

Chapter 7

Utilizing Digital Storytelling Tools and Thinking Routines for Cultivating Multiliteracies in Contemporary Classrooms

Tharrenos Bratitsis

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4257-2755>

University of Western Macedonia, Greece

Kiriaki Melliou

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7297-7852>

Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Greece

ABSTRACT

Pedagogies that foster inclusion, diversity, and the celebration of difference are central in contemporary classrooms that are characterized by an ethnically diverse population with multiple learning styles and ranging abilities. A powerful and flexible venue for educators to address the complex literacy needs of all students is incorporating multimodalities into teaching that draw upon a variety of modes including visual, linguistic, gestural, oral, and spatial. The chapter offers theoretical foundations about the pedagogy of multiliteracy through digital storytelling and provides specific examples of tools and strategies such as thinking routines and story element creation tools that are framed within the Harvard's Project Zero's dispositional framework and the StoryLogicNet project. Using these frameworks and tools, the authors seek to contribute authentic examples on developing and advancing young students' multiliteracy skills for inside and outside the classroom.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-5022-2.ch007

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) over the past decades has significantly affected everyday life and, at extent, education. Several learning and teaching approaches arise in the literature (Grant & Bolin, 2016) for addressing the needs of children who are nowadays born in a multimodal, media-dominated society, mainly via digital technology. In this society, children begin interacting with such technologies and a huge variety of information from a very young age, even their early infancy. Prensky (2001) introduced the term “digital natives” for children who are born in a digital environment and find it very natural to interact with corresponding technologies, but also with information. On the other hand, he also claimed that despite that interaction the children do not possess digital competencies as an inborn skill.

Furthermore, pedagogies that foster inclusion, diversity and the celebration of difference are central in contemporary classrooms that are characterized by an ethnically diverse population with multiple learning styles and ranging abilities. At the same time the 21st century creates more persistent expectations for higher and wider levels of literacy from all students in order to communicate across differences and make meaningful contributions to their societies. A powerful and flexible venue for educators to address the complex literacy needs of all students is incorporating multimodalities into teaching that draw upon a variety of modes including visual, linguistic, gestural, oral, and spatial.

This chapter reflects upon three pillars which combined can address the aforementioned situation, namely Multiliteracies, Digital Storytelling and Thinking Dispositions. The element of convergence for all three is that of making meaning via multimodal communication channels in order to achieve successful communication, also being able to understand different perspectives of various elements (people, conditions, events, etc.).

The chapter is structured as follows: first a brief introduction is made to the theoretical framework regarding Digital Storytelling and Multiliteracies development. The utilization of the former in order to treat the latter is then discussed, under the scope of an EU funded project. Following, a dispositional view of multiliteracies and stories of migration in Early Childhood Education is discussed, before the concluding discussion.

BACKGROUND

The world is facing unprecedented challenges, and this time has underscored the importance of equipping young students with all of the competences that are needed to communicate successfully with others in culturally diverse classrooms. At the same time the 21st century creates more persistent expectations for higher and wider levels of literacy from all students in order to communicate across differences and make meaningful contributions to their societies. A powerful and flexible venue for educators to address the complex literacy needs of all students is incorporating multimodalities into teaching that draw upon a variety of modes including visual, linguistic, gestural, oral, and spatial.

Multiliteracy, the ability to identify, interpret, create, and communicate meaning across a variety of visual, oral, corporal, musical and alphabetical forms of communication involving an awareness of the social, economic and wider cultural factors that frame communication is strongly connected to multimodality. This interplay between different representational modes and the freedom to use any medium and tool to create meaning provide students with the opportunity to learn in an environment that is more

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