A four month research study with UCL Institute Of Education's EDUCATE project

DOES VIDEO PRODUCTION INCREASE THE RATE OF PUPIL PROGRESS IN KS2 ENGLISH?

Authors: Dominic Traynor & Tim Miles - LitFilmFest - info@litfilmfest.com

Based at the UCL Institute Of Education, EDUCATE connects EdTech entrepreneurs, practitioners and researchers and uses research to inspire the design of high-quality learning products and services. It helps companies develop and create EdTech products that work.

Introduction

LitFilmFest brings together traditional literacy with digital skills by producing English projects for primary schools which follow the National Curriculum. The aim is to make traditional reading and writing more enjoyable and purposeful for the YouTube generation by combining the best of traditional literacy skills with digital skills.

Why did we do the study?

As primary teachers, we had seen the effects of combining traditional literacy with digital literacy in the classroom. Having identified that the motivations, hopes and dreams of today's pupil are subtly yet significantly different to those of previous generations, we knew that bringing video production into the classroom was crucial to give context to traditional literacy as well as developing the digital and presentation skills that children need to succeed in the global, digital economy.

Since we started LitFilmFest in 2014, our teaching and learning projects have been used in over 4000 primary classrooms. However, apart from anecdotal feedback and raw school data, we did not have conclusive evidence of how and why our approach was successful in terms of academic progress and pupil engagement. We wanted to use our approach in a few different schools to see if we could reliably measure the effect that our projects would have on the attainment and engagement of a diverse range of 7-11 year olds. Our research question was, 'Does video production increase the rate of pupil progress in KS2 English?'

Who took part?

The data was collected from 202 Key Stage 2 pupils from three different state primary schools. We wanted the research study to involve a mix of socio-economic backgrounds, access to technology and school settings so that the findings of the study could be applied to a wide range of schools nationally. See chart on page 3.

School	# Pupils on roll	Gender	Local authority	Access to technology	Ofsted rating	% Free school meals	% SEN	% Pupil premium
#1	72	Mixed	Shropshire	Limited	Good	0	0	0
#2	199	Mixed	Islington, London	Limited	Good	35.2	13.9	53
#3	249	Mixed	Hackney, London	1:1 iPad Apple RTC	Outstanding	29.3	17	54

How was the research study structured?

The classroom projects we designed for the research study combined traditional literacy with digital literacy to encourage pupils to understand the connection between reading, writing and the digital media they are surrounded by. The video outputs created by the pupils from each project were a range of styles; news reports, cooking programmes, adventure films and "explainer" videos.

The research took place from September to the end of December 2017, usually for 5 days a week and one hour a day. The projects in the study were:

- The Plastic Times - 10 lessons - news reports. The video output is a news bulletin.

- El Dorado - 55 lessons - adventure genre covering narrative writing, character descriptions, letter writing, diary writing and script writing as well as studying a fiction text. The video output is an adventure film.

- Kitchen Kid - 10 lessons - instruction and persuasive writing covering healthy eating. The video output is a cooking programme.

- Temple of Boom - 30 lessons - adventure genre covering narrative writing, character descriptions, letter writing, diary writing and script writing. The video output is an adventure film.

- Masters of the Digiverse - 5 lessons - balanced arguments. The video output is a digital safety video.

This is the breakdown of which projects were delivered in each class involved in the study.

School #1	Y6 - Temple of Boom (6 weeks), Plastic Times (2 weeks), Kitchen Kid (2 weeks), Masters of the Digiverse (1 week) Y3/4/5 - El Dorado (11 weeks)
School #2	Y6 - Temple of Boom (6 weeks), Plastic Times (2 weeks), Kitchen Kid (2 weeks), Masters of the Digiverse (1 week) Y3/4/5 - El Dorado (11 weeks)
School #3	Y5/6 - El Dorado (11 weeks)

Each classroom project followed the National Curriculum for KS2 English and provided the class teachers with the following:

- Differentiated planning

- Stimulus videos

- Interactive whiteboard files

- Supporting resources (writing frames, word banks, etc)

Initially, all three schools received one day of teacher training from our team which covered the literacy and, above all, digital skills that would be needed during the research project. Once the research study had started, all of the classroom teaching was delivered by the classroom teachers without any support by the LitFilmFest team.

How was progress measured?

Before our projects were used in the classroom, all pupils completed a cold writing task designed by the LitFilmFest team which asked them to write a narrative story from some basic stimulus

material. At the end of the research project, all pupils completed a similar task which again used some basic stimulus material. For both tasks, children had 45 minutes to complete their work.

In order to measure improvements in writing, we used No More Marking, an online comparative judgement tool.

"No More Marking uses the professional judgement by teachers to replace the marking of tests. A judge is asked to compare the work of two students and simply to decide which of them is the better. From many such comparisons a measurement scale is created showing the relative quality of each student's work; the scale can then be referenced in familiar ways to generate test results." (Pollitt, 2012)

We had a team of six judges, all primary teachers ranging from former headteachers to current class teachers, who used No More Marking's comparative judgement platform to repeatedly compare two random pieces of writing.

Judges' backgrounds and data

Judge A	BA Hons Sports Development, KS2 Phase leader, Year 6 teacher, writing moderator for local authority and approved SATs moderator.
Judge B	33 years teaching in primary schools across all the age ranges. Deputy Head, Assessment co-ordinator, Mentor to NQTs and students and Acting Head.
Judge C	BA Hons English Literature & Film Studies, Graduate Teacher Programme, Year 5 form teacher, KS1 & KS2 ICT teacher, ICT & Digital Literacy Co-ordinator.
Judge D	BSc Biochemistry/Human Nutrition, Deputy of Teaching and Learning and classroom teaching experience in Y5 and 6.
Judge E	BA Hons, English & Education, research into the psychology of children's writing, linguistic research, 20 years experience in Primary teaching (all KS2) and English lead.
Judge F	Permanent primary class teacher and tutor. Experience of supporting SEN as SENCO. Moderation experience in KS1 and 2.

Writing Progress Results

Using 'anchors', examples of writing identified by the NMM team as being age-related standards taken from over 13,500 primary pupils across the country from more than 130 schools, we were able to create a scale on which to plot writing improvement. This allowed us to produce data which compared the progress of pupils involved in the study against a reliable national scale.

The LitFilmFest approach delivered an average of 15 months progress over 4 months compared to the national average.
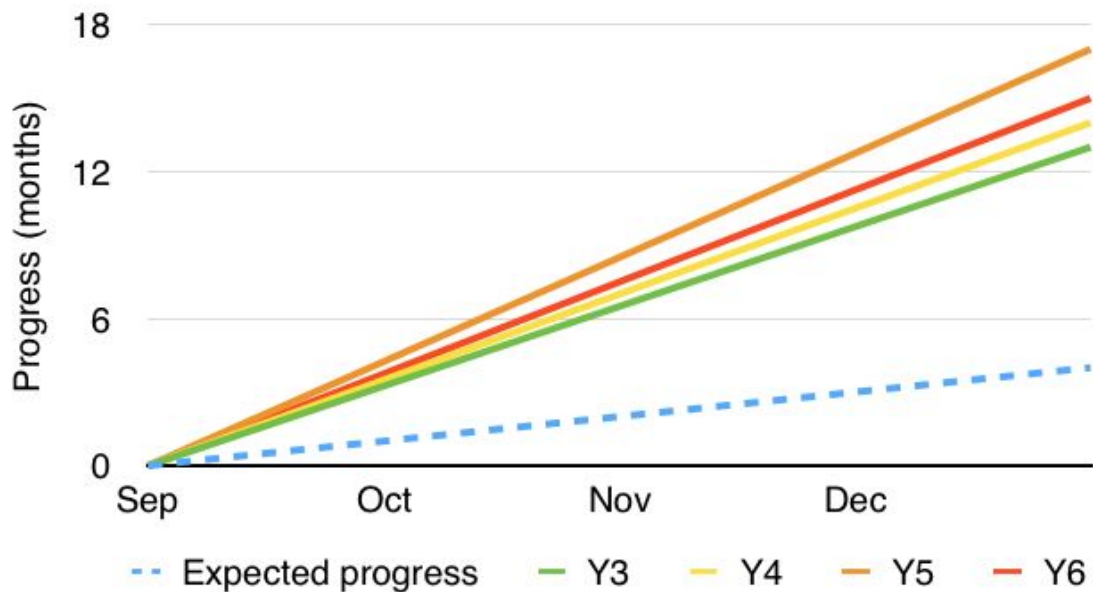
	Pre scaled score				Post scaled score			
	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Mean	456.6	466.5	494	504.7	485.8	498.3	519.2	536.2
Std.Deviation	24.3	22.4	17.8	20.6	19.7	24.1	22.3	18.6

Looking at the changes from pre-test to the post-test scaled writing scores, the table shows that for pupils in all year groups 3 to 6, the mean score for writing increased. The increase is equivalent to around 6 months in Y3 and 1 year 7 months in Y4, Y5 and Y6 in terms of mean writing ages of each year group.

Participating Teacher Testimonials

I loved teaching the projects because the engagement and effort levels of my pupils exploded. I thoroughly enjoyed facilitating the learning. Seeing their progress week by week was fantastic and the sentence level work which was included gave fantastic structure to their writing. The projects also allowed enough flexibility for me to support and extend different groups of pupils as required.

Richard Piggford, Year 6 teacher, KS2 Phase Leader, Holy Trinity Primary

The effect of creating videos in our English classes on the levels of engagement in my classroom has been remarkable. Although it was hard work, I've never seen my pupils so keen to improve their English skills. In a small rural school like ours, creating something that can be seen by a global audience is such a powerful motivating force. The projects themselves really help to channel that energy into pushing them to improve their traditional English skills.

Rachel Preece-Dawson, Year 4/5/6 teacher & Literacy Lead, Sheriffhales Primary

The KS2 children at Copenhagen Primary School have thoroughly enjoyed every aspect of their learning during this research project. They went on a journey of mystery and mayhem, while considerably improving their imagination and confidence in writing, no matter what their interest or ability. As a teacher, it was challenging but definitely worth it to see the significant progress that our pupils made across the board.

Rebecca Thomson, Year 5 teacher & Literacy Lead, Copenhagen Primary

Conclusions

We believe that the 'YouTube Generation' doesn't relate to traditional forms of media (books, newspapers, etc) in the same way as Millennials or Generation X do. In our experience as primary school teachers, this leads to a disconnect between English as a subject and the digital media that they consume.

Matching traditional with digital gives pupils a sense of purpose. The digital end product motivates pupils to improve over the course of each classroom project. Giving pupils creative freedom to make choices within a predefined structure creates ownership. This combination of purpose and ownership is the major reason why KS2 pupils make so much progress using LitFilmFest.

Pupils are very motivated by the experience of creating video which opens them up to understanding the relationship between traditional English skills and digital skills. This leads to a significant increase in effort and enthusiasm. When these two things are brought together, the average rate of progress improves significantly delivering the kinds of results we see in this research study.

What are the holes in the research?

The brief given to the judges to complete the No More Marking task was to 'choose the better narrative'. Our data doesn't give us precise details on how exactly our judges felt that the children got better at writing.

We tried to minimise the impact of children leaving mid-project by removing their data from the study, likewise for children joining after the initial questioning and cold task. The study therefore initially had more than 202 pupils, but had to be reduced.

A Y4 teacher in school #2 was absent for a significant period. That same class also had the lowest attendance percentage. The combination of these two factors is something which we think had a negative impact on the data. There were also just two Y3 classes who took part in the study, which meant that the average Y3 writing improvement data was more heavily reliant on the performance of those two teachers.