

Digital Storytelling Overview Transcription

Speaker 1

Could you tell me about the process for digital storytelling?

Speaker 2:

Digital storytelling is a very successful, co-created, collaborative model that has been applied in education now for almost 20 years. There is, as I was saying, it's a sort of template in the way in which we think about digital storytelling. It's something that each educator and each student could concede, rethink, reapply, adjust, adapt to the needs of their lesson plan or the achievements, the goals they want to reach.

Speaker 1

And what is the process of digital storytelling?

Speaker 2:

Yeah, that's very important. Because actually when we talk about digital storytelling, we should consider both the process and the output. Yeah, because the next question would be what is a digital story? Right? So actually we never know which question comes first. So very often we have people, students, educators, asking us what is a digital and what makes digital story different from other types of media? Right. And what makes a digital story different is actually the process.

So conventionally as being applied and delivered in education in the classroom through five steps. And it's just a way of organizing the activities to make sure that there is enough time for individual work to enhance each person's creativity, to make sure they have enough time to think about how to create the story, but also collaboration and mutual learning. So it's the process itself is a space for social learning to enable social learning.

So these five steps conventionally, they start with a briefing session. And the briefing is when we actually think about what is a digital story and we provide some prompts, some ideas, we show some examples of digital story to set the expectations, so what we need to achieve by the end of the process.

The second step within the creative process is what we would define a story circle, which actually is within the first initial brainstorming of the process. And the story circle is when the participants, and we don't like to divide participants from educators because being a social space for mutual learning, the facilitators can be the students themselves. So story circle is when a facilitator is supporting the other participants to share verbally the idea of a story.

Then we move into what conventionally is script writing activity. So when we ask participants to translate what they shared verbally into a script, and we tend to say to contain the script in around 200-250 words, because then when we move into the next step, that is starting with the technical part of the process for the audio recording to record the voiceover, we think of 200 words/250 words in English because it's different from in other

languages where we've got, for example, an Italian and in German, we've got lots of prepositions so you are allowed to have a bit more space. We move into the audio recording then it's around if we read the script of 200 words it's around 2 minutes. Why 2 minutes? Because then when we move into the next step, that is the editing, the video editing, a video of 2 minutes is manageable. I mean, these are not videos made by a professional video makers these are made for make people think, create, co-create, learn from other people and therefore it's an idea learned to make the video editing phase feasible within the workshop duration, the length of a workshop.

And then there is a brilliant very important step and that is the screening, the sharing phase. So when we come back together and we can witness this sort of transition from the story that was told in the story circle, was written down into a script, was recorded as a voiceover, was created with still and moving images as a video combined to the voiceover and then is played on screen and is watched by other people and is again another collaborative activity in which participants they'll provide each other feedback. And it's a celebration as well of this creative artifact that is being created by each individual participant.

Speaker 1:

Do you see the elements of creativity and collaboration being really important in that process?

Speaker 2:

Absolutely. I mean, creativity and collaboration are essential in at least three of the steps of the conventional model. So as you see it is about co-creation, it's about collective creativity but there is also space for individual creativity to happen and co-creation is actually is the best is the most exciting form of collaboration I would say. So when collaboration that is about providing each other feedback, taking decisions together, saying, are you sure? Are you going to say this? Why are you going to represent visually in your storyboard this in this way? Is this an emotion that they're trying to deliver? I don't feel that now. How can we work together to make that emotion comes up for everyone to be accessible. Do you really mean that? I mean, all those questions are actually an act of collaboration that as an outcome is an act of co-creation because the piece of media, the digital story that is created at the end of this process is not the story would create by yourself in front of a computer.

Phase 1 Story Circle Transcription

Speaker 1

So, Antonia, how would you advise delivering a story circle and how could it be adapted for different situations?

Speaker 2

So, story circle in the conventional ideal scenario is a way of creating an intimate space for sharing those initial ideas of a story. So, within a classroom, it's very difficult to recreate that sort of environment, especially if we think about the size of the groups in a classroom around 20 or more than 20. So ideally, we then tend to think of a story circle as run by one facilitator with around eight to ten participants. So, if we have a group of 20, we could potentially split it in two groups and, have them actually facilitate their own story circle.

Recently actually with our students, we've been using this technique that has been very effective also to support active listening so which plays a big part of the story circle dynamics. So what we did, for example, if we were now sitting around in a circle because that's the idea of creating the circle as a metaphor of those stories moving around and therefore creating this story listening storytelling loop within the environment. So, what we would do, I would say, OK, the one in the middle is the storyteller, the one on the right is the facilitator, the one on the left is the time keeper, and we would switch this role moving to the next one. And this would allow you, of course, to ask questions and also to involve the rest of the group in asking questions and providing feedback after the storyteller has been talking about their initial idea of the story.

And for you as a timekeeper, you will keep an eye on time because as I said, we think of a story circle one facilitator, and in this case, the facilitator will switch around the circle and 10 people, if we think of 10 minutes for each storyteller is already almost 2 hours. So with a bit of introduction, 10 minutes is not just a monologue is about allowing, let's say, three to 5 minutes to share the idea of the story and then using the other 5 minutes to provide feedback to clarify the audience, Why are you telling this story? What kind of emotions are you trying to trigger in your audience? What is your first target audience? Are you going to share this story with your friends? And if so, why? And how? Are you already thinking about the visuals? So making the participants think about the implication of sharing a story not just as an act, as a performative art, but actually as a first step to actually create a short video so where it's not just the ability of sharing the story verbally and orally, and therefore getting that kind of emotional engagement in that stage, but is also thinking about how to recreate that emotional response from your audience by using visuals, music, sound, silence.

So, in the story circle, of course, there is support from all participants to make the storyteller represent in the best way possible, the idea of a story, but also to make the storyteller think about the impact of that story and the implication of telling this story, sharing the story in the digital space.

Phase 2&3 Script writing and storyboarding transcription

Speaker 1

So following from the story circle, what's the next step?

Speaker 2

So conventionally we would think of the script writing phase and they could work on their writing, on the script writing phase individually so we could even give them a few prompts to work on starting from the feedback they received in story circle to work on their individual script.

But recently we've been asking them to work individually on the script and then come back to the group in the classroom and work in pairs. So, what we asked students to do was to act one as the person who is drawing on a storyboard and the other one as the person who is telling the story. So actually the person who's working the storyboard is acting as the listener and is interpreting the story in a way through the drawings, and then they swap. So, Jenny you would be the one listening to Karen's story and drawing, taking notes on the storyboard on what you are hearing in terms of representing visually the emotions you are somehow experiencing. So and this is a way of, again, supporting mutual learning dialogue and make the storyteller think about what the other person is experiencing. Why am I telling my own story.

But very often we do storyboarding as an individual activity so that actually we use storyboards as they are used in other industries. And you are an expert illustrator and you've been delivering those sessions with our students. So what, what is a storyboard and how do you run those sessions with students?

Speaker 3

So for storyboarding, it's the first step from thinking about your narratives and writing, because so far you've been talking orally and you've been writing. So everything's very verbal. But the outcome of a digital story is that it's a audio visual narrative. By drawing what you are going to show you can really reflect and think about what the weight and the significance of the visuals are, as opposed to your oral storytelling. So you can, for example, think about, Oh, if I'm going to say that I'm confused, how are you going to show that visually? If they do that in pairs, then you can also see how others interpret your story visually. So it's you have an opportunity to get outside of your conventional understanding of visuals and significance and see what you're showing to the viewer and it's your first step to participating in watching a digital story.

Speaker 2

And in practical terms, if we think about this activity as a two hour, lets say slot we have with our students, we could print out this template that we often use with our students. They are very simplified, for example, we use a template in four blocks to make sure they

reflect on the four key moments of the story. Of course, starting with a beginning, the context and an end point with the key message to the reader, to the audience. And then we also give them some space to start thinking about the title of the story, which is, again, very important.

Usually, we think of this activity individually or even in pairs. The first moments of the storyboarding will be a 20-minute activity. Then they will come back in the shared space to report on the process. So, the other thing that is important then in the next steps is even more obvious is that whatever is on the video is not duplicating what we are saying. So the exercise we do through the storyboarding is actually: this is what I'm going to represent visually, this is what I'm going to say, how those two things together are working we will know only by doing this exercise.

Phase 4. Recording and editing transcription

Speaker 1

So what does the recording and editing step look like?

Speaker 2

So these two steps actually could be combined and again adapted depending on the needs of each educator and each group of students. This could be individual activity or group activities. So in the recording phase is what we were saying very briefly earlier is when we start recording the voiceover. So what was actually completed in the first two steps, so the story was told and then was somehow visually represented in a storyboard, now needs to be recorded as a voiceover. So the previous steps were essential to actually critically develop a script that is exactly saying what we want to then compliment with the visuals.

So we would ask participants to go in a quiet space that could be in their own home or in in the classroom. We need to recreate a space where, you know, there is no echo there are no other sounds, people are very quiet. We would ask them to read a few times their script before recording.

We tend to use good microphones, but they could record voiceover with their phones. You could use a clip-on microphone sometimes to make participants less intimidated by a professional microphone. But what happens is very simple. We ask participants to read in a more expressive way the script, not like if they were reading the script, but if they were telling the story. I think in my experience, from the feedback received from participants it is the most difficult phase because nobody loves listening to their voice back after the recording and then therefore, they need to go back and start again try.

This is why I said some people may prefer to do that as an individual exercise, an individual activity. Some people, sometimes they prefer to be in a group pretending that they are actually telling the story and there is a listener that is actually smiling, reacting, so the body language of the listener that could act as the person who is recording and pressing the button so that there is not that kind of anxiety of keeping an eye on the microphone but there is another person supporting the storyteller.

Now we tend to use video editing platforms in which it's possible also to record the voiceover, and we tend to use a platform called wevideo where it's very easy to actually synchronize the visuals with the voiceover at the same time. So what I'm saying here is that the two phases of recording and editing can be swapped or can happen together because there are some students, some participants who sometimes prefer to select first the visuals and start the video editing process and have in mind the pillars, the ones they have selected for the storyboard, of course expanded well they like to create new footage and then start combining the footage together, and then they could actually record the voiceover and

synchronize, respond to the visuals while they are recording the story. So what they see is actually a stimulus for them to record the voiceover and to find the right pace as well.

Phase 5 Screening transcription

Speaker 1

Sally what happens in the sharing in the screening phase?

Speaker 2

So the screening phase is one of the most important phases is when the students get the opportunity to show back their work, their digital story that they've created. It's crucial that they get that opportunity as they are able to share with their peers what they've done, and everyone can give their feedback and talk about how they felt that that digital story made them feel. It's really crucial to give them the opportunity to show their work and be proud of their work.

Top tips transcription

Speaker 1

So what would be your top tips for each of the processes.

Speaker 2

Starting with the briefing, which includes the story circle I would say I would start always with a clear explanation of the process, so I would have a clear plan of the next steps since the very beginning of the process, since the briefing and I would also share a few examples of stories at the very beginning of a workshop.

And then in the story circle, the most important tip is actually to make sure that all participants that they feel that they can share what they want to share, they feel supported, they feel listened to, that their story is made important, is important for everyone. And also that there is not a sort of judgment on the quality of the story that is shared. So that there is freedom for them to share a story that is very deep and very personal or a story that is just an experience they had last week, for example, because then the depth of the story will come through the rest of the process.

Speaker 3

And for the writing phase, I encourage the participants as a facilitator to write first, edit later because a lot of participants if they're not used to telling a story verbally they tend to judge how good their story is even before writing. So let it all out, let the words just stick on to the paper so it's no longer in your brain, but you can objectively look at it and then start to make decisions as to what is the first thing that the viewers need to know and what is the last.

And going off of that for storyboarding sessions, I would say the same thing where the participant should be encouraged to draw more and not just go into their photograph galleries and look for pictures that are vaguely related to their stories, but just have fun drawing, it doesn't have to be a masterpiece. We're not ever asking you to be Michelangelo it is just a doodling session to visualize what you are envisioning as for your narrative. So it's not really a drawing session its a storyboarding session so I always, always encourage the participants to have fun and just draw.

Speaker 4

And I think for recording, I think it's really important that students have read through their scripts out loud before they start recording, so they feel as comfortable as possible and ensuring that the space in which they're recording is as quiet as possible so that when you are editing, you don't have to cut out loads of background noise. In terms of the editing process, I would always encourage participants to export their final story and watch that through before they take it to the sharing phase, because often things like volumes that you've listened to may be slightly different when you've exported it. And I would always encourage participants to think very carefully from the storyboarding stage about actually what own photos and footage they can put in that complement what their words are.

Speaker 1

And finally, the sharing phase, I think it's important to be respectful of everyone making sure that space is a respectful space to share their stories, but also remembering it's a celebration of the creative process that we've been through. They get to see what everyone's created and share it together, which is really, really crucial.

What does digital storytelling mean to you- transcription

Speaker 1

What does digital storytelling mean to me? It's— in my opinion, in today's age, when you don't have really a lot of opportunities to just, you know, you don't have the time to tell your personal stories, because people don't really pay attention because of the, you know, everything's busy, everything is overwhelming.

Digital storytelling is a platform which is short and is highly personal and it can provide this opportunity for you to just tell something from a really personal and— personal perspective, and just connect at least some people to yourself; and digital storytelling means for me, it means connectedness. In a world that feels heavily disconnected, emotionally, I should say.

Speaker 2

Well, I think that digital storytelling is most of sharing, because, you know, everyone is unique and a thousand people has a thousand hamlets, so everyone have their own method of expression, and they will to express to their own life or their opinion, or their— or their own things. So most of them express, to us, that emotional or inspiration, and a resonation to others. And so the storytelling bring most of people together, I think is a value of this.

Speaker 3

Well for me, at first, I think this is just a normal study plan for me; but after two weeks of study, I think digital storytelling is very important to my research. You know, in my opinion, I think if people don't have same experience, maybe they can't fully understand it with each other, but digital storytelling provide a method to make people to gather some different feelings.

Maybe people could use this way to understand the other people to some extent. A part of that, I think it's very important for a UX designer, you know, sometimes we need to think about other people's feeling, and, yeah, and apart from that, we also need to express our own feelings and ideas to others. So I think, it provide a better research to help us how to communicate with each other.

How does digital storytelling help with creativity- transcription

Speaker 1

So can you explain to me how you feel that the process of digital storytelling helps with creativity?

Speaker 2

Sure, I think— so when I think about digital storytelling, at the very beginning, you're, in my case, I was a bit unsure about how this can actually make you more creative. I had, like, I was quite skeptical about it, actually. And then what I would say is that it actually works. I think for me, the part where it clicked is when you do the story circle and you get to see, like, people's like real emotions about a certain story.

Speaker 2

I don't know what it is, but something in your brain just sort of, like, lights up. And then you start thinking completely different about things. And I think that's the point where, like, creativity just like kicks in.

Speaker 1

So engaging with others, and in that process of the storytelling circle helps you with your creativity: seeing other people's opinions and stories helps your own personal creativity?

Speaker 2

Yeah, I think in my personal experience, and even in the academic world, so many times, it's yeah, if this assignment that you have to do, and it's very structured, so you know that you have to do this and that, when you go and do an essay, it's always, they actually teach you the structure.

When you listen to how people tell stories, because everyone is so different, somehow it like, opens up a new way of like, thinking about things.

So then, when you have to do a video, or any other thing — an essay — you don't think of it as a structure, you think of it as— what, what was the impact that it had on me? And then it goes from there. So I think it opens up a lot. When I was creating the video, I wasn't thinking of, I need to have an introduction, and I need to have a body, and I need to have a conclusion.

I was thinking, I need to have this because I need to convey this image, and then how can I do that? Then it's like, endless possibilities of how, how to do that. So I think that's my point.

Speaker 3

I think having the, yeah, having the overall goal you want to get towards, and then knowing that you can get to it through all these different kind of ways; so the main way we did it was

we had the script, and we knew that our whole story kind of revolved around a certain point. We explored different ways to get to it most effectively. So everyone's video turned out really differently. The idea was different, and then it required different things to make it come to life.

Speaker 1

So then you start with that same point, the same point, and everyone else, you still managed to come to different end points because of the process you've been through.

Speaker 3

Yeah, yeah. Well, when you want to convey like a message, you have to use different, different mediums to do that. You have to use different ideas, and yeah, everyone did.

Speaker 2

And I think also, like when I think about it, is when you think about creativity, I think there's like, a lot of room for doubt because it's like, OK, I can be creative, I can do this, I can do that, but at some point, you actually need to do something, whatever it is, you know, a piece of art, sculpture or a video, you actually need to do the video. You can't just keep on thinking about this and that.

When we did the storyboards, like, I remember yours, George, you had like, this crazy, like drawing and everything, and then it ended up being, like a bit different in the video, but you ended up making like, this really like, concise video about this particular theme.

Speaker 3

I think that, I think that's how it works. Yeah. Like, you make a storyboard, and you only have to use the certain parts of it, but you're making it, your creative process goes into it, and all these different outcomes can come from it and it can shoot off in any direction. If you didn't do the storyboard, you wouldn't have known where to, where to go off into.

You go from storyboard to the script, and my script was different because the storyboard was different, and then the script is a certain way and then that could shoot off in directions. And then, so for all these different processes, you're just like a tree, I guess. Starting from the trunk, it goes off and you can end up at any point. Yeah.

Speaker 2

Yeah. And even like, within one of the process, like, I remember you told me, check out this thing where you like, actually put a prompt and you say, imagine a tree, or this taken blah, blah. And then you have like, an A.I. that generates that image, and we went through so many images. I didn't incorporate any in the video, but it's like, you know, the— is the tree thing, right?

Like we went so wide on the choices. Yeah, it's really interesting.