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The Contribution of Digital Storytelling to the Teaching of Folk Culture in Elementary School

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Abstract
The present research, explores the benefits of digital storytelling, as an ICT tool, in teaching folk culture modules at the Elementary School, through a guided project, focusing on the discipline of Language in the 5th Grade of Elementary School. Even though folk culture never constituted an independent discipline in the analytical curriculum, its presence is traced in scattered modules (folk tales, riddles, proverbs, folk songs), especially in Anthology, which can be combined in a cross-curricular way with other disciplines, such as the ICT course (digital storytelling - presentations), with Environmental Studies, Visual Arts and Flexible Zone. The purpose of this research is to contribute to the debate and research on whether digital storytelling is effective in teaching folk culture. It is also examined whether digital storytelling enhances students' motivation for learning, teamwork, creative and critical thinking, and ultimately whether it offers more opportunities for engaging and learning for students who are performing poorly in linear teaching.

Keywords: digital storytelling, folk culture, creative writing, intersectionality, guided project, motivation for learning, teamwork, creative thinking, critical thinking, participation opportunities, fairytale

1. Introduction

The present study attempts to investigate the extent to which the teaching of folk culture can be differentiated from the linear-frontal teaching, which prevails even today in many cases at school, by utilizing the digital storytelling tool. Digital storytelling can be used as a learning tool and can encourage students to explore their expressiveness and communicative ability of thoughts and emotions in an articulate, lucid manner (Mokhtar, 2011). It allows the development of the principles of action research, as the teacher is released from the role of knowledge transmitter and becomes a researcher and co-producer of knowledge along with his students. (Apostolidou, Chontolidou & Kaplani 2000). The composition of a digital storytelling by students is a short audiovisual work, it comprises photos, recorded narration, music and less frequently, videos. (Meliadou, Nakou, Gouskos & Meimaris, 2011). Windows Movie Maker software is a sufficient narrative tool as it is user-friendly and operationally efficient, as Kotridou & Toziou (2011) underline.

More specifically, the research examines whether a student-centered approach based on ICT (digital storytelling), the experiential techniques, research and presentation can result in a more effective way of teaching, as well as in the development of a positive attitude towards producing a new history, considering as a starting point a popular fairy tale. Children are generally expressed through traditional storytelling, however, digital storytelling draws the attention of students and the public whose attention they wish to capture through an interesting narrative (Papadimitriou, Kapaniaris, Zisiadis & Kalogirou 2013). Digital storytelling according to Robin (2006) is appropriate for students with different learning profiles and can promote collaboration since students work as a team while focusing on enhancing the learning experience through personal ownership and achievement. Individualized assignments help the weaker students while the second and third review of the student texts acts as learning support (Apostolidou et al., 2000). The process of producing a digital narrative enhances the organization of ideas and the development of integrated written discourse, the cultivation of the aesthetic criterion through the selection of music and

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photography, the enhancement of cooperativity and the acceptance of diversity (Meliadou et al., 2011).

Digital storytelling allows students to "evaluate" the reality that surrounds them and produce their own interpretation of it by acquiring knowledge-based skills and interaction with the physical world as well as social citizen, and cultural skills. (Robin, 2016). Project- based digital stories are developed in complex learning environments that focus on meaningful engagement with real-life problems and are show success in measuring student learning outcomes. (Garrety, 2008). According to Robin & McNeil (2012), teachers who utilized digital storytelling in their classroom have identified an increasing tendency in their students' technical, research, presentation, organization and writing skills, as well as in motivation and commitment. Creating digital stories incentivizes students, both at individual and group level, by giving them the opportunity to express their views, ideas and thoughts and share them with more people while improving their writing (Rammos & Bratitsis, 2017). The most important contribution of digital storytelling is that it allows students to become active participants rather than passive consumers in a media-saturated society (Ohler, 2006).

Kapaniaris (2017) points out that folk culture in modern school must be taught at the level of perceptions, habits and social interaction through the use of long-term school projects, where through social research and data analysis social learning a solid conscious collective memory will be built. Foulides (2015) expects students to stop being passive recipients of book knowledge and interact with the multimedia environment, text information, links, and participate in folk culture activities and games.

2. Content of the research questions

The pillars of the teaching intervention we have designed and developed, were the research questions related to the set teaching objectives. These research questions were assessed by methods of: a) quantitative research (pre-test / post-test) and evaluation sheet and b) qualitative research (researcher logbook).

The research questions are the following:

✓ Whether Digital Storytelling enhances teaching and helps students better understand the field of folk culture?

✓ To what extent do students better understand the structure of storytelling through organized projects?

✓ To what extent do students develop interpersonal skills by building their own knowledge through collaboration and communication, and to what extent does digital storytelling enhance group dynamics?

✓ To what extent the use of ICTs (digital storytelling) allows more incentives for weak students to get involved in the learning process?

✓ Whether digital storytelling promotes the research, writing, composition and presentation of folk culture skills in order to cultivate students' creative and critical thinking?

✓ To what extent do students comprehend the utility of the blueprint before writing each story by learning the importance of the history board?

✓ Whether digital storytelling contributes to the production of their own multi-dimensional story?

The research questions were recorded in tables and linked to the collection tools and objectives of the educational scenario, as well as to the questions asked to the students. At the end of the teaching intervention, an evaluation sheet was completed by the students, exploring the added value of digital storytelling in the process of folk culture.

3. Subject of the research

In summary, this research examines the added value of digital storytelling in the teaching of folk culture. In this context, we explored the effectiveness of digital storytelling in encouraging students' creativity in writing (with the contribution of creative writing), the reinforcement of learning motivation, teamwork, creative and critical thinking, and the increase in opportunities for participation and learning of students with poor performance in the linear teaching method.

4. The innovation of the research

The research is based on the assumption that the teaching of the story "The Mouse and its Daughter", with the contribution of digital storytelling, will lay a stronger foundation for understanding folk culture, will demonstrate the value of an organized work plan regarding learning the structure of a story and will enhance team-based teaching. Moreover, the research is built on the belief that learning motivation will increase, especially for weak students and will cultivate their creative and critical thinking through the promotion of research, writing, composition and presentation skills. Through learning to use the history board, students are expected to become familiar with the use of the blueprint before writing each story and finally be able to create their own multi-dimensional story. The research seeks to examine whether and to what extent the above assumptions can be applied in in the Greek educational reality. The present research is merely a trigger for redefining the value of interdisciplinary teaching. Is linking the popular tale to ICT, Environmental Studies, Visual Arts and the Flexible Zone the key to understanding the vitality of folk culture and developing a positive attitude towards it? What is the added value of digital storytelling in its teaching?

5. Aim and objective of the research

The purpose of the research was, after familiarizing students with the technique of digital storytelling, to understand and evaluate whether an installed tool, namely the Windows Movie Maker software, could contribute to more effective teaching of folk culture. Specifically, we explored the extent to which students' motivations for learning, their creative and critical thinking, as well as other interpersonal skills, might be strengthened and whether weaker students would be more actively involved in the learning process. By training students in the guided project, we are essentially preparing tomorrow's citizens for their workplace, where they will be asked to research, collaborate, produce work, and draw conclusions.

6. Methodology

A fourteen-hour instructional scenario with the corresponding activity sheets was created. For the implementation of the digital storytelling by students, the installed Windows Movie Maker tool was chosen because it is suitable for teamwork within the IT lab, is easy to use, covers the needs of a student's first contact with digital storytelling and is available free of charge.

The survey is quantitative with non-probability sampling, in particular it involves convenience sampling, ie selection of easily accessible individuals. At the same time, the research is also qualitative, as research subjects are studied in their natural context through observation and focus groups.

7. Implementation of the research: The adaptation of the folk tale "The mouse and his daughter"

The adaptation of the popular tale "The mouse and his daughter" by students of the 4th grade of Elementary School, began in January and was completed in February 2020 in the context of the Flexible Zone by the teacher and researcher Tornikidou Eleni, under the scientific supervision of Dr. Alexandros Kapaniaris, Postdoctoral Researcher, Department of History & Ethnology, Democritus University of Thrace, Professor at the Hellenic Open University.

The educational scenario is based on the theory of construction learning, as the learner builds his knowledge by exploring and discovering. It is assumed that driven by motivation internally, with excitement and courtesy, the students develops their creative thinking and imagination and achieve fine collaboration within a student-centered teaching environment. With the contribution of the Internet and web 2.0 tools, students are assimilating newly acquired knowledge in creative writing and digital storytelling, through personal creation.

The stages of teaching were the following:
1. Orientation - presentation of the subject of folk tale and digital storytelling, 2. Pre-test filling - Presentation of the structure of a story (Freytag pyramid) - Activity sheet filling, 3. Editing the story in groups, 4. Presentation of history board use, 5. Creation of images, 6. Introducing Windows Movie Maker software - Web material collection, 7. Creating digital stories and 8. Presenting digital storytelling - Post-test completion.

Each of the three groups of students created and digitally presented their own fairy tale, drawing inspiration from the popular tale "The mouse and its daughter".

7.1. Aim of the program

The purpose of the program was to familiarize students with the concept of tradition in order for them to stop regarding it as a museum and dead knowledge that does not concern them. The production of the past can be adapted either unchanged or alternated to contemporary conditions in order for the correlation between tradition with the morality of a social body or a people to be fully comprehended.

7.2. Methodology of the program

The teaching intervention, which lasted 14 teaching hours, was conducted in a class of the 4th grade of elementary school and was implemented in 6 two-hour and 2 one-hour teaching interventions in the school classroom and in the school's IT lab. It was incorporated in the context of intersectionality of the language course, to which the stimulus-course "The mouse and its daughter" and the storytelling activity belong. The researcher is the general education teacher of the class.

The pre-test, the post-test and the evaluation sheet were the main tools for the quantitative research. The effectiveness of the teaching scenario is investigated by the question

sheet distributed both before its implementation (pre-test) and after its completion (post-test). The pie chart of excel was used to process the statistics. The answers the students were asked to select, follow the Likert five-point scale. For the needs of the statistical processing, these were coded as follows: Strongly disagree: 1, Disagree: 2, neither agree nor disagree: 3, Agree: 4, strongly agree: 5.

Qualitative research tools were also used to export more in-depth research. Specifically, the researcher kept a logbook of each intervention, recording the students' concerns, their level of participation, and the problems encountered. The conclusions drawn from the logbook were sorted according to the objectives set in the educational scenario.

7.3. Evaluation of the program

Students were excited by the presentation of even template digital narratives. They experimented a lot with the free adaptation of the folk tale "The mouse and its daughter" and many elements of folk tales can be detected in their creations. They comprehended Freytag's pyramid and even applied it to their own stories.

The students had already revised their own stories with the creating writing method this year however, children with difficulties in cooperation expressed some complaints when writing their stories. There was a thorough team spirit along the way, especially when it came to new technologies. Each group undertook to download images from two different computers, separating the story according to the history board without remarkable involvement of the teachers. Students exchanged roles when using Windows Movie Maker without friction. At the technology involvement stage, there was an immediate response to the teamwork process, even by three students who found it difficult to cooperate within a team in general.

We strongly believe that the association of folk culture and digital storytelling in educational process, is worth exploring more extensively in a larger sample with simultaneous exploration of other parameters, such as student gender, or student-centered research with learning disabilities.

8. Expected research results

This scenario aims to a more effective teaching of folk culture through an installed digital storytelling tool, namely Windows Movie Maker software.

Students are expected:
- **Regarding the cognitive subject (Cognitive objectives)**
  - ✓ To get acquainted with Greek traditional fairy tales.
  - ✓ To learn the main features of fairytale (eg. classic motifs, animism, mythical beings etc.)
  - ✓ Get familiarized with the concept of tradition and understand that this is not a museum, obsolete or dead notion, but something lively, directly related to them.
  - ✓ Get familiarized with popular wisdom and natural humor as offered through folk tales.
  - ✓ Comprehend that tradition is related to the mentality, behavior and ideas of a social body or people.
  - ✓ Create their own story by differentiating the flow of the tale.
  - ✓ Acquire the ability of illustration
  - ✓ Engage in charity work.

- **Regarding the learning process (Pedagogical objectives)**
  - ✓ Develop interpersonal skills by building knowledge through collaboration and communication.
  - ✓ Cultivate their creative and critical thinking.
  - ✓ Acquire research, writing, composition and presentation skills.
  - ✓ Increase problem solving and decision making skills.
  - ✓ Become familiar with the research method of study.
  - ✓ Involve weak pupils in the process.
  - ✓ Be taught the structure of a story.
  - ✓ Adopt the use of a blueprint before writing each story by learning the meaning of the history board.
  - ✓ Create their own multi-dimensional story.
  - ✓ Enhance their storytelling techniques.

- **Regarding the use of new technologies (Technological objectives)**

  - ✓ Acquire technological literacy.
  - ✓ Learn to search online, evaluate and organize their material.
  - ✓ Become familiar with digital storytelling tools online.
  - ✓ Learn to combine oral storytelling with new media.
  - ✓ Get to know digital storytelling and its key features.

9. Conclusion

The students were excited about the implementation of the educational scenario and treated it as something attractive and original.

The observations from the combination of the results of both the quantitative and qualitative research tools are the following:

The majority of students turned to absolute agreement on the contribution of digital storytelling to a deeper understanding of a story. One student noted that she generally learns more easily through videos and narratives.

The students understood the importance of structure in narrating an interesting story, with the gradual path to the climax and then to the solution. The students were also impresses by the point of the climax and they were looking for it in well-known fairy tales and films already familiar to them.

The students assessed teamwork positively. However, it should also be underlined that even after the teaching intervention, there were students who were unsure about the effectiveness of teamwork in acquiring new knowledge. During the pre-test, many students were not sure whether digital storytelling really enhances team dynamics. Over the course of the program, they have learned to work together, even those who prefer to work alone, especially in the field of new technologies.

The majority of students agreed that technology-assisted work (such as digital storytelling) makes learning more attractive to students in general. One student observed that children, who find it difficult to concentrate and work on their own through book exercises, are very good at using computers. The lowest performing student in the linear teaching style, was thrilled with Windows Movie Maker and Audacity, downloaded a multitude of images and music investments, and substantially assisted all groups by providing technical support, ideas, as well as the removable disk.

Most of the students agreed that digital storytelling makes writing and presenting a fairytale more attractive.

Even though the diagram in the form of a storyboard, was initially difficult for them, leading them to choose a more abstract form, eventually helped them in searching for images on the web and building their digital narrative.

There was no disagreement over the creation of a multi-dimensional story using digital storytelling, since it was clear even from watching a digital storytelling that it relates to many levels of knowledge. One student noted that their fairy is significantly enriched after its digital adaptation.

It emerged from the evaluation sheet that 91% of students enjoyed creating digital storytelling through Windows Movie Maker when designing the program, and that the vast majority of them believes that using digital storytelling software helps them approach more easily the writing and presentation of a fairy tale.

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