

Chapter 4

Digital Storytelling Project for Language Teachers: Using Personal Narratives and Technology for Authentic Learning Experience

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ABSTRACT

This chapter will present a model of a digital storytelling project that is designed to help language teachers experience what their students would go through in the digital storytelling process. The model will give teachers an opportunity to reflect on the experience and plan for the implementation of the digital storytelling in their teachings. The chapter discusses concepts of new literacy, semiotics, and technology for language learning, and importance of teacher perspectives in relation to the presented model. The discussion also reminds readers that the ultimate goal of the teacher digital storytelling project is to support authentic and meaningful learning of their students, including English language learners (ELLs) and bilingual students. The digital storytelling approach is used to acknowledge diversity and promote culturally responsive teaching in a language class. Reading, writing, and sharing personal narratives in the digital storytelling offer opportunities to ELLs or bilingual students to understand the context, make voices, and contribute to a learning community.

INTRODUCTION

Today's world is rapidly changing, impacted by diversifying demographics and revolutionary technologies. Such changes demand reformation in schools, including teaching and learning practices in classes. Teachers often face more cultural and linguistic diversity as the number of migrant students increases in their classrooms. They also try to incorporate innovative technologies into their pedagogy but struggle to keep them relevant to the curriculum. On the other hand, students with diverse backgrounds, including English Language Learners (ELLs) or bilingual students, do not always feel welcomed by the classroom

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community and may need extra support beyond the traditional way of teaching and learning (Volante et al., 2020). ELLs have fewer opportunities to participate in classroom activities, especially when those activities are mainly by spoken or written words, or verbo-centric (Woodrow, 2006). Therefore, teachers should find a way to ensure all students' participation in the class by choosing the right pedagogy.

The changing society has impacted how we view language and literacy. The concept of new literacy has emerged, and new literacy uses semiotics to explain multimedia and multimodality in language classes. Technology is known to be effective in assisting language learning, as it can provide opportunities for authentic, meaningful learning experiences for students. This chapter will then present a model of digital storytelling project for language teachers to firsthand experience digital producing and sharing. Digital storytelling is an innovative way of storytelling using multimodal technology and serves as a good example of how technology can be integrated into the curriculum to support students' language and literacy learning. In the teacher digital storytelling project, teachers produce a digital story and conceptualize and reflect on the process. As participants of the project, teachers will follow the same steps that their students would go through. The digital storytelling uses the first point of view as it narrates the story, and the teachers will firsthand experience the process as writers. In this way, teachers are better prepared to teach their students because they understand the student as writers (Cremin et al., 2020; Bifuh-Ambe, 2013; Watts & Thompson, 2008). The model may be used as a part of teacher training or professional development, emphasizing the importance of teacher reflection and hands-on experiences.

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

New Literacy

The complexity of today's society impacts student and teacher performances in schools. It is especially true to language teaching and learning because language is never static but constantly changes to reflect the people who use it and its context. One attempt to keep schools updated is to implement approaches supported by new literacy. Historically, there have been different views of literacy, and it is worthwhile for teachers to understand literacy theories to support innovations in classes to make learning relevant to all students. This section will briefly review the evolution of new literacy that has influenced current technology implementation in teaching language as a social practice. Chung (2006) and Metcalfe, Simpson, and Todd (2013) provide a historical review to explain literacy's changing concept. Chung describes how literacy first emerged to describe basic reading and writing skills and has gradually evolved into more complex concepts as society changes. There has been a range of different views on literacy, from autonomous literacy to critical literacy. Autonomous literacy views literacy as decoding and encoding texts, and the knowledge and skills involved in such ability is neutral or autonomous to anyone and any culture. Being literate from this perspective means that one can read and write to transmit messages attached to the text (prints, in most cases). The autonomous literacy values functional mastery of literacy as a goal of education, and often focuses on teaching techniques of reading and writing prints. In this view, students from different cultures and linguistic backgrounds are expected to learn the same values and techniques, which marginalize them if they cannot conform to such norms. According to the sociopsycholinguists such as Noam Chomsky or Kenneth Goodman, reading is not a neutral or mechanical process, but it occurs in human minds heavily influenced by socio-cultural aspects (see Goodman, 1996; Smith & Goodman, 2008). That is to say, individuals with different socio-cultural backgrounds may dif-

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