

What are Digital Stories?

Digital stories are a contemporary form of traditional storytelling. Short and from the heart, digital stories use photos, recorded narration, video clips, and music to create a multimedia narrative. Digital stories can be funny, touching, informative, analytical, or thought provoking (University of Houston digital storytelling website).



Images from "When I Grow Up" by L. Wilkinson (2011)

Creating a Digital Story

Lambert (2003) defined seven key elements to consider when creating a digital story: point of view, a dramatic question, emotional content, the gift of your voice, the power of soundtrack, economy, and pacing.

Lambert's elements are interwoven in the steps of digital story creation:

- Write an initial script
- Participate in a story circle & revise script
- Collect digital images
- Make a storyboard
- Record and add the narrative track
- Add special effects and transitions
- Select and add a music soundtrack
- Share your story with an authentic audience



Images from "Tall Poppy Syndrome" by C. Hatch (2011)

Supporting Multiliteracies

Digital stories enable learners to develop linguistic, intercultural, and multimodal (visual, verbal, musical) communicative competence. The production process promotes an engaged, student-centered learning environment and creates a community of practice in which students and teachers are both experts and novices at various stages (Vinogradova, 2011).

Language Acquisition

The digital story production process can facilitate language acquisition; learners have numerous opportunities to interact and use language in authentic and personally meaningful ways (Rance-Roney, 2008). Students:

- Participate in a story circle to share script ideas and provide each other with feedback
- Explore the narrative genre and learn new vocabulary needed to convey their message
- Write/revise a narrative and develop it into a script, both alone and with peers
- Record their narration monitoring their own speech for intelligibility and re-recording as needed
- Work together to learn and use media production technology tools

MA TESOL Student Reflections on Digital Story Production

"I feel much less intimidated with all of the various audio formats and am thrilled by the density and richness that audio can bring to one's personal stories."

"Creating a digital story reminded me how to craft a written story...I learned that the act of storytelling is media agnostic, and that making our instruction equally media independent is the challenge we face today."

"During the production process I used software I had never tried before; this experience gave me insight into a learner's perspective on encountering these types of technology."

"This process opened my eyes to a new way of utilizing technology-based projects to create opportunities for students to use language in a personalized and authentic manner."



Images from "At Home in the World" by H. Benucci (2011)

References

- Lambert, J. (2003). *Digital storytelling cookbook and travelling companion - 4.0*. Digital Diner Press.
- Rance-Roney, J. (2008). Digital storytelling for language and culture learning. *Essential Teacher*. 5 (1) pp. 29-31
- Vinogradova, P. (2011). Multiliteracies Lecture, American University, March 2011
- Vinogradova, P., Linville, H., & Bickel, B. (2011, forthcoming). Listen to my story and you will know me: Digital stories as student-centered collaborative projects. *TESOL Journal*.