Effectiveness of Digital Storytelling on Cultural Awareness

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ABSTRACT

Digital storytelling refers to a wide variety of concepts from interactive digital narratives to computer game narratives, from web-based dramas to digital filmmaking tools. The digital storytelling approach provides students with an environment in which they can actively use technology as participatory designers in the process of creating messages regarding their thoughts. This research aims to reveal the effectiveness of digital storytelling practice to increase the motivation in the instructional environment, to raise awareness through teaching elementary school students some cultural values and to affect effective use of technology in elementary schools. The participants of the study were chosen among the elementary school students in the city of Eskişehir. In the study, the criterion for determining the participants was taking the course of “Digital Storytelling” found in the Education Program for Talented Students (EPTS). At the end of the digital storytelling process, many of the students expressed that being active participant in the design process and using their own products were exciting and pleasing and encourage them to interest on cultural themes through awareness.

Keywords: Cultural Awareness, Digital Storytelling, Elementary School Education, Participatory Design, Research

INTRODUCTION

In modern societies, technology is used to communicate and understand identities, cultures and customs. Technological developments and activities provide students with different cultural backgrounds to understand each other’s behavior and culture. In this process, perceptions and awareness regarding the cultural mosaic of societies are developed (Dawn & Southcott, 2006). Technological developments are also regarded as rich sources which allow the expression and transfer of expressing and transferring cultural images. It is also the most effective way of enabling students to express cultural backgrounds efficiently. On the other hand preparing students as individuals who can effectively use technology in real life is considered as one of the missions of the instructional environments. In this respect, students should be included in instructional systems if technology is to be used in instructional environments. Technological tools and facilities have brought many innovations and developments in many
social environments. With the rapid advancements in technology, it has become a necessity to effectively benefit from the newly emerged technological tools in instructional environments. The environments which are armed with interactively used technological tools make it possible for both instructional and cultural interaction and communication (Robin, 2008).

Today, digital storytelling appears as one of the approaches which encourage students using technology actively, especially in instructional environments. Digital storytelling for learning provides students time and context independent, open-ended, participatory and interactive learning. Digital storytelling considers learning as building knowledge not a knowledge transmission (Feher, 2008). Additionally digital storytelling can be used to support different aspects of learning by the alternative method of communication and interpretation (Druin et al., 2009).

Digital storytelling approach promote a student-centered learning focused on learning motivation, learning achievement, meaningful student engagement and learning performance by conducting learning activities with systematic instructional construction (Robin, 2008; Ohler, 2005). Digital storytelling approach enhances learning behavior and learning motivation by developing active learning performance, fostering deep learning and critical thinking skills (Robin, 2008; Gere, 2002). Students who complete challenging tasks and actively involved in the organized technology integration procedures achieved by digital storytelling approach consider them to improve technological skills, multimedia skills and literacy skills (Gere, 2002). Digital storytelling approach also constructs interaction among students, attract the student interest and enhance learning achievement (Bran, 2010).

Digital storytelling approach provides students to combine learning content and multimedia elements effectively. The combination of technology and learning content in a manner way allows student to control the learning process. The control of learning process encourages students to develop self-expression, personal technology skills, media skills and learning confidence (EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative, 2007).

Digital storytelling refers to a wide variety of concepts from interactive digital narratives to computer game narratives, from web-based dramas to digital filmmaking tools. Digital storytelling also requires combining the story with a digital content including pictures, audios and videos and generally with a powerful and emotional component in order to create a short film (Robin, 2008; Bull & Kajder, 2004). Digital stories are emotional attachment that students focus on a story construction through setting, characters, plot, and events (Landry & Guzdial, 2006; Vincent, 2006). There are a number of definitions of digital storytelling, yet these definitions generally refer to combining such digital multimedia tools as pictures, audios and videos with the art of storytelling. However, all stories mean presenting digital graphics, texts and recorded stories by establishing relationship with videos and music in order to give information about a certain subject (Robin, 2006). Gregory and Steelman (2008) consider digital storytelling as a multi-dimensional learning approach since it requires critical reading, critical thinking, verbal communication, written communication and intensive use of technology. Digital storytelling should involve a degree of critical reflection because of preserve, share and reflect the student’s vision and experiences (Landry & Guzdial, 2006).

Digital storytelling allows students to collect, organize and reflect information for learning and to establish communication. Thus, digital storytelling influences students’ cognitive development positively and integrates technology effectively into the learning environment (Jonassen et al. 1999). Digital storytelling is basically a process that makes it possible for a student to use technology as a designer. In this process, students can interpret their thoughts in line with their experiences and thereby form their own language (Barret, 2006; Tendero, 2006). The digital storytelling system in which students take part as designers constitutes an entertaining learning environment and provides