

Západočeská univerzita v Plzni

**Fakulta pedagogická
Katedra anglického jazyka**

Diplomová práce

**DIGITÁLNÍ VYPRAVOVÁNÍ PŘÍBĚHU VE VÝUCE
ANGLICKÉHO JAZYKA U ŽÁKŮ 2. STUPNĚ**

Marcela Kotěšovcová

Plzeň 2013

University of West Bohemia

**Faculty of Education
Department of English**

Thesis

**USING DIGITAL STORYTELLING IN ENGLISH
LESSONS WITH LOWER-SECONDARY SCHOOL
STUDENTS**

Marcela Kotěšovcová

Plzeň 2013

Tato stránka bude ve svázané práci Váš původní formulář *Zadáni dipl. práce*

(k vyzvednutí u sekretářky KAN)

Prohlašuji, že jsem práci vypracovala samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

V Plzni dne 20.dubna 2013

.....

Marcela Kotěšovcová

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express immense gratitude to my advisor Mgr. Gabriela Klečková, Ph.D. for her time and patience, motivation and valuable remarks. Without her guidance and continuous support this thesis would not have been possible.

ABSTRACT

Kotěšovcová, Marcela. University of West Bohemia. April, 2013. Using Digital Storytelling in English Lessons with Lower-Secondary School Students.
Supervisor: Mgr. Gabriela Klečková, Ph.D.

This thesis deals with digital storytelling as a valuable teaching tool. Its theoretical part offers all essential information about digital storytelling background, development and also defines the possibilities of creating digital stories. The process of production including the available software is also provided. The benefits of employing this type of work into the teaching practice together with students' overall development and with language learners is also discussed followed by the actual guide of the in class implementation. The research part describes how the action research was carried out. The group of students working on the projects and the chosen topics are presented. It is followed by the actual application of digital storytelling into the language instruction. The subsequent part deals with students' results that turned out to correspond with their IT and English skills. Finally, all the work is then summarized and discussed with follow up teaching implications and ideas for further research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND.....	3
Defining Digital Storytelling	3
Types of Digital Stories	5
Steps in Creating a Digital Story	6
Tools for Digital Story Creation	10
Applications for Digital Story Creation.....	11
Recourses and Copyright Issues	13
Digital Storytelling in the Classroom	14
Benefits of Digital Storytelling in the Classroom	14
Meeting National and School Standards	16
Student’s Development	17
Digital Storytelling with Language Learners.....	18
Application of Digital Stories in the Classroom.....	20
Assessment & Reflection.....	23
Assessment	23
Peer Assessment	27
Reflection	27
III.METHODOLOGY	29
Students.....	29
Topics.....	29
Questionnaire	30
Application.....	30
My Neighborhood – 6 th grade.....	30
My Day – 9 th grade	33
About Me – 9 th grade.....	36
IV.RESULTS AND COMMENTARY	39
Results.....	39
My Neighborhood	39
My Day & About Me	41
6 th vs. 9 th Grade Comparison	43
Commentary.....	43
Questionnaire Results	48
V.IMPLICATIONS	52
Implications for Teaching	52
Limitations of the Research	53
Further Research	53
VI.CONCLUSION	55
REFERENCES	56
SHRNUTÍ.....	58

I. INTRODUCTION

Telling stories is one of the most natural ways of communicating known to the humankind. People use stories to share experience on regular basis with no special effort required for an act of this type. The very first method of such communication was in a form of cave paintings which have undergone serious changes throughout centuries being very closely linked to the civilization development. What used to be recognized as simple means of building social connections among people has changed its form significantly with new digital technologies. The main purpose, however, remained unchanged and the main idea of this thesis is to investigate whether telling stories in its new form could be used effectively for teaching purposes, for improving English language instruction in particular.

Before any type of teaching action can be taken it is vital to give proper explanations of the exact meaning and use of digital storytelling which is all being discussed within the theoretical background part of this thesis. The first part deals with presenting and describing the target expressions and types of digital stories that could possibly be created. When producing any type of product certain rules should be followed in order to make the work successful. These rules come in three stages namely preparation, production and presentation and are described next.

The word digital comes along with technology inventions which make digital story creation possible. Most Czech schools possess the necessary equipment and programs with a little to no difference when compared with international institutions; however, the programs provided were accustomed to fit best the conditions in our country.

Before deciding whether to use new and innovative teaching tool it is good to search for possible benefits emerging from its employment. The concordance with the national education standards is also essential. The above mentioned together with the use of digital storytelling with language learners followed by the actual implementation and the final assessment is what the last parts of the Theoretical Background are oriented at.

The Methodology section of the thesis defines how the action research was carried out including a description of the students and topics chosen for this project. The Application part is devoted to the teaching practice itself and how assigning and producing the digital stories was handled. To get a better idea of the products sample screen shots of the final outcomes were also included alongside a brief summarization of the students' results. It is then followed by commentaries of the whole work process accompanied by the teacher's observations and opinions about the implementation. That is all described within

the Results and Commentaries section together with the results of a questionnaire that was given to students upon digital story completion to get relevant feedback for future work in the area. Implications section covers implications for teaching in the form of recommendations for teachers willing to use digital storytelling in their own teaching practice. It is followed by limitations of the action research and ideas for further research. Finally, the Conclusion summarizes briefly the main ideas of the thesis.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The objective of this section of the thesis is to provide general information about digital storytelling. It begins with defining what digital storytelling is together with its development. The types of digital stories are also presented within this section. The next part is devoted to steps in digital story creation which describe the stages of a successful project production. In order to make any type of similar project, it is required to possess the necessary equipment and software. Possibilities in this area are also provided. The following sections become more practical where the actual implementation of digital storytelling is discussed together with its benefits and possible students' development of various skills.

Defining Digital Storytelling

For a better understanding of digital storytelling as a whole it is necessary to look closely at the words the term consists of. I shall begin with the word storytelling as I consider it to be the one of a bigger significance being one of the oldest activities known to the humankind.

Story and tell are two terms lying within the expression storytelling. For the purposes of this thesis I list several explanations I find relevant to the topic.

According to Merriam-Webster online dictionary the word story is explained as follows (a) an account of incidents or events; (b) anecdote; especially an amusing one; (c) a news article or broadcast. Oxford online dictionary defines story as (a) an account of imaginary or real people and events told for entertainment; (b) a report of an item of news in a newspaper, magazine, or news broadcast; (c) an account of past events in someone's life or in the evolution of something. At last, Cambridge online dictionary lists the following explanations (a) description, either true or imagined, of a connected series of events; (b) a report in a newspaper or on a news broadcast of something that has happened. While the word story possesses various definitions, the verb tell is, on the other side, clarified as giving or communicating information in all three above mentioned online dictionaries.

The word digital has, very similarly to the term story, diverse explanations. Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines it as (a) relating to, or using calculation by numerical methods or by discrete units; (b) relating to, or being data in the form of especially binary digits; (c) relating to, or employing digital communications signals; (d)

characterized by electronic and especially computerized technology. (A) signals or data expressed as series of the digits 0 and 1; (b) relating to, using, or storing data or information in the form of digital signals, and finally (c) involving or relating to the use of computer technology are explanations offered by Oxford online dictionary. Finally, Cambridge online dictionary specifies the term digital as: (a) describes information, music, an image, etc. that is recorded or broadcast using computer technology; (b) showing information in the form of an electronic image.

Storytelling evolved from cave paintings where human beings shared their experience about the wildlife and were driven by the struggle of survival and later on developed into more sophisticated ways of communication within man's culture and its ancestors such as music, poetry or religion. The oldest forms of storytelling, besides paintings we have already mentioned earlier, was telling stories in its literal meaning – by speaking and acting. Storytelling written and later printed was to follow (Teehan, 2006).

The twentieth century brings out new technologies in forms of audiotapes, videos, computers, internet, mobile phones and more. The digital revolution which started in the end of the twentieth century continues and draws our attention to new digital technologies. Storytelling changes its form significantly. Ohler (2008) and Miller (2008) both refer to the term “new media” when describing digital storytelling which means the use of videos, audio production, video game consoles, contents that come on Cd's and DVD's, mobile phones, etc.

“The biggest difference between traditional types of narratives and digital storytelling is that the content of traditional narratives is in an analog form, whereas the content in digital storytelling comes to us in digitized form” (Miller, 2008, p.4). According to Miller (2008) traditional stories

- are preconstructed; story elements cannot be changed;
- have a linear plot; they are usually told in linear fashion;
- author/writer is sole creator;
- are experienced passively;
- have one unchangeable ending;

while works of digital storytelling

- are malleable, they are not fixed in advance;
- are nonlinear, nonchronological;
- the user cocreates the story;

- are experienced actively;
- different outcomes are possible (p.19).

Moreover Miller (2008) suggests digital stories are types of narratives with dramatic events telling a story and containing characters. They are interactive and nonlinear meaning that there is no fixed order of events and scenes. Moreover, the aim of the story is to pull the user into the content so he can get the mood of the story and understand it better.

Storytelling together with digital storytelling is part of our everyday life, we communicate our stories via the “new media” when we use our e-mails, phones, iPads, social networks such as Facebook or Twitter and more without even realizing we are doing so.

It brings us to the fact that digital storytelling is not fixed in form as well as there are numerous possible combinations in creation of a digital story. It could be a presentation, sequence of photographs accompanied by music, a narrative in combination with a video or images, and many more.

As could be seen, storytelling has changed over the past with more changes to come in the future however its importance is more than significant. As Miller (2008) suggests “Storytelling is a magical and powerful craft. Not only can it transport the audience on a thrilling journey into an imaginary world, but it can also reveal the dark secrets of human behavior or inspire the audience with the desire to do noble deeds. Storytelling can also be pressed into service for other human goals: to teach and train the young, for example, or to convey important information”(p. 4).

Types of Digital Stories

As was briefly mentioned in the previous section, digital stories may be of many different types which will be discussed in greater detail within this chapter. The first division of digital stories is made on the basis of the content while the second division characterizes its prevailing form.

Joe Lambert introduces us with *Personal Narratives* in his *Digital Storytelling Cookbook* (2010) as one of the possible kind of a digital story. *Personal Narratives* are types of stories where people share their personal information. They include describing important characters in one’s life, important events and accomplishments. Moreover, what people do, where they live or what adventures they have experienced also belong to *Personal Narratives*. Other type of digital story includes *Stories that Examine Historical*

Events, where historical material is being processed and can be further explored in the classroom. Finally, *Stories that Inform or Instruct* close up this division with stories where instructional materials from different areas such as science, math, technology and more are created.

According to a dominating form of a digital story we may speak about stories based on text, video, audio or image only. I believe those forms speak for themselves as far as their meaning and need no further explanation. Creating a story with the use of images only, for example, might be very interesting and challenging however it is more common and less difficult for the students to employ several forms in one story. They may create a digital story in combination of text and audio or video, text and image or they are also free to produce their work with the use of all form, depending on their skills and fantasy.

As Teehan (2006) points out there are many uses that could possibly be appointed to digital storytelling. To add concreteness to the topic I list several digital stories students may create while combining different types and forms in their projects, some of which are: book reports, student created poetry, retelling of folks and myths, biographies, oral histories, advertisements, how-to-do-it directions, students created short stories, etc. (Teehan, 2006).

As this chapter shows digital storytelling is a very variable tool for expressing ideas, themes, facts and more when forms like texts, videos, images and audio are employed in numerous combinations.

Steps in Creating a Digital Story

In order to produce any type of a successful project it is necessary to have it planned prior to its own creation. Teehan (2006) states that “Most students do not have the organizational skills necessary to complete a multitask assignment such as digital storytelling. They need a method that enables them to integrate new and old knowledge, asses understanding of concepts, and assemble complex ideas into a structure that can be told using digital storytelling. They need aids to sequence their thoughts into a compelling story that has a beginning, middle, and end” (p.49). As teachers it is in our competence to guide students in such process.

According to Frazel (2010) the process of digital storytelling is divided into three stages: preparation, production, presentation. Ohler (2008) uses more advanced division when he refers to five subsequent phases consisting of story planning, preproduction, production, postproduction, and performance.

Story planning and preproduction as described by Ohler (2008) corresponds with Frazel's (2010) preparation stage. Production and postproduction could be identified with the production stage and performance phase is identical with the presentation. There could be no significant differences found between the two divisions I have therefore decided to discuss the three stage division (Frazel, 2010) in greater detail for the reasons of simpler understanding of the entire digital story process for both students and teachers.

The preparation stage serves as a concept creation where students develop the main ideas of their future digital story. The teacher aids by asking some fundamental questions to help them shape their thoughts and to make them aware of all that is needed to be thought over before the actual digital story creation begins. Miller (2008) suggests a ten step developmental checklist that have been revised for the purposes of teaching. The checklist consists of the following areas and questions:

1. *Premise and purpose.* What is the sense of the future digital story? Why have we decided to create such a story? (To be introduced to a person, an important or historical event, grammar issues, etc.)
2. *Audience.* Who will be the future user? How do you plan to get the audience interested in your project?
3. *Medium, platform.* What media will the digital story be made for? (The Internet, mobile phones, etc.). What hardware will the digital story use? (PC, mobile phone, etc.)
4. *Narrative elements.* Will there be narrative elements within your story? What will be the main plot and the major characters?
5. *Students' role.* What will the role of the author be? Will the student present himself or will there be somebody else introduced?
6. *Characters.* Who will be the main characters beside the author and what will their role be? What will the author need in order to get other people involved? (Parents' or friends' agreement, etc.)
7. *Structure.* What will the structure look like? (Timeline, chapters, etc.)
8. *Settings.* Where will the digital story take place?
9. *User engagement.* What will make the future user engaged with the digital story? What is the main goal for the student to accomplish by the end of the project?

10. *Overall look and sounds.* What visuals will you use? (Animations, video, photos, graphics, text, etc.) How will the audio in your project be used? (Speech, ambient effects such as rain, cars, trains, and background music, sound effects).

The teacher guides students through questions that can potentially cause problems and once all questions are answered an outline document is created as students should now have a clearer idea about their future project of digital storytelling.

Frazel (2010) also suggests the teacher “to generate a formative assessment rubric to help guide students throughout the process” (p.21). In another words the teacher should develop a set of outcomes to be assessed during the digital story creation and upon the digital story project completion. The formative assessment rubric should be designed not only as a form of guidance but also as a way for students to achieve their assignment goals.

The preparation stage is followed by the production stage where the actual digital story is being created. Choosing and organizing all the media elements is part of the production stage. In case of an audio format a podcast is created while video format yields a movie. Depending on student’s choice of a specific digital story type they select appropriate visual or audio features. They choose whether a video or a slide show will be employed in case of a movie creation. A podcast, on the other hand, requires a selection of appropriate sound effects. Every digital story also requires a narration (written or spoken) typically accompanied by music and ambient sounds.

According to the story type chosen suitable software should be also selected during the production stage. The modern age overwhelmed with endless amount of new technology offers a large variety of appropriate programs fitting any story type a student might choose. Number of free applications as well as those needed to be purchased prior to its use, are available. Photo story, iMovie or Movie Maker are some of the possible choices, however digital story software will be discussed in greater detail within the next section.

Archiving the final version of the newly created digital story onto a relevant medium such as a CD, DVD, portable flash disk, etc. is the last part remaining to finish the production stage successfully.

The teacher mentors and guides where necessary throughout the whole production stage. Certain students may encounter lack of knowledge with the software they have decided to work with which may require the teacher’s assistance in the area. Students more

technologically skilled may, on the other hand, need guidance related to the use of special effects, photos or animation regarding its excessive use. As Frazel (2010) suggests the teacher assists students with any problem emerging out of the digital story creation process from troubleshooting through slides organization to helping with the narration itself.

The presentation stage represents the finale of students' hard work. Their newly created digital stories are being presented to the target audience which, according to Frazel (2010), is of two kinds: a face-to-face and remote audience, each having its specifics.

A face-to-face presentation requires students to show their digital stories directly to the audience present at a time. Apart from the digital story itself students need to employ varied abilities for the whole presentation to be a success. As Frazel (2010) suggests, it is essential to let the students introduce their stories to the audience as it enables them to practice their face-to-face presentation skills they will find valuable for their future careers. Such skills, how difficult some students may find their mastering, show themselves to be vital in completing the overall image of the whole digital story. Both Frazel (2010) and Teehan (2006) point out essential communication skills such as eye contact, body gestures, poise and strong voice among more others that help the speaker to be well accepted by the audience. The digital story author is also responsible for answering any possible questions that may follow directly after the digital story has been projected. It is also important for the student to be able to respond in an adequate way for any type of feedback there may occur whether the positive or the negative one.

Teehan (2006) and Frazel (2010) stress out for the teacher to create an assessment rubric regarding the teachers' expectations about the face-to-face digital story introduction. In such case students have time sufficient for its preparation.

Apart from the classroom presentation, adhering to the school policy, the digital story presentation may also take place in a school assembly, parent assembly or students may even decide to show their accomplishment to their family or close friends.

Unlike face-to-face audience the remote audience is specific with its absence of the digital story creator since there is no introduction necessary prior to the digital story viewing. Stories are usually uploaded to LAN (local area network) available only for the school purposes or can be shared online. When the second option has been chosen students together with the teacher or alone may also decide whether the digital stories will be access free.

As mentioned earlier the face-to-face presentation may take place in the classroom, school or parent assembly or at home and so could be any presentation targeted for the remote audience only. Ohler (2008) also adds some interesting settings for a digital story to be presented, local television, contests or education meeting to list some of them.

To summarize, targeting the remote audience offers wider possibilities regarding the digital story distribution while presenting the digital story face-to-face to the audience develops other valuable skills beyond those needed for the digital story creation.

As it could be seen, based on this section, effective organization of any digital story project proves itself to be crucial. Both teachers and students are required to invest the time and the energy into the process if their final work is to be successful.

Tools for Digital Story Creation

Tools necessary for creating digital stories are discussed within this section. As hardware is essential for any type of digital work, it is to be started with, followed by software which is represented by various programs designed for video and audio processing used in digital story creation. The chapter is completed by focusing on recourses and copyright issues.

Merriam and Webster online dictionary (www.merriam-webster.com) defines hardware as computer machinery and equipment, including memory, cabling, power supply, peripheral devices, and circuit boards. To be less technical and more concrete it is obligatory to mention potential hardware utilized in digital story creation out of which the best known is a computer with a suitable operating system (OS). iPhones, iPads and Android phones have become very popular recently and are all very well usable when creating digital story in both audio and video mode. Even though students do have access to a school camera most students favor to operate their mobile phones when taking photos, making a video or recording an audio. However, a digital camera continues to be used for recording any type of a school event which, later on, may prove itself very convenient for students' future digital stories. Scanners employed for old photos digitalization or any type of a paper document also find their place in digital storytelling projects. Considering the facts that have just been listed digital cameras and scanners cannot be ignored no matter how outdated they may seem. Microphones, necessary for any type of audio recording, are last to be mentioned, to complete the hardware list (Ohler, 2008).

Software signifies instructions that tell a computer what to do. Software is the entire set of programs, procedures, and routines associated with the operation of a computer

system, including the operating system (www.merriam-webster.com). Programs to be dealt with, for the purposes of this thesis, have been chosen mainly for the Windows OS as it represents the dominating OS for the highest number of users. Among other OSs Mac OS X and Linux should be listed but coming out of personal experience it is very unlikely to meet students with such operating systems.

Every program demands certain system requirements I decided not to list not only because they are very similar for all programs but also because students' hardware performance is frequently above the satisfactory level. The technical equipment of large percentage of schools likewise reaches the standards and students may therefore use all programs listed below with no concerns over the quality of a facility they work in.

Applications for Digital Story Creation

As mentioned earlier, the majority of the programs chosen are designed for Windows OS however several applications also have their Mac OS X and Linux versions. Moreover, a lot of students and people, in general, gained access to smartphones, iPhones and tablets which brought up the need for an easy application for a video, audio or photo processing. iMovie is considered to be such program as it has its computer version as well as it has been designed for the use with iPads and iPhones. It is also listed in this thesis as suitable for digital story creation as could be seen below. Furthermore, I have divided the applications into three different categories according to its specialization regarding the media processing. Program names followed by general description specify each category and label them as video tools, photo slides and audio category.

The video tools category includes Movie Maker, Avidemux, iMovie and Video Trim. Movie Maker is a free application designed for Windows OS while Avidemux, a free program as well, was primarily designed for Linux OS however it is also compatible with Windows OS. iMovie, as stated above, is a video editing software for Mac OS X, iPhones and iPads and could be purchased for a low cost of about €5. iPads and iPhones versions are limited which is caused by the hardware rather than the software itself. Video Trim, a program for Android OS, used mainly with smartphones and tablets, is free at its lite version with the full one to be purchased. The general description is comparable for each application and has therefore been unified.

All video editing programs allow adding video footage, photographs, music and sound effects from a camera or PC. Users can fine tune movies any way they like by trimming the length or splitting the clip. It offers the possibility to speed up or slow down

the movie as well as using the color filters. When the work around the clip itself is satisfactory the users may move towards the next step that includes enhancing the movie with audio and theme. Music and sound effects are included within the applications; however, the software users may employ songs from their own music library or record audio straight into their projects. Most applications offer uploading the movies online on social networking and video sharing sites upon its completion. I find such options very convenient for the students as they may upload their digital stories on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or Vimeo directly from the video editing tool.

Photo slides category includes two almost identical applications: PowerPoint which comes with the Microsoft Office package and its free version Impress available within the Open Office set of programs. PowerPoint is widely spread both at schools and students' homes despite the fact that it is not free.

Unlike video tools photo slides is visual and graphic software aimed mainly for editing and organizing photographs and it therefore yields a presentation where texts, pictures, diagrams, animations and more could be combined. Even creating a video is not unmanageable with the aid of animation and the right timing. When working with pictures students may choose between video or photo editing software as they both offer very similar options and it only depends which program a student is more comfortable with.

Audio category is the last to complete the list of suitable digital storytelling software. Audacity application is the sole program within this category as it is very widespread, user friendly and offers many possibilities when editing sound. The program is free and is usable with Windows, Mac OS X, Linux and other operating systems. It enables users to record live audio, change the speed of a recording. Users can also cut, copy, splice and mix different sounds together, adjust volume and fade-in and fade-out the sounds. Audacity also allows users to edit different sound files and even convert tapes and records into digital recordings which could be especially convenient for students creating digital stories out of old non-digital materials from their past.

Table 1 OS & Software				
Category / OS	Windows	Linux	Mac, iPhone, iPad	Andriod
Video tools	Movie Maker, Avidemux	Avidemux	IMovie	Video Trim
Photo slides	PowerPoint, Impress	Impress	PowerPoint	
Audio	Audacity	Audacity	Audacity	

The software market offers additional applications usable for digital story creation such as Adobe Premiere or Sony Vegas, programs that enable very professional video, photo and audio editing. Besides the price, which is rather high, it also requires the users to work with such applications on regular basis in order to gain necessary skills. Frazel (2010) also notes that digital stories can be created using free or low-cost software that will meet the goals of any school project.

Frazel (2010) also recommends checking the technology students and teachers will be working with prior to its use to prevent its malfunction. Cooperating with the school computer specialist may also prove itself more than convenient when assisting students with the basics of troubleshooting and when spending extra time in a computer lab when necessary.

Recourses and Copyright Issues

As Teehan (2006) mentions, any good digital story requires photos, videos or music of a good quality which may be downloaded from numerous websites offering different materials. There could of course be found recourses free of charge as well as those needed to be purchased. Students may discover various information, photos or videos about countless topics such as history, science, technology, biology, music and more. Apart from getting materials online, students could also find useful to look at some sample digital stories to acquire a better idea what digital stories may look like or simply for drawing inspiration.

When teachers encourage students to use professional recourses from different websites they are also obliged to introduce them to copyright issues. Most students lack the basic information regarding this subject and they have a habit of borrowing photos, videos or music without realizing they are actually breaking the law. It is therefore essential for the students to learn when and at what conditions they are allowed to integrate other people's materials into their digital stories.

I find introducing students to copyright when creating their digital stories an excellent opportunity as I perceive it as knowledge necessary for any of students' future work in a related area.

To avoid copyright issues students should be inspired to use their own materials which can simultaneously add authenticity to their digital stories. It is not, on the other hand, possible with every story a student may possibly choose as some may require way more literate material students are not able to provide on their own.

Teachers should also be aware of the fact that they are not allowed to publish students' work without their parents' permission. It is also applicable to any photos originated during a school event of any type. Thus, it is not only students who need to learn about copyright but primarily the teachers who should then lead by example.

Digital Storytelling in the Classroom

The main idea of this section is to accentuate the advantages of using digital stories as an educational tool, firstly on general level then with emphasis on acquiring a second language. Potential benefits of digital storytelling in the classroom based on a research are to be started with, followed by fitting using digital stories into the national and school curriculum and finally stressing out how creating digital story actually develops students with individual learning needs.

Benefits of Digital Storytelling in the Classroom

Every teacher eager to use digital storytelling for teaching purposes decided for this educational tool for it surely has its advantages. The benefits of digital storytelling were the main goal of John Brown, Steve Denning, Katalina Groh and Larry Prusak research, all being considered world's leading thinkers specializing in computer-supported activities. The following is a list of potential benefits (<http://www.creatingthe21stcentury.org/Intro6-benefits-story.html>).

Communicate quickly. Storytelling communicates ideas holistically. As a result, listeners can get complicated ideas not laboriously, dimension by dimension, but all at once with a new gestalt, which is transferred with a snap.

Communicate naturally. Storytelling is our native language which we know how to do at the age of two. Abstract language by contrast is something that we learn at the age of eight or later and becomes a kind of foreign language that we rarely feel as comfortable in as our native language, storytelling.

Communicate clearly. By drawing on this natural age-old method of communication, storytelling helps us make sense of a chaotic world by connecting us with time and space and human purpose of a sequence of events so as to make sense.

Communicate truthfully. Stories can communicate deep holistic truths, while abstract language tends to slice off fragments.

Communicate collaboratively. In abstract discussions, ideas come at us like missiles, invading our space and directing us to adopt a mental framework established by another being, and our options boil down to accepting or rejecting it, with all the baggage of yes-no winner-loser confrontations. Narrative by contrast comes at us collaboratively inviting us gently to follow the story arm-in-arm with the listener. It is more like a dance than a battle.

Communicate persuasively. When the listener follows a story, there is the possibility of getting the listener to invent a parallel story in the listener's own environment. Since we all love our own babies, the story so co-created becomes our own, and something we love and are prepared to fight for.

Communicate accurately. Before the advent of instant global communications, there was less awareness of the context in which knowledge arises. When communications were among people from the same village, or district, or city, one could often assume that the context was the same. With global communications, the assumption of similar context becomes obviously and frequently just plain wrong. Storytelling provides the context in which knowledge arises, and hence becomes the normal vehicle for accurate knowledge transfer.

Communicate intuitively. We know more than we realize. The role of tacit knowledge has become a major preoccupation because it is often the tacit knowledge that is most valuable. Yet if we do not know it, how can we communicate it? Storytelling provides an answer since by telling a story with feeling, we are able to communicate more

than we explicitly know. Our body takes over and does it for us, without consciousness. Thus although we know more than we can tell, we can, through storytelling, tell more than we (explicitly) know.

Communicate entertainingly. Abstract communications are dull and dry because they are not populated with people but with things. As living beings we are attracted to what is living, and repelled by inert things such as concepts. Stories enliven and entertain.

Communicate movingly so as to get action. Storytelling doesn't just close the knowing-doing gap. It eliminates the gap by stimulating the listener to co-create the idea. In the process of co-creation, the listener starts the process of implementation in such a way that there is no gap.

Communicate feelingly. For all the talk about emotional intelligence, explicit talk about feelings can be cloying. Storytelling enables discussion of emotions in culturally acceptable and elegant way.

Communicate interactively. Unlike abstract talk, storytelling is inherently interactive. The storyteller sparks the story that the listeners co-create in their own minds.

Meeting National and School Standards

The educational process needs to be in concord with national and school standards including any innovative teaching tool such as is digital storytelling. As stated in Czech Republic's Framework Education Program for Elementary Education (FEP EE) "The entire educational content and all of the activities taking place at school must be aimed at and contribute to forming and developing key competencies" (p.10). Learning competency, problem-solving competency, communication competency, social and personal competency, civic competency and professional competency are the key competencies. As Teehan (2006) implies, students involved in digital story creation projects work on improving various skills which have been connected to the above mentioned key competencies.

Learning competency

- Student becomes an active, participatory learner
- Student participates in an alternative learning style
- Student uses higher-level thinking levels in evaluation, application and synthesis of ideas

Social and personal competency

- Student participates in peer coaching activities

- Student collaborates on projects and works collegially
- Student participates in peer review

Problem-solving competency

- Student masters research skills and information seeking strategies

Communication competency

- Student becomes a designer of effective and stimulating communication
- Student becomes a communicator of knowledge to others

Civic competency

- Student assesses information through authentic means

Professional competency

- Student uses organization skills
- Student performs authentic tasks

Student's Development

Every student is a unique personality with unique set of abilities. Apart from the standard intelligence quotient well known to everyone, the new trends and educational development has a growing tendency to incline to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences where each individual is endowed with seven different types of intelligence in a varying degree (Průcha, 2002). With that said it is more than obvious that in order to modernize and to increase the efficiency of any learning process, multiple intelligences and individual learning needs should be taken into consideration. Digital storytelling is an individualized form of learning fitting, by its nature, both specific learning needs and Gardner's framework (Frazel, 2010). Here is an example how certain tasks used within digital storytelling projects could be matched to multiple intelligences (Frazel, 2010, p.12):

- Linguistic: brainstorm and develop the text of the story
- Body-Kinesthetic: decide and teach presentation of the story, create movie
- Musical: create music, sound effects, and set mood of the story
- Interpersonal: work with the story map and the presentation
- Intrapersonal: develop the self-reflection section of the story (emotional)
- Spatial: decide on photographs and movies (visuals)
- Mathematical-Logical: project time management – length of story and slide timings

Digital Storytelling with Language Learners

The ability to speak at least one foreign language at a decent level is, in today's globalized world, more than a necessity, thus it is not surprising that foreign languages have been given a lot of attention. Not only do pupils start studying languages at lower age (primary school, even first grade), but also the number of hours per week spent studying L2 have been increased.

In order to learn a language successfully the cultivation of various skills is essential. These abilities are divided into two categories: *receptive language skills* and *productive language skills*. As is obvious from the words themselves the first category includes skills that help students with receiving the language which means reading and listening, while the latter contains speaking and writing, skills connected to language production. (Harmer, 2007).

Apart from the benefits already mentioned earlier in this section digital storytelling targets both receptive and productive language skills. Moreover it fulfills almost all expected outcomes set by the FEP EE as could be seen below (FEP EE, p.24).

Receptive language skills

The pupil shall:

- Read texts of appropriate length aloud fluently and respect the rules of pronunciation;
- Understand the content of simple texts in textbooks and of authentic materials using visual aids; find familiar expressions, phrases and answers to questions in texts;
- Understand simple and clearly articulated utterance and conversation;
- Infer a likely meaning of new words from the context;
- Use a bilingual dictionary, find information or the meaning of a word in a suitable explanatory monolingual dictionary.

Students develop these skills during the preparation stage while searching for information they require for their digital stories. In addition to improving the understanding of authentic written texts they may also encounter receiving information from short films or audios, therefore improving their listening skill. The ability to infer a likely meaning of any unknown vocabulary is as essential as finding it in a dictionary, especially when working with longer texts.

Productive language skills

The pupil shall:

- Create a simple (both oral and written) expression concerned with a situation related to family and school life, and other thematic areas being studied;
- Create simple sentences and short texts and modify them in writing using correct grammar;
- Retell briefly the content of a text, utterance as well as conversation of suitable difficulty.

Improving productive language skills is accomplished within the production stage where students put together their projects. They write a narration which is to be recorded and added to their stories, hence working on both writing and speaking.

Interactive language skills

The pupil shall:

- Make himself/herself understood in a simple manner in common everyday situations.

Digital storytelling might not always contain common everyday situations; however, it is necessary for any successful digital story to be told in a manner that will be easily understood in terms of pronunciation as well as content. With that said, it is obvious that students also need to work on their interactive language skills to make their L2 acquisition as all-embracing as possible.

Alongside the FEP EE fulfillment Maran (2010) points out several other benefits of using digital storytelling for English language students such as giving students the opportunity to complete a speaking or writing task using an unusual monotony breaking teaching tool, targeting specific grammar rules inconspicuously or improving students' oral performance. It can also help students build confidence in their English skills as well as helping those reticent to speak the opportunity to express themselves in an unobtrusive way.

As can be seen from the above sections, digital storytelling is a very complex educational tool with many benefits developing students of all abilities regardless their intelligence type, language and technology skill. The personalized form of digital story projects allows students to work in pace best suiting their most effective learning style.

Moreover, digital storytelling not only meets national standards at its highest purpose of developing the key competencies but also grasps the lower goals of specific subjects.

Application of Digital Stories in the Classroom

The benefits of digital storytelling in educational process have been dealt with in the previous section, now the focus will be on the actual application of digital stories in the classroom. Teehan (2006) suggests a 12 step implementation manual for teachers to manage digital story projects in order to make the work as efficient as possible and to avoid unnecessary errors.

1. Assign groups.

Teehan (2006) advises to assign digital storytelling to small groups unless working with older more sophisticated learners. Working together on an assignment with other students make them more engaged as they do not intend to disappoint their fellow team members. All students sink and swim as a group they are therefore more motivated to learn not only from each other but also on their own as the contribution of each member is required. Working in groups also enhances social skills for the students learn cooperation and communication within a group of people with the same goal.

Teachers should assign groups carefully considering the personality types, academic and technological skills or anything that may affect the group work. For the groups to be effective they should be heterogeneous so students can tutor and help each other. The social relationships within the classroom also need to be taken in consideration since it could influence the team work significantly, in both positive and negative ways. Monitoring the teams and intervening when necessary is the teacher's role.

2. Demonstrate and teach software.

In order for any digital story to be successful students need to be familiar with the software they will be using. Teachers should explain the software basics essential for the digital story creation for the students to be able to work on their own and assist with more complicated tasks individually as the work progresses. Students with less technological talent may require further one-to-one explanations. The teacher has to make sure that everyone working with new software gained the necessary skills and is therefore able to produce the assigned work.

3. Show exemplary digital stories.

Seeing digital stories examples before students start their own projects aids them in imagining what the final product could look like. Samples can be taken either from numerous websites specializing in digital stories or teachers can present students with stories produced by other pupils. Teehan (2006) advises the teachers to use examples created in the target software so students can connect specific tasks to the final outcome. They will then have a better understanding of the range of special effects that could be added to their stories and where to find them. In addition to the technical requirements there should also be research requirements discussed so the students are acquainted with the depth of research necessary for the digital story project.

4. Assign task.

At this point the teacher distributes concrete assignments, each demanding a certain amount of searching for information. However, students often get lost in the research and they get carried away very easily forgetting the initial purpose of the assignment. Teehan (2006) suggests students write the task down - what the exact assignment is and how the research will be demonstrated. It allows students to get back to the basic purpose of their project when they are overwhelmed with information.

5. Define expectations.

In this step of the implementation manual the teacher defines what his or her expectations of the future digital stories are. Teehan (2006) suggests for these expectations to be in the form of a rubric. These rubrics show what and to what extent will be assessed upon digital story completion. Each rubric should be explained and discussed if future misunderstanding is to be avoided. Each student should receive a copy of the rubrics to keep in mind what is expected of his/her work.

6. Begin research.

During this part of digital story creation students start the actual research. They search for information and they evaluate whether it is relevant to the topic. Students should be encouraged to access information not only electronically but also through printed materials such as books, newspapers or encyclopedias. Students should avoid using Google and Wikipedia as primary research tools. Supplying students with a list of preselected sites might also be suitable with certain group of students, especially the younger ones. The

group should also divide the research equally among all the members and create a concept of what exact information is needed for the digital story. The teacher monitors students, helps where necessary and reminds the teams to save any applicable information.

7. Begin storyboarding.

Storyboarding is all about organizing a story. Students have to be reminded that each story needs to have a beginning, middle and end. The outcome of this part are rough drafts where videos and graphics are sequenced properly and the overall design of the story containing images, music, narration and any other content is developed. The drafts are not the final products and are often changed many times before deciding what the final version will look like.

8. Write narration.

When students decide to use voice narration they should write it prior to its recording in order to avoid unnecessary errors. Students should use their own words only when writing the narration not only because copying is plagiarism but also to add authenticity to their stories. Dictionaries or the teacher may of course be consulted when working on the text. Teehan (2006) suggests that students use Audacity program to pre-record their narrations and save them outside the actual digital story so it could be rehearsed and corrected if needed and add it to the story when the final version is complete.

9. Produce product.

The goal of this step is putting all pieces students have been working on together. At this point images, video clips, narration and music are ready to be completed into a digital story. To make the story look more professional the working teams may decide to use transitions and other special effects to their projects. It is also necessary to add titles and cite the recourses. The teacher should advise the students to save their work often to avoid losing data. The final version of the story needs to be reviewed many times so no errors and imperfections are overlooked.

10. Publish and Present project.

Teehan (2006) implies that students should present their work in a more advanced manner than just letting the digital story run on its own. The groups should introduce their stories, explain their motivations and involve self-reflection on how their stories turned

out. The way students are able to present themselves in front of an audience is also very important, they should consider poise, body gestures, eye contact and even clothing before they present their projects. However difficult this part might for some students be, it should play an important role in any digital story creation process since it enriches students with valuable skills they will surely find useful in their future.

11. Asses & 12. Reflect.

Assessing and reflecting on students work is vital for any educational process and therefore a single chapter has been devoted to these issues where it will be discussed in greater detail.

Assessment & Reflection

This section is devoted to assessing and reflecting on students' work. As Ohler (2008) states "Assessment is pivotal point in educational process and it is how we determine how our students are doing as learners and how we are doing as teachers" (p.62). Moreover, according to Kalhous and Obst (2002) "Assessment is a comparison of the actual state with the one expected" (p.404).

Assessment

As Frazel (2010) implies any type of assessment including assessing digital stories should follow school curriculum. In the case of Czech Republic the FEP EE on national level and SEP on school level help teachers to design the proper assessments.

Both Frazel (2010) and Teehan (2006) suggest creating assessment rubrics for grading digital stories. Students need to be supplied with the assessment rubrics at the beginning of the assignment so they are aware of the teacher's expectations throughout the whole creation process. Digital story projects are rather lengthy tasks therefore a periodic assessment at different stages should also be involved.

Frazel's (2010) assessment rubrics are based on the process of creating digital stories and are divided according to its stages into preparation, production and presentation rubric. Teehan (2006) on the other hand, supports the idea of judging quality of digital stories on the basis of content. The level of mastery should be part of every rubric and has these headings: beginning, developing, accomplished and exemplary, where the last one listed is the best score a student or groups of students may receive for their final work. These are sample rubrics for each method.

Elements	Beginning	Developing	Accomplished	Exemplary
Storyboard	No evidence of storyboard usage	Minimum detail & planning in storyboard format	Good detail & planning of storyboard & digital story elements are evident	Excellent detail; well planned; effects & transitions evident in storyboard
Audio	Audio is cut-off and inconsistent; audience has great difficulty hearing narration and soundtrack	Audio not clear in parts; audience understands narration and soundtrack; expression of ideas muddled	Audio is clear; but only partially express ideas	Audio is clear; effective communication of ideas; soundtrack enhances story
Editing	No evidence of engaging flow through effects of editing	Scenes have little or no flow; viewer gets lost in story	Most scenes has seamless appearance; good flow and engaging pace	Smooth viewing; seamless appearance, excellent flow
Transitions, Effects	No enhancement of message through effects	Minimal enhancement of message through effects	Somewhat enhances message of the story through effects	Enhances story through effects; completes project
Originality and Creativity	Story shows no originality or creativity	Story shows little originality or creativity	Story shows some originality or creativity	Story shows excellent originality and creativity in composition
Documentation	No evidence of citations of sources	Some evidence of citations of sources	Good evidence of citations of sources	Excellent evidence of citations of sources

The following is a production rubric by Frazel (2010) for individual digital storytelling projects where the author suggests leaving out the exemplary heading because “It is more appropriate for small-group projects within a whole class to increase the incentive for excellence and competition” (p.99).

Table 3 Production rubric by Frazel (2010, p.99)			
	Beginning	Developing	Accomplished
Locating multimedia elements	Student selects multimedia elements, but does not record original location and has to locate the source over again	Student selects multimedia elements and records and understands this process so that work can move forward independent of the teacher	Student meticulously locates and records each multimedia element and is willing to help others stay on track
Evaluating and citing elements	Student is beginning to understand the evaluation process and can write some citations	Student takes time to check each element and feels confident evaluating and citing media with only a little help from the teacher	Student evaluates and cites each element correctly both in the project notes and in the finished story
Digital citizenship	Student is just beginning to learn about being a good digital citizen	Student grasps the concepts of fair use, ethical online behavior, and respect for intellectual property	Student promotes proper digital citizenship in digital storytelling and applies it to other projects
Knowledge of software	Student needs help learning the software and is not willing to learn from another student	Student is competent with the software, but if passively sharing his or her knowledge with other students	Student has mastered the software needed and shares that expertise with other students
Troubleshooting hardware and software issues	Student seeks help from teacher without trying to solve the problem	Student seeks help from other students but still needs guidance from the teacher	Student works individually and in a group to solve hardware and software issues
Phase one (assembly)	Student's progress is slow and random without meeting goals	Student's work meets goals within timeframe	Student's work is ordered, cited, evaluated, and completed
Phase two (editing)	Student doesn't see the importance of editing and making changes	Student edits work, but is unclear why it is needed	Student's work is quickly edited and meets goals and timeframe
Phase three (completion)	Student is behind schedule and has to return to goal sheet frequently to stay on target	Student's work is on schedule and goals are met	Student works efficiently and quickly, meeting both goals and deadlines
Deadline	Doesn't meet deadline	Meets deadline	Meets deadline ahead of schedule and helps other students if asked

Ohler (2008) follows a different approach when assessing digital stories. He does not reject rubrics completely but states that teachers prefer doing things differently and “employing a scale or assessment approach that they don’t like may lead into dismissing

the rubric in its entirety” (p.68). He therefore suggests traits of digital stories that could be adapted to any assessment. This is his list of digital story evaluation traits (p. 68):

Table 4 Digital story evaluation traits	
Story	How well did the story work? This trait can address structure, engagement, character transformation, or any of the other qualities of digital stories.
Project planning	Is there evidence of solid planning, in the form of story maps, scripts, storyboards, etc.?
Media development process	How well did the student follow the media development process?
Research	Was the student’s project well researched and documented?
Content understanding	How well did the student meet the academic goals of the assignment and convey an understanding of the material addressed?
Assignment criteria	Did you require stories to be under two minutes, use no more than 10 images and 30 seconds of music? Whatever the criteria, be clear and stick to them.
Writing	What was the quality of the student’s written work exhibited I the planning documents, research, etc.?
Originality, voice, creativity	How creative was the production? Did the student exhibit an original sense of voice and a fresh perspective?
Economy	Was the information presented through the story sifted, prioritized, and told without gaps or detours?
Flow, organization, and pacing	Was the story well organized? Did it flow well, moving from part to part without bumps or disorientation?
Presentation and performance	How effective was the student’s actual presentation or performance? This includes burning a DVD, posting the story on the Web site effectively, performing it before an audience – whatever the assignment required.
Sense of audience	How well did the story respect the needs of the audience?
Media application	Was the use of media appropriate, supportive of the story, balances, and well considered?
Citations, permission	Has everything that is not original been credited? Have permissions been obtained where necessary? Do citations appear in the format required by the project?

Both assessment rubrics and evaluation traits are only suggestions on possible approaches of evaluating digital story projects. Teachers may combine or omit rubrics or

traits they do not find suitable for their projects, they can even create their own criteria as far as the basics of any assessment are fulfilled.

Peer Assessment

Fellow students giving feedback on digital stories created by other groups or individuals is also a valuable assessing tool. As Teehan (2006) states “when students get feedback from their peers in time to correct deficiencies they often turn in a better and more thoughtful project” (p.73). It is important for students to learn and practice self-correction. This is a simplified rubric for peer evaluation which is not very time consuming and still gives students enough feedback for their work.

Table 5 Peer review rubric by Teehan (2006, p.74)				
Elements	Needs work	Not bad	Pretty good	Awesome
I understand the story and could follow your purpose				
I thought the images were chosen carefully and thoughtfully				
I thought the audio was good				
I noticed that you cited all your sources				
I liked your use of effects and transitions				
Overall, the story is rated:				

Reflection

When a digital story project is over it is good to reflect on it in order to find out what was learned and what can be improved next time. Reflection may be of two kinds, depending on different people involved, for students and for teachers, both requiring a different approach. During students’ reflection teachers encourage students to think of what they have learned. Ohler (2008) suggests asking questions such as “What problems did they solve? How did the experience transform them? What would they do differently next time?” (p.157). Answering these questions helps students in realizing what were the

actual benefits of their lengthy projects and knowing how much they have learnt may motivate them for any future work in the area. Teachers, on the other hand, should reflect on how the digital story projects turned out in order to improve any future lessons of similar type. Teehan (2006) suggests that teachers ask themselves questions such as “What went right? What did the students learn? What could be improved? What was outside of your control? Did your choice of organization structure work for your students?” (p.75) and more. I am sure that, upon reflection, both students and teachers will realize what a powerful teaching tool a digital story could be.

The Theoretical Background section dealt with the basics of digital storytelling in the form of describing the origins and the development of storytelling. Subsequently it points out the advantages of using digital storytelling in educational process and also how it could be implemented effectively. The benefits of creating digital stories with language learners are also discussed. Whether the language instruction can be improved through digital story projects is being investigated in the following research section. The aim of the Methodology part of this thesis is to present readers with students and topics chosen for the action research which is to be followed by the actual implementation of digital storytelling projects into teaching with follow up results and commentaries together with implications for teaching and ideas for further research.

III. METHODOLOGY

As could be seen from the theoretical background of this thesis digital storytelling appears to be a very powerful educational tool which I have decided to explore further in my own teaching practice at Základní škola jazyků Karlovy Vary in a form of an action research to find out whether it can enrich and improve language instruction. This section covers a brief description of the topics chosen for digital story creation and students working on the projects. A description of implementing digital story creation into my teaching is to be described next followed by results and a final discussion together with a questionnaire given to the students upon the digital story completion.

Students

Digital story projects were held in 6th and 9th grade. The 6th grade students are of age 11 and 12, the 9th grade students are 14 and 15 years old and either class includes both genders. According to CEFR the level of English of the 6th graders is A1 and they have been studying English as a second language from the 1st grade, there are 15 students in the group. Students from the 9th grade are usually of level A2 some of them B1 and they have been studying English as a second language for 8 years, there are 20 students in one of the groups and 21 students in the parallel one. Both 6th and 9th grades are mixed ability classes.

Topics

According to FEP EE, the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary the possible topics for students in 6th grade were My Family, My Neighborhood, Countries and Animals. The connection to other subjects was also considered when choosing the topic. My Family is studied within Civic classes, My Neighborhood is connected with Geography and Civics, Animals and Countries have no connection to other subjects in 6th grade as they are being studied in higher grades. After considering all the facts stated above My Neighborhood was selected to be worked on.

For students in 9th grade topics About Me and My Day were chosen. However simple those topics may seem they require complex knowledge of grammar if they are to be processed on a higher level. About Me involves usage of past continuous tense for a picture description from students' past which is not taught earlier than in 8th grade as well as other tenses and vocabulary needed for this digital story. My Day was also selected to combine various grammar and vocabulary alongside IT skills. It could have also been done with younger students with the usage of present simple routines but only in a form of

presentation as using video is rather difficult for them at this age. Both topics to be worked on with the older students were aimed to revise their English skills in a complex way.

Questionnaire

A simple questionnaire to help with the digital story evaluation was designed to be given to students after digital stories had been completed. The following questions should help both students and the teacher to find out whether the project work was not only enjoyable but also useful for language improvement. The questions are closed and target both English and IT skills, enjoyment and working environment. Students could choose out of four different answers: very much, slightly, not much and not at all.

Application

This section covers the actual description of the work itself. The pattern of the 12 step story creation described in theoretical background was followed and notes have been taken during each step. The subsequent descriptions show how various steps were carried out taking into account the specifics of each topic.

My Neighborhood – 6th grade

1. Assign groups.

Describing the place where students live requires specific information for each digital story which excludes group work thus there were no groups assigned for this project. Students worked on their own however certain cooperation was allowed in the form of sharing photos in case of living in the same area.

2. Demonstrate and teach software.

When deciding on the software to be used for digital story creation a fellow IT teacher was consulted in order to incorporate currently studied software into the project. Students in 6th grade learn how to make a presentation with the use of PowerPoint therefore a PowerPoint presentation was selected to be the final outcome. As there is not a lot of time to teach students new software during English classes this solution proves itself convenient for both sides. The English teacher does not have to spend extra time demonstrating new programs and the IT teacher gains a chance to see students work with the target software also outside IT classes.

3. Show exemplary digital stories.

There were no suitable exemplary digital stories created by English students of the target level found on the Internet and there were no similar digital stories created by other English teachers in our school either. Students were therefore shown a simple presentation of a similar topic but in Czech language created by students of their age and IT skills during previous school year. The English language was presented by adding extra sentences with the use of the target phrases and vocabulary outside the presentation itself.

4. Assign task.

The project of My Neighborhood should yield a PowerPoint presentation with no audio footage with the minimum of ten slides. Students were to search for a map on the Internet marking the place where they live which was to be followed by photos of their house and significant buildings and sights in their neighborhood with short descriptions. The presentation was intended to be short and simple for the students to practice target language currently studied within English lessons along with IT skills.

5. Define expectations.

The teacher's expectations were defined along with showing the exemplary digital stories where the main points of the future assessment were pointed out. It included the project length, vocabulary, grammar and performance with three possible grading scales – excellent, pass and did not pass. For a better understanding of what the students were expected to do they have been given an assessment rubric. Apart from the English part of the projects students' IT performance was also expected to be evaluated within their regular IT classes and by their IT teacher.

6. Begin research.

The research within this digital story creation was to be carried out in a really simple manner by finding the map of the target neighborhood on the Internet along with information about any significant building or sight the students decided to use. The latter could be also searched in books, newspapers or magazines and students were encouraged to do so in order to motivate them using other sources. Searching for unknown vocabulary was also permitted however students were strongly recommended to reduce seeking new vocabulary on the Internet to a minimum to prevent vocabulary misuse.

7. Begin storyboarding.

Students were instructed to make a rough draft of their digital stories in a paper form especially keeping the slides ordering in mind. As this project was done with 6th grade students it was pointed out again how the organization of the digital story should be carried out.

8. Write narration.

As the descriptions on each slide was intended to be brief and short and there was no audio footage students were not asked to write narration on paper prior to its implementation to the story however they were presented with such option as some students may prefer it.

9. Produce product.

During this step students were completing their digital stories. They were mostly working on their own with no or little help of the teacher or fellow students. Several English lessons were devoted to the story production however due to different working speed, level of English and IT skills and lack of time several students were also required to work on their projects outside of school. Students were reminded to continuously save their work to prevent data loss and to send the teacher the final product via email.

10. Publish and present project.

To successfully finish the digital story project each student was expected to present it in front of the class. As the English level of 6th grade students is not high enough to speak in words other than those previously used in their projects their presentation step was limited to reading only. These circumstances were taken into consideration when creating the assessment rubric thus a performance rubric concentrating mainly on reading was designed.

11. Asses & 12. Reflect.

The following table shows the assessing rubric for My Neighborhood digital story. As previously mentioned each student received this rubric at the beginning of the project to avoid misunderstanding during the evaluation part. Students' performance was assessed directly after the story presentation, the other rubrics were completed later after the teacher viewed each story repeatedly. Students were awarded with final grades during the following English lesson along with summarizing the overall work in a form of reflection.

Table 6 Assessment rubric – My Neighborhood			
	Excellent	Pass	Didn't Pass
Task completion	The task was completed to or above required extent. The task was processed with variability and certain originality.	The task was completed but didn't meet the required extent	The task was not completed or was way under required extent
Vocabulary	No spelling mistakes, various vocabulary is used, vocabulary is used with accuracy	Some spelling mistakes, vocabulary repeated, some accuracy errors	Serious spelling mistakes, the vocabulary is very limited
Grammar	Correct use of "there is/are", prepositions, articles, the pronoun it	Some mistakes in target grammar	Serious grammar mistakes
Performance	The performance is fluent with excellent pronunciation and accuracy	Some mistakes in fluency and pronunciation	Serious pronunciation errors, unable to read fluently

My Day – 9th grade

1. Assign groups.

My Day is a specific topic meant to describe students' activities during their regular days which makes group work impossible. Students could however cooperate by sharing photos of friends or using the same video sequences where possible as well as they were allowed to help each other with the story production.

2. Demonstrate and teach software.

Due to lack of time during English classes the software necessary for the digital story creation have been chosen in accordance with students' IT classes and currently studied skills. The IT teacher was also consulted and requested for help in the IT field. My Day digital story required appropriate knowledge of video processing software, photo and audio editing which has all been taught within IT classes.

3. Show exemplary digital stories.

Several exemplary digital stories were borrowed from an English teaching colleague who has done similar project in previous school year. Although the topic was not

identical the students had the opportunity to see how the final product should look like in terms of language and IT processing.

4. Assign task.

My Day digital story was intended to be a combination of a video and photos with audio included. The minimum length was two minutes and shots from the whole day should have been incorporated into the story however they did not have to be all taken or recorded in one day only. The audio was to be a mixture of authentic direct speech in a form of video and a voice over audio which was to be recorded and added to the story additionally.

5. Define expectations.

Expectations for the digital story had been defined during step three after students have watched the exemplary stories. Students had been given assessment rubric with five criteria to be graded. These are task completion which grades whether the minimum of two minutes length is met, language creativity grading the language variability, vocabulary, grammar and performance where pronunciation, accuracy and fluency were to be graded. Each rubric has three possible grades from excellent to pass and did not pass. The final grade was a combination of five grades evaluating the performance in each of the rubric. The assessment rubric was meant for English part of the project only, the IT teacher was to assess the projects according to his own criteria used within the IT classes.

6. Begin research.

Since students' goal was to describe their regular day by recording a video and taking photos the topic My Day did not require any further research.

7. Begin storyboarding.

Storyboarding played an important role in this project. Students had to organize well their work if it was to be successful. It required careful planning of what will be done through video and where photos will be employed. Students were therefore suggested to note how the story will be carried out in terms of both organization and processing.

8. Write narration.

During the storyboarding step students were supposed to decide where to use authentic and where the voice over audio. In both cases they were recommended to write

narration to avoid unnecessary mistakes however in case of the audio used in their video sequences what will be said could only be thought over in advance to emphasize the authenticity.

9. Produce product.

After consulting students' IT teacher most of the photo and video editing work was done within the IT classes where students could also get adequate help in the field when necessary. The narration and all English work were, on the other hand, handled during English classes. Students were also responsible for recording the videos and taking photos on their own or with the help of family or friends. Where the finalizing of the product took place depended on students' work pace as it was not possible to devote as many lessons to finish the digital story as some students needed. In case of time insufficiency students could either complete their projects at home or were offered to spend more time in school's computer lab after classes.

10. Publish and present project.

The projects were not published anywhere public, students were asked to send their final products via email or in case of bigger files saving it on a flash disk and bringing it to class. Due to a high number of students in one study group the required time to view all the digital stories during English lessons would take a minimum of three lessons which was evaluated as way too time consuming therefore only couple of the projects awarded with high grades were presented to point out students' good work.

11. Asses and reflect.

As mentioned earlier, students were assessed for both English and IT performance. An assessment rubric which follows was used for English evaluation. Upon receiving the teacher's feedback in form of grades and suggestions for future work students were requested to fill out a questionnaire to find out how they responded to digital story creation and to help improve any future work in the area.

Table 7 Assessment rubric – My Day			
	Excellent	Pass	Didn't Pass
Task completion	The task was completed to or above required extent. Excellent fulfillment of the topic.	The task was completed	The task was not completed at all or way under the required extent, the topic wasn't followed
Language creativity	Various use of language and grammar	Several different phrases/grammar being repeated	No language creativity, one or two phrases repeated
Vocabulary	No spelling mistakes, various vocabulary is used, great vocabulary accuracy	Some spelling mistakes, vocabulary repeated, some accuracy errors	Serious spelling mistakes, the vocabulary is very limited
Grammar	Correct use of tenses, prepositions, articles and common grammar rules	Occasional incorrect use of tenses and other grammar rules	Serious errors in using target grammar
Performance	Excellent pronunciation, great fluency and accuracy	Satisfactory pronunciation, fluency and accuracy with occasional mistakes	Severe pronunciation mistakes. The performance not fluent and accurate

About Me – 9th grade

1. Assign groups.

The goal of this digital story was for students to describe themselves thus there were no groups needed for the work however as was allowed in other two projects students could cooperate to a certain level in terms of helping each other with editing their work or borrowing photos where possible.

2. Demonstrate and teach software.

No software was taught during English classes, the form of the final outcome was chosen in accordance with the teaching goals of IT classes.

3. Show exemplary digital stories.

An exemplary digital story for this topic was also borrowed from an English teaching colleague. Several exemplary stories were also found on the Internet however they were usually above students' level of both English and IT skills.

4. Assign task.

About Me digital story was assigned to be an automatized presentation created in PowerPoint program. The automation was to be achieved via animation. Photos with a voice over audio were to be included in the presentation. Students were supposed to describe themselves both in the past and in the present that is why photos were chosen over a video since not a high number of students had many videos recorded in their childhood. The minimum length of the digital story was to be two minutes and describing the past and the present had to be well balanced.

5. Define expectations.

Expectations were defined through an assessment rubric given to each student. The rubric contains five different entries to be graded separately upon the digital story completion each having three grading scales. A final grade would be then awarded. The assessment rubrics used for My Day and About Me are identical as the age and English level of the students are alike.

6. Begin research.

The only research necessary for this project was to be done at home within students' family archives where photos of their childhood were to be found.

7. Begin storyboarding.

Students were asked to create a rough draft of their presentations in order to get a clear idea of their work organization. They were reminded how the task was to be carried out and how the final product should look like.

8. Write narration.

The narration was written during one of the English lessons so the students could get guidance and help from the teacher where necessary. Submission of the written text was not compulsory however students were recommended to consult the final version with the teacher to avoid serious errors.

9. Produce product.

Students were completing their digital stories during several English lessons, IT lessons and also on their own at home or in a computer lab after school. They could consult

possible problems with both teachers. Their final versions of the stories were to be sent via email or brought to class on a portable disc.

10. Publish and present project.

This step was approached in a very same way as described in the previous topic. High number of students and lack of time during English lessons lead the teacher to watching the final projects outside of class.

11. Asses and reflect.

Students received two grades. Their English part of the project was assessed within English classes through the following assessment rubric. The presentation was also evaluated from the IT point of view during IT classes. Students were also asked to fill out a questionnaire for the teacher to receive some feedback about the digital story projects.

Table 8 Assessment rubric – About Me			
	Excellent	Pass	Didn't Pass
Task completion	The task was completed to or above required extent. Excellent fulfillment of the topic.	The task was completed	The task was not completed at all or way under the required extent, the topic wasn't followed
Language creativity	Various use of language and grammar	Several different phrases/grammar being repeated	No language creativity, one or two phrases repeated
Vocabulary	No spelling mistakes, various vocabulary is used, great vocabulary accuracy	Some spelling mistakes, vocabulary repeated, some accuracy errors	Serious spelling mistakes, the vocabulary is very limited
Grammar	Correct use of tenses, prepositions, articles and common grammar rules	Occasional incorrect use of tenses and other grammar rules	Serious errors in using target grammar
Performance	Excellent pronunciation, great fluency and accuracy	Satisfactory pronunciation, fluency and accuracy with occasional mistakes	Severe pronunciation mistakes. The performance not fluent and accurate

IV. RESULTS AND COMMENTARY

This section covers the results of students' work providing different data on each topic and also compares the work with students of various age groups. It is then followed by commentaries where all digital storytelling projects are discussed.

Results

The results of each group of students are presented in this section and contain the following information: number of digital stories submitted, the average grade, the level of English, meeting the requirements (processing, extent ...) and the willingness to work. Sample screenshots of each type of digital story are also added however their full versions can be viewed on a supplementary CD at the end of this thesis. Since both students' projects created in 9th grade contain video or voice over audio it is strongly recommended to view them in order to get the overall image of the work.

My Neighborhood

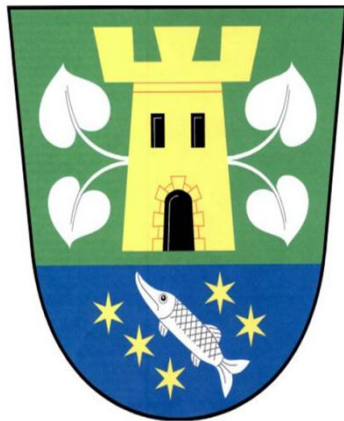
All 15 students within the study group submitted their digital stories, some of them however, due to previous illness after the submission deadline. Most of the projects met all the requirements in the means of processing and the compulsory content to a very good level. The same cannot be stated about the English part of the project. While some of the students followed strictly the instructions given and therefore created an easy almost errorless presentation with the correct use of the target language, others made the effort to produce language wise a presentation way above their level which lead to many incomprehensible phrases and overall confusion. This was the case for students who struggle with learning English or those who wanted to ease their work and searched for help on the Internet, Google translator to be exact. All these students also had problems with reading their presentations as the number of words they were not familiar with was way too high. The average grade for most students was Pass, there were several Excellent pieces of work but also two being way behind the satisfactory level and therefore graded as Didn't Pass.

The students might have lacked the necessary level of English but it was well compensated with their willingness to work. They seemed very motivated and from what could be observed within the classes the majority of them enjoyed creating their presentations. Unfortunately in case of some students' high level of motivation lead into a

need of employing too much unnecessary information which was, luckily, managed to be prevented.

Town hall

- There is a town hall in our village. It's very beautiful.



Screenshot 1: My Neighborhood

My neighborhood



- This is our neighborhood
- This is a photo from a bird's perspective
- There are many trees

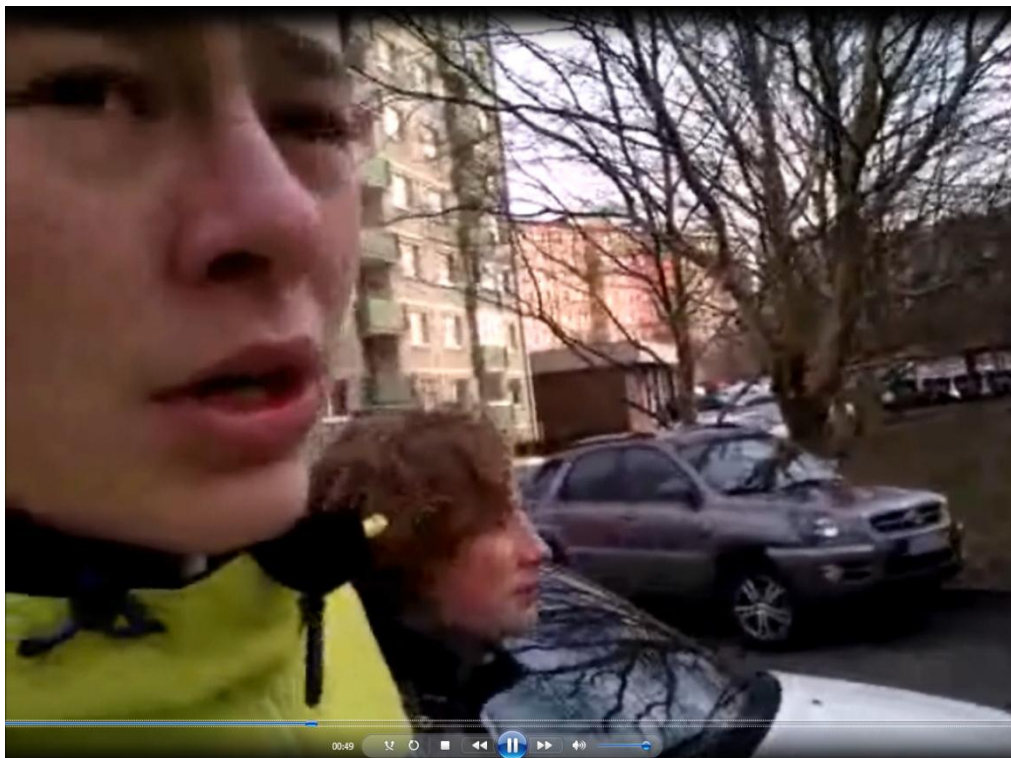
Screenshot 2: My Neighborhood

My Day& About Me

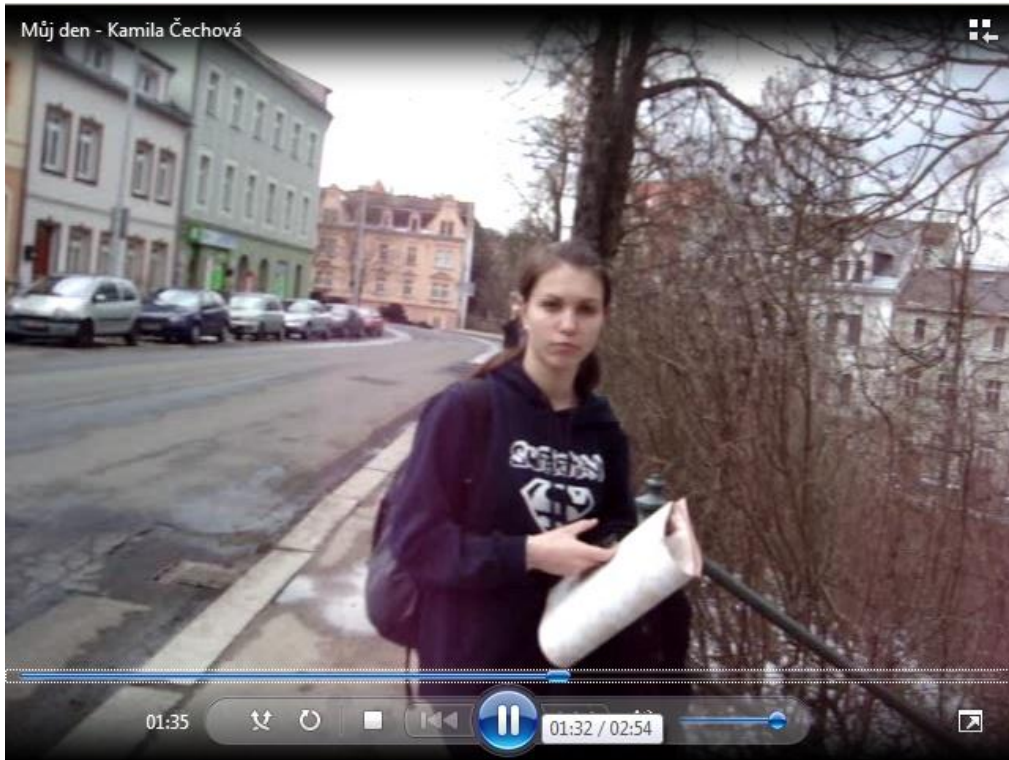
Apart from the number of submitted digital stories the results coming out of both groups of students are very alike and therefore will be presented together to avoid repetition. Only 60% of all students turned in their projects. Several students attempted to submit their work after the deadline however it was not accepted unless serious circumstances given to keep the rules equal to everyone.

The requirements in the area of length, video and photo editing were met on an outstanding level, several projects even to a degree above the demanded. The level of English used corresponded with students' ability to use the language properly, their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. The tendency of the weaker students to use any type of dictionary resulted, in most cases, into unintelligible text which was in combination with voice over audio very hard to follow. The average grade was Pass but in comparison with the younger students there was a higher number of both Excellent and Didn't Pass grades.

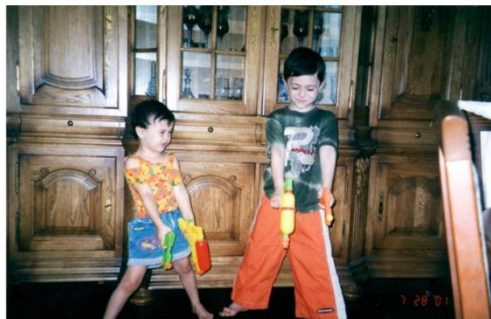
As it is possible to conclude from the number of submitted projects the students' willingness to work was rather low. Unfortunately numerous students prefer receiving a Didn't Pass grade over putting the necessary effort into any type of work which I believe is a motivation struggle that comes along with people of this group age.



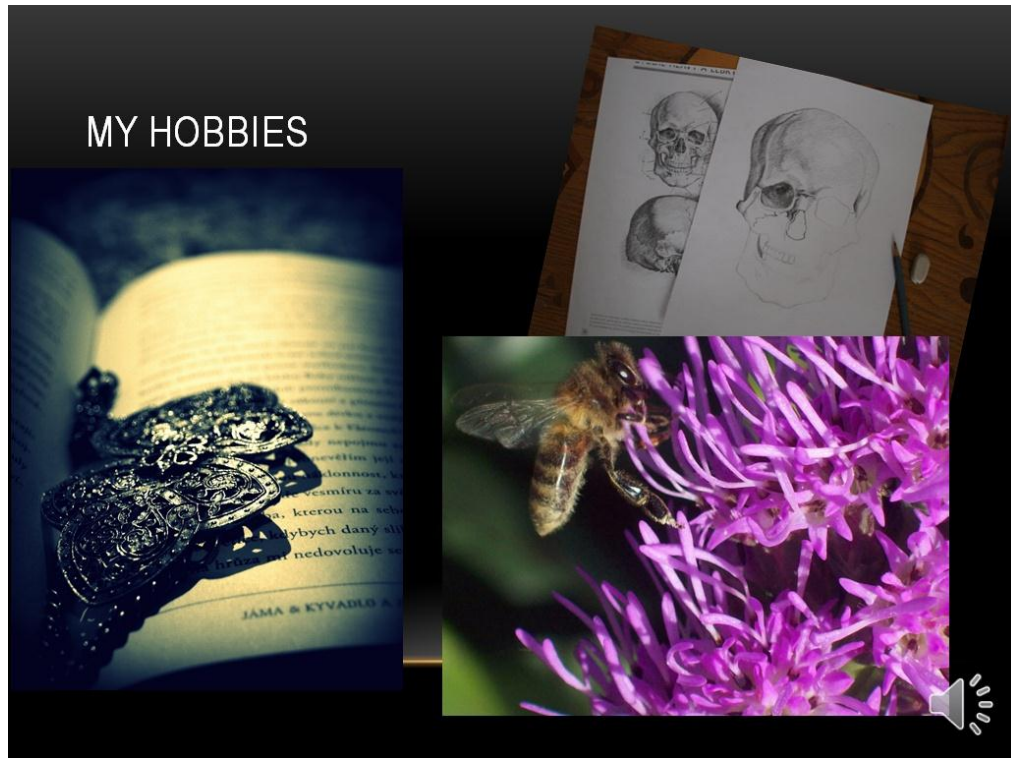
Screenshot 3: My Day



Screenshot 4: My Day



Screenshot 5: About Me



Screenshot 6: About Me

6th vs. 9th Grade Comparison

As could be seen from the results it is easier to work with the younger students in terms of motivation and willingness to work, the older student' knowledge of both English and IT, on the other side, allows to process topics with more complexity as well as more interesting topics could also be chosen. The younger students are not only restricted to uncomplicated projects but also require more supervision and guidance. To summarize, it could be noted that each age group has its specifics that has to be taken into account when planning projects of any type.

Commentary

The realization of digital story projects in my own teaching with possible improvements or suggestions for any future work in the area of digital story creation are discussed within this section. To make it easy to follow the observations made during the teaching practice are also organized in the 12 step implementation guide pattern.

1. Assign groups.

All the topics processed within the digital story creation were meant for individual work which I prefer over working in groups for the following reasons. Firstly, all the

projects required work outside of school which, in some cases, could not be handled without problems especially when students do not live in the same area. Secondly, I believe such work is suitable for specific group of people where the relationships among students, their skills and working needs allow it. And finally, over the years of teaching I have noticed that group work, in most cases, leads into one or two reliable students completing all the work for other group members. Despite the fact that group work has its advantages in a form of building social and working skills alongside others I would yet prefer students to work on their digital stories individually.

2. Demonstrate and teach software.

As it was mentioned earlier there was no software taught prior to digital stories creation within English classes due to lack of time and the final outcomes and programs where the stories were to be designed were chosen according to currently taught IT skills. I found such approach ideal and would not do it otherwise. Not only am I not competent enough to teach software of any kind but also educating within two different classes were connected which I find to be an excellent way of teaching students how to practically apply their knowledge.

3. Show exemplary DS.

Finding exemplary digital stories that would exactly fit my needs was more difficult than expected. The Internet offers an enormous number of digital stories of any kind but since all the projects were done with ESL students it was almost impossible to find projects that would correspond with both English level and IT skills. To avoid such difficulties in the future I requested several students who have been very successful with their projects if their stories could be used as exemplary for other students. This way students will have a chance to see how exactly should the digital stories be carried out in case of assigning the same projects in the future. I also plan to make a collection of additional digital stories of topics that could possibly be used with my students.

4. Assign task.

Assigning task in the clearest way possible is a key to success with majority of students. Since they will be working in a foreign language, the teacher can ease their effort by giving them instructions as exact as possible regarding the level of English required and recourses to be used. The problem with students learning English lies within their language

skills which are not on a level high enough to process more complicated topics students could be interested in. They are then restricted to less complex topics which might not engage them enough to put the energy needed for a successful digital story completion.

Apart from the above older students often view any extra work as a form of punishment and therefore refuse doing it. Motivating them with an interesting choice of topics does not always work as it is very difficult to attract their attention to a level where they would actually want to get deeper into the topic. Selecting the right task for the right group of students seems to be crucial but not an easy thing to do at the same time.

The last thing to be mentioned within this step is assigning alternate tasks for students having problems with performing in front of a video camera or whose family or friends refuse to take part in their projects. Such problems are most noticeable in personal topics such as My Day, My Family or About Me. In those cases students need to be offered alternate arrangement in a form of substituting unwilling participants with friends, things or puppets. The topics could also be given a slight change where students are not required to use real people but for example actors instead e.g. My Family could be changed into My Dream Family and so on.

Difficulties performing in front of a video camera or other people come with the age of lower secondary students and as some do not encounter such problems others may to such extent they refuse to fulfill the task and rather fail. I believe consistent work in the area in a form of various role play tasks and speaking activities in front of an audience lowers the intimidation and shyness in most students however alternate tasks should be designed for those whose fears persist. I consider individual approach in assigning tasks and alternate tasks vital for respectable student-teacher cooperation.

5. Define expectations.

The necessity to clear the definition of teacher's expectation as mentioned in the theoretical background is strongly agreed with. The form of an assessment rubric, new and unusual to both students and myself, was difficult to get identified with it at first but it turned out to be an effective evaluating tool. It helped me to set clear objectives of the evaluation which I believe lead to a more balanced assessment technique. Students knew exactly what areas and to what extent they will be graded. To simplify the grading process the scale of three grades only was employed.

6. Begin research.

There was not a lot of research necessary for completing the chosen topics however when there is with more complex topics I would choose the following approach based on the theoretical background and my own teaching experience. I suggest creating a list of preselected sites students may choose from to save them time and also to avoid using irrelevant sources. Students at school are in the process of learning how to work with and use information they have previously found during their research. They often want to ease their work by including the discovered material unchanged not realizing they might be breaking the copyright law. It is the teacher's role to guide them and show them how to research and use information effectively and correctly at the same time. I also recommend using various sources alongside the Internet and visit the library, museums or the town if time allows it.

7. Begin storyboarding.

As mentioned in the theoretical background of this thesis it is important for students to organize well their digital stories before starting the actual work. Without storyboarding most students would omit the required beginning, middle and end which would result in a hard to follow chaotic digital story.

8. Write narration.

Writing narration prior to its recording is, without a doubt, a necessity. Students, in most cases, have unrealistic ideas about their own skills which usually lead into underestimating this part of the project and results in a lower grade. I would suggest employing special tasks of creating a list of vocabulary and speaking about chosen topics without preparation to make them realize it is not an easy task to successfully process a given theme with no previous planning.

Another issue to be discussed within this section is checking and correcting the narration before its recording and to what extent it should be done. Apart from the students checking their own work, I believe the teacher should also provide them with his/her insight however not by correcting students' work completely but more in a form of suggestions as I am certain the priority of any project should be creating their own piece of work even with occasional mistakes students can actually learn from rather than generating a work error wise perfect with no further educating impact.

9. Produce product.

As mentioned earlier, students were producing their digital stories within both English and IT classes as well as working on them in their free time after school. Students from 6th grade managed to do more work during school time as their projects were easier to be handled and therefore had also more time for consults. Students from 9th grade, on the other side, worked with more autonomy as they did not need as much guidance. The hardest part of this step was to persuade students to go back and improve their work if any parts were not meeting the expectations or were way lower of the expected level. Finding a balance of where to make students redo their projects or where to rather lower their final grade in order to avoid discouragement for future work was not an easy task to do and had to be chosen very carefully with respect of each student's individual characteristics, learning needs and both English and IT skills.

10. Publish and present.

The authors cited in the theoretical background suggest that students should present their digital stories in front of the audience for it also improves their presenting skills as a part of the project. As was already mentioned in the application section of this thesis only the 6th grade students were presenting their work as it was part of their task. Due to time deficiency the other groups of students submitted their final work to the teacher and only several of the very successful digital stories were presented to the class as exemplary. Even then students were not interested enough in other students' work for me to make the effort of finding extra time for presenting all the stories in the future.

Publishing digital stories was not taken into consideration; however, I would think about it in the future if the work was to be connected with a selected school event. It could then combine English and IT skills with documenting a real school life experience and could be published within the school website. Students could, of course, choose to publish their work on their blogs or social network if they wanted to share it with family or friends.

11. Asses and reflect.

I believe the assessment rubric turned out well however unusual it seemed at the beginning. It was clear, easy to follow and was explained before students began their work. Most students accepted their final grades with no complaints. For the teacher, however, grading all digital stories was quite time consuming. The next thing, in my opinion, to be considered for any future project of this kind is the weight of the final grade which should

be scaled according to the reasons for assigning a digital story project. Possibilities could be e.g. extra work, volunteer vs. compulsory work, final work, revision work and more each resulting in a different view of the grade received.

Reflecting is not a very common thing to do in our teaching system and students together with teachers are only at the beginning of accepting it as a valuable feedback in education. To find out whether the students enjoyed working on their projects alongside with improving their skills they have been given a questionnaire which helped me as a teacher to evaluate the overall impact of the digital story projects on the teaching practice.

Questionnaire Results

The following are the results of the questionnaire given to students upon digital story completion. Graph 1 presents the answers of 6th grade students while Graph 2 those of students from the 9th grade. The bars represent the number of students who selected each of possible answers while the numbers at the bottom of the graphs refer to these 16 questions that have been asked:

Receptive skills

1. Do you think you worked on your reading skills when producing your digital story?
2. Do you think you worked on your listening skills when producing your digital story?

Productive skills

3. Do you think you worked on your speaking skills when producing your digital story?
4. Do you think you worked on your writing skills when producing your digital story?

Vocabulary

5. Were you encouraged to use target vocabulary?
6. Have you learnt any new vocabulary?

Grammar

7. Were you encouraged to use grammar rules you have previously learnt?
8. Did you miss the knowledge of some grammar rules?

IT skills

9. Do you think your IT skills have improved?
10. Were your IT skills sufficient to work on your project successfully?

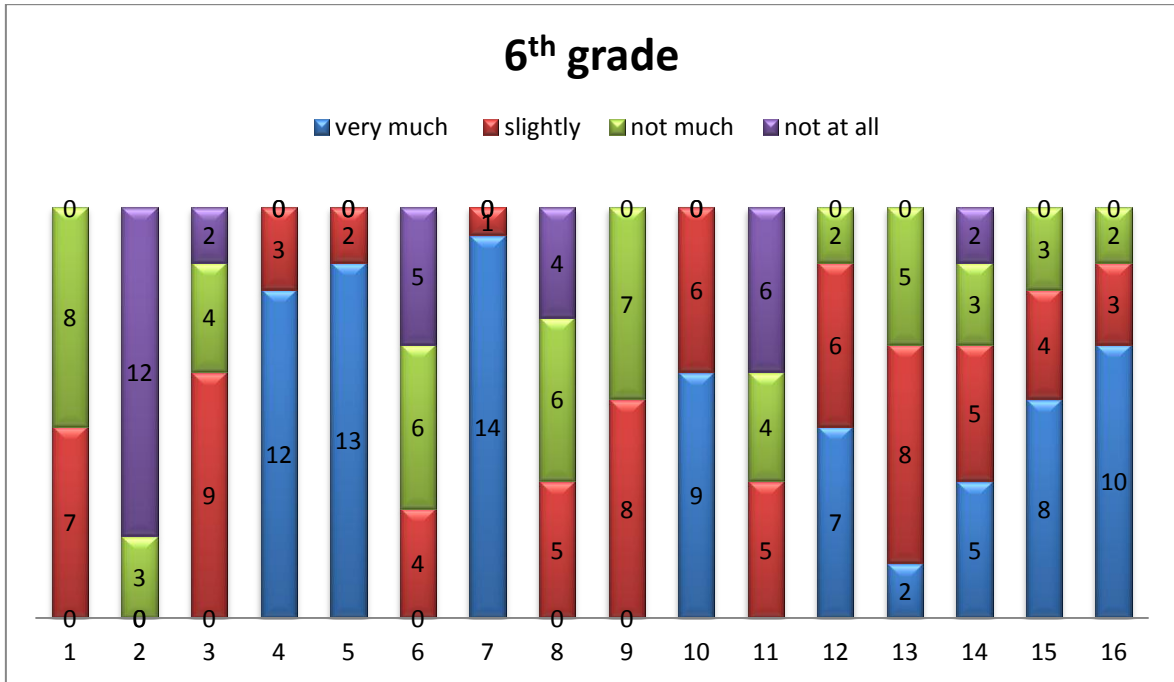
Enjoyment

11. Did you find working on your digital story difficult?

12. Did you enjoy working on your digital story project?
13. Did you like the topic of your digital story?
14. Would you like to do more digital story projects in the future?

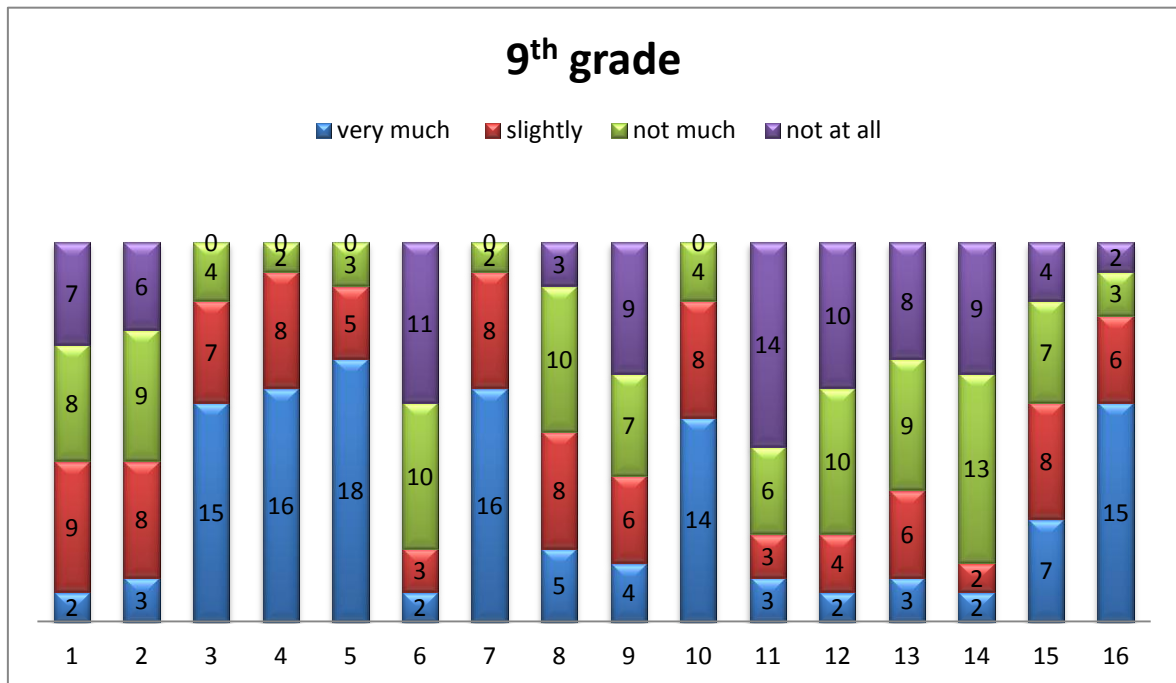
Working environment

15. Did you have enough time to complete your work?
16. Did you get help from your teacher when needed?



Graph 1: Answers of 6th grade students

Most students think their listening and reading skills were not worked on unlike the productive skills that were used greatly in producing their digital stories. The majority of students agreed that they were encouraged to use target vocabulary and grammar but did not learn a lot of new information. The IT skills were sufficient in most cases and there was also a slight improvement in students' knowledge in the area. The working environment turned out to be stimulating with the teacher's support and enough time to complete the work. The overall enjoyment during the digital story creation was very positive and a high percentage of students would like to work on a similar project in the future.



Graph 2: Answers of 9th grade students

Most students thought productive skills were used more than receptive skills. They were highly encouraged to use target vocabulary and grammar and several also responded that new vocabulary was acquired. The knowledge of grammar seemed sufficient however number of students felt they are missing necessary grammar rules to express their thoughts. Students' IT skills, on the other hand, were adequate and digital story creation did not lead into improving these for many students. A high number of students did not find working on the task difficult but they did not enjoy it much and would not like to do similar projects in the future. The working environment was evaluated as average with reference to time allocation and as outstanding regarding the teachers support.

The results correspond well with my own observations of students work and attitude. It could be said that digital storytelling projects met the goals in terms of practicing English language even gaining new knowledge in some cases. I agree that it is a suitable teaching tool for bringing variety into class alongside connecting different subjects when the topics are carefully chosen. It is also great for students to practice using English language in its complexity and to their full potential together with working on other skills such as many times mentioned IT skills or the ability to search for and use information. The time required for the digital story creation itself and the afterward assessment, unwillingness of some students to work or the insufficient level of English for processing topics of more demanding areas are some of the negatives observed during my teaching practice.

The overall impression of digital storytelling as a valuable teaching tool for improving language instruction is mainly positive; however, it requires careful time and curriculum planning and more practice in organization if to be used effectively. I can say with confidence that I will devote more time in the future to digital story creation not only to get more experience in the area but also for enhancing and enriching my own teaching methods.

V. IMPLICATIONS

Implications for teaching in the form of recommendations for teachers willing to try digital storytelling for their own language instruction improvement together with limitations of the research and ideas for further research are discussed within this section.

Implications for Teaching

Teachers eager to improve their language instruction should attempt using digital story creation. Not only will they break the monotony of ordinary English lessons but they will also improve various students' skills alongside using the target language in its complexity. In order to do so effectively several suggestions have been made according to the results and observations made during my action research.

Efficient planning and organization is vital for any successful project work and thus following the 12 step implementation guide described in the Theoretical Background is strongly recommended, especially for those not familiar with such work. Before commencing with digital story creation various decisions have to be made in order to avoid confusion and unpreparedness during the whole process. The teacher needs to have a clear idea about the topic and the expectations of how it should be treated. Choosing the right topic for different groups of students is essential. Factors as age, English skills, IT skills or students personal characteristics among others should be taken into consideration. After selecting what students will be working on the teacher has to decide how they will be assessed which could be done in the form of an assessment rubric or in any other way the teacher and students are accustomed to; however, creating an assessment rubric with clear evaluating criteria results in slight decrease of the subjectivity every teacher carries into the grading process.

When the above key questions have been answered, I would then recommend the teacher to decide whether students will be working individually or as a group. I would suggest students to work separately to begin with but if group work is preferred I believe pair work should be chosen over a higher number of group members for the reasons already mentioned in the Commentary section. Furthermore, the software and research tools should also be selected prior to digital story assignment. Unless the teacher is literate in using various software I would advise consulting the school IT specialist and try to attempt for future cooperation. Together they can decide on the form and processing of the future digital stories. If any type of research will be necessary for the project completion a

list of preselected sites should be designed in order to prevent students from using Google and Wikipedia as primary research tools. Finally, the amount of time the teacher is willing to dedicate to the project within the English lessons and the time students will have to work on their own should be determined however it can be assumed that it will be adjusted accordingly during the digital story creation.

The remaining steps of the implementation guide that have not been mentioned within the recommendations should also be followed; however, certain customization is expected according to the individual teaching practices and as the work progresses. Nevertheless, I believe receiving clear ideas by answering the previous fundamental questions is essential if the digital story project is to be carried out successfully.

Limitations of the Research

It is expected for every research to have its limitations. Three groups of students have been chosen for the digital story projects and they were only of two different age groups which I believe misrepresent slightly the research results. To get values that could be considered as steady it would require a research extended in both length and age variety.

Time deficiency could be also reflected as a limitation. As it was mentioned several times in previous sections the time that could be devoted to digital story creation was not sufficient enough to do all the work within school classes which subsequently lead into an increase of outside school work resulting in motivation decrease. Unfortunately, the time that could be allocated to projects of a similar kind does not correspond with time requirements for such work.

Further Research

If there were more research to be conducted in the future it would be interesting to choose more complex topics that would require specific research in different areas. Connection with more subjects apart from the IT could also be explored in order to find out whether students are able to use the English language for cross curricular production. It might also be suitable to do digital storytelling in the Czech language to discover to what extent students are capable to process a task in their mother tongue which could then be compared with their outcomes in the English language. A possible cooperation with high school teachers might also prove itself convenient to discover how students' language skills together with skills necessary for project completion improve with age. Finally, more digital stories similar to those completed within the action research could be assigned by

different language teachers including other foreign languages. The benefits of digital storytelling together with observations and suggestions for improvement could follow as an outcome of a discussion among all the colleagues.

VI. CONCLUSION

As described in the Theoretical Background of this thesis telling stories is a natural way of sharing experience widely spread among all people which was, due to the technology age, transferred onto the next level creating digital storytelling an innovative communication tool. It can take on many forms and can be also used variously. The possible use as a teaching tool is considered one of its advantages and is further explored both theoretically and practically.

After a detailed description of digital storytelling on theoretical basis including types of digital stories, their benefits, student's development or the class implementation to mention some, the actual action research has been taken in order to find out whether it can improve language instruction. Students of two different age groups worked on the projects and three different topics were chosen. The instructions and suggestions described in the Theoretical Background were followed and notes have been taken during the whole process so a final discussion could be held.

Most of the work was done with no serious problems and students' results of the action research came out acceptable corresponding well with their level of English. Students' opinions about the digital storytelling came out positive in terms of practical usage of English; the older group of students' however would not prefer similar projects in the future due to extra time required for a successful completion.

If I am to answer the key question about using digital storytelling for language instruction improvement I would also have to highlight it as a valuable teaching tool which, used under certain circumstances and with enough experience, can not only help break the monotony of regular lessons but can also give students the opportunity to use English language for sharing real life experience along with the discreet building of additional essential skills necessary for their future lives.

REFERENCES

- Digital.(n.d.).In Cambridge online dictionary. Retrieved from
<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/digital?q=digital>
- Digital.(n.d.).In Merriam-Webster online dictionary. Retrieved from
<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/digital>
- Digital.(n.d.).In Oxford online dictionary. Retrieved from
<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/digital?q=digital>
- Frazel, F. (2010).*Digital Storytelling Guide for Educators*. USA: International Society for Technology in Education.
- Groh, K. (2001). Storytelling Passport to the 21st Century: What are the potential benefits of storytelling? Retrieved from <http://www.creatingthe21stcentury.org/Intro6-benefits-story.html>
- Hardware.(n.d). In Merriam-Webster online dictionary. Retrieved from
<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hardware>
- Harmer, J. (2007).*The Practice of English Language Teaching*. England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Kalhous, Z., &Obst, O. (2002).*Školnídidaktika*.Praha: Portál.
- Lambert, J. (2010).*Digital storytelling cookbook*. USA: Digital Diner Press.
- Maran, R. (2010).*Steps for integrating digital story into an EFL lesson using Photo Story 3*.JaltCallJournal, 2, 103-114. http://journal.jaltcall.org/articles/6_2_Maran.pdf
- Miller, C.H. (2008). *Digital Storytelling: A Creator's Guide to Interactive Entertainment* (2nd ed.). USA: Focal Press.
- Ohler, J.B. (2007). *Digital Storytelling in the Classroom: New Media Pathways to Literacy, Learning, and Creativity*. USA: Corwin Press.
- Průcha, J. (2002). *Modernípedagogika*.Praha: Portál.
- Research Institute of Education in Prague. (2007). *The Framework Education Programme For Elementary Education*. Available from http://nuv.cz/file/195_1_1/download/
- Software.(n.d). In Merriam-Webster online dictionary. Retrieved from
<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/software>
- Story. (n.d.).In Cambridge online dictionary. Retrieved from
http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/story_1?q=story%C2%A8
- Story. (n.d.).In Merriam-Webster online dictionary. Retrieved from
<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/story>

Story. (n.d.). In Oxford online dictionary. Retrieved from

<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/story?q=story>

Teehan, K. (2006). *Digital Storytelling: In and Out of the Classroom*. USA: Lulu.com.

SHRNUTÍ

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá digitálním vypravováním jako jednou z možností forem výuky. Teoretická část nabízí základní informace o digitálním vypravování, jeho vývoji a možnosti tvorby. Popsán je též proces samotné produkce včetně dostupného softwaru. Dále se zabývá výhodami začlenění této vyučovací formy do výuky a z toho plynoucího rozvoje studentů jak na úrovni všeobecné tak i jazykové. Poslední část teoretické části tvoří návod na implementaci digitálního vypravování do výuky. Praktická část popisuje průběh výzkumu v rámci jazykové výuky. Představeni jsou studenti a vybraná témata. Následuje popis samotné práce a způsob, jakým bylo digitální vypravování do výuky začleněno. Závěrečná část praktické části shrnuje výsledky studentů, po kterých následuje diskuze včetně návrhů a doporučení pro výuku a možností dalšího výzkumu.