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Personal Stories and the Visual Turn: Exploring Digital Stories as Identity Representation

Abstract While the rhetoric surrounding digital technologies in education has occasionally been breathless, the reality is that formal learning and ICT have a messier relationship (Selwyn, 2011; Ferneding, 2003). However, considered exploration of digital technologies for personal storytelling offers promising suggestions for learning under certain conditions. In this chapter, two educators discuss digital stories as an effective mode to articulate and extend meaning-making in different ways. In the first case, digital introductions offered authors opportunities to play with multimodal potentials and reflect on aspects of technology and stories of personal identity. In the second case, digital stories were employed to give voice and form to author experience, often traumatic, that cannot easily be expressed in oral or written language. Moreover, these stories are ones which have been and continue to be actively suppressed by government institutions. In each instance, the designers of the curriculum tasks were influenced by notions of authentic purpose, meaning-making and audience.

Introduction

In 1951, Isaac Asimov published a short story, "The Fun They Had", about schooling and computerisation. Set 200 years into the future, it tells of two children who discover a book in their attic. While speculating on the book's purpose, Margie and Tommy compare its educational appeal to their own programmed, depersonalised schooling. Their curriculum is mediated by an inspector, and delivered via individual computer punch cards. The novel idea of a human teacher and learning in a single room with peers grows on the children. Increasingly, they consider the "fun" that schoolchildren of yesteryear must have had.

Asimov reputedly wrote the story for a friend, and was surprised by its popularity. The power of story to engage on a number of levels leads us to speculate, wonder and predict. Asimov's writing of digital learning is prescient and, in the tradition of many short stories, ironic.

The story stays with us for what Asimov, as a science fiction writer, got wrong as well as right. The children's home technology adjusts to generalised age levels, and computer malfunction means students cease formal learning. Margie has to submit work via a punch code which she learned when she was six. Coding has

now been part of UK primary school curriculum since 2014, working from the assumption that children are enabled through knowledge of the "architecture" of the digital. We continue to wrestle with questions around engagement and influence of digital technologies on our learning and social practices.

A prevailing discourse around computers in the mid-20th century is that of mechanistic, controlling forms of technology which render users passive. The "big brother" capacity of the computer held more fear than excitement for those anticipating the future. While traces of this encroachment thinking continue in contemporary representations of digital technology, we generally view our devices and their potentials in far more social and active ways. Since the advent of social media, it is the "communications" dimension which dominates the information and communications technologies (ICT) concept. The implications of such a rapid and shifting digital embrace have deep implications for learning and teaching. In this chapter, we will explore the "communications" potential of new media, specifically for digital storytelling, and critically consider some of the ways in which such forms of expression might impact on education in the 21st century.

Background

Narratives have long been recognised as central to our human experience. Stories are "primary" ways (Hardy cited in Meek, 1978) to create a sense of events and exchange, as we organise our experiences into socially meaningful episodes. To do this, we call upon combinations of prior knowledge, assumption, expectation, inference, pattern matching and metaphor. Storytelling ranges across cultures and sees different representations of human experience. Through rich stories, students are offered access to understanding themselves and their world, as both creators and readers/listeners of stories. Here, stories are used as powerful forms of personal, social and cultural representation. Moreover, their power is contingent on ways that they might legitimate or contest more dominant narratives, or metanarratives. The extra dimension in the discussion that follows is the role of the digital in the storytelling, and the ways it might serve to shape and distribute the producer's content, particularly in terms of audience and purpose, two concerns fundamental to literate practices. The examples discussed in this chapter attempt to move the lens between the microprocesses involved in creating personal stories to larger political and cultural issues within which the stories sit.

In the first instance discussed in this chapter, digital introductions offer authors opportunities to play with multimodal potentials and reflect on aspects of technology and personal identity. In the second case, digital stories are employed to give

form to author experience, sometimes traumatic, that cannot easily be expressed in oral or written language.

In each instance, the designers of the curriculum tasks were heavily influenced by notions of authentic purpose, meaning-making and audience. To fully engage, writers need to hear the sound of their own voices as well as those of others, a capacity central to human interaction. Feeding the imagination through oral storytelling, however, has dropped off the school curriculum radar, partly as a consequence of high stakes testing and, pertinently for this chapter, the rise of digital technologies in schools. Phillips (2000: 5) notes that "for many years storytelling has been forgotten in many educational environments, as our world of visual imagery has rapidly flourished".

This chapter argues for a classroom re-emergence of storytelling as a convergence with digital technologies. A key affordance of ICT is that of writer (of the technologies) as knowledge producer rather than reproducer, a shift from many of the more traditional learning approaches of the past. Further, the rapidly expanding number of ways that digital tools can mediate ideas is a feature of 21st century design. As a teacher educator (Julie) and an English as an Additional Language teacher (Author) in two universities in Melbourne, Australia, we sought openings for learners to find their voice through authoring their own narratives. Although by the time of writing, we were working at different universities in Melbourne, we had worked closely together previously and shared curriculum ideas around narrative and digital technologies.

As educators, we sought openings for learners to find their voices as knowledge producers through authoring their own narratives. Contained within this authoring notion are practices of assembling, selecting, pacing and sequencing, shaping processes which provide momentum and give texture to narrative.

Working from these understandings, we invited learners – preservice teacher students in the first case, English as an Additional Language learners in the second – to explore the ways that technologies could enable forms of self-expression and representation. With the rise of ICT, argues Kress (1995), we are experiencing a "visual turn", whereby the weight of meaning has shifted from print to image. Syntactic demands on print language have lessened as visual content becomes more complex and abstract. Focusing thus on semiotic modes, or creating meaning through signs and symbols, we asked adult students to create their own stories for a peer audience.

This chapter will detail the challenges of each initiative, as well as the ways they achieved and even exceeded teaching intentions. The two studies discussed here reinforce the notion that narrative is central to human experience and thus

central to learning, both formal and informal. The second research premise is that digital tools are well positioned to enable learners as creators of their own stories. Digital resources enable not only traditional forms of storytelling (for instance, podcasts of The Moth stories, http://themoth.org/stories), but also ways that specifically digital forms of narrative can be voiced (for example, Inanimate Alice, http://www.inanimatealice.com/episode4/). We will critically reflect upon the employment of digital tools to explore narrative representations of experience, and particularly the role of the teacher/facilitator in shaping the content. From these instances, implications might be drawn for related explorations across similar kinds of educational contexts.

Changing Education Landscapes?

Bill Green (2001), speculating on the implications for subject English in the 21st century, points to "the proliferating phenomenon of techno-textuality" (ibid.: 249). A dimension of this techno-textuality, however, has been the opening up in terms of what can now be authored, not only of new kinds of content, but also of form (Green 2001). Particularly in Web 2.0 environments, multiliterate understandings engage complex relationships among visuals, space and text as well as interpreting a range of symbols in critically and culturally appropriate ways. The shift towards "new literacies" (Lankshear & Knobel 2007) emphasises the creative and participatory elements of meaning-making over the ideological. In turn, such elements have been critiqued by Lanier (2010) as over-celebratory and not enhancing innovation. We further recognise, however, that ideological elements might be subsumed in meaning-making as "natural" or "common sense". We are therefore mindful of Green's (1988) critical dimension of his 3D literacy model, which calls attention to values and assumption implicit in the text.

This chapter first explores the reshaping of semiotic form through digital introductions, expanding to wider debates around technology, representation and communication through story. Our second case involves the sense of self that recent immigrants and refugees are able to construct through their own digital stories, and how their personal narratives might sit in tension with broader current political "meganarratives" (Olsen and Craig, 2009).

In the introduction to this collection, Stocchetti points to the "narrative support" (ibid.: 3) required for institutional power to maintain authority. Schools and universities are no strangers to these processes, as education becomes increasingly codified, standardised and regulated. Such processes often sit in marked contrast to the social structures which govern young people's lives.

Differences within ways that in-school and out-of-school literacies are organised have been usefully analysed by Bernstein (1999). While schooling values vertical, segmentally-structured discourses of knowledge, popular (and digital) ways of knowing to which everyone has potential or actual access can be described as "horizontal". They are "likely to be oral, local, context-dependent and specific, tacit, multi-layered and contradictory across … contexts" (ibid.: 8). Young people take up valued knowledge by word of mouth and there is a rapid turnover of what is required to be a participant within and across a number of cultural contexts. Arguments calling for classrooms to draw more effectively on learners' informal practices and ways of knowing grow increasingly pressing (Lankshear and Bigum, 1999; Gee, 2003; Green, 2011).

Yet, the interplay of power relations in terms of practices and processes lead to what Feenberg (1991) describes as a "scene of struggle" (ibid.: 14). An element of the "struggle" includes an over- emphasis on the technology per se at the expense of pedagogical considerations. Selwyn (2011) argues that enhanced learning often occurs because teachers have designed innovative contexts and scaffolding to encourage new practices. We examine two instances where we, as teachers, have worked at the intersections of digital and curriculum design to discover what might emerge from potentially new forms of storytelling within an institutional context.

In exploring our students' "small stories" of learning, we draw from Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008), who argue that "people use small stories to construct a sense of who they are, while big story research analyses the stories as representations of world and identities" (ibid.: 382). We were conscious of shaping versions of experience through the questions we asked and the ways processes of selection positioned the respondents (including ourselves as educator researchers). Moreover, respondents choose what to include, highlight, downplay or omit. This shaping, or interpreting act, constitutes a reflexive methodology through its way of seeing the world, then reflecting on it.

Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) claim that it is in the navigation process between small and big stories that a "sense of self" is rehearsed. It is with this constant interactive movement between versions of the self and local contexts that identities are constructed and reconstructed. Digital storytelling offers particularly generative opportunities for these identity processes as it provides what Illich (1979) terms "convivial tools" for author agency and self-expression.

Using the work of Bamberg and Georgakopoulou to frame the identity work in our digital storytelling projects, we developed two distinct focal points. The first study explores the kinds of technological affordances that open-ended digital

introductions as personal story could draw upon. The second project establishes a learning community through new media, and examines how such a community can then digitally support personal stories of risk and displacement, sometimes in juxtaposition to broader political narratives or even silence.

Digital Potentials

Our first instance of digital storytelling is realised through a digital introduction task, offered at tertiary level (though could be introduced in any educational sector). Student participants comprised 23 postgraduates, engaged in a one-year teaching qualification. The university cohort draws from a culturally diverse mix of local applicants, most of whom were in their early to mid-20s and chose English as one of their secondary teaching methods.

Students were asked to create a 3-to-5-minute personal introduction to show their lecturer and peers, then complete a written reflection on representational choices they made and why. No specifications by me were made as to the content or software programmes they could choose, beyond Author recommending that students worked 'at the outer edge' of their digital expertise. This was intended, via the reflection, to invite a reflexive approach, as students learned through and about the technology. Moreover, the task design emerged from a belief that critical understanding, rather than encouraged solely as a theoretical concept, is "better achieved when students have some grasp of how media texts are actually produced" (Durrant 2011: 76).

The theory of multiliteracies (the New London Group, 1996; Cope and Kalantzis, 2000) takes reconceptions about literacies in a technologised, globalised environment and maps them on to more established notions of situated practice, in this case, personal storytelling. Through building a social-semiotic theory of multimodality, Kress (1997) develops the notion of affordances. Crucial to choices individuals make when designing multimodal artefacts are the potential resources available for socially- and culturally-shaped uses of different modes. The rules and norms of cyberspace create a different and distinctively new sense of spatial awareness, involving a "fracturing of space" (Lankshear and Bigum, 1999). We can now shift back and forth between different modes of meaning, creating new design patterns. Space is no longer closed and purpose specific, but 'open, continuous and fluid' (Knobel and Lankshear, 2007: 11).

Kress (2003) calls the ways that we can purposefully mobilise these resources *synaesthesia*, or the remaking of semiotic resources within modes (*transformation*) and across modes (*transduction*). Within each mode exist different systems, or organising logics, which affect the ways that the semiotic elements are integrated,

or "braided" (Mitchell, 1994). While multimodality is not new, through rapidly changing technologies, we can, and increasingly do, deploy innovative ways to overlay image, word, gesture, image, sound and space. Three-dimensional space opens prospects for cognitive reshaping of texts, which have now become, Kress (1997) argues, affordances. In this sense, the producer's relationship with the text has become something potentially more generative and creative than previously. The processes which drive this shifting meaning-making create qualitatively new forms from those that have previously existed, pre-internet. Users of formerly static systems have become remakers, or transformers, of representational resources.

We sought to understand how pedagogical design could encourage authors to use digital technologies to represent their personal stories in new ways. If synaesthesia, or shifting back and forth between modes, were evident, how might students conjure and recombine elements from available resources? While students who engage in social media may be experienced "curators" (Potter, 2012) of their own digital lives, we wanted to bring their practices into the formal learning environment.

The Introductions

The 23 preservice teachers' interview data, their reflections and the digital introductions themselves provided a number of valued insights into how digital storytelling might offer expanded learning possibilities. From the collected data, themes were identified and mapped on to those emerging in the literature. As not all students from the cohort contributed to the study, findings are drawn from the 14 students who agreed to participate.

The introduction content ranged from limited, in terms of exploitation of form, to rich and boundary pushing. Exploring the ways students drew on available resources to tell personal stories, we looked particularly at intersections between what was told and how it was told. Predictable content could be represented as digitally interesting, while conceptually innovative material might be formatted in traditional ways. The most striking stories experimented with both content and form.

At the limited end, five presentations used the task as a kind of digital scrapbook, posting photos of friends, family and pets, following a chronology from baby to university student and occasionally supported by a favourite music track. The visual and audio resources in these cases mimicked print resources of self-representation; they tended to be linear in structure, rely more strongly on written text and draw upon known conventions such as photo albums.

However, other students consciously wrestled with the "messiness" of ICT (Bigum, 1995), producing introductions that were conceptually and visually interesting to, at the higher end, spectacular. Their programme range included iMovie, Prezi, Xtranormal, Movie Maker, PowerPoint, Google Earth, Animoto, websites and blogs, suggesting many students took on the teacher directive to extend their expertise. A number of reflections detailed hours spent on learning new software, time willingly expended in pursuit of a programme that would achieve their narrative ends. Music, for example, was often problematic to add to images. Yet, reflections suggest that students read guides, searched YouTube instructions and sought advice in their efforts to have their chosen digital platform achieve the effects they wanted for the intended audience.

In some cases, authors "bent" genre conventions as they played with identity constructions. This was done from a distanced perspective and often using knowing humour. Writers have achieved this with print, so the interest here lay in observing whether, and to what extent, the digital affordances added value to the already sophisticated and reflexive productions.

For example, Amy filmed people talking about her and talking "as" her – at no point did she ever either appear or reveal anything substantive about herself. Employing documentary and vox pop techniques, Tom edited clips of his family and friends discussing him posthumously, with one brother struggling to remember he had even existed. Another introduction engaged an animation programme with computer generated, HAL-type voices, to parody his decision to become a teacher education student. He chose a pre-provided Napoleonic war scenario to request safe passage to the outer Melbourne suburb where he would commence his teacher education diploma.

In terms of "braiding" elements to create new spaces for story, a number of students experimented successfully with technological possibilities. Koh from Singapore constructed an on-screen digital jigsaw puzzle with his name written in the centre piece. Other digital pieces contained hyperlinked identity features (a Google map link to his street, favourite satay recipes, a trailer to a popular television series). Clicking and dragging the irregular pieces to the centre piece completed his jigsaw, which formed a map of his own country.

Liam filmed himself in profile, intermittently speaking. He then stood adjacent to his interactive screen profile and conducted a conversation with himself – a playful, decentred expression of authorial voice.

Google Earth provided a platform for Matt to offer an annotated tour of the history of his relationship and work with a Japanese tent theatre company. He uploaded to Google Earth photographs and notes of events that took place in

Tokyo and Melbourne linked to his ongoing collaboration, "flying" us to Tokyo and pasting theatre photos on relevant points of the map. The blending of literal and figurative modes extended his understanding of communication and representation. No two-dimensional form could replicate the geographical space Matt wanted to overlay as an architectural layer to his photographic images.

The level of "orchestration" (Kress, 2003) in these examples was high, as students borrowed and experimented with combinations to explore identity concepts. However, perhaps fewer than half the students reflected in such depth and detail, or exploited the multimodal affordances of the technology. Some introductions made few connections beyond self-evident statements. David Buckingham (cited in Thomas, 2011: x) asserts that "most of young people's use of digital technology is mundane rather than spectacular: it is characterised not by dramatic manifestations of innovation and creativity, but by relatively routine forms of communication and information retrieval". To encourage new combinations and expression of students' local digital knowledge, then, the role of the teacher becomes significant.

As Selwyn (2011) reminds us, the creativity of Kress's synaesthetic affordances is thus not inevitably implicated in digital technologies. The inventive play with time and space by students described in this study could have been mediated through other technologies, though arguably not as readily. In this curriculum design, there was a central focus on semiotic communication and representational interrelationships, highlighted by guided reflection questions. However, open-ended tasks per se guarantee no more "creativity" than more traditionally mediated invitations. The role of the teacher in expanding and scaffolding possibilities appears pivotal here.

Repositioning Student Expertise

In the second case discussed in this chapter, new media were employed to create engaged English as an Additional Language learning communities. The origin for this multimedia emphasis was a year-long project focusing on the out-of-class literacies of a small group of South Sudanese and Liberian young men. There were students from Myanmar (the predominant country, refugee-wise, in Australia at that time) and a smattering of students from China, India, Macedonia and South Sudan. Using personal stories as the foundation, the aim was to acquire and experiment with new digital approaches in the classroom, challenging students' notions of what "learning English" looks like, as well as teachers' perceptions of their own pedagogical role. Students used culturally relevant websites, a class social network and moviemaking to build the learning community around personal stories. This

project also aimed to interrogate the roles that teachers play in shaping students' understandings of their own "resources", or expertise.

In this case, 17 students participated from the highly culturally-diverse western suburbs of Melbourne and were proficient in oral culture. The university project intended to build on existing strengths, moving away from deficit notions of learners and learning. The project therefore drew on student skills, dispositions and out-of-school knowledge typically left at the classroom door. The learners also became teachers in this community, sharing expertise and offering collegial support, with Author instructing them to seek peer advice before consulting the teacher.

Two notable participants in this project were Ugul and Makuac. Ugul was a South Sudanese 18-year-old, who positioned himself as an insider in the rap scene prior to arriving in Australia. A student and HIV/AIDS peer educator, he had experienced being singled out above others as a rapper who was viewed as talented, someone whose skills are "in demand" in his social context. Ugul knew the processes of recording, composing raps, shaping lyrics to appeal to particular audiences (girls and their families). He was able to move between Swahili and English when rapping – with a rationale for rapping in either language – but did not discuss his wide-ranging rapping expertise in his English classes.

Makuac, 24, also from South Sudan, was a leader within his community. Makuac uploaded a number of files to the computer (as he had learnt in our prior lessons). He had filmed (on his phone) clips of people dancing from an Eritrean music website. From here, he developed and edited his one-minute film clip from the five minutes of footage he had already saved. His final story represented powerful forms of cultural identity which included remembering – keeping his culture alive, and maintaining an ongoing connection or relationship with his community and culture. Culture was central to his learning – to his ways of acting and/or being in learning situations. Makuac's digital story was a way of keeping the culture close, in tune with life there, for when he might return. Through such moments, the audience powerfully came to see the centrality of culture, especially in relation to music and movement.

Following this Out of Class Literacies project, a number of additional multi-media projects linked to real-world issues and interests of refugee students were created by Author. In Author's Life-Story project, he engaged culturally diverse asylum-seeker students in telling their own multimedia stories. The students in this instance comprised a range of recent arrivals with varying degrees of English language and digital technology competence. Students in this EAL class created a 2-to-3-minute digital story to teach preservice teachers about refugee/immigrant life. They were instructed how to script and storyboard their narratives, use a

title, transitions, write a voiceover and credits. They could use their own photos, understanding how copyright worked with free photos and how to acknowledge music. Students were introduced to elements of design, lighting and sound as well as relevant programs: Flickr and Creative Commons, www.mp3.com, Windows Moviemaker, Audacity, Ning, WMA Converter and Windows Photostory. They were encouraged to create profiles, post comments and respond to others' comments on the class Ning (that allowed for blogging, posting of photos and videos, and providing feedback to each other).

In terms of language and literacy teaching, the students were taught the genre structure for their digital reports; for example, how to introduce their story and develop it (through the various stages of the genre). For one project, they completed an oral presentation to the class and then created a video report on the same topic with the same material. In the process they learned the difference between the formal oral presentation and the video presentation. Students at lower EAL levels were provided with scaffolding in the form of sentence stems (This is my house… This is my… where I… etc.).

Students also extensively reviewed their digital reports, where they had specific things to look for, for example, pronunciation, structure, body stance and so on. They also reviewed each other, and this is where major learning took place as they adjusted their pronunciation, speed of speaking or the structures of their reports in response to peer feedback. They were encouraged to improve their reports because they knew that their projects would be viewed by their peers. Language was thus embedded, along with media skills, as part of motivated, authentic and crafted communication, reflecting contemporary notions of literacy as situated practice.

Experiencing success was a key project goal and students' efforts were constantly scaffolded through modelling and an array of accessible online resources as well as the physical presence of the teacher. In the spirit of distributed expertise, one student learned a feature and then taught others, as needs arose. Each was advised to draw on peer knowledge, learning at the point of need and through trial and error; familiar strategies for learning in digital environments (Anstey and Bull, 2006; Gee, 2003). The stories themselves borrowed intertextual elements from film and documentary, using music, framed shots and transitions to engage the audience and scaffold language development. A number of students described their learning trajectory as dramatic, having come from locations, such as refugee camps, without any form of digital technology.

The engagement of students with limited English language skills in digital storytelling proved a rich and generative experience. Strategic in the learning process was the design of authentic tasks which linked to cultural values, and

local audiences, thus providing high levels of motivation for developing and strengthening English skills. Peer collaboration was another strong feature of the story-making process. The narratives provided opportunities (for teachers and students) to evaluate English skills, motivated by producing personal stories in real-world contexts. Using Gee's (1994) 'bootstrapping' metaphor to underline the importance of timely support, high expectations lifted the levels of learning activity and production. We noted a pedagogical tension, however, between explicit teaching and the necessity of distancing ourselves as teachers, to allow more space for students to learn. In this case, Author consciously encouraged learner collaboration and autonomy. While the task was well scaffolded to enable students to learn independently, the challenges for both skill development and self-representation were high.

Key to the digital storytelling pedagogical approach was to maintain a strengths focus via students taking control of their own narrative. Much was learned by all participants about students' socio-cultural contexts, dimensions of difference (gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality, belief system, locale), expertise (knowledge, skills, strategies) and attitudes/values. Careful curation (Potter, 2012) was required of students. Like the students in the first instance discussed, they made choices about what to share about themselves and their communities in their narratives. Self-protection and respect for the community at times played out against agency and the freedom to express oneself through digital formats.

These kinds of considerations sit within a broader perspective of power relations. In Australia, asylum seekers are detained offshore and widely characterised by both political leaders and media as "illegal". Immigrants and refugees (who may or not be asylum seekers) frequently face isolation and public disapprobation. Many have experienced torture and trauma. The role of educators in seeking participant narratives thus takes on an ethical and political dimension, moving beyond skill and knowledge building. It can be seen as a role of forging empathic connections, a role that sees story as facilitating, challenging and affirming deeper understanding. The digital stories offered recent arrivals occasion to write enthusiastically about their own lifeworlds and articulate their skills and expertise, encouraging audience participants to learn, borrow and adapt from others. The value of digital stories in this case was manifold, reaching well past more traditional EAL approaches (which might also include narrative). Students learned multimedia skills in order to establish a particular sense of self and understand story as a tool of affirmation and interpretation, for both authors and audience.

Conclusion

Authors of stories indicated that personal learning in relation to attempting something new and potentially confronting included strategies such as trial and error, collaboration, timely and point-of-need instruction. The digital affordances provided a generative space for stories to be "explored, controlled and mapped" (Martinez-Borda and Lacasar, 2014: 185). Animating new challenges enabled personal confidence and reflexivity in relation to narrative framing (Green, 2001).

The digital introductions and stories were designed to explore identity constructions through potentially innovative technological spaces. The mode in this case could 'reformulate' and expand communicative possibilities. Prevailing discourses in education around generational and technological determinism continue to be interrogated in the literature, as contextual influences and power relations influence and limit educational change. Green's (1988) 3D literacy model allowed the creators of personal stories to reflect on the production and reception processes at technical, social and critical levels.

The digital stories described here suggest further ways that new media technologies can enable narrative to play out in cultural storytelling contexts. The authors' stories illuminated disjunctures between the realities of personal experience and limitations of more traditional pedagogies. The digital stories reflect self-aware and resonant identity representation in moving from page to screen. Among a traditionally marginalised group of refugee language learners, they provided important and accessible spaces for recognition and affirmation.

The two instances described here argue, however, that the task design needs to be theoretically sound, the tools "convivial" and the role of the teacher relevant and timely. Selwyn (2008) contends that we need to clarify our digital focus on the "state-of-the-actual" rather than "state-of-the-art", continually asking questions about how digital technologies sit alongside pre-existing cultures and structures of schooling. Bearing these contexts and interrogations in mind, the examples in this small study suggest that the range of programmes and devices for storytelling can be made inviting to learners as effective tools of identity representation.

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