

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

Using digital storytelling in the MFL classroom

Before starting, let's consider;

What do I want my students to know, understand, and be able to do?

The creation of a digital story in a foreign language will help students develop many of the learning outcomes in the junior cycle MFL specification.

What makes a good digital story? At this stage of learning, a good digital story has the following characteristics:

- a clear purpose and a clear focus
- gives simple but relevant information
- can be easily understood due to accurate pronunciation and intonation when spoken and clarity of message when spoken or written
- has images and music that are relevant to the narration and support it by creating an atmosphere and/or an emotional tone
- communicates a clear and comprehensible message through the appropriate use of the target language.

Let's get started!

1. SCRIPT-WRITING

This is the most important phase of the whole process. The story is the core of a digital story; technology is just a medium to enhance and enrich the telling of a story.

Things to consider

What type of text will students produce? Consider the purpose and the audience.

- Descriptive/Informative text: e.g. an autobiographical presentation (tell me who you are), a biography (present a celebrity that you admire)?
- Narrative text: e.g. a fairy tale, a personal story?
- Instructional text: e.g. a recipe?

Deciding what type of text you want to focus on will help you establish what language needs to be developed in order to write the script, for example:

- which verb mood (indicative, imperative etc.) and verb tense (present, past, future)?
- which person? (first, second, third)
- which vocabulary (descriptive adjectives, sequencing adverbs, subject-specific vocabulary)?
- which connectives (adding, sequencing, emphasizing etc.)?

2. STORYBOARDING

Storyboarding is essential to plan the digital story.

It is the process through which students, by using a comic strip format (the storyboard), illustrate how the words of the script are matched with specific multimedia items.

It is an effective way to help students pre-visualise their entire video and decide:

- what visual (images, text, video) and audio (music, sounds) elements they want to include in their digital story;
- in what order they want those elements to appear in their video

Creating the storyboard helps students reflect on what they want to achieve with their digital story and encourages them to be more thoughtful when choosing the media elements that best support their story.

3. COLLECTING AND ORGANISING MEDIA ITEMS

In this phase students gather, create and organise the media items they want to use in their digital story.

This phase includes:

Organisation of folders

It is advisable that students create a master folder on their device which contains a number of subfolders (e.g. script, storyboard, images, voice recording, music) where they can save and store the media files they source for the video.

Voice recording

Students record themselves reading the script.

Things to consider:

- How to prepare your students for the voice recording? Which are the features you want them to focus on in terms of pronunciation and intonation?
- Which digital tool do you want to use for the voice recording? Consider that:
 - by using audio editing software like Audacity the process might take longer.
 - by using video editing software the process can be accomplished during phase 4, the phase in which the students assemble all the media components to create the digital story.
- Where students can do the voice recording, considering that they need a quiet and silent place for this?

Selecting or creating images, music and sounds

Students can create their own media items (e.g. pictures, using their own digital camera; music and sounds, recording themselves playing some instruments or producing some sounds) or they can select and download pre-existing media items from the Internet.

Make sure students:

- select high resolution and large size images
- use copyright-free items

4. PUTTING EVERYTHING TOGETHER

Students engage in the actual creation of their digital story. Using video editing software they assemble all the media items they have gathered and/or created and edit the resulting video.

Their original and unique digital story is finally ready.

Things to consider

- Do you want to use video editing software (e.g. iMovie for Mac, Microsoft Photo Story for PC) or a web-based video editor (e.g. Adobe Spark)? Consider that a web-based video editor can be used on all devices but can have limited features, while video editing software has more features but can be used only on specific devices.

5. SHOWCASE

Students can proudly show their digital story to everyone. This can happen:

- during a public screening where they can also comment on and discuss their work
- on a dedicated and protected online space where they can upload the video and share it with their peers.

The role of feedback and reflection

Feedback and reflection are essential in supporting students to make sense of their learning and to move their learning forward. By setting goals and reflecting on these goals throughout the process, students are clear on what they hope to achieve. Feedback, from peers or the teacher, offers students further support for improving their learning. Feedback based on success criteria offers clarity to students as they draft and re-draft their work.

On publishing the digital story, reflection on the entire digital storytelling process is important for the students as they get the opportunity to acknowledge what they have learned and to take pride in their work.

