Chapter 2
Fostering Participatory Literacies in English Language Arts Instruction Using Student–Authored Podcasts

Molly Buckley-Marudas
Cleveland State University, USA

Charles Ellenbogen
Campus International High School, USA

ABSTRACT

English language arts teachers must tend to the proliferation of easily accessible technological tools and storytelling platforms for the teaching of stories. It is critical that educators teach with and about these spaces in order to develop young people’s literacies. This chapter examines an English language arts unit that required students to create an audio podcast to support students in the process of making meaning, sharing ideas, and interpreting texts. The chapter offers insights into the podcasting process for students and teachers, including ideas about technical aspects of production, lessons learned, and recommendations for future practice. The chapter discusses how this project draws on adolescents’ participatory literacies and how it developed practicing teachers’ participatory literacies and pedagogical approaches.

INTRODUCTION

Technology is changing the way we can tell stories and the way we can consume them. With the proliferation of easily accessible recording tools and storytelling platforms, the highly networked, immediately streamable technologies that are characteristic of today’s media landscape are rewriting the rules for telling stories. Those of us in the business of teaching stories and story writing must pay attention. In this digital era, when a growing number of everyday interactions and communication channels are me-
diated by digital technologies, it is critical that current and future teachers acknowledge the capabilities of digital media and leverage digital media in their pedagogical designs (Hutchinson & Colwell, 2014; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004). National and state standards for K-12 learning and instruction, including the Common Core State Standards, place a significant emphasis on the use of digital technologies for teaching and learning (Coleman, 2011) and, according to the NCTE/IRA Standards for English Language Arts (2012), students should “Use a variety of technological and information resources to gather and synthesize information and create and communicate knowledge.” Existing research suggests that teachers should teach students how to use different digital tools and help them develop multiple literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007; Leu, O’Byrne, Zawlinkski, McVerry, & Everett-Cacopardo, 2009). Furthermore, with increasing awareness of the value of participatory literacies (Wohlwend, 2016) and the significance of Connected Learning (Ito, Gutierrez, Livingstone, Penuel, Rhodes, Salen, Schor, Sefton- Green, & Watkins, 2013), educators must be able to integrate digital media and technological tools in their classrooms to foster the participatory literacies that are required for young people to fully participate in today’s society.

It is now well documented that digital platforms are able to create spaces of learning and offer new opportunities for interacting with others in school-based settings (Buckley-Marudas, 2016; Hull & Stornaiuolo, 2014; Ito, 2009; Mills, Ulsworth, Exley, 2018; Shanahan, 2012). A great majority of these spaces tend to be participatory in nature and offer diverse formats for sharing their ideas and intellectual work with others. It is increasingly understood that networked spaces, spaces our students are already familiar with, are creating new forms of engagement and interaction (Hutchinson & Colwell, 2014; Jenkins, 2016). Yet, despite the increase in student use of these spaces and the expansion in free or low-cost digital composing and publishing tools, much of the work that youth create in school continues to rely on traditional, alphabetic writing that is often published for the singular audience of a teacher. Although students will still develop and refine their literacies through this kind of academic writing and work, this approach elides the need for students to think multimodally and semiotically about different ways to best represent their ideas, to format material and use different texts strategically—especially the increasingly relevant audio text—to communicate their ideas and engage a variety of diverse audiences (Doerr--Stevens & Buckley-Marudas, 2019; Smith, B., 2018).

Considering the growing interest in and reliance on podcasts the past several years and the accompanying surge in podcast production and consumption, this was the year for us—a university-based English Language Arts teacher educator (Molly) and a high school English Language Arts teacher (Charles)—to pay closer attention to podcasts. Charles, in his 26th year of teaching, has never felt very comfortable with technology and, as appealing as podcasts sounded, he was reluctant to include them as a central part of an instructional unit. Molly, in her sixth year as an ELA teacher educator has researched the role of digital media and tools, including podcasting, for literacy learning in other high school classrooms and has worked to integrate podcast production into her own teacher education courses, yet had not introduced them to a high school class of her own. Both of us believed that podcasts’ increasing popularity and prominence made them an important communication platform for our students to learn.

Given our roles as ELA educators, we were eager to think of podcasts both as stories and as participatory literacies in a high school Language and Literature classroom. How could we foster students’ participatory literacies in and through a unit that invited students to listen to podcasts that were linked to the content of the unit and required them to publish a podcast of their own connected to one of the themes of the unit? The specific unit that we selected for this project would focus on the question of how power and money relate to the concept of the American Dream? In this chapter, we will share a range
Preservice Teachers Collaborating and Co-Constructing in a Digital Space: Using Participatory Literacy Practices to Teach Content and Pedagogy


www.igi-global.com/chapter/preservice-teachers-collaborating-and-co-constructing-in-a-digital-space/237423?camid=4v1a