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INTRODUCING DIGITAL STORYTELLING TO ENGLISH TEACHERS IN MALAYSIA: WHAT ARE THEIR CONCERNS?

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ABSTRACT

This study shares the findings of a study that explores the initial concerns of three teachers who introduced digital storytelling as a project-based learning activity in their ESL (English as a Second Language) classrooms. Digital storytelling is one of the many new technologies in the Web which could be harnessed to enhance learning because it can encompass many topics in different educational contexts. A digital story has a narration overlay and sometimes a music background; combining images, audio, and video to tell a story or to make a factual presentation. The purpose of this paper is to report on three teachers' initial concerns using the Stages of Concern (SoC) dimension which utilizes these three techniques: one-legged interview, open-ended concerns statement, and Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ). The analysis of the teachers' concerns revealed that each teacher's personal concerns can be related to one of the four classifications of teachers in relation to ICT integration in practice: contented traditionalist, selective adopter, inadvertent user, and creative adapter. The discussion of findings implies that the teachers' personal concerns can be associated with the teacher ICT characteristics, as well as their job responsibilities and experiences in using ICT in the language classroom. The paper ends by highlighting the need to investigate teachers' concerns from a bigger sample population before conclusive findings can be made.

Keywords: digital storytelling; ESL; Stages of Concern; ICT; teacher concerns

INTRODUCTION

The current society is moving forward rapidly with the advancement in computers and technology. In order to produce a workforce which is ready with all the necessary knowledge and skills in this 21st century, teachers are now faced with the challenge of integrating new technology in their classrooms to enhance teaching and learning. Digital storytelling is one of the many new educational tools which have been used by many educators and provided multi-faceted benefits to both teachers and students. Storytelling in teaching is not a new idea, what is new is the digital element in digital storytelling (Meadows, 2003). Digital storytelling embraces the art of traditional storytelling and reconfigures it with digital content which includes images, sound, and video, to create a short movie. Mclellan (2006: 66) defines digital storytelling as "the art and craft of exploring different media and software applications to communicate stories in new and powerful ways using digital media". The use of digital storytelling (DST) as an educational tool is gaining more attention from educators, based on the educational benefits reported. For instance, Paull (2002), Sylvester and Greenidge (2009), and Kieler (2010) found that using DST during the writing process could

help learners to enhance their writing. In a study based in Hong Kong, Hafner and Miller (2011) reported how their students learned to be more autonomous in language learning through the production of a digital video. The benefits of DST is aptly surmised by Mclellan (2006) who described that DST promotes skills such as visual literacy, collaboration, mastery of technology, creativity, and problem-solving.

As review of studies on the use of DST has shown positive results and benefits in various educational contexts, the researchers in this study attempted to introduce DST as a new educational tool for the teaching and learning of English in Malaysia. This paper aims to report on the initial concerns and challenges faced by three English teachers who volunteered to carry out DST as an English language project in their classrooms. The English teachers concerns were investigated using the Stages of Concern (SoC) dimension which utilizes three techniques: one-legged interview, open-ended concerns statement, and Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ).

LITERATURE REVIEW

As this study looks into the challenges faced by three individual teachers in implementing the digital storytelling project, the Concerns-based Adoption Model (CBAM) is deemed as a suitable theoretical framework as it considers change from the perspective of those implementing the innovation. The CBAM is a change model developed by Hall and Hord (2001). There are three diagnostic dimensions for conceptualizing and measuring change in individuals: Stages of Concern (SoC), Levels of Use (LoU), and Innovation Configurations (IC) (Hall and Hord, 2001). The Stages of Concern (SoC) is most relevant to this study as it focuses on change during initial adoption from the perspective of the individuals in the change, and can be used as a tool for continued examination throughout the process of innovation adoption (Donovan, Hartley & Strudler, 2007). In the SoC dimension, there are three techniques for assessing stages of concern: 1) One-legged interview, 2) Open-ended concerns statement, and 3) Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ) (Hall & Hord, 2001).

In Hall and Hord (2001), *one-legged interviews* are described as brief conversations between a change facilitator and an implementer about the use of the innovation. They are viewed as important incidents in schools where there is little time for extended conversation. *Open-ended concerns statements* are written descriptions of an individual's concerns. The SoCQ is a self-report survey to understand the feelings and perceptions about change from the individuals involved in the change process. The SoCQ, a 35-item questionnaire, has been tested for reliability (test/retest reliability range from .65-.68) and validity (alpha-coefficients range from .64-.83) (Hall and Hord, 2001; Donovan et al., 2007). There are seven *Stages of Concern* within four levels – unrelated, self, task, and impact (see Table 1 below). Each of the seven *Stages of Concern* is measured with a series of five statements. For each statement, the degree of relevance is measured using an eight-point Likert scale that ranges from (0) = *Irrelevant* to (7) = *Very true of me now*. All 35 items in the SoCQ are arranged in a random order.

Table 1. Stages of Concern: Typical expressions of concern about the innovation

	Stages of Concern	Expressions of Concern
Impact	6) Refocusing	I have some ideas about something that would work even better.
	5) Collaboration	I am concerned about relating what I am doing with what other teachers are doing.
	4) Consequence	How is my use affecting my students?
Task	3) Management	I seem to be spending all of my time getting materials ready.
Self	2) Personal	How will using it (the new innovation) affect me?
	1) Informational	I would like to know more about it.
Unrelated	0) Awareness	I am not concerned about it.

METHOD

1. Participants and setting

The context of this study is in a Malaysian secondary school. There were five English teachers teaching the lower secondary students (Form 1 and Form 2 students). All five teachers were personally invited to participate in the Digital Storytelling Project (DST Project). However, only three teachers filled in the SoCQ. One teacher decided not to participate in the project and another teacher was transferred to another school before the project begins. Digital storytelling was a new innovation for all three teachers and it was their first experience in implementing the DST Project in their English language classrooms.

2. Research Procedures and Instruments

An invitation was extended to all teachers in two secondary schools in Malaysia to participate in the DST Project. Five English teachers from a secondary school expressed interest in the DST Project, but only three teachers were committed to implement the DST project in their classrooms. The teachers were given materials on DST to be read via e-mail and the key researcher conducted briefing sessions to demonstrate the chosen software application for the DST Project, which is the *Photo Story 3*. For this DST Project, the *Photo Story 3* is the most applicable software for students to carry out the production because of its low-threshold characteristics and ability for students to work off-line without accessing the Internet.

Before the teachers implement the DST Project in their classrooms, the SoCQ was administered to each teacher to investigate their individual concerns. All 35 items in the questionnaire were used but they were adapted to investigate concerns related to DST. The teachers were required to rate each item on a 0 to 7 scale, according to the degree of concern (0 = irrelevant; 7 = very true of me now). At the end of the SoCQ, the teachers were asked to describe any concerns they had at the open-ended concerns statement section. The key researcher also kept a research log where she jotted down her one-legged interviews with the teachers during the formal invitation and briefing sessions. One-legged interviews take the

form of a brief conversation between the researcher and teachers on an impromptu basis, and in an informal and less intimidating manner (Hall & Hord, 2001; Donovan et al., 2007).

3. Data Analysis Procedures

The scores in the SoCQ were analysed according to the SoCQ Quick Scoring Device and procedures outlined by Hall and Hord (2001). The data from the one-legged interviews, research logs, and open-ended concerns statements were used to corroborate with the data obtained from the SoCQ.

FINDINGS

This section discusses the characteristics of teachers in relation to ICT integration in classrooms and examines the teachers' concerns profiles based on the data from the SoCQ, open-ended concerns statements, and one-legged interviews.

1. Classification of teachers' characteristics in ICT integration

The model of teacher ICT integration presented by Donnelly, McGarr, and O'Reilly (2011) categorized teachers into four different categories based on their different practice and perceived efficacy in technology use. They are: 1) Contented Traditionalist; 2) Selective Adopter, 3) Inadvertent User, and 4) Creative Adapter.

Teachers who are contented traditionalists (CT) focus on assessment with limited methodology use, they believe what they will be most merited on, will be students' examination results. Thus, they do not feel the pressure to move beyond chalk and talk unless extrinsic factors prevail. Teacher Olly who was initially approached to take part in this study seemed to belong to this category. She classified herself as a non-user of ICT and her response when the invitation was extended to her was:

“Do I have to give you an answer now? I would like to think about it. Can I observe other teachers? Because I'm kind of a 'dinosaur' in ICT. I'm not so confident.”

As noted by Ward and Parr (2010: 120), “when traditional practices continue to work” and there is “no clearly recognized need to change”, then teachers do not see the need to use computers. Clearly that was the case with this teacher who refused to take part even when she could not see immediate benefits of the involvement to herself.

For those who are selective adopter (SA), they focus on assessment with varied methodology use, and they would only adopt and continue to use an ICT resource if it helps their students to do better in their final assessment. This is evident when Teacher Cherry who claimed she is a believer in using ICT for teaching and learning indicated she was only willing to carry out the DST project with the best class that she was teaching (which is the first class among the 9 classes of Form 1).

“I think we just do it with IKRK. They can do it. Other classes I don't think so. They don't even have the proficiency. Other classes will also have discipline problems. Later they destroy the computers.”

It would be interesting to follow her development in the project. Unfortunately she had to drop out from the DST Project as she was transferred to another school.

An Inadvertent User (IU) is more of an accidental user of a particular ICT in their classroom and they do not feel particularly competent in using new ICT. Teacher Enna can be categorized as an IU because she agreed to participate in the DST project after being asked by the Head of the English Department to do so. Teacher C admitted that:

“Honestly, I’m not very good with ICT but I’m willing to try.”

Teachers who are creative adapters (CA) would have a strong focus on student-centered approaches that facilitate meaningful learning and they have no qualms about trying new techniques in their teaching if they think it may lead to greater learning for their students. Teacher Danny and Teacher Lily can be classified as such teachers. They enthusiastically agreed to the DST project on being approached. Teacher Lily said she finds integrating ICT in her lesson rewarding because it motivates her students to learn English. Teacher Danny also adheres to this principle. He declared:

“I’m fine as long as the students are learning. I don’t really care about the syllabus.”

2. Analysis of teachers’ concerns

The series of operations on the Quick Scoring Device yielded an individual profile of each teacher. Each teacher has an individual profile based on the scores in the SoCQ, as shown in Figure 1. The graph in Figure 1 shows the various stages of concern with its relative intensity for each teacher. The following section will look into each teacher’s concerns profile and draw upon the one-legged interviews with the teachers to better understand their various concerns.

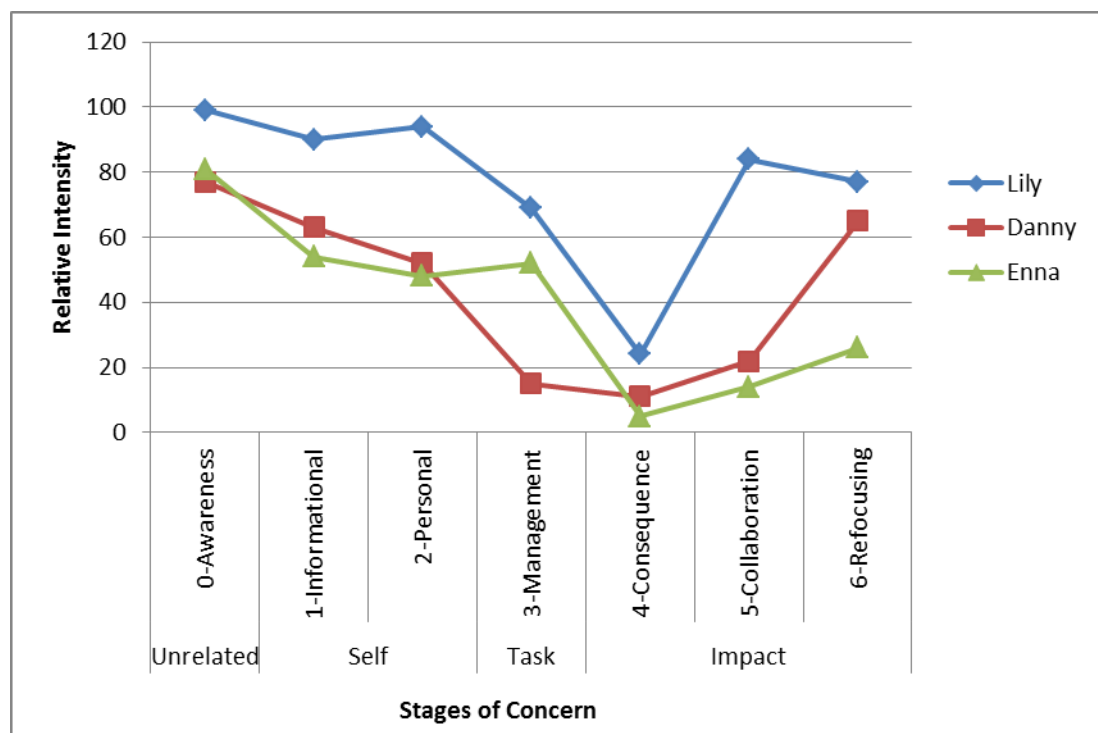


Figure 1. Teachers' concerns before implementing the DST Project (based on the SoCQ)

Teacher Enna

Teacher Enna's profile shows that her highest concern is at Stage 0 (Awareness). She also revealed great concern at Stage 1 (Informational), Stage 2 (Personal), and Stage 3 (Management). As a non-user of this new innovation, her concerns are high at these stages because not only digital storytelling is a new experience for her; but using technology for language learning itself is a very rare experience. She describes her ICT experiences as:

"I've been teaching in this school for 5 years... but I only go to the lab maybe once a year... to show the students the CD. My students always ask me to go to the lab but I say wait, wait..."

This probably explains why her concern at Stage 4 (Consequence) is low because she knows that her students would have positive attitude towards the DST Project as they have been requesting for her to go to the lab to learn English. Teacher Enna's concerns at Stage 5 (Collaboration) and Stage 6 (Refocusing) are also low because as a new user of this innovation, she is not ready to share her experiences with others or to improve on the learning outcomes.

Teacher Danny

Teacher Danny's profile also shows that his highest concerns are at Stage 0 (Awareness), followed by Stage 1 (Informational) and Stage 2 (Personal). His concerns at Stage 3 (Management) and Stage 4 (Consequence) are low because he very often integrates technology in his English lessons and he is quite sure that his students would respond positively towards the DST Project. He reported that sometimes he conducts his English lessons in the lab even though it's only for a 40-minute lesson. He finds that using computers to learn English motivates the students very much.

"They like to go to the lab... they are very interested even when I just show them some powerpoints... sometimes it's better there than in the classroom..."

His profile also shows that he is not concerned about collaborating with his colleagues at the initial stage of the DST Project. However, interestingly, his concern for Stage 6 (Refocusing) was high, and this suggests that teacher Danny was probably concerned about using this innovation to enhance his students' learning.

Teacher Lily

The graph shows that Teacher Lily's concerns are at the highest level of intensity compared to Teacher Danny and Teacher Enna. Teacher Lily's concerns are very high at Stage 0 (Awareness), Stage 1 (Informational), and Stage 2 (Personal). This indicates that she is concerned about this new experience in the DST Project and how it would affect her. Her concern at Stage 3 (Management) was also the highest among the three teachers because she was the teacher in-charge of the computer lab and involvement in this DST Project also

means more frequent use of the lab. She has to ensure proper use of the computer lab by both teachers and students.

“As you know, I am the coordinator for this computer lab in the afternoon, so I have to make sure everything is in order after use.”

Her concern at Stage 5 (Collaboration) is also high because as the lab coordinator, she also helps other teachers when they face technical problems in the lab. This is an example which she related to the researcher.

“The other day Teacher X tried to use the lab but she doesn’t know how to access the local network so I had to go to the lab to help her.”

Her high concern at Stage 6 (Refocusing) indicates that she is aware of using this new innovation to improve learning outcomes. Teacher Lily’s lowest concern is at Stage 4 – ‘Consequence’, similar to the other two teachers, but with a higher intensity. She described her students’ initial response as:

“My students were very excited when I told them that we are going to do digital storytelling. They ask me when can start...”

Based on their enthusiastic response, Teacher Lily was confident that her students would be very interested and receptive towards the DST Project.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of the teachers’ concerns shows that there is a similar pattern which runs across the concerns profile of these three teachers. Firstly, they reveal great concern at Stage 0 (Awareness), Stage 1 (Informational), and Stage 2 (Personal). This suggests that they are concerned about the DST Project which they will be implementing in the classroom and their new teaching experience involving this innovation. Secondly, their lowest concern at Stage 4 (Consequence) implies that the teachers are not worried about how the new innovation will affect their students because they are confident that their students will respond positively towards learning with ICT. An important finding from the analysis of the teachers’ concerns is that even though digital storytelling is new to all three teachers, they do not chart a similar graph as would be expected of a typical non-user profile, as suggested by Hall and Hord (2001). They hypothesized that the concerns of a typical non-user would be the highest at Stages 0, 1 and 2, followed by Stage 3, and then decreasing towards Stages 4, 5 and 6.

The SoC graph (in Figure 1) reveals that Teacher Enna’s profile is the only profile which follows the graph pattern of a typical non-user, even though with variation in intensity. Her concerns are high on the *Self* level (Stages 1 and 2) and *Task* level (Stage 3) because she has the characteristics of an inadvertent user (IU), one who does not feel competent in using ICT. Her participation in the DST Project is probably very much due to obligation as she was first invited by the Head of English Department, Teacher Cherry, who agreed to participate in the project but was later transferred to another school. Teacher Danny and Teacher Lily are both creative adapters (CA), therefore, their concerns profiles do not depict one as such of a typical non-user even though they are new to the innovation too.

Their concerns profiles are unique because their concerns are also affected by their job responsibilities and ICT experiences in language teaching. For Teacher Danny, his concern at *Task* level is the lowest among the three teachers. This suggests that he is not worried about how the new innovation would affect his lessons, class management, and organization in class because he is a teacher with CA characteristics, who frequently integrates ICT in his language teaching. Teacher Lily has also been classified as a CA. However, her concern at the *Task* level is the highest because her job responsibility as a lab coordinator requires her to ensure that the computer lab is always in order. Participation in this DST Project not only requires her to manage her own class with a new innovation, but also to coordinate with other teachers when they use the computer lab for the DST Project. This probably explains her high concerns at Stage 5 (Collaboration) of the *Impact* level.

Both Teacher Danny and Teacher Lily also have high concerns at Stage 6 (Refocusing) of the *Impact* level, which means that they are aware of how digital storytelling can be used to improve learning outcomes. With their past experiences of integrating technology in their language lessons, it seems that they are more capable to adapt and adopt the use of digital storytelling for English language learning in their classrooms to match the syllabus and learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study on teachers' initial concerns in relation to the introduction of a new technological innovation in the classroom may serve as a useful starting point to various educational stakeholders who aim to integrate technology or introduce new innovation into teaching and learning contexts. The teachers' concerns profiles indicated through the SoCQ imply that their personal concerns and related intensity levels can be associated with the teachers' characteristics in relation to ICT integration in classrooms, as well as their job responsibilities and ICT experiences in language teaching. Even from such a small sample population, it is possible to find teachers belonging to one of the four categories of teachers as proposed by Donnelly et al. (2011). Further research need to be conducted on a bigger sample of teacher population before generalizations can be made. Further investigation in future is important to help us better understand the majority of Malaysian teachers' concerns, perception and attitude towards the introduction of new technological innovations in their classrooms.

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