EDD 7914 – OL1 Curriculum Teaching and Technology
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Assignment #1 – Emerging Technologies – Paper
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Abstract

This paper describes the integration of an iPad2 into a digital art project for early childhood students. Students used computers and age-appropriate software to create digital art portraits. Using the iPads and an iPad software app *ScreenChomp*, ver. 1.3, students were able to record an audio artist statement to go with their creation. The software proved easy to use for the recording, and the students enjoyed the opportunity to listen to their voices. However, the software would not reliably upload the recording to an associated web site. While overall a successful project, it would be worthwhile investigating similar software apps that can reliably publish or share recordings.

Exploring Emerging Technologies Paper

Papert (1980) argued that the integration of instructional technology into teaching and learning should focus on students being creators rather than consumers. By this, he meant that students should have tools that allow them to draw a portrait, to build and control robots, to compose a piece of music, and to construct other personally relevant artefacts. He was concerned that students would more likely be consumers of content. Banister (2010) listed many uses of the iPod Touch, a device related to the iPad, with a clear emphasis on students as consumers, especially at the early childhood level. Similarly, Murray and Olcese (2011) found that most software apps focus on consumption to the detriment of either creation or collaboration.

Peluso (2012) argued that some of the hype surrounding the use of iPad in education is media-driven and unjustified based on research findings. Murray and Olcese (2011) suggested that a key element of research should be identifying affordances that the iPad has that other instructional technologies do not. They suggested that the hardware capabilities of the iPad provide new affordances but that they were not being exploited by software app developers.

Background and Goals

This brief case study was conducted with students aged 5 and 6 years old enrolled in an international school in Singapore. This class of students is relatively unique in hosting students for 2 years, covering grade one and the year before grade one (called Pre-Primary at this school). While some students can read and write at an emergent level, others are just becoming literate. The school follows the Primary Years Programme (PYP) of the International Baccalaureate. Much of the PYP is organised around trans-disciplinary themes taught by the class teachers and integrated with specialist lessons, such as information and communications technology (ICT), art, and music.

The unit in question focused on the students learning about the people at school. Over the last few years, the ICT project related to this unit has focused on digital art in which students created portraits of people at school using simple, child-friendly software, Fresco, ver. 1. As most students like to draw and use computers, this has been a popular project with students. Student work has often been printed in colour and displayed in the computer suite.

The main goal of this initiative was to facilitate the students recording an artist statement to go with their creation. This statement was provided orally as that avoided issues of writing ability. It gave students the opportunity to work on their speaking skills and provide a record for benchmarking fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary for comparison later in the year. This goal exploits the recording functionality of the iPad and, to a lesser degree, its portability. The activity used a software app to combine the drawing and the recording, and to make this combination available online, giving students an avenue to publish their art and artist statement.

Activity Description

Previous to the lesson, students had completed their digital portraits of people around school. Students completed one, two, or three portraits of the same person. All of the images, in jpeg format, were uploaded to the researcher's DropBox account. These could then be accessed by the iPad using the software app ScreenChomp, ver. 1.3. This particular app was recommended by an Apple Education consultant (P. Singh, personal communication, 11 September 2012). This free software app is designed to facilitate the uploading of the recording in video format to a related web site. Each recording can only be accessed with the specific web address.

The author arranged to take one student at a time. He explained that they could identify who they had drawn, why they selected that person, and what was in the image. The author let them select which image they would use, if they had more than one completed. When the record

button is pressed, there is a 3, 2, 1 countdown. Some students started spontaneously while others waited for prompts from the author. When finished, they listened to their recording.

Analysis and Reflection

In all cases, the students were enthusiastic, with most smiling as they listened to their voices. One student was adamant that he did not sound like the recording. He subsequently asked the author if he really sounded like the recording and was interested to find out that he does.

The software app that was used, ScreenChomp, proved to be generally easy to use. Except for a problem uploading some of the recordings, it would be easily useable by teachers and could be used by students directly, given sufficient training. One challenge to implementation is finding a quiet location for the recordings. In this trial, the locations were perhaps not quite quiet enough. Along with that, if students are being recorded on a one on one basis, another adult needs to be available to supervise the rest of the class.

However, the problems uploading the recordings limited its utility if the teacher wishes to share the recordings with parents. While the first few were successfully uploaded, subsequent recordings were not. A search using the Google search engine indicated that this is a problem that many have found. There is no reason or solution posted. This suggests a need to consider other software apps. At the same time, it might be possible to find an application that also lets the student draw the person while in that person's presence, exploiting the portability of the iPad. ScreenChomp's drawing tools are limited compared to those found in Fresco.

In conclusion, the project was sufficiently successful that the author intends to complete his recording with the full class and continue to seek ways to upload the recordings. He also plans to share the recordings with the class teachers, and perhaps other teachers, as a demonstration of one use of the iPad.

References

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