

A CROSSWALK OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING AND MULTILINGUAL LEARNING



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Purpose

The present study found that while many middle-school teachers report using digital tools in their classrooms, technology usage among multilingual learners (MLs) was often limited to consumption rather than creation. This limited use of technology to create highlights the need for effective professional development that considers students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. To address this technology gap and promote effective teacher learning that values diversity, we propose the implementation of digital storytelling (DST) in ML classrooms through critical and multiliteracy frameworks.

Perspectives

By incorporating critical literacy practices into DST activities, students learn to view the stories they create and consume with a critical lens and develop a deeper understanding of the world around them (Honeyford, 2012). Additionally, the multiliteracy framework supports DST by recognizing its potential to engage and empower learners, especially those struggling with traditional forms of literacy (De la Piedra, 2010). By implementing critical and multiliteracies through DST, teachers can create more engaging and inclusive learning environments that support the literacy development of MLs.

Method

This design-based research (DBR) study is part of a larger, multi-year Department of Education, National Professional Development Grant-funded project with the goal of building capacity for MLs in high-need school districts. We focus here on mixed methods of data analysis from 28 teachers completing an instructional log for each day of an instructional week, for a total of 153 logs. We examine these logs quantitatively for the percentage of time teachers used technology with MLs and qualitatively regarding their description of what that usage entailed. Instructional logs from seven teachers in grades 6-12 reported using technology with MLs for content presentation, Web 1.0 instructional activities, and assessment.

Research Question

How can digital storytelling help teachers integrate technology for MLs?
Does digital storytelling develop language learning purposes?

Results

In the DBR study during the needs assessment, we noted an inhibiting factor of the teachers using technology, but less so for specific ML instruction, especially at the middle-school level. Thus, we present the research that led to this modification in the form of the crosswalk between DST and language learning purposes presented subsequently in our findings.

Crosswalk of Digital Storytelling and Language Learning for Multilingual Learners

Author, Year, Grade of Participants	Core Areas of Evaluation			
	Content	Context	Communication and Language	Identity
Angay-Crowder et al., (2013), 7th-8th	Topic included heritage, personal interests, or political issues	Teacher held writing conferences to guide student work	Encouraged to use their native languages and codeswitching	Represented and reflected on their multiple cultural identities
Honeyford (2013), 7th	Written poems were used to create DST narrative poems	Teacher worked with student to help describe images and literacy structures	Communicated experiences and dreams and made sense of cultural norms	Illustrated experience as an immigrant youth - marked by the doubleness of his identity
Chuang et al. (2019), 6th	DST was used to promote creative storytelling in English class	Teacher served as a facilitator allowing students to problem-solve within their groups and intervened as needed	Multiple modes helped students express their ideas and effectively communicate content knowledge	Not addressed
K.P. Liu et al. (2018), 6th	DST was used to assess targeted vocabulary, grammar skills, and sentence patterns	Teacher spent less time on direct instruction to allow time for DST activities	DST had a positive impact on students' language performance and oral reading fluency	Not addressed
M.C. Liu et al. (2018), 6th	DST learning task covered three topics: weather, activities, and clothes	Some students worked individually, while others worked cooperatively	Cooperative learning offered opportunities for interaction and peer-teaching	DST helped students achieve greater learning autonomy
Okumus (2020), 8th	DST was used to assess vocabulary, grammar skills, and language skills in English class	Students were divided into three groups: character, background, and story writers	Pictures and music helped students in lower academic-level classes to communicate outside of written text	Students decided what part of their identity would be shared and how to share it. (student-centered)
Hirsch & Macleroy (2020), 9th	English classroom project that merged poetry with multilingual digital storytelling	Teacher used a workshop approach with a small group of students	DST poem used multiple languages	Encouraged to use images, artifacts, and native languages to express sense of self and belonging
Yang et al. (2022), 7th	Cross-curricular (English and computer class) project where students explored career goals and options	Storyboards created in English class were used as an outline for presentations created in computer class	Writing scripts and recording narration provided students with opportunities to produce L2 output	Empowered students as they explored emerging careers while identifying as English speakers

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