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Case studies of primary level students’ activities using multimodal resources in narrative writing


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Summary

This study draws on the theoretical frameworks of sociocultural and New Literacies theories to investigate students' literacy practices as they participate in an online Multimodal Learning Environment (MLE). The study seeks to find out if an alternative way of promoting students’ literacy practices might be more relevant for today’s students. The study investigated how students responded to the MLE’s resources to support their narrative writing. The significance and relevance of the broader implications of literacy are also discussed in the process of learning about the students’ experiences of using MLE support to construct meaning as they enhance their story content creation.

Building on the idea that writing should be linked to a broader view of education and not constrained to practical terms (Vygotsky, 1978), this study draws on the seminal work of Langer and Applebee (1987), which emphasises the active role of the writer on naturally generating deeper thinking and learning. Linking the research to more recent developments in literacy, this study also applies multimodal literacy theory and practice to cultivate active and dynamic learning processes (New London Group, 2000).

The study examines two main areas: (i) Singapore primary students' literacy practices, and (ii) the roles played by MLE supports and resources. The study was carried out over approximately one semester. In my roles as a researcher and a teacher-participant, I conducted the study in a Singapore primary school with 12 student participants during their curriculum time. Findings from the study indicate that the MLE benefited the primary students. Details of the findings will inform researchers and educational practitioners interested in subjects related to writing and learning.

Information was analysed primarily from the student participants’ perspectives using case studies. Data collection included the students' writing artefacts, student data
in the MLE, lesson observations, discussions, and the researcher’s field notes. Grounded coding revealed a pattern that emerged from the student participants’ experiences and attitudes to learning. Specifically, when the students were given opportunities to work in a constructivist learning environment that allowed for new technologies, they attuned socially and culturally. Interestingly, the students’ collective heightened awareness enriched each other’s development of more informed story content.

This study reconceptualises literacy learning and re-presents writing as “assembling according to designs” (Kress, 2003, p. 5) – texts constructed in new forms and meaning. The findings call for rethinking the design and use of teaching and learning resources and for addressing teaching and learning differently in this new media age.