

社交平台 **Storify** 与汉语语言文化的协作学习

Promoting Collaborative Learning of Chinese Language and Culture Using Storify

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[**Abstract**] Social media platforms have been used widely and effectively in language teaching and learning. This article introduces a student project using Storify, a lesser known media, in an advanced Chinese course for heritage speakers. It discusses the design and assessment of the project, while examining the role storytelling on social media plays in the development of students' language proficiency and cultural understanding as well as critical thinking skills.

[**Key Words**] social media; storify; storytelling; heritage speakers

In recent years, students in colleges and high schools are becoming impressively proficient at using social media sources such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and Tumblr. As they eagerly share their lives online, social media sources are also being incorporated in formal classroom settings for the teaching and learning of foreign languages. Through YouTube videos, Flickr images, or online posts, authentic language materials on social media have been integrated into the Chinese language curriculum. This paper introduces a group storytelling project on Storify (www.storify.com) that was completed in a third year Chinese course at Emory University. The paper explores the effectiveness of social media in the teaching and learning of Chinese language and culture. It argues that this type of multimodal projects cultivates an active and collaborative learning environment and facilitates the development of learners' knowledge of Chinese language and culture.

1 What is Storify?

Storify is a free online storytelling tool. There are countless posts, tweets, videos, and images online, and keeping up with everything posted on social media is an unrealistic task. Storify allows internet users to sort and collect information into one place. On Storify, users can search multiple social media streams such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr,

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YouTube, and Instagram, and then create new stories by pulling together the public content found on any or all of them.

Storify has been widely used by journalists and educators of journalism. News websites routinely use Storify to capture breaking news and highlight discussions on social media. Journalism educators have been using it to organize readings, create multimedia course content, and teach students how to curate social media. As Fincham puts it, “The tool, which lets users pull together content from various social networks to tell stories, is a one-stop Web publishing shop for even the most technophobic educator.” (Poynter.org)

2 A Storytelling Project on Storify in an Advanced Chinese Course

While teaching Advanced Chinese for Heritage Speakers (CHN303), I assigned a mid-term group project that requires students to curate a themed story on Storify about a social, cultural, or political topic. Students in this course have taken two intensive courses of Chinese for heritage speakers or have demonstrated their proficiency level by means of a placement test.

2.1 Teaching and Learning Goals

CHN303 is the third (advanced) course in the heritage track of the Chinese program at Emory University. Students possess advanced Chinese proficiencies, particularly in speaking and listening. As HL (heritage language) learners, they “need to increase their sociolinguistic sophistication, and need to upgrade their HL proficiency from that of a child in an intimate or informal family situation to an age-appropriate academic level and register.” (Li, 2008:22) This course aims to further develop the total range of their linguistic and cultural competencies through reading and analyzing texts of different genres and styles.

Considering the learning goals of this course, I designed a mid-term group project in which students used Storify to create stories on aspects of Chinese culture and society. This project engaged students in active learning through a comprehensive range of learning activities including reading, analyzing and synthesizing information, writing, and presenting. The goals of the project were to promote sophisticated language production and enhance students’ socio-cultural understanding.

2.2 Project Description and Requirements

Students worked in groups of three. Each group produced a Storify story on a cultural, social, or political topic of their own choice. Stories generated and presented by students included The Battle of Red Cliff: Why Cao Cao Lost (赤壁之战:曹操为何战败), Sister Furong: China’s Web Icon (芙蓉姐姐,中国网红), Hong Kong Businessman Offers Up Millions to Find Husband for Lesbian Daughter (香港富商豪掷5亿港币为同性恋女儿

招亲), The Mid-Autumn Festival: History, Changes, and Future (中秋节的历史, 变化与未来). A list of selected stories and URL are in the Appendix.

After deciding on the topic collectively, students followed the steps below to curate their stories.

- Phase One—Preparation. A training session on using Storify was conducted by an Educational Analyst at University Technology Services prior to the beginning of the project. Students set up accounts on www.storify.com. They began gathering original contents (assets) by combing through media sources, including tweets, news reports, YouTube videos, photos, Weibo posts, etc. At least 20 assets must be included. Among them there must be a minimum of three blog posts on Weibo, three tweets, three videos, three images, three news reports from China and three news reports from outside of China (either in English or Chinese).
- Phase Two—Analysis and writing. Students organized assets and edited the contents in the sequence in which the stories were told. Additionally, each group was required to write least five paragraphs of transitional texts to tie the storyline together. Finally, a critic or evaluation of the story in no less than 700 characters was required at the end of each story.
- Phase Three—Presentation and reflection. Each group was given 15 minutes to present their story to the class. Each member of the group submitted a one-page personal reflection on this project including his/her participation within the group, details about the group experience, the effectiveness of Storify, and how the project impacted his/her Chinese language development. An online survey was also conducted.

2.3 Timeline

The project was completed in approximately five weeks, from mid September to late October in a fall semester. Detailed schedule is as follows.

Week 1	Instructor preparing sample story on Storify, students receiving, training, signing up on Storify, forming groups, deciding titles
Week 2	Researching and gathering assets, organizing assets
Week 3	Writing narrative and essay, receiving feedback on writing
Week 4	Completing story on Storify, links emailed to course Blackboard
Week 5	In-class presentation, personal reflection, survey

2.4 Assessment

The stories on Storify were evaluated based on the following rubric.

Categories	Details
Storytelling 30%	Contents and Story development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a clear topic • Information is rich and supports topic • Interesting
	Pronunciation and Speaking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak clearly, loudly, in cohesive paragraphs • All students have important parts and are well prepared
Critique 30%	Contents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues clearly stated • Focused and well supported
	Grammar and vocabulary usage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use sentences that are at the level of your proficiency • Use written style vocabulary extensively
Meeting the minimums 20%	Have a headline, no less than 20 assets, five paragraphs of texts, and a critique of at least 700 characters. You must send the link on time.
Quality of story 20%	Editorial judgment and quality of assets (images, videos, music, sound, etc.)

2.5 Students' feedback

A survey was conducted online to gauge students' feedback on this project. 38 students took the survey. Results are summarized below.

Rate the following statements about your learning and skill development through the mid-term project.

No.	Statements	Scale (1=strongly disagree; 3=agree; 5=strongly agree)					% of 3~5 (Agree)
		1	2	3	4	5	
1	I was able to develop reading skills when browsing media resources.	7.9% (3)	10.5% (4)	28.9% (11)	42.1% (16)	10.5% (4)	81.5% (31/38)
2	I was able to develop cultural knowledge on the subject that I chose.	13.2% (5)	7.9% (3)	13.2% (5)	42.1% (16)	23.9% (9)	79.2% (30/38)
3	I was able to develop writing skills by writing the midterm narrative and critique.	7.9% (3)	10.5% (4)	15.8% (6)	47.4% (18)	18.4% (7)	81.6% (31/38)
4	I was able to develop speaking and listening skills through the in-class presentations.	7.9% (3)	7.9% (3)	21.1% (8)	50.0% (19)	13.2% (5)	84.3% (32/38)

(续表)

No.	Statements	Scale (1=strongly disagree; 3=agree; 5=strongly agree)					% of 3~5 (Agree)
		1	2	3	4	5	
5	I had to use critical thinking skills to complete this project.	2.6% (1)	13.2% (5)	15.8% (6)	47.4% (18)	21.1% (8)	84.3% (32/38)
6	Creating a Storify project was easy and intuitive.	10.5% (4)	18.4% (7)	21.1% (8)	36.8% (14)	13.2% (5)	71.1% (27/38)
7	I found this to be a valuable project to create.	5.3% (2)	18.4% (7)	18.4% (7)	39.5% (15)	18.4% (7)	76.3% (29/38)

Below quotes comments from students' reflection essays:

- “Through the process of doing this project, my personal Chinese speaking, reading and writing skills have greatly improved due to the extensive use of Chinese needed to create the project. Because I did most of the proof reading and wrote the discussion, I feel that reading and writing aspects of my Chinese improved the most.”
- “I think Storify is a useful tool for education—it simplified the storytelling activity while combining with technology. It is essentially the next generation of storytelling. I was very impressed with its function and could see myself using it in the future. Overall, I highly recommend Storify for students to use, as it is a powerful storytelling tool.”
- “This project has definitely helped my learning of the Chinese language and culture ... Storify seems to be a very good tool. It is easy to utilize and very convenient as one can compile various different sources into one place while having it still look organized and professional. Because it is capable of displaying all kinds of popular social media websites, it is versatile enough for even the advanced language courses.”

3 Discussions

In the teaching of foreign languages, course contents are increasingly presented in multimodal, interactive, technology-mediated, e-learning format (Birch & Sankey, 2008). Literacy research continues to explore how multiple modalities influence the literacy development of our students. In the proposal for a blended learning model, Piccano points out that “multiple intelligences and mental abilities do not exist as yes-no entities but within a continua which the mind blends into the manner in which it responds to and learns from the external environment and instructional stimuli. Conceptually, this suggests a framework for a multimodal instructional design that relies on a variety of

pedagogical techniques, deliveries, and media.” (Piccano, 2009: 116) Mayer (2003) contends that students learn more deeply from a combination of words and pictures than from words alone; known as the “multimedia effect”. Reflecting upon the Storify project, I feel that its strength lies in its ability to engage students in active language and culture learning in multiple modalities. For each of the stories, students researched materials in texts, videos, images. They had to use linguistic, visual and audio modes to find information and analyze contents. Creating their own stories was a knowledge-building and knowledge-application process in which students explored the interconnectedness of multiple domains, exchanged information, and collaborated with their peers. In terms of language learning, the survey data, with over 80% agreement to statements 1, 3, 4 and 5, demonstrated that this type of multimodal learning was effective in developing students’ reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. Additionally, since the topics of the stories were based on aspects of the Chinese culture and society, the project engaged students in active exploration of Chinese cultural topics. Nearly 80% of the students felt that this project helped them develop their cultural knowledge on the subject they chose. Below are some comments in their reflection essays:

- “I have learned a somewhat innovative Chinese language, the internet language, through narrating and using sources to best describe the story.”
- “We all worked together in collecting assets both from our personal experience at the Chinatown and also from online sources. Working with others, better students also helped me understand how to write better. Reading their work as well as reading Chinese articles helped me with my reading abilities as well.”
- “The project has definitely helped my learning of the Chinese language and culture. While I was aware of the battle of the Red Cliff, my knowledge mostly stemmed from watching hours of popular films and putting together bits and pieces of Chinese folktales. Having had the chance to actually research on and present our topic, I was able to walk away with a very clear understanding of what took place. Having to shift through the Chinese sources forced me to sit down and read through some of the more difficult texts, which improved my Chinese reading and comprehension skills. With that, I was able to express myself better in writing. I found that I wrote with more ease as I was nearing the end of our written analysis.”

Another significant result is that students overwhelmingly (84.2%) agreed that they used critical thinking skills in completing this project. I believe that students benefit greatly by using critical thinking skills in their learning of Chinese language. Firstly, thinking critically is the first step in elevating their Chinese proficiency “from that of a child in an intimate or informal family situation to an age-appropriate academic level and register.” (Li, 2008:22) This assignment required students to conceptualize an important cultural or social issue and express their thoughts both orally and in writing. When they

think critically about the issue at hand, they also make an effort to express themselves using the language at the appropriate level. This makes the learning of language more meaningful to them. Secondly, to think critically when completing this project means that learners must evaluate events or ideas in multiple domains. This process of evaluation has the potential of enhancing their understanding of the issues in Chinese culture and society. This is evident in the survey result for statement 2, in which over 79% of the students felt that they developed their cultural knowledge on the subject they chose.

Storify, the e-platform for this project, is a story-building tool in the realm of social media. For this assignment, students generated stories by weaving media information and their own thoughts into cohesive narratives. The stories were shared with fellow students and could be critiqued by anyone for any aspects of it, including language, content, as well as veracity of the sources. This makes learning an active, collaborative and social activity. Additionally, Storify is easy to utilize and very convenient to use. Below are some comments by students:

- “I believe that Storify should continue to be used because by implementing various forms of social media, it lets students write a story which is better-rounded and complete when compared to traditional forms of storytelling such as Power Point slides or a movie created by iMovie.”
- “It (Storify) is easy to utilize and very convenient as one can compile various different sources into one place while having it still look organized and professional. Because it is capable of displaying all kinds of popular social media websites, it is versatile enough for even the advanced language classes.”

Having discussed a number of positive outcomes of this project as well as advantages of Storify, we should consider a number of limitations. First, the fact that some students did not agree with the statements in the survey poses the needs for improvement in project design. One student pointed out that the time allocated for presentation was too short for them to comment and ask questions. Several students suggested using class time to prepare for this project due to their diverse and busy schedules. Storify, though convenient and easy to use, does have a few drawbacks. One student mentioned that personal assets had to be uploaded to another website before they could be included on Storify. Another student pointed out that Storify only allowed “linear layout, meaning that text could only be over or under an image, but not next to it.”

Besides issue of logistics, this project does not assess the learning outcome of students in relation to their different learning styles. Research suggests that multimodal presentation of content can potentially cater more effectively to the different learning styles of an increasingly diverse student body. (Sankey, Birch & Gardiner, 2010) Although the connection between multimodal learning and learning styles is not assessed in this project, it could be explored in future projects involving the use of Storify.

4 Concluding Remarks

This paper described a mid-term group project for an advanced Chinese class for heritage speakers at Emory University. While observing several areas for improvement, this project has a positive impact on student learning. Considering the learning goals for this course, telling social stories on Storify facilitated the development of students' language proficiency and cultural understanding as well as critical thinking skills.

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Appendix: List of selected stories

Title of Story	URL
Liu Xiang: A Hero? (刘翔:英雄还是……?)	http://storify.com/xiaowen/story
The Battle of Red Cliff: Why Cao Cao Lost (赤壁之战:曹操为何战败)	http://storify.com/CHN303G3/story
Sister Furong: China's Web Icon (芙蓉姐姐,中国网红)	http://storify.com/CHN303GROUP1/story
Hong Kong Businessman Offers Up Millions to Find Husband for Lesbian Daughter (香港富商豪掷 5 亿港币为同性恋女儿招亲)	http://storify.com/chn303/5?utm_medium=sfy.co-twitter&awesm=sfy.co_c9Zs&utm_campaign=&utm_content=storify-pingback&utm_source=direct-sfy.co
The Mid-Autumn Festival: History, Changes, and Future (中秋节的历史,变化与未来)	http://storify.com/chinese303/story
Chinese New Year—A Festival for All Chinese People (属于所有华人的节日——春节)	http://storify.com/katherineguo76/chinese-new-year