Chapter 45

Digital Storytelling and Its Tools for Language Teaching:
Perceptions and Reflections of Pre-Service Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the analysis of the self-reported reflections of pre-service English teachers about the use of digital storytelling and its tools in terms of Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge. Through the reflection reports of 78 pre-service English teachers and a focus-group interview after implementing a digital storytelling project, the present study investigated the perceptions and reflections of pre-service English teachers regarding the use of digital storytelling to teach English to young learners. The data were analysed through mixed (qualitative and quantitative) methods. The results revealed that pre-service English teachers reflected positive perceptions towards to the use of digital storytelling. Their reflections are significant in terms of the tools to be used for digital storytelling, the viewpoints regarding young learners and the improvement in their Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge. The findings should be of interest to teacher education programs in supporting pre-service teachers to integrate technology into language classrooms.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing influence of digital technologies on teaching and learning has raised concern about technology integration into teacher education (Graham, 2011; Mishra & Koehler, 2006). In this regard, the 2011 annual Horizon Report revealed inadequate digital media literacy training for in-service and pre-service teachers (PSTs) as one of the top five challenges confronted in K-12 education (Johnson, Adams & Haywood, 2011).

In order to address the tendency to integrate technology into teacher education, Mishra and Koehler (2006) proposed a framework called Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK). TPACK framework presents the approach of integrating technology effectively into teaching environments. It includes three main components which are technological knowledge (TK), pedagogical knowledge (PK) and content knowledge (CK) and their interactions which are technological pedagogical knowledge (TPK), pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), technological pedagogical knowledge (TCK) and TPACK. TK is knowledge about standard and digital technologies; CK is knowledge of a subject matter; and PK is knowledge about teaching practices, techniques and methods. Regarding the relational components, Mishra and Koehler (2006) define TPK as the knowledge of using particular technologies for pedagogical strategies; TCK as the knowledge about how technology and content are mutually related; PCK as the knowledge of applicable pedagogy used to teach a subject matter; and TPACK as the meaningful interweaving of technology, content and pedagogy.

The theoretical domains of TPACK framework require the development of "a nuanced understanding of the complex relationships between technology, content and pedagogy and the use of this understanding to develop appropriate, context-specific strategies and representations" (Mishra & Koehler, 2006, p.1029). TPACK questions content-neutral or pedagogic-neutral teacher technology practices. Maddin (2012) argues that most teacher education programmes have at least one course in instructional technology constrained to technology skills and competences rather than improving the abilities to compose technology applications with appropriate content in an increased pedagogical understanding. Thus, teacher education programmes need to use the potential of TPACK to prepare PSTs to integrate technology into their teaching (Graham, 2011).

To enhance the practice of instructional technology and to enrich the understanding of teachers on applying technology with sustained inquiry and revision, a "learning-technology-by-design" approach is identified by Mishra and Koehler (2006, p.1035). Learning-technology-by-design approach refers to learning by doing with linking theory and practice instead of explicit and traditional teaching. Hence, teachers and learners may experience designing digital artefacts such as online courses and digital videos so as to be more creative and reflective during the process. These kinds of hands-on activities of PSTs may influence their future applications of technology in instruction (Bhattacherjee & Premkumar, 2004). More specifically, DS is acknowledged as an effective tool to be used in education for TPACK enhancement (Maddin, 2012; Robin, 2008; Yüksel-Aslan, 2013).

Digital Storytelling

Traditionally, storytelling is a very common method used in teaching, and DS has been the outcome of integrating technology into instruction. DS is described as "combining the art of telling stories with a variety of digital multimedia, such as images, audio and video" (Robin, 2006, p.709). A short digital story, based on a chosen theme and told from a specific point of view, can be created by multimedia software and utilized for several purposes. In order to create digital stories, there are seven elements to focus: a point of view, a dramatic question, emotional content, the gift of your voice, the power of the soundtrack, economy of the content and pacing (Robin, 2006).

Research has shown that DS has several advantages to be used in education (Barrett, 2006; Sadik, 2008; Yuksel, Robin, & McNeil, 2011). According to the survey conducted in 2010 all around the world by Yüksel et al. (2011), using DS in teaching and learning has developed subject skills, reflection skills, language skills, higher thinking skills, social skills and artistic skills of both educators and students.

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