIDDAY

STUDENT TWO sets up at a desk pulling out a notebook, alif baa and a pencil. They begin to write out the letters. They draw a "taa"

STUDENT TWO
Is that tha? Or taa?

STUDENT TWO flips through their textbook, and finds the page describing the sound of "taa".

STUDENT TWO
Okay, okay. Taa.

STUDENT TWO draws a "baa"

STUDENT TWO
Now, this is not "taa" that's "taa". Maybe it's "aa"?

STUDENT TWO flips through the book again.

STUDENT TWO
(exasperated) No. No it's "baa". (sighs) Okay.

INT. AT CLASSROOM- EVENING

Students file into the AT room. The AT stands behind the desk, smiling as they take their seats in the circle. The AT looks at the clock and moves to a seat in the circle.

AT TEACHER
Ahlan wa sahlam! Ismii **XYZ**. (Speaks somewhat rapidly in arabic).

AT TEACHER is nodding and trying to make eye contact with the students to see if they are understanding, which they are not.

AT TEACHER
Can we go around and say names and where we are from? Shuu ismik? Ayn medinatik?

Students nod, as if they are now understanding the rapid arabic. AT nods head at STUDENT THREE, gesturing for them to go first.

STUDENT THREE

Oh! Uhh, ismii **XYZ**. And... um, ana min
madinaat San Francisco.

AT TEACHER

(excitedly)

Mumtaaz! Let's keep going.

They continue around the circle, arriving at STUDENT ONE

STUDENT ONE

(quietly, obviously a bit unsure of
themselves) Ismii **XYZ**. And I'm, um ah,
min New York. Or ana min New York I
guess. I think. Whatever.

STUDENT TWO

What's the question exactly?

AT TEACHER

Shuu ismik? Ayn madinatik?

STUDENT TWO

(looking around, obviously confused)
Um..Ismii..

AT TEACHER

Ismi XYZ

STUDENT TWO

Alright...ismii XYZ.

AT TEACHER

Wa ayn madinatik?

STUDENT TWO

Can someone else just go. I just,
whatever.

AT TEACHER

Ana min (some place). Wa inti?

STUDENT TWO

Ana min Chicago? I guess.

AT TEACHER

Good! Before we start the next activity, do you have any questions about what you've learned this week?

A few students snort.

STUDENT FOUR

Don't even get me started!

STUDENT TWO

(addressing the AT) Yeah, I've been having a tough time with the letters. Like, I do the drills and everything but I still have a hard time writing the correct thing when we're given a word to spell.

Others mumble in agreement.

AT TEACHER

(nods understandingly) Yeah, that's definitely challenging. The more time you spend doing it, the easier it gets. I think this next activity will help with that! (addressing class) How about we do some dictation? I'll give you a word, and then you can go up to the board to write it.

AT TEACHER

[student 3] and [student 2], do you guys want to go up first?

They reluctantly agree.

AT TEACHER

Okay, perfect! Here it is: thaabat.
thaabat.

2 and 3 pause, thinking about what to write. Student 3 spells it correctly, and student 2 writes : thabat (missing alif). They turn toward the AT, waiting to see if they got it right.

The AT congratulates 3, and then says to 2:

AT TEACHER

Good, but just one thing: you forgot the alif. Other than that, perfect!
Good job! Who's next?

Another two students go up: 1 and 4

AT TEACHER

Toobee. Toobee.

Student one lowers their head, thinking. The two students write the word, then wait for the AT.

AT TEACHER

Mumtaz, [student one]! You got it!
(Student one struggles to conceal a triumphant smile, obvs very pleased with themselves)

The AT moves to look at student 4's answer. The AT picks up a piece of chalk to add the dash below the ee, and gives student four a smile and thumbs up.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF AT CLASSROOM DIRECTLY AFTER AT

STUDENT THREE is walking ahead of STUDENT ONE and STUDENT TWO.
STUDENT ONE and STUDENT TWO join STUDENT THREE

STUDENT ONE

You're really good at this.

STUDENT THREE

Not really, but thanks

STUDENT TWO

No really. How? I just can't seem to figure it out.

STUDENT ONE

I can study for history, sure. Write a paper for english whatever. But this...I just don't even know where to begin.

STUDENT THREE

Well I spread out my work so I'm working with the language a little every day. I was in your position just two weeks ago, but then met with the professor during office hours

Insert scene here in the professor's office, where the professor and the student are sitting. The professor tells the student:

Learning Arabic, like any new language, is at first very challenging, but all it takes is a plan. Be patient. Follow the syllabus. Doing all the required homework is a victory. Come to class to celebrate those small victories. Language is an art you craft everyday you use it to make something new. You cannot learn without making mistakes. Endorse this!
Also, take it a day at a time, alone or with friends. The struggle is a part of the process.

STUDENT TWO

But what does that look like? How do you even study?

STUDENT THREE

All kinds of stuff. Drills for homework. Listening to the alphabet. Making up words to practice letters. It's easier if I show you. Maybe we can all study together.

STUDENT ONE

I'm only really free Wednesdays at five. Does that work?

STUDENT TWO

Works for me.

STUDENT THREE

Perfect.

INT. CLASSROOM - MIDDAY

STUDENT ONE IS AT THE BOARD, HALF DONE WITH SPELLING THE WORD khafiif;

TEACHER

Khafiif

STUDENT ONE

WRITES khifiif

TEACHER

SIGNALS TO STUDENT: ALMOST CORRECT. REPEATS THE WORD TWICE,
PUTTING EMPHASIS ON THE FIRST SYLLABLE:

Khafiif. Khafiif

STUDENT ONE

Aha! ERASES THE KASRA FROM UNDER THE F, AND PUTS A FATHA ON THE
F

TEACHER

Mumtaaz!

STUDENT ONE

Shukran ustaadh! (**WITH A BIG SMILE!**)

Appendix Four: Shot List Example (Video#1)

#	Scene / location	Shot Type	Description/Dialog	Talent	Props
1A	INT Classroom	Pan / ESTAB	STUDENTS are working together in pairs. There is Arabic written on the board, indicating an Arabic language class.	Student One, Student Two, Student Extras, Teacher	
1B	INT Classroom	2-shot / Full on Student One, Student Two	STUDENT ONE and STUDENT TWO are completing an activity in class.	Student One, Student Two, Teacher, Student Extras	
1C	INT Classroom	POV Student One	Student One is holding a slip of paper that says, "ahlan wa sahlan." They are pronouncing it wrong.	Student One	Slip of paper
1D	INT Classroom	3-shot / MS on Student One, Teacher, Student Two	TEACHER intervenes to help the students with their pronunciation.	Student One, Student Two, Teacher	
1E	INT Classroom	MS on Teacher	Teacher dismisses the class.	Teacher	
1F	INT Classroom	EWS	Students leave the classroom.	Student One, Student Two, Student Extras, Teacher	
1G	INT Classroom	MS on Student One	Student One, looking frustrated, is the last one to pack up their bag. They leave moments after everyone else.	Student One	Book bag, textbooks, pencils
2A	EXT Building	WS on Student One, Student Two	Student Two is walking ahead of Student One, but notices and slows down.	Student One, Student Two	
2B	EXT Library	DOLLY FT / MS on Student One, Student Two	Student One and Student Two discuss Arabic. They stop in front of the library.	Student One, Student Two	
2C	EXT Library	ESTAB	Student One walks away while Student Two enters the library.	Student One, Student Two	
3A	INT Library	OSS Student Two	Student Two flips through Arabic textbook and pronounces Arabic letters out loud. They take notes as they say the letters.	Student Two	Arabic textbook, notebook, pencil
3B	INT Library	HA / CU Student Two	Student Two grows frustrated.	Student Two	
4A	INT Classroom	OSS AT Teacher	AT TEACHER watches the students file in.	AT Teacher, Student Extras	
4B	INT Classroom	ESTAB	The Students sit down at AT Teacher takes a seat in the circle. AT Teacher begins speaking Arabic at a speed that's a little advanced for beginners.	AT Teacher, Student Extras	

4C	INT Classroom	MCU on Student Three	STUDENT THREE introduces themself in Arabic.	Student Three	
4D	INT Classroom	WS	STUDENT FOUR and the others talk about the difficulties of Arabic. Everyone joins in.	AT Teacher, Student Four, Student Two, Student Extras	
4E	INT Classroom	MCU on AT Teacher	AT Teacher comforts the students and suggests that they do an exercise on the board.	AT Teacher	
4F	INT Classroom	MWS on Student Two, Student Three, AT Teacher	The students write on the board. They look to AT Teacher.	Student Two, Student Three, AT Teacher	
5A	EXT Classroom	WS on Student One, Student Two, Student Three	Student One and Student Two are walking. Student Three catches up and joins them.	Student One, Student Two, Student Three	
5B	EXT Classroom	MS on Student One, Student Two, Student Three	Student One, Student Two, and Student Three talk about improving in Arabic.	Student One, Student Two, Student Three	
6A	INT Office	OSS Student Three, CU Teacher	Student Three is in the Teacher's office.	Student Three, Teacher	
5C	EXT Classroom	MS on Student One, Student Two, Student Three	Student One, Student Two, and Student Three talk about improving in Arabic.	Student One, Student Two, Student Three	
7A	INT Classroom	WS on Student One, Teacher	Student One is writing on the board. They almost spell the word correctly.	Student One, Teacher	
7B	INT Classroom	CU on Teacher	Teacher repeats the word.	Teacher	
7C	INT Classroom	WS on Student One, Teacher	Student One spells the word correctly. The Teacher tell them they're correct.	Student One, Teacher	
7D	INT Classroom	CU on Student One	Student One smiles after spelling the word right. Big smile!	Student One	