

AUGMENTING THE READING CURRICULUM: ALTERNATIVE VIDEO TECHNOLOGY STRATEGIES

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Abstract

Students often struggle throughout the reading process and are not aware of how they are reading. While reading instruction dialogue has been around for many years, it has mostly focused on traditional face-to-face methods of modeling and feedback. Technology can play a role in reading instruction by offering teachers and students the option of using video to help motivate students to read, to showcase student readings, as well as to show students what they are doing as they read. This study will present and review strategies using readingcasts, dramatic read-alongs, digital booktalks, recorded video of students reading for feedback, and video feedforwarding.

Keywords: video, reading instruction

1. Introduction

As teachers move on from the 21st century, there is no doubt that technology is here to stay. However, what do teachers do about the basic literacy skills of reading and writing? How do teachers teach, let alone motivate, students when they are playing computer games, surfing the internet, and chatting with their friends on their favorite social app? According to Conradi (2014), it cannot assume that all students are even motivated by technology or that technology is inherently motivating. If teachers are to use technology, they need to match how students feel about technology with the parts of technology that suits their dispositions.

While technology might be here to stay, just using technology as a substitute may not be the most effective way to teach or learn reading (Dunn, 2013). In the Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, and Redefinition (SAMR) method of technology integration (Puentedura, 2009) there are four levels of integration in the classroom; substitution, augmentation, modification, and redefinition. While there is merit to substituting ebooks for textbooks because of price and portability (Boris, 2012), it is not enough that we just make wholesale substitutions. Students must find value in the technology usage if they are to use it as a motivating force behind learning to become better readers (Conradi, 2014). While we

want to become more effective at using technology, it is not an endgame but is more of an open-ended pursuit (Koehler, Mishra, & Cain, 2013).

Not all students hold a positive attitude toward technology and reading, similarly, not all students are tech-savvy (Conradi, 2014) and technology is always in a state of flux (Koehler et al., 2013). Reading is more than just saying the words. According to the metacognitive view of reading, reading is actively thinking and processing the text while reading (Block, 1992).

The research question in the present paper is how we teach reading and motivate students about reading using video technology. The goal of this paper is to look at five video technology strategies that could make a difference in how students learn to read. The researcher will examine the readingcast strategy, dramatic readings on/from video, video book talks (book trailers), using digital video cameras to discuss the main idea and supporting details, and the use of edited video to self-model effective reading strategies (video feedforwarding) to see if students actively think and process the text while reading.

2. Strategies

Readingcasts are an adaption of the screencast technology that captures the content on the computer screen along with any audio commentary (Stieglitz, 2013). According to this reading model, teachers create a Microsoft Word document with text and images, or a section of scanned text from a book. This method begins with the student opening up the Word document. The student then opens a program such as Camtasia 2 or Screencast-O-Matic and selects the portion of the screen they wish to record and either use the computer's microphone or a headset with built-in microphone to capture audio commentary. Figure 1 shows the screen where the student then presses the record button and begins the recording. The goal of this activity is for the student to model various reading strategies on the computer with an audio explanation of what the student is doing and thinking.

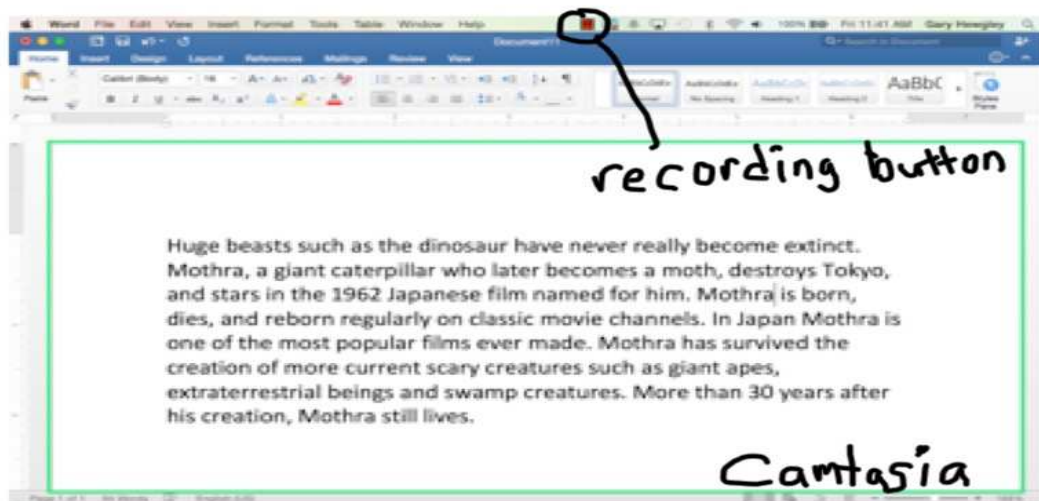


Figure 1. Screen recording with Camtasia.

With the current push towards bigger classes, as well as for teachers to differentiate in the classroom (Tomlinson, 1999), readingcasts offer support for teachers to assess the reading skills of students by time-shifting the formative assessment when there are no students around – like lunchtime, planning periods, or after school. As the student’s reading is recorded, the teacher can listen to skills such as reading fluency, visualizing, and various text strategies like making predictions and breaking down complex sentences. Peer feedback is also possible as teachers can see and hear what the student is reading and make suggestions based upon what they are noticing about the reading process. Teachers can view the material at any point in the day and leave contemporaneous notes while viewing the video. Although reading is often a silent and secret process that is hard for an outsider to decipher, having the students read out loud and mark-up the text can help assess what the student is doing and allow for appropriate formative feedback (Stieglitz, 2013). Readingcasts can be recorded using programs such as Camtasia or Screencast-o-Matic and saved as an .mp4 file that is hosted either locally or on a cloud-based system like Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, or Dropbox.

If a student is to be able to reflect on a piece of reading, he/she must first decode the text, make meaning of that text, and finally interact with that text to create meaning (Malin, 2010). Many reluctant readers have difficulty “seeing anything” when reading and making connections between the text and personal experiences. According to Eisner (1992), “We cannot know through language what we cannot imagine. Those who cannot imagine cannot read.” (p. 591). The ‘video read-aloud’ method uses video-recorded dramatic readings of text along with subtitles and annotations to guide students through the comprehension process. Reading aloud and creating read-aloud stories can help create a positive feeling about

literature (Malin, 2010). These videos can either be found or created and hosted on sites like YouTube or Vimeo. Students could also create their own recordings using microphones, an audio mixer, and a program like Garageband.

Using dramatic read-alongs can help scaffold the reading process from the teacher to the student. Reading-along acts as a model as to how a sentence should be read, including tone and speed. When students encounter texts that are above their reading level, read-alongs can help build scaffolds that allow them to follow along with the activities in order to make reading a more enjoyable process (Malin 2010). During the read-along process, formative assessments can be built-in so that instruction can be tailored at particularly difficult sections or when a strategy is being emphasized. Read-alongs can be created with screencasting software and hosted on various sites so that students can create and view their own material as part of a project or summative assessment and others can view (Schrock, 2014).

The digital booktalk method is based upon the premise that people who create stories are more likely to consume stories (Gunter, 2012). In this method students create book trailers based upon books they are reading, or any other text that is being consumed. As students use video as a medium to communicate, they do not have to worry about the writing process and can focus more energy on the explanations and verbal delivery. This method in particular exploits the differences between reading a book and creating a movie. The four elements to the Digital BookTalk Method are as follows: time and place, cause and effect, the central character(s), and how the reader wants to communicate the story to the viewers (Gunter, 2010).

According to Bettelheim (2010), research has shown that children's learning is largely dependent on inherent interest, emotional engagement, social interaction, physical activity, and the pleasure of mastery. Attitudes go from negative to positive after students get engaged in the BookTalk Method of reading and book trailer creation (Gunter 2010). Words are beginning to have meaning as the students move through the process of reading the text to translating that into pictures and video. Gifted and remedial students show particularly solid gains as they express their own feelings instead of what they feel the teacher wants to hear (Gunter 2010). Book trailers can be created in iMovie or Windows Movie Maker, and posted to sites such as YouTube or Vimeo. Book trailers could also be part of an innovative book competition similar to college basketball's March Madness (Harper, 2014). In the March Madness competition, students create book trailers and reviews that would be hosted for viewing. Students then vote on their favorite book each round until a champion is crowned.

Students could also create a set of book trailers that is stored and viewed in the library so that other students have a better idea of what books their peers read and liked.

Using video cameras/camcorders to record students as they progress through the process of reading, focusing on finding the main idea and supporting details, is another reading instruction method. This method is similar to the readingcast method, however, it uses a video camera to record regular textbooks and other reading material that is not electronic. This method starts with the reader talking their way through the process of identifying the main idea and supporting details. The student is required to talk and actively point-out where the main idea/supporting details are and why they are chosen and related (Unger & Rong, 2013). Tablets, phones, or laptops can be used as recording devices and the video can be edited with programs such as iMovie, Garageband, or one of many online cloud-based video editors.

The act of pointing helps students to realize that text has a time and space, as well as a hierarchical order when reading. Since learners are finding and pointing to the main idea and supporting details, peer feedback is possible, as well as powerful formative assessing of the process (Unger & Rong, 2013). According to Unger and Rong (2013), the act of pointing can act as a primary reference point for students and instructors to assess and track the creation of complex semiotic systems (signs and symbols). The use of video can also help students to regulate and monitor mental activity as they work through the process of connecting the supporting details to the main idea. With the advent of cameras in phones and tablets, this can be done with any smartphone or tablet that has a camera on the back. The video can easily be edited with several programs like iMovie and Garageband and converted if necessary with a program such as Handbrake.

We can harness the brain's plasticity by training our brain to make positive patterns more automatic. According to Chen (2013), using video is a way students can make changes as to how they learn new material. Video feedforwarding is a method of reading instruction that relies on recording a student reading, editing out the negative aspects/bad habits, and showing the edited version to the student (Dowrick & Rupnow, 2006). During the editing process the teacher tries to capture student success and only provide limited feedback or encouragement in the final edit of the video. The ultimate goal of this activity is to show to a student that he/she can be successful where they have previously had a history of reading failures (Dowrick & Rupnow, 2006). YouTube videos have been shown to change one's moral and ego development (Koh, 2014) and can be used to give effective feedback that changes one's mental growth patterns.

Video feedforwarding has been shown to be successful in the acquisition of social skills, physical skills, as well as changing a student's classroom behavior (Dowrick & Rupnow, 2006). This method is simply an adaptation of that method to the reading process. The teacher's goal while recording is to capture the successes of reading a more difficult text as opposed to selecting certain targeted words. Video feedforwarding was shown to be effective, along with tutoring, based upon phonological awareness, motivation inventories, and continuous probes of oral fluency (Dowrick & Rupnow, 2006). Students are able to watch the videos as late as six months later (Dowrick & Rupnow, 2006), and watching the edited videos proves to be an effective reading support. It has been shown that building relationships using feedforwarding, built upon the affective domain, are effective ways to motivate students to work through difficult academic issues (Ya-Ting, Yung-Hsin, & Cowan, 2014). These videos could be hosted on the teacher's classroom computer, a local server, or on a private channel on YouTube. Students could also use these video editing skills in other areas such as drama, art projects, RAFT's, and many other inquiry-based learning projects.

3. Limitations

While five selected technology-based strategies for helping students through the reading process have been discussed, these are only strategies that are a part of an all-inclusive curriculum. The danger with picking out a few of these, or even one strategy, is that it ends up being something similar to a cargo cult (Starnes, 1998), where one strategy is thought to be the one and only savior that will rescue the poor reader from illiteracy. Some of these strategies might work really well with some students. Some strategies may not work well with other students. The goal of this paper has been to show teachers that there are supplements to the curriculum that can be effective. However, these are only supplements and are not intended to take the place of solid and effective instruction, differentiation, and scaffolding.

4. Conclusion

Teachers can use video technology in their classrooms to help students become better readers. Struggling readers may have a lower morale and showing them positive aspects of their reading might strengthen those skills while diminishing the negative aspects of struggling to read. As Ya-Ting, Yung-Hsin, & Cowan (2014) discovered, students show greater improvement in their English skills when they receive both direct instruction and indirect instruction through reading. Readingcasts, dramatic readings, digital booktalks, and video feedforwarding are just one of the many ways to use video to help students with their reading

comprehension. None of these strategies by themselves is the answer, but as part of a toolkit could prove very effective for any reading teacher.

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