Publishers in the digital island of Lilliput: A story for young learners

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During his first voyage, Gulliver is washed ashore after a shipwreck and finds himself a prisoner of a race of tiny people, less than 6 inches tall. They are inhabitants of the island country of Lilliput. After giving assurances of his good behavior, he is given a residence in Lilliput and becomes a favorite of the court.
Like Gulliver, publishers are a kind of giant: they publish an enormous amount of titles for different target audiences.

They have adapted to the world of technology and produced digital materials mainly for adults.

They now want to become the “favorite of the court” BUT, they are ruled by the residents of Lilliput, those are the young learners (YL), who have special needs and talents that older ones don’t necessarily have.
We are publishers not hostages of Lilliput.

As publishers we ask ourselves:

- Why do we feel like hostages?
- How do we get out of an unfamiliar situation of dealing with cutting edge technology, creativity and YL?
- How do we cater the tiny people of Lilliput with solutions that were so far suitable only for the big ones?
Who are these Lilliputians? What makes them so special?

Some simple facts about them:

- They are small but in most cases, they are born into swiping tablets and smart phones and this is part of their natural environment.
- They are easily attracted and/or distracted by different learning materials. They move very fast from printed books, online content, interactive TV, and tactile activities.
- They are born with special talents that later on vanish.
Publishers are asking:

What do the publishers know about digital content creation?
Publishers (Gulliver) are more experienced with “older” learners. They know that...

- It's difficult to visualize a ready digital product until it is on the screen.
- Digital content requires planning, structure and clarity.
- Publishers need to apply the right technology to the right product and target age.
- Most publishers still create printed content first, leaving very little time (and money) for the digital production.
- Producing fast, efficient quality content requires adequate tools, trained writers & editors, talented designers, graphic artists, and organized project management skills/staff.

IS IT THE SAME WITH YOUNG LEARNERS? Let’s briefly compare ...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yong Learners</th>
<th>Others</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learn intuitively by looking, listening and repeating</td>
<td>“Formal” teaching, logical understanding of the language structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn by trial and error.</td>
<td>Learn by being taught.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn best by doing and playing games</td>
<td>Learn best by moving from theory to practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make up their own “over generalized” grammatical rules and are cognitively</td>
<td>Understand grammar rules and need to hold on to them in order to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not ripe to grasp any formal grammar rules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are not afraid of making mistakes and don’t mind being corrected. They see it</td>
<td>Are hindered and inhibited by making mistakes. They are often embarrassed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as a natural part of the learning process</td>
<td>by being corrected by others</td>
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## Young Learners’ abilities and needs vs. adults (2)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Yong Learners</th>
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<tr>
<td>Need a lot of practice, they forget as fast as they learn</td>
<td>May be slower at grasping language but retain it for a longer period of time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have a short concentration span and need constant changes and exposure via different means of media</td>
<td>Have a longer concentration span, need less rich media and more text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are able to mimic/acquire foreign accents and intonation and can sound like native speakers</td>
<td>Loose the ability of sounding like native speakers at the age of puberty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adapt to any learning methodology and have no inhibitions about technology</td>
<td>Cling to “old” learning habits and find it difficult to change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Find it natural to begin with a long oral exposure and gradually learn how to read</td>
<td>Adults learn oral language together with reading strategies</td>
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# Fulfilling the Needs of YL with the required digital solutions (1)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Young learners’ needs &amp; abilities</th>
<th>Digital content solutions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Intuitive learning by looking, listening and repeating</td>
<td>Presentation of rich media, pictures, sounds and modeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Over generalization”/ no grammar rules</td>
<td>Exposure to endless examples without giving and explicit grammatical explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn by trial and error</td>
<td>Providing correct answers after the YL has had a chance to experience a few trials and errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich media exposure and a variety of short activities</td>
<td>Providing a wide range of videos, audio files, pictures, animation, and games</td>
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</table>
### Fulfilling the Needs of YL with the required digital solutions (2)

<table>
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<th>Young learners’ needs &amp; abilities</th>
<th>Digital content solutions</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Constant practice</td>
<td>A large variety of interactive exercises and games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn by doing and playing games</td>
<td>Digital content provides activities and games that encourage doing rather than learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mimic and acquire foreign accents and intonation</td>
<td>Native tongue modeling/listening and recording activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long oral exposure and gradual acquisition of the mechanics of reading</td>
<td>Long exposure requires visuals, and rich media (as it is done in first language)</td>
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</table>
What should we be asking ourselves in order to utilize the talents of the YL and the technology we have?

- How can publishers reposition/repurpose and sustain content to any platform or target audience to suit YL?
- How can publishers decide, which part of the learning package is digital and which is not?
- How can publishers gain digital knowledge rather than look for vendors to solve their problems?
- and more....

Are there answers to these QUESTIONS?
Most of the solutions and answers to the questions we have raised, evolve around two main resources:

- Knowledgeable professional staff that can develop digital content for YL.

- A tool that can help create interactive digital content.
The professional staff required for young learners contains:

- Techno pedagogical experts that can design products suitable for YL.
- Writers who have been trained to create digital content for YL.
- Rich media experts specializing in YL needs (cartoon videos, animation, games etc).
- Integrators who are able to deal with huge amounts of rich media files.
1) Activities for YL

- Create games in a fast and easy way. (e.g. writers write a list of terms and cross word puzzles/ or memory games are created automatically).
- Create a variety of interactive activities suitable for YL in different subject matters (shooting gallery, matching, categorizing, drag and drop, etc).
- Create special practice activities for YL whose auditory senses are more dominant than others.
2) Facilitating writers

- Use familiar, common tools for writers (Word) so that no training is needed.
- A variety of suitable ready-to-use templates for writers dealing with YL content.
- Preview screens of the content for writers so that they can “see” what the content will look like when it’s published.
Facilitating developers

- One tool for all: integrators, writers, audio/TV studios can all work with the same tool.

Is there such a tool? Can content be created in such a way? Let’s see some examples and learn for ourselves.
Introducing the RAT via products
Robby & Patch
Cheeky
Score!
E blocks

- QUARTER
- DOLL
Nice! But time consuming and costly. How do we shorten the process & create YL content in an efficient way?

- How can we reach a high level of creativity & efficiency at the same time?
- How do we induce our pedagogic beliefs into our product (e.g. moving from lower to higher cognitive abilities)?
- How do we deal with our writers and promise that they all work under the same standards and systems?
- How can the integrators “speak” to the writers and make their work easy?
How does the RAT work?

Writers

- Click on the menu button
- Select an activity type from the menu.
- Fill in the ready template.
- Preview the activity.
From writers to integrators

Integrators

- Click on the “extract data set” to automatically create:
  - structured data files (JSON, XML, HTML).
  - Media production scripts.
  - Structured reference content (grammar/glossary etc).
From integration to a ready product

- The integrator clicks on the Publish button
- The ready content is published and spilled into the activity engines.
Presentation tools

There are two presentation tools: web and app. They both support:

- Interactive activities, speaking practice, games
- Built-in scoring system
- Built in dashboards
- SCORM packaging
There are three suggested phases to enter the YL creative world of digital content:

1) Seek outside expertise/professional staff as a first step in acquiring internal knowledge.

2) Use a sophisticated authoring and presentation tool that is friendly to both IT and writers.

3) Become independent and be able to reposition/change content according to internal needs and technological demands.
Appendix 1: Writers

Helps writers with:

- Selecting the activity type needed
- Forming the template based on the selected activity
- Filling in templates with the appropriate activity content
- Monitoring content creation
Appendix 2: The media production

RAT Provides:

- Automatically generated scripts for audio visual production
- Media tagging such as: file name, picture size, voice gender.

- Additional tools:
  - Links that can be previewed
  - Missing files follow up
  - Size of visuals
Appendix 3: A quick preview tool

- Before publishing the content, writers/editors can get a fully functional preview of each activity.
Let’s go back to the happy end of Gulliver. Isn’t this what we want? A free Gulliver?