

Preparando a futuros profesores para dar clase online: Usando cuentos para enseñar inglés y literacidad visual)

Preparing Future Educators for the Online Classroom: Using Picture Books to Promote ESL and Visual Literacy in Distance Education

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Resumen

Con la crisis de salud de COVID-19, las clases de todo el mundo cambiaron su formato de presenciales a clases a distancia. Sin embargo, la enseñanza tradicional presencial debe actualizarse para mejorar su formación pedagógica a través de la red. Se debe enseñar a los futuros profesores habilidades esenciales para enseñar a distancia y ejemplos de qué enseñar, cómo formar no solo literacidad escrita, sino también literacidad visual y cómo administrar estas lecciones online. Además, a medida que las imágenes y su retórica se vuelven más frecuentes en la sociedad actual, la necesidad de incluir esas lecciones en las unidades didácticas de los estudiantes de educación primaria y secundaria. La literacidad escrita siempre ha sido un objetivo principal de la educación, pero a los estudiantes también se les debe enseñar cómo comprender la gramática visual e incluir estas actividades de trabajo visual. Un cuestionario fue compartido con los estudiantes de educación de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid para medir sus experiencias y percepciones sobre los libros ilustrados. Resultados de este cuestionario serán usados para diseñar un plan de intervención para enseñar a los estudiantes cómo usar libros que promueven el desarrollo del carácter y el cambio social en el centro de sus planes de unidad, incluidas actividades que producen lenguaje auténtico y literacidad visual. Este objetivo de crear comunicación, tanto escrita como visual, preparará mejor a sus estudiantes para el futuro. Este estudio cuantitativo y cualitativo incluirá un proyecto con estudiantes de la Escuela de Educación de la UCM que imparten cursos de enseñanza en línea en inglés a estudiantes de tercer, cuarto y quinto grado y se centrarán en el vocabulario y la retórica visual. Las conclusiones darán una idea de cuáles son las habilidades de la enseñanza online más necesarias y las experiencias y percepciones de los estudiantes de educación.

Palabras clave: Didáctica Online, Enseñanza de didáctica, Cuentos ilustrados, Literacidad visual, inglés como segundo idioma

Abstract

With the COVID-19 Health crisis, classrooms around the world moved online. However, traditional face-to-face teaching must be modified to provide effective pedagogy on the web. Future educators must be taught essential skills for distance education and examples of what to teach: not just written literacy, but also visual literacy and how to manage these lessons online. As pictures, and their rhetoric, become more prevalent in today's society, they need to be included in the lessons for students in both primary and secondary education. Written literacy has always been a major objective of education, but students must also be taught how to include visual grammar and the creation of visual literacy in their online unit plans. A questionnaire shared with student teachers focused on their experiences with and perceptions about picture books. Results from this survey will be used to design an intervention plan to teach education students at the Complutense University-Madrid how to use picture books that promote character development and social change at the heart of their unit plans, including activities which produce authentic language and visual literacy. This goal of creating communication, both written and visual, will better prepare their students for the future. This quantitative and qualitative study will include a project with UCM School of Education students teaching English online literacy courses to third, fourth, and fifth graders and focusing on vocabulary and visual rhetoric. The conclusions will give insight into which online teaching skills prove to be the most effective and information about the experiences and perceptions of the preservice teachers.

Keywords: Online Education, Teacher Education, Picture Books, Visual Literacy, English as a Second Language

Research Problem

Give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking; learning naturally results. —John Dewey

Education changed in the first half of 2020, and teachers were not prepared. Just as the world was not ready to transition to working from home, teachers were caught by surprise. From preschool to university, classrooms were suddenly steaming, but teachers were neither trained nor ready to make the transition. Course content needs to be structured differently, participation needs to be measured differently, and even assessment needs to be created in

a different frame of mind. But while this Covid-19 virus caught the world by surprise, now there is no excuse, and teachers must be prepared. Specifically, students in the school of education need to be taught how to effectively teach on an online platform. They must leave the university knowing the differences between face-to-face and online teaching, and they must have experience teaching online. In the end, we learn by doing.

This study will explore an intervention in teacher education, in which pre-service teachers will be trained in distance education and will create a platform and teach two sets of classes, one using picture books as the basis for literacy and one teaching the same material in a more traditional method. The central question is what teachers learn by teaching written and visual literacy on an online platform.

Important variables may include time and the retention of both the university and school-aged students. This project hopes to focus on primary during the fall semester and secondary during the spring semester, while other mandatory classes are in full force. Again, while students will sign a contract that they will remain in the online class, it is possible that some may withdraw due to personal reasons.

Another important factor of the project is the use of picture books. In lieu of the class text, picture books provide a refreshing source of authentic language. Pre-service teachers learn how to make a unit plan using a picture book as the backbone of all the lessons. Yet, many future primary teachers, and almost all future secondary teachers are reluctant to use a picture book in the classroom. When asked, these same teachers will add that the English lessons when they were students were boring, yet they hesitate to try a new resource. We will look at the culture behind reading picture books both at home and in the classroom, and the reasons why they are effective to use in the classroom.

Finally, visuals are ubiquitous. Pre-service teachers need to be taught the rhetoric behind visual literacy and how to create assignments that teach these strategies to their students. University students will teach their students to produce a multimodal project, where they not only produce language, but also pictures. This will prepare them for the real world, where rhetoric is everywhere, not just in texts.

Again, pre-service teachers need to be ready to teach online. They will learn to provide distance education strategies, teach literacy, not with just the textbook, but with other resources such as picture books, and create lesson plans that enable students to produce written and visual rhetoric.

Theoretical Framework

Teacher education courses need to focus on engaging learners and using technological tools (Rice & Deschaine 2020). Online courses, and even classes during an emergency situation, must be designed in a different frame of mind and incorporating different tools. Recording hour long lectures, as if the students were sitting in the classroom, is not an option. Students must be engaged in the learning process.

The presentation of material must be provided in “chunks”. Each lesson can have two or three ten minute videos, but unlike many traditional face-to-face classrooms, the students should be involved. In order to keep students engaged, they must be active. The student-centered classroom becomes even more important.

In addition, teacher-student and student-student interaction must be equal to that in the classroom. Teachers must often provide clear and regular feedback through email and students must interact with each other in discussion boards as much as two or three times per week. In these discussion boards students create a thread, and then are asked to reply to a certain number of classmates. This provides similar interaction to that of a classroom discussion. Also, sometimes, even in asynchronous classes, the teacher and students meet on a video call. This too provides student-student interaction. All of this interaction must be a part of the continuous assessment in the course. In fact, class participation should be between 10 - 30% of the student’s final grade (Vai & Susulki 2016). It is also important for students to work together completing group projects. All of the commonly used MLS (Management Learning Systems) provide many tools for these projects, such as blogs and wikis.

Finally, assessment must be varied and ongoing. The grading system becomes completely transparent, and the final exam can no longer be a major percentage of the grade. Because these exams are also online, they need to be more practical to help reduce the sharing of

answers. Some schools provide a tool such as Respondus, which shuts down all applications on their computer and permits the student to only work on the exam.

Therefore, the information will be online, but the content will be taught either through picture books or some traditional classroom classes. Picture books provide the perfect medium to teach literacy online. Many are read aloud on YouTube, making them a free resource. In addition, students can practice listening to different accents and speech patterns.

Picture books also provide cultural information. The language, the visuals, and also the plot can all give detailed information of a particular culture. When listening to a story, the students have to infer and use their imagination, both are life skills that they need for the future. In addition, the students are listening to the language and acquiring that knowledge instead of learning it. Most importantly, picture books are motivating. Students listen to the story because they are interested in it. The books create a community of learning, and the discussions that follow, including decision making, point of view, etc, can be just as interesting (Lazar, 1993).

A perfect way to teach visual grammar is using the picture book to create a unit plan based on that theme and including a multimodal project. Visual grammar is the grammar of modern visual design (Callow, 2013). Students will teach one aspect of visual grammar a week and have their students prepare their own visual. Examples include:

- Angle- high, low, or eye level
- Shot distance- close, mid, or long shot
- Proximity- closeness to others
- Color- moods
- Frame- layout on page

(Callow, 2013)

Therefore, students will create weekly visual rhetoric by painting or using technology and incorporate different means of written communication as well. All of this information will be provided through an online platform.

Research Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that pre-service teachers who learn the skills to teach online and then practice teaching literacy in English through picture books will have positive experiences and perceptions about distance education and teaching through picture books.

Methodology

Teacher education students will teach English as a second language to third, fourth, and fifth graders on an online platform. The classes will consist of two thirty minute sessions a week for four months. For the Quantitative study, students will teach vocabulary and visual rhetoric through picture books while the other half of the students will teach the same vocabulary words and visual grammar in a traditional manner including flashcards, graphic organizers, etc. Participants will take a pre and post-test of online skills and visual grammar. These results will be compared individually and as a group.

The qualitative study will consist of surveys for all of the pre-service teachers. Both groups of students will be asked to rate the online instruction, their value and appreciation for the English classes and picture books, etc. Finally, three students of each group, will participate in individual interviews where they can reflect on the teaching and learning.

The combination of both the qualitative and quantitative studies provide sound methodology.

Results Achieved So Far

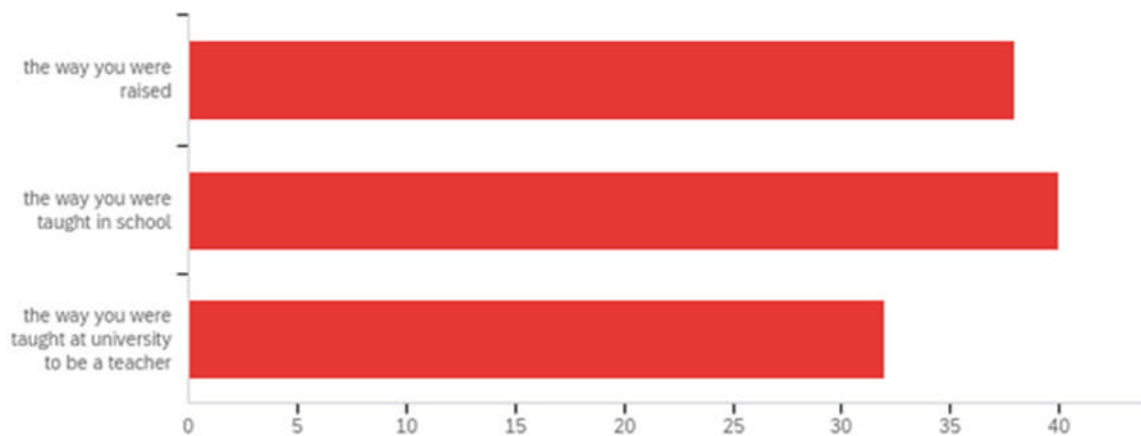
Unfortunately, because of unforeseen circumstances, I do not have any results from the studies above. I do have results from the questionnaire about literacy. A total of 124 students and teachers answered a survey regarding teaching practices and cultural information about literacy. Those who participated were 104 females and 20 males. 94% were under 25 years of age and 80% were students in education and 15% were primary teachers. The others were not teachers. 89% were Spanish and 6% were from the United States.

Students were asked why they would not use picture books in the classroom, and answers included: it would be distracting (16), students would pay more attention to the pictures (14), not enough time (7), it would be boring (12), and it would not teach vocabulary (4).

Students were also asked how often their family read to them when they were young and 67% claimed they were read to at least 3 times a week, but 14% were never read to or almost never.

Another interesting result is one that brings up the question of how and what teachers decide to teach. Here only 32 students feel that what they learn in university most affects the way they teach.

Table 1. What do you think most influences how often you read in the classroom?



Interpretation of the Results

Some of the results of this literacy study are surprising. First, 61% claim to use readings in the classroom that were not the textbook. I believe this number is too high and that it is because many of the students who answered are not teachers yet.

Another surprising statistic is that 67% of students were read to often as a child. That figure should be beneficial when persuading students to use picture books in the classroom. However, when students wrote why they thought reading the picture books in the class would not work, many wrote exactly the opposite of the research presented earlier. I will give this test to the pre-service teachers who will participate in the study and we will discuss

the results. Finally, the last question is shockingly equal. Students are torn between what modifies their teaching style between family, previous teachers, and university professors.

Conclusions

It is too early in the study to provide conclusions at this time. I will get the majority of my data this coming school year.

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