Modern Teaching Strategies with Digital Storytelling Tools in Secondary Education

Evangelinaki Marianthi

PhD Candidate, University of Alicante

Introduction

In the contemporary digital landscape, characterised by rapid transformation, conventional methods of literary instruction frequently prove ineffective in engaging students in a meaningful manner. Digital storytelling (DS) presents an alternative approach that has been shown to empower learners to connect with texts personally, express themselves creatively, and develop essential 21st-century skills. The poster explores the potential of digital storytelling tools to transform the learning experience in secondary education.

What is Digital Storytelling?

Digital storytelling can be defined as the process of creating short, personal narratives using multimedia elements such as images, audio, video, music, and text. The programme synthesises creativity, technology, and narrative to facilitate students' exploration of identity, perspective, and interpretation within the classroom environment.

Pedagogical Framework

The integration of DS tools is grounded in:
➢ **Constructivism:** Students actively build knowledge through creation and reflection.

➢ **Sociocultural Theory:** Learning is mediated by cultural tools and collaboration.

➢ **Multiliteracies:** Literacy involves multiple modes — visual, audio, textual, digital.

Benefits of DS Tools

✓ Enhances engagement and motivation
✓ Encourages critical and creative thinking
✓ Develops multimodal and digital literacies
✓ Promotes inclusion through differentiated expression
✓ Fosters deeper understanding of literary content
✓ Supports student voice and agency

Practical & Popular Tools for the Classroom

Tool	Description	Features
Canva	Visual design & video	Templates, drag-and-drop media, Ease of use
WeVideo	Cloud-based video editor	Timeline editing, voiceover, effects
Storybird	Story creation platform	Visual prompts for writing
Animoto	Slideshow video	Music sync, easy visuals
Adobe Express	Multimedia	Templates, graphics, animation
Powtoon	Animated storytelling	Engaging visuals
Voki	Talking avatars	Language learning support

Free & Easy Tools for Beginners

✓ **Canva for Education:** Safe, school-friendly
✓ **Microsoft Clipchamp:** Simple editing for Windows users
✓ **Powtoon:** Animated storytelling
✓ **Voki:** Talking avatars (great for ESL)
✓ All tools support **UDL principles** & **student voice**

Implementation in the Classroom

❖ Digital poems and monologues
❖ Retelling literary stories with a modern twist
❖ Character diaries or inner voice narratives
❖ Cross-disciplinary projects (history + literature)
❖ Peer feedback sessions and public sharing

Implementation Strategies

✓ Embed DS in literature and cross-curricular units
✓ Introduce simple, free platforms
✓ Design clear phases (planning, production, sharing, reflection)
✓ Promote peer learning and narrative feedback
✓ Develop flexible rubrics recognizing voice, structure, and media use

Teacher's Role

Teachers facilitate rather than instruct:
- Support storyboarding and scripting
- Encourage reflection and collaboration
- Guide use of tools without needing to be experts

Challenges & Considerations

➢ Limited access to devices and connectivity
➢ Time constraints in curriculum
➢ Need for training and support
➢ Varied student digital skills

Recommendations

❖ Start with pilot projects using free tools
❖ Co-create rubrics with students
❖ Embed DS into cross-curricular frameworks
❖ Advocate for digital literacy policy support
❖ Showcase student work to build confidence and value

Conclusion

Digital storytelling tools offer students a voice — and the power to shape meaning through creative expression. By integrating these tools into secondary education, we foster a more inclusive, student-centered, and future-ready learning environment.

References

- Ajani, O. A. (2023). *The role of experiential learning in teachers' professional development for enhanced classroom practices. Journal of Curriculum and Teaching, 12*(4), 143. https://doi.org/10.5430/jct.v12n4p143
- Avgerinou, M. D., & Pettersson, R. (2011). Toward a cohesive theory of visual literacy. *Journal of Visual Literacy*, 30(2), 1–19
- Bouchrika, I. (2024). Digital Storytelling: Benefits, Examples, Tools & Tips in 2024. Research.com
- CAST. (2018). Universal design for learning guidelines version 2.2. https://udlguidelines.cast.org
- Figg, C. (2023). *Differentiating instruction with digital storytelling while making connections to critical literacy*. Teaching and Learning. https://doi.org/10.26522/TL.V5I1.299
- Hull, G. A., & Nelson, M. E. (2005). Locating the semiotic power of multimodality. Written Communication, 22(2), 224–261. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0741088304274170
- Kajder, S. (2007). Bringing new literacies into the content area literacy methods course. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, 7(2), 92–98. https://citejournal.org/volume-7/issue-2-07/general/bringing-new-literacies-into-the-content-area-literacy-methods-course
- New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. Harvard Educational Review, 66(1), 60–92.
- Ohler, J. (2013). Digital storytelling in the classroom: New media pathways to literacy, learning, and creativity (2nd ed.). Corwin Press.
- Papert, S. (1980). Mindstorms: Children, computers, and powerful ideas. Basic Books.
- Reinders, H. (2011). Digital storytelling in the foreign language classroom. ELTWorldOnline.com. https://www.appstate.edu/~fountainca/5530/Reinders_2011.pdf
- Robin, B. R. (2008). Digital storytelling: A powerful technology tool for the 21st century classroom. Theory into Practice, 47(3), 220–228. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00405840802153916
- Sadik, A. (2008). Digital storytelling: A meaningful technology-integrated approach for engaged student learning. Educational Technology Research and Development, 56(4), 487–506. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/225696853_Digital_storytelling_A_meaningful_technology-integrated_approach_for_engaged_student_learning#fullTextFileContent
- Sylvester, R., & Greenidge, W. L. (2009). Digital storytelling: Extending the potential for struggling writers. The Reading Teacher, 63(4), 284–295.
- Walsh, M. (2010). Multimodal literacy: What does it mean for classroom practice? *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 33(3), 211–239.