

The Impact of Digital Storytelling on Student Engagement, Motivation, and Revision During the Writing

Process



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Introduction

The twenty-first century learner will continue to embrace emerging technologies in their personal lives, therefore it is imperative that educators integrate technology in their classrooms in meaningful and personal ways (Robin, 2008). The 'digital generation' of today's classrooms is not solely wired to gather information, but new and ever-changing technologies afford them the ability to create and share information. The technological comfort level of these students far exceeds that of their parents and teachers, as they are typically confident and willing to explore new software, devices, and technology tools (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009). Graphic designer and researcher of visual literacy, Erin Reisland (2005) emphasized that educators must adopt this attitude in order to prepare their students to "thrive in [the] increasingly media-varied environments [of today]" (para. 1). Through digital storytelling, educators can nurture the twenty-first century learner's natural tendency to explore various technologies within the academic context of storytelling and sharing in the classroom.

Background and Need

Despite the more recent infiltration of technology into the educational setting, the technique of digital storytelling was not recently established (Robin, 2005). Digital stories, in the form of two to three minute short films, have existed and decorated the lives of individuals since the early 1990s. This unique process of storytelling was first launched by Joe Lambert, who co-founded a community-based training center in digital media in Berkeley, California. This training center became known as the Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS), and has since been expanded as an international organization.

The digital storytelling process has more recently been popularized within the classroom setting. As literacies evolve to include technological proficiency, the benefits of the digital storytelling process are two-fold. The digital story values the cornerstone of traditional storytelling and writing methods, then enhances the publication of the story by blending digital graphics, text, recorded audio narration, video, and music to present information on a specific topic (Robin, 2008). The intent of the educational environment is to prepare students for the real world where they will most certainly have to apply knowledge of technology (Karakoyun and Kuzu (2016), and digital storytelling presents an opportunity for students to acquire and apply technological skills while simultaneously improving and enhancing their writing.

Purpose of the Study

The foundation of this thesis was to investigate the impact of digital storytelling as it pertained to student engagement, motivation, and revisions during the writing process in an elementary classroom setting. Despite extensive modeling, the researcher had noted that students were often unwilling and unmotivated to revise their writing. All too often, students submitted what they deemed their best work, when it was apparent that they hadn't exerted any effort to have a second read, much less reevaluated and adjusted their writing. A theme in the literature exhibited that the process of creating a digital story cultivated an awareness of the cyclical nature of the writing process and increased realization of the final product. Therefore, this researcher was eager to observe and analyze the effects of assigning an informative digital story project to third graders in an elementary classroom. This general occasion afforded the following research questions:

1. How will the use of digital storytelling impact student engagement and motivation?
2. How will the task of creating a digital story impact student use of the writing process, particularly with regard to revision?

The study was intended for a sample of 27 third grade students and taught by one elementary school teacher. As such, a case study was the most appropriate methodology to examine the impact of constructing a digital story on student engagement, motivation, and revision during the writing process. To explore this impact, the researcher altered the publication process of an expository animal report and assigned the composition of a digital story. Upon approval of their rough drafts, students applied the use of *Google Slides* and *Screencastify* to perfect their publications.

Methods

The outlined research questions were analyzed by a mixed-methods approach which entailed student completed surveys, student interviews, and classroom observations accompanied by checklists to assess student engagement and motivation. Student artifacts, both rough drafts and final digital story versions, along with revision specific checklists were collected to analyze the impact of digital storytelling on revision during the writing process. Data analysis methods involved inductive analysis and descriptive statistics.

Likert Scale Survey: Motivation

Statement	Before	After
It is important to learn the writing process.	4	4
Writing is exciting.	4	5
I enjoy fixing my writing.	3	4
My first draft of a writing project is my best effort.	4	2
Reflecting on my writing helps me to revise.	4	4
Revision is an important part of the writing process.	4	5
I enjoy using technology in the classroom.	5	5
I like learning new technology applications.	5	5
Adding images to the writing process helps me to think.	3	4
Creating a visual product that I can share with my audience motivates me.	4	5
Digital storytelling is a positive learning experience for me.	4	4
I usually fix my paper when my teacher gives me suggestions.	4	4
It would help to hear my teacher's suggestions more than once.	4	4

Behavioral Observation of Students in Schools

Behavior	Number of Students Displaying Behavior
Active engagement	22.5
Passive engagement	0
Off-task motor	0
Off-task verbal	0.5
Off-task passive	1
Restroom requests	0.5

Informative Writing Revision Checklist

Type of Revision	Average Number of Revisions Made
Corrects spelling	4.86
Capitalization (beginning of sentences, Proper Nouns)	2.07
End Punctuation	0.93
Commas in addresses, dates, lists	0.21
Apostrophes	0.79
Quotations'	0.07
Commas in Dialogue	
Subject-Verb Agreement	0.21
Verb Tense	0
Pronoun-Noun Agreement	0
Adds Compound, Complex Sentences	0.93
Adds sensory details	1.43

Results

Following this case study, the researcher noted that digital storytelling. . .

- Promoted increased overall excitement about writing and revision
- Confirmed student enjoyment when creating a visual product for their audience
- Highlighted the process of creating a digital story as a positive learning experience for students
- Demonstrated that the students were engaged and motivated in capturing their digital stories during the supplied work time, as there were minimal off-task verbal and off-task passive behaviors and few restroom requests
- Reminded students of the importance of revision
- Showcased how students valued the writing process because they believed it impacted their current grades and their future
- Did not have a marked impact on revision during the writing process

Conclusion

Digital storytelling simultaneously meets the needs of educators and students because this modality adjusts to various personalities, learning styles, and assignments. The research suggested that digital storytelling serves as a powerful teaching tool for the twenty-first century classroom because of its ability to engage and motivate student writers, and its potential to instigate revision during the writing process. This case study confirmed that the process of creating a digital story had a positive impact on student engagement and writing motivation. However, data presented that the process of creating a digital story did not have a marked impact on revision during the writing process due to the limited number of revisions noted. Additional research is needed to answer this research question. Future research regarding the impact of digital storytelling on student engagement, motivation, and revision during the writing process should be designed as action research in a multiple classroom setting with multiple technologies to produce digital stories. In addition, researchers should anticipate the need for quiet, private recording spaces in which students can record, playback, and re-record audio narration for their productions.

Literature Cited

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