

Chapter 19

The Multimedia Memoir: Leveraging Multimodality to Facilitate the Teaching of Narrative Writing for Preservice Teachers

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ABSTRACT

In this case study, two teacher educators in literacy education examine preservice teachers' (N = 20) Multimedia Memoirs, focusing specifically on their learning of multimodal writing processes during a language arts methods course. Data analyzed for this study includes a set of Multimedia Memoirs and written reflections. The researchers find that preservice teachers navigate between writing their memoirs traditionally and digitally by drawing on their knowledge and experiences with the writing process and with technology integration. Multimedia Memoirs and reflections demonstrate that preservice teachers' knowledge about the writing process and the use of multimodality increases for their own writing and their future writing pedagogy. Implications for teacher education programs include a need to provide scaffolded digital writing instruction using a variety of genres.

INTRODUCTION

The National Commission on Writing (2003) referred to writing as the “neglected ‘R’” in both K-12 and higher education settings and called for a writing revolution at all levels of education. At the post-secondary level, the Commission recommended that teacher education programs provide

opportunities for preservice teachers to develop their own writing skills and offer courses on writing theory to meet teacher certification requirements. In the years since the Commission’s report, much has changed in terms of what it means to “write” and to “be a writer” as new technologies continue to proliferate. Currently, writing is not just black marks on white paper; it is “created out of word,

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image, sound, and motion; circulated in digital environments; and consumed across a wide range of digital platforms” (DeVoss, Eidman-Aadahl, & Hicks, 2010, p. ix). Therefore, it becomes imperative for technology to be embedded in literacy methods courses to prepare future teachers of writing, in this case, for preservice teachers’ writing pedagogy and their knowledge of a variety of writing genres and their knowledge of writing with digital tools.

Preservice teachers often enter these methods courses with diverse writing needs and skills and describe their knowledge of the writing process as “nonexistent” (Colby & Stapleton, 2006). Many also struggle with implementing technology into writing instruction (Lei, 2009). Finally, preservice teachers sometimes dislike writing or think they are poor writers (Gallavan, Bowles, & Young, 2007; Morgan, 2010). Given the recent national spotlight on writing (Common Core, 2010; Gilbert & Graham, 2010; Kihara, Graham, & Hawken, 2009) and because participating in multimodal practices permeates young peoples’ lives (Macken-Horarik, 2004), there is a growing need for cultivating effective writing teachers for 21st-century learners.

Although recent studies of preservice teachers and writing examine traditional writing practices (Morgan, 2010; Zimmerman, Morgan, Kidder-Brown, & Batchelor, 2012), little empirical research has been conducted related to the preparation of teachers of writing for the digital classroom (MacArthur, 2006). New technologies have changed the nature of writing in school, allowing authors to manipulate multimedia components such as voice recording, audio, image, video, and more to create digital writing pieces. Digital storytelling--a distinct narrative genre that uses new media technology to produce short, personal narratives (Miller, 2010; Robin, 2008)--has been increasingly incorporated into the field of education. Prior research examining digital storytelling has focused primarily on learning motivation (Kajder, 2006; Sadik, 2008) and academic achievement (Burmark, 2004; Kajder &

Swenson, 2004; Robin, 2008; Yang & Wu, 2012) across a variety of content curricula. However, far fewer studies have focused on how writing process and digital storytelling can affect the preparation of teachers of writing. More research is needed to understand better how digital storytelling can be used as an instructional medium to prepare teachers of writing.

Within this qualitative study, we sought to answer the following two research questions: (1) How do preservice teachers compose a Multimedia Memoir using traditional writing and digital storytelling? and (2) How do preservice teachers articulate their understanding of themselves as writers and teachers of writers after completing the Multimedia Memoir project?

In this chapter, we propose to offer an approach to developing the writing skills and writing pedagogy for preservice teachers preparing to teach 21st-century learners through their own composition of a multimodal text—the Multimedia Memoir. This project provides a framework for developing preservice teachers’ knowledge in three distinct areas: writing development, writing pedagogy, and technology. The Multimedia Memoir project is designed to help preservice teachers discover process and confidence in their writing behaviors and teaching of writing using both old and new literacies (Knobel & Lankshear, 2006). This chapter addresses *multimodal writing processes* within the context of preservice teacher education in writing. The affordances of digital media must be included when engaging in writing instruction.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study draws from theoretical perspectives shaped by an integration of teaching writing and technology skills. The guiding principles of writing pedagogy include writing process theory (Emig, 1971; Flower & Hayes, 1977; Graves, 1975) and sociocultural theory of writing (Bakhtin, 1981; Heath, 1983; Vygotsky, 1978) and incorporates concepts from the writing workshop

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