The Digital Storytelling in the Foreign Language Course
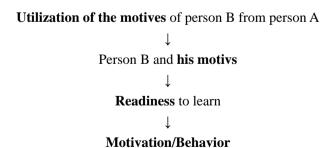
Ntasiou Dimitra

(38th Primary School of Larissa, Greece)

Abstract: This paper presents the use of the digital storytelling as a learning tool in the German lesson in the 6th grade. Specifically, a two-month, two-hour-a-week, classroom and computer lab work is presented, in which students were divided into groups of four and each group chose a local mythic or real hero of their city (Farsala, Greece). They then researched print and online sources for this hero, to find as many biographical details and images as they could, but also to learn the typical elements of a biographical text. At the end, a video was created through the Movie Maker program with all the local heroes in the form of a quiz for the viewer, with the answers given at the end of the video. Specifically, for this video, each group recorded a short biographical text about the hero in German, selected the appropriate images and together they decided on the soundtrack and the setting of the final product.

Key words: digital storytelling, biographical text

1. Theoretical Background

One of the demands of education at any level is that students engage in learning projects for the value they have, which is not immediately visible to the students, and not for external rewards such as money from parents or grades and praise of the teacher. We are talking of course about the internal motivation that lead a person to a behavior, which the person will want to repeat regardless of the existence of reward, while otherwise he will manifest it only in the presence of reward, as found by Deci (1971, 1972), the main exponent of the theory of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in recent years with a series of experiments with children, who solved cube puzzles. It is obvious how strongly intrinsic motivation is related to engagement in a project, both in education and everywhere. The following schema presents how motivation works:

Utilization of the motives of person B from person A
↓
Person B and **his motivs**
↓
Readiness to learn
↓
Motivation/Behavior

Assuming that the creation of a multimedia digital material cannot but move today's 11–12-year-old students and in this way activate the internal motivation, related to the interest caused by engaging in a project and the

Ntasiou Dimitra, German Teacher, 38th Primary School of Larissa. E-mail: dita_ntasiou@yahoo.gr.

satisfaction it brings (project orientation), an attempt was made to assign them the creation of a short (approximately 3 minutes) digital story on the subject of heroes, mythical and real, of their place. By the term "digital storytelling", according to Lathem (2005), is meant the combination of traditional oral storytelling with the use of ICT tools. It is a relatively new art form that uses music, image, video and storytelling to create stories about people's lives. It is used as an entertainment medium that arouses the interest, pleases and engages the listener visually. According to Georgiadou et al. (2008) storytelling is a very important tool at all levels of education, as it has been shown to increase students' oral and written communication skills, while at the same time cultivating critical thinking, analysis and information synthesis skills. The learning objective in this particular application was mainly the writing of short biographical texts in German, which will include already known and simple language elements for the 6th grade students (name, origin, place of residence, age, family and free time activities) combined with digital literacy skills such as finding, evaluating, consuming and ultimately creating digital content.

2. Practical Application

The Figure 1 shows the stages or phases of using digital storytelling in the classroom.

Figure 1   The Circle of Digital Storytelling

In this specific application in the German lesson with the 6th grade (12 years old students), the students were divided into 5 groups of four. Initially (Introduction phase,) the students were informed about the project of the next two months, they were presented with the three basic types of digital storytelling (informative, fictional and personal) as well as the corresponding examples as well as simple biographical texts in German (both from the school textbook , as well as from the internet) and a record was made of the information, expressions, syntactic elements (e.g., connecting sentences) and the structure of the biographical texts. At this point, a rubric was created with evaluation criteria based on elements of the digital story (evaluation rubric, see Appendix), which resulted from a discussion but also from the criticism of several digital stories that the students saw. Then (Storyplanning phase), each group chose a local hero, mythical or real. At this point it was found that there was so little information about the heroes that a mixed information would eventually be attempted, so that it can be a little richer, but also arouse the interest of the listener.

Then each group looked for information and images online and in encyclopedias, related to each hero, and collected them. This was followed by the writing of the text and the creation of the storyboard, in the logic of Storyboards, as shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2   Storyboard

In the next phase (Preproduction) the students searched and saved the digital material they would use, such as images and music. In addition, they recorded their voice reading the story (the text they wrote) for the hero. Regarding images and music, the importance of copyright ownership and Creative Commons copyright was mentioned.

All the material started to be processed in the appropriate digital program (Production phase). Windows Movie Maker was chosen, but storify and storybird could also be used.

In the next phase (Postproduction phase) the necessary corrections, editing and final storage were made.

In the distribution (distribution phase), in addition to the presentation to all the students of the school and the publication on the school's website, it was decided to give it to the municipality of Farsala for use on their own city-website.

In conclusion, it was found that the learning objectives were largely achieved with the only observation that more video-making knowledge was required than children of this age usually possess. Students benefit in many ways, as they take on roles and initiatives, are asked to make decisions, adhere to schedules, become responsible for the outcome, reinforce democratic ways of behaving and of course the digital narratives they create are essentially reframes of existing knowledge. Reframes that encourage the development of cognitive and metacognitive skills that in turn lead to digital literacy (Knavas & Seroglou, 2014).

References

Deci E. L. (1971). "Effects of externally mediated rewards on intrinsic motivation", *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, Vol. 18, pp. 105–115.

Deci E. L. (1972a). "Effects of contingent and non-contingent rewards and controls on intrinsic motivation", *Organizational Behavior & Human Performance*, Vol. 8, pp. 217–229.

Deci E. L. (1972b). "Intrinsic motivation, extrinsic reinforcement and inequity", *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, Vol. 22, pp. 113–120.

Lathem S. A. (2005). "Learning communities and digital storytelling: New media for ancient tradition", *Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education Information Conference*.

Ntasiou D. (2005). Motivierungsmöglichkeiten im DaF-Unterricht (Masterarbeit).

Georgiadou E., Pantelidis X. and Apostolidou M. (2008). *Creative Arts*, Cyprus: Frederick Research Center.

Knavas O. and Seroglou F. (2014). "Teaching Science through digital storytelling: The cases of making a student film and creating an online multimodal poster (glog)", Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Pedagogical Department of Elementary Education. Thessaloniki: ATLAS Research Group.

Costaridou-Euklidis A. (1999). Psychology of Motivation, Athens: Greek Letters.

Available online at: https://digistoryhub.web.auth.gr.

Appendix

Evaluation Rubric

Quality Criteria	Grading			
	Excellent	Very good	Good	Needs improvement
Purpose, Organization, economy	The goal is clear, the organization is focused on it, there is an economy of means and time (as much as)	All of the above are present for the most part, but there are also very few points that are not present	All of the above are present for the most part, but there are also a few points that are not	All of the above are only partially present
Originality and Provocation of Interest	It causes the recipient to be interested, surprised and thought-provoking and the subject is original	Interesting for the most part, but there are very few places where this is not the case, the theme is original	It is interesting for the most part, but there are a few places where this is not the case, the subject is not presented as original, although it could be	Only partially interesting to the recipient, the subject is not original
Language use	Fluency and rich vocabulary with very few repetitions	Most of the time there is fluency and rich vocabulary with very few repetitions	There are few places where fluency, rich vocabulary and few repetitions do not occur	Fluency, a rich vocabulary and few repetitions are only partly the case
Narration Clarity and Pace	The voice sounds clear, the pauses are appropriate in duration, and the voice is appropriately emotionally colored	All of the above are present for the most part, but there are also very few points that are not present	All of the above are present for the most part, but there are also a few points that are not	All of the above are only partially present
Background Music	Good choice of background music, so much so that it helps achieve the audience's involvement and the goal of the story	Apt choice of soundtrack	Good choice of soundtrack, but it offers nothing more	The soundtrack doesn't match the story and doesn't contribute anything to its goal
Image Selection	Clear, high-resolution images, well suited to the narrative, helping to make sense of it, but not "overshadowing" it	Clear, high-resolution images, very relevant to the story	Clear, high-resolution images	Poor quality images, together and not very relevant to the story
Transitions-Editing	Transitions are numerically ideal, harmonious and interesting without being excessive	All of the above are present for the most part, but there are also very few points that are not present	All of the above are present for the most part, but there are also a few points that are not	All of the above are only partially present
Opening and closing title and references	There is an opening and closing title, as well as references at the end for the material used	There is an opening and closing title, but the references are not complete.	There is an opening and closing title, but there are very incomplete references	There is an opening and closing title. No reports though