Digital Storytelling as a Pedagogical Tool for Enhanced Learner Engagement

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Abstract: This article provides an overview of Digital Storytelling as an instructional tool in the language classroom. Digital Storytelling as an educational tool can be very engaging as students can learn and practice their language skills. Additionally, Digital Storytelling targets both spoken and written language production through the iterative stages which are brainstorming, storyboarding, scriptwriting, rehearsing and presenting. Language teachers can adapt Digital Storytelling to be an instructional tool at every level since the complexity of the task can be modified through the story being told, and the language difficulty. The underpinning framework in Digital Storytelling is multimodal literacy which dictates technological advancement in digital media and mobile technology has led to the empowerment of students in multitasking aptitude. Similarly, in relation to Digital Storytelling, the iterative processes between the five stages empowers students in multimodal literacy. In the creation of digital stories, students will generally go through these processes: brainstorming, storyboarding, scriptwriting, rehearsing and presenting. These processes are valuable to the learning experiences of students, especially in enhancing their spoken and written language skills. Hence, as an educational and instructional tool, Digital Storytelling can be an adaptable and entertaining approach that can help students to enjoy the language learning process.

Keywords: Multimodal literacy, constructivist, Digital Storytelling, English as a Second Language (ESL).

A CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH TO LANGUAGE LEARNING

There are two dimensions in Constructivism. The first is the epistemological domain which contributed to the theory on knowledge and pedagogy (Mcnichols, 1999). The epistemological domain denoted acquisition and the source of knowledge, while pedagogy also included the instructional theories. The approach in the present research was also consistent with how constructivism relates to student-centred, collaborative, and authentic learning (Kwan & Wong, 2015).

The constructivist outlook is considered as the most apt for this study as it stimulated reasoning, self-regulation and learner reflection, critical thinking, and knowledge application (Driscoll & Burner, 2005; Kwan & Wong, 2015). According to the theory of Zone of Proximal Development, higher order thinking is initiated by social activities and social interactions, found in social situations (Vygotsky, 1978 in McLeod, 2015).

In the classroom, a constructivist learning environment would place emphasis on social negotiations that is crucial in the development of students' critical thinking. To illustrate, in social negotiations, students will face contradictions. Hence, they will need to justify their opinions, and reflect on their thinking when they are asked to support their perspectives (Kwan & Wong, 2015). Additionally, Schunk (2012) considered constructivist learners to actively construct knowledge such as through the process of making sense when encountering new information because this process demands learners to adapt and modify their present cognitive strategies and knowledge, so that the newly acquired knowledge is stored in their knowledge bank, thus completing the constructivist phase.

THEORIES IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION (SLA)

Theories in language learning should be reviewed to understand how adults learn language. Undeniably, first language acquisition is different in many aspects from learning a second language. One of the pioneers in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Krashen has been investigating and developing theories in SLA (Krashen, 2009). The researcher believed that these theories are crucial and relevant to this study.
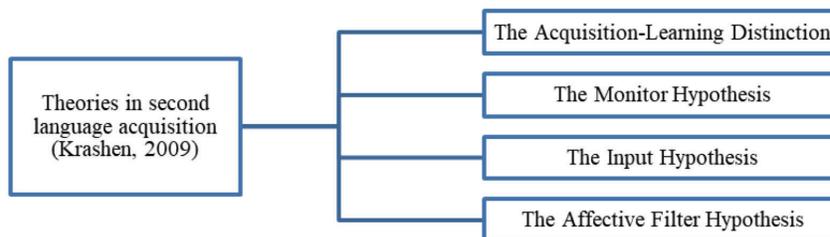
Fig. 1. Krashen's theories in second language acquisition

Krashen (2009) discussed several important theories in the field of SLA. The first theory is the Acquisition-Learning Distinction which dictates that adults learning a second language have two separate, independent ways of acquiring communicative competence. The first one is through language acquisition which is imitative to how children acquire their mother tongue. The language acquisition is a subconscious, implicit process where the learners are not aware of the acquisition process, but they became aware of the language acquisition when they used the language to interact. Grammar rules that they violated and any errors that occur, may not be within their consciousness. Other terms that refer to this method of language acquisition are 'implicit learning, informal learning, and natural learning' (Krashen, 2009, p. 10). The next method of SLA according to the Acquisition-Learning Distinction, is through language learning. In contrast to language acquisition, the language learning process dictates that learners are consciously aware of their effort to learn a language such as 'knowing the rules, being aware of them, and being able to talk about them' (Krashen, 2009, p. 11). This method of learning is also referred to as explicit learning.

Comparatively, the Monitor Hypothesis opposes the Acquisition-Learning Distinction. It disagrees that learning, and acquisition are two independent processes, rather, these processes are interdependent. Acquisition determines the acquirer's fluency. Meanwhile, learning functions as a monitor, or editor that adapts, adopts, edit, or repair the language during or after the language is produced. Specifically, acquiring the language is important. However, learning takes place when the acquirer develops their language through practice, and self-correction before or after writing or speaking. According to the monitor hypothesis, the formal rules that learners learn have a limited role and they are only applicable within three conditions: time, focus on

form, and knowing the rule (Krashen, 2009). If they have ample time to think, learners can apply the formal rules. Although, natural interactions seldom allow for speakers to take too long, lest learners risk appearing hesitant in their speech or accused of inattention for taking focus off the conversation to think about what to say, instead. Next, while interacting with one another, learners can be consciously learning if they focus on form or thinking about correctness (Dulay & Burt, 1978 in Krashen, 2009, p. 16). However, again, they may not be able to recall and may lose focus on the conversation. Finally, conscious learning can occur when learners know all of the language rules, which is not possible as language learners are most often exposed to fragments of the rules. As Krashen (2009, p. 16) reiterated: 'We can be sure that our students are exposed only to a small part of the total grammar of the language, and we know that even the best students do not learn every rule they are exposed to'.

Next, another theory that Krashen proposed on SLA is the Input Hypothesis. The impetus for this theory is questions such as how do people acquire language? How do they advance from one stage to another? Acquisition is developed when learners' understanding of the language structure is understood beyond their present understanding. Hence, how do learners develop understanding of language structures they have not acquired? This is achievable when learners use their knowledge of the world, context, and extra-linguistic information, on top of their linguistic competence (Krashen, 2009, p. 21). Therefore, the Input Hypothesis opposes the assumptions that language learning is administered by learning the structures, which are then used in practice, and then only fluency develops. Fluency and accuracy cannot be taught explicitly, and it takes time to develop independently by listening and understanding more input.

Finally, another theory in SLA is the Affective Filter Hypothesis. This theory relates to how the affective factors relate to the second language acquisition process (Krashen, 2009). Dulay and Burt (1977) introduced the concept of the affective filter and in 1981, Krashen established a set of variables that can affect successful language learning.
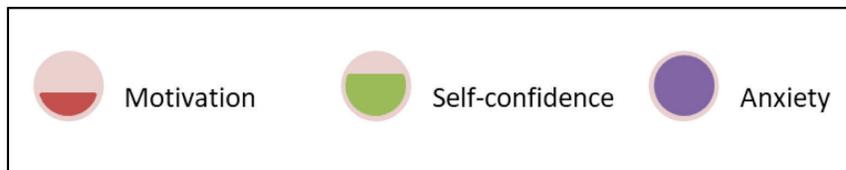
Fig. SEQ Figure * ARABIC 2. Variables in the Affective Filter

Non-optimal learners who possess a high or strong Affective Filter, would display, or possess low motivation, low self-confidence, and high anxiety. Meanwhile, optimal learners would possess higher motivation, higher self-confidence, and lower anxiety. When an input is given, the learners' affective variables can either 'impede or facilitate the delivery of input to the language acquisition device' which can influence whether the input was comprehensible to the learners or otherwise (Krashen, 2009, p. 32).
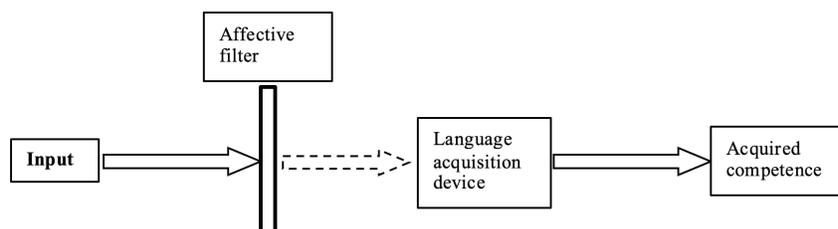

Fig. SEQ Figure * ARABIC 3. An illustration of the Affective Filter Hypothesis

In conclusion, the researcher believes that these SLA theories are fundamental in understanding how language learners acquire and develop their language. In relation to this study, theories such as the Input Hypothesis and the Affective Filter Hypothesis are significant in helping researchers, educators, and learners understand the process of learning and acquiring a second language because not only are there many different theories and school of thought, but there are also many different internal and external factors influence learners' proficiency.

MULTIMODAL LITERACY

Multimodality refers to the different modes of communication that existed in a single message (Gregori-Signes, 2014). Walsh (2009, p. 1) indicated that multimodal literacy was also referred to as multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Unsworth, 2001), new literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003), multimodal texts, multimodal discourse, and multimodality. In this study, multimodality is in the use of Digital Storytelling, digital tools, computer skills, social media, and integration of 21st century learning skills in the ESL classroom.

Multimodality is evident in today's digital age where there is 'textual shift' in the sharing and dispersal of information and communication, which has led to a shift in the 'literacy and learning' paradigm (Walsh, 2009, p. 1). In other words, technological advancement in digital media and mobile technology empowered students' multitasking aptitude such as in activities like 'surfing the internet, texting and chatting on social media, and playing a game while listening to music' (Walsh, 2009, p. 1). Youth growing up in this day and age were capable of producing their own unique multimedia texts through hybrid texts such as weblogs, instastory, podcasts, snapchat, tiktok, or YouTube videos. The advancement of the web 2.0 allowed for greater interactive use of the world wide web via collaboration, connectivity, and enhanced communication. In addition, web 2.0 technology also led to another source of information sharing, such as blogs, wikis, podcasting as well as social media, which further contributed to new cultures such as the paroxysm of memes, and gifs. The use of abbreviations in spelling, numbers, graphics, and images, emoji, acronyms, and such have influenced the communication of today.

Via exposure to synchronized texts, images, sound, and movement, youths of today have developed multitasking, specifically on the digital platform (Walsh, 2009). Thus, how has this shift changed the way students learn inside and outside the classroom? How have these processes of 'texting, blogging, or communicating online' affected the 'cognitive abilities' of students? (Walsh, 2009, p. 2). Comparatively, how do their different cognitive abilities process information when dealing with classroom tasks such as writing, reading, and interacting with printed texts?

The emergence and advancement in digital communication would inevitably lead to innovation of theories and pedagogy. Similarly, in order to prevent redundancy in the classrooms, curriculum and assessment practices must also be transformed (Walsh, 2009). Educators were tasked with identifying 'what type of pedagogical shift' their students needed to accommodate the textual shift, and the integral role that the 'new modes of communication' played in the communication in the classroom (Walsh, 2009, p. 2). In understanding and reflecting in the emergence of multimodality in the learning environment, researchers and educators should ponder on aspects of digital texts that students interact with:

1. Whether the visual, aural, spatial, and textual processes occurred separately or simultaneously?
2. Do students read digital texts for meaning in the same way as they read print-based texts?
3. What are the strategies needed for digital reading to enhance 'inferential, analytical, critical and evaluative understanding'?
4. What are the differences between the process of sending a text message and a handwritten message on paper?

Advancement in communication devices such as smartphones and tablets led to the success of social media, which are available within reach, any time of the day. Social media popularized hybrid texts, which involved 'an interchange of modalities and processes' (Walsh, 2009, p. 2). A post on social media has specific designs, where it may incorporate images, graphics, video, and sound. Through social media as well, consumers were given a platform to participate, create, produce, design and author their own texts for communication, publicly, discreetly, or anonymously (Walsh, 2009). Hence, reading does not only include looking at the text, but also listening to the audio, viewing the visual and responding to the text. Conversely, writing in hybrid text may involve speech, and listening as well. The preconceived notion of what texts are, and the overall process of literacy has blurred, and most texts are transformed into hybrid texts (Walsh, 2009). The multimodal environment in the classroom today incorporates both print-based and digital texts in the teaching and learning process. Table 1 outlines the difference between these two materials.

When multimodal literacy is incorporated in the classroom, students are

engaged in other processes that are not limited to the 'traditional aspects of literacy' only. For instance, they would also come across semiotic systems (Walsh, 2009, p. 6). In other words, they do not only have to understand the context, but also the 'interconnection...between the modalities of written text, image, and sound' (Walsh, 2009, p. 6). More holistic learning takes place when multimodal literacy is included in the curriculum as students become more responsible and active in their learning. To illustrate, Walsh (2009, p. 6) observed that whilst recording their narration, students became aware and careful of their 'tone, intonation, pauses, pitch, modulation and stress' in their dialogue and how it would affect their audience. The present study aims for this kind of awareness among its participants too.

Besides that, the researcher also aims for students to possess high levels of engagement in their task. Male students who were often disinterested in classroom learning displayed higher learner engagement when conventional tasks were integrated with multimodal texts (Walsh, 2009). While students interact with the written text, they must also plan the audio production, and which visual (images and graphics) to incorporate. 'This whole process demonstrates a different literacy where modes converge' (Walsh, 2009, p. 7). There is a structure in gaining literacy and the learning experiences when there is collaboration, not only in the task but also between students when they discuss, listen, plan, review, research, design, write and publish their digital content together.

Literacy process of print-based materials	Literacy process with digital technology
▪ The reading process involves knowledge on coding, semantic and pragmatic. ▪ Use of latent and background knowledge to understand different types of texts and audience. ▪ When necessary, the instructor models and scaffolds the overall genre with different text types. ▪ Students plan and draft print-based texts. ▪ Throughout modelling and scaffolding by the instructor, peer collaboration and discussion can take place.	▪ Exploration of web 2.0 technology by both instructor and students. ▪ The process of planning, drafting, designing content, and exploring the combination of audio and video files. ▪ Produce storyboards as a record and narrative for the images and graphics. ▪ Proceed with combining visual, written and audio materials such as narrating the text, and recording the audio within a time limit with sound and music. ▪ Contribute to a sense of an audience.

Table 1. Literacy processes of print-based materials vs. digital technology

Similarly, when multimodal pedagogy was implemented on a group with higher proficiency, it was observed that students revealed an inclination for creative thinking, teamwork in problem-solving and divergent thinking (Walsh, 2009). During the completion of their digital content, they displayed higher order thinking skills in both individual and group tasks, in addition to learner autonomy, they required little teacher talk. The higher proficiency students were able to develop learner autonomy and their intrinsic motivation during the completion of the digital content, as evident in Walsh's commentary:

> *A rather quiet student became the class expert...with camerawork and editing. The teacher had to open the classroom at lunchtimes to have the movies completed and most students attended these extra sessions. Before the teacher could call in an expert to demonstrate the iMovie application, the students had taught themselves and were teaching other class members. Students taught themselves how to use GarageBand to add music and sound effects to the movies (Walsh, 2009, p. 41).*

Finally, multimodal pedagogy helped in addressing all types of students, from the extroverted ones to the introverted ones. As an approach in enhancing learning experiences, multimodal literacy's potential proved beneficial due to its holistic versatility that can fit any mode of learning.

MULTIMODAL LITERACY VIA DIGITAL STORYTELLING

The impact of technology, in addition to the ease and assistance afforded by technology over the recent years, have been tremendous. Technological innovations, especially recording tools such as digital cameras, video cameras and smartphones, software for editing, narrating, and authoring which are readily available, have provided more opportunities for technology to be used in the classroom. The opportunities also extended to helping students learn and making the experience fun and more relevant to the real world. These innovations created more meaningful learning experiences while simultaneously facilitating the process of knowledge construction, presentation of ideas and information sharing.

Storytelling has always been a tool for conveying knowledge and values throughout the history of human development especially during the time of

the Prophet Muhammad, Plato, and Aristotle. In fact, storytelling was at its height during the Shakespearean age. Although informal and unguided by any curriculum, storytelling is a powerful teaching tool due to its natural yet powerful technique of engaging and exchanging knowledge, experiences, moral values and even humor (Smeda, Dakich & Sharda, 2013). In the classroom, storytelling can be used as a tool to personalize students' learning experiences, by providing opportunities for students to 'construct their own meaning and knowledge from the stories that they hear and tell' (Behmer, 2005 in Smeda et al., 2013, p. 3).

To make the curriculum relevant to the students in the present classroom, technology should be integrated with the syllabus. However, this does not merely refer to the technology manipulated and controlled by instructors in the classroom. In fact, with the popularity and widespread use of social media today, the culture of storytelling lives on through these new digital tools. Hence, 'a digital story can be viewed as a merger between traditional storytelling and the use of multimedia technology' (Normann, 2011 in Smeda et al., 2013, p. 1).

Students should be given authority over their learning as well, thus promoting learner autonomy. The implementation of Digital Storytelling increases student engagement, and promotes autonomy, innovation, problem-solving, creativity, collaboration, and teamwork (Robin, 2016). In the context of English classrooms nowadays, most students have ready access to the hardware, such as computers and mobile phones, and software in the computers or online, to ensure a possible execution of Digital Storytelling. Learning can become more meaningful for students because via Digital Storytelling, they are responsible for the production of their stories. Digital Storytelling also appeals to the digital natives today due to their familiarity with digital and technological influences such as social media. In the West, the use of Digital Storytelling as a pedagogical tool is extensive, where studies include primary (Behmer, 2005; Bjorgen, 2010), secondary (Lowenthal, 2009), tertiary (Barrett, 2006; Zaragoza-Ninet & Brigido-Corachan, 2009 in Gregori-Signes, 2014) and preparatory educators (Blocher, 2008; Dogan & Robin, 2008). In fact, there are currently 123 institutes that manage courses on Digital Storytelling (McWilliam, 2009). Digital Storytelling has existed since the 1990s and there is even a Centre for Digital Storytelling in the United States (Lambert, 2010). Digital Storytelling

is reportedly beneficial to students' learning due to its flexibility and it can be used in many fields such as health and services, community development, social services, human rights, environmental justice and most importantly, in education (Gregori-Signes, 2014). In the present age of technological advancement, Digital Storytelling continues to evolve over time, and it is present in many digital forms, in media and entertainment today such as in blogs, podcasts, social media and websites especially those like YouTube (Couldry, 2008).

Digital Storytelling is narrated in students' own voice via multimedia tools such as soundtracks, music, animations, graphics, images, and such (Barrett, 2006; Lambert, 2010; Robin, 2016). There are seven key features of Digital Storytelling (Lambert, 2013). Essentially, a digital story must contain a point of view, complication, drama or conflict, narration, soundtrack or music, details and lastly, pacing. However, Wikan, Mølster, Faugli and Hope (2010) and, Gregori-Signes (2014) elaborated that Digital Storytelling in the educational setting is more complicated. Firstly, once it is incorporated into the curriculum, it should be assessed and evaluated. Secondly, since Digital Storytelling in this setting is produced by students, they might not only need instructions, but also a higher level of guidance and facilitation throughout the process of completing the Digital Storytelling.

In the Malaysian context, literature on keywords such as accuracy and Digital Storytelling revealed minimal results. However, other related keywords revealed studied in related areas such as cybernated storytelling (Rosli & Idrus, 2017), 21st century learning skills (Ming, Sim, Mahmud, Kee, Zabidi & Ismail, 2014), technology integration via Digital Storytelling (Thang, Lin, Mahmud, Ismail & Zabidi, 2014), computer-mediated communication (Lingam & Aripin, 2019). The researcher believed that this research is among the few studies that investigated at length, and in-depth the phenomenon of spoken and written accuracy in the ESL classroom with the application of Digital Storytelling. Additionally, the researcher sought to answer how and why Digital Storytelling affects language learning through a rigorous process of data collection and analysis. It is hoped that this research helped shed light on key areas in the Malaysian context.

AN INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL STORYTELLING

Storytelling is an ancient art (Salpeter, 2005), and people are naturally attracted to stories (Dujmović, 2006). Digital Storytelling is a short story delivered through narrations and dialogues, and the uniqueness is in the incorporation of multimedia tools such as music and images. The use of Digital Storytelling provides opportunities for students to let their voice be heard in terms of sharing ideas and experiences, developing storyline, creating scripts and other situational opportunities.

According to Saponaro (2005 in Abu, 2014), the use of Digital Storytelling has increased students' confidence in communicating in English and in using media as a learning tool. The combination of spoken narrative and the visuals such as animations, music and images were believed to not only benefit learners of diverse learning preferences, but also help inculcate values such as teamwork.

This study is significant to students in preparing and developing their 21st century learning skills. This is because values and key elements such as collaborative decision-making, sharing of information, teamwork, innovation, and efficiency are essential today. Students who want to compete and succeed must be able to 'communicate, share, and use information to solve complex problems, adapt and innovate in response to new demands and changing circumstances, and command and expand the power of technology to create new knowledge' (Arch, 2010, p. 1). The 21st century learning skills consisted of four categories: digital age literacies, inventive thinking, effective communication, and high productivity (NCREL, & Group, 2003). The definition of the 21st century learning skills referred to the ability:

> *...to a) collect and/or retrieve information, b) organize and manage information, c) evaluate the quality, relevance, and usefulness of information, and d) generate accurate information through the use of existing resources knowledge (Arch, 2010, p. 2).*

One literacy facet listed in the 21st century learning skills was visual literacy. In relevance to this study, visual literacy is one facet of the 21st century learning skills that students developed. Most students have access to smart phones equipped with digital cameras, video streaming, and common

imagery standards allow for users to communicate through visual imageries. Communication in the age of technology and the internet mostly consisted of 'the convergence of voice, video, and data into a common digital format' (Arch, 2010, p. 6). Visual literacy offers an image-rich curriculum especially since Internet sites can enable access to more students. Visual literacy also helped in teaching them quicker and more meaningfully, as compared 'to traditional written student reports and text-based, verbal instruction' (Burmark, 2002 as cited in Arch, 2010, p. 6). Besides the enhancement in student learning, visual literacy also improved their options in the workplace (Burmark, 2004).

Digital Storytelling encourages students to embrace digital literacy, which is important in order to understand, relate and motivate students (Bumgarner, 2012). In the current scenario around the world, technology is prevalent and media-saturated, and it is not only limited to the youth, but adults too. Hence, educators must learn to integrate technology into the classroom (Bumgarner, 2012). If the students find the classrooms boring, then it is safe to assume that the environment is not appealing to their curiosity and interests. Although many educators worry that technology is making students conform to the software updates, smartphones, or web browsers. However, if it is used effectively, technology can be a beneficial tool to sustain students' interests. Frost and Postman (2006) claimed that many students are losing themselves in technology, but Bumgarner (2012) contested that while we worry about losing ourselves in technology, we are not given a choice because the younger generation is already there.

Students today are part of the textual landscape (Carrington, 2005). They are able to multitask via a multitude of technology available to them digitally or at hand. For example, they play online games while sending texts, share and edit images while listening to music, or construct their own hybrid texts such as through social media (Walsh, 2009). In such instances of information sharing, students use abbreviated spellings, numbers indicating words, graphically manipulated images, emojis and icons to contribute, retell and enhance their stories (Walsh, 2009). Most educators are concerned by how this multi-tasking and adaptation of language such as using images, emoji, or other graphics to spread or share information, affected students' language skills. There were also concerns on whether this new form of literacy will enhance or impair proficiency.

On the other hand, some educators also fear that if technology and technologically based pedagogy are not inculcated into the classroom, lessons will face the danger of becoming repetitive and monotonous (Walsh, 2009). Thus, educators faced a conundrum. Those who fear the disruption or damage that technology caused to students' learning experience, cannot limit students' use of technology outside of the classroom. Furthermore, as Bumgarner (2012) mentioned earlier, the younger generation are already immersed in technology. Hence, the next best step that educators could do is to mold the existing technology to be something that could benefit the students academically as well as developing lifelong learning skills.

In conclusion, the significance of the research to policy makers, other researchers and practitioners in the field are as elaborated. The researcher believed that this can be further studied especially in building students' intrinsic motivation in learning English. Whether at school or in the tertiary level, educators have first-hand experience in dealing with students. In response to the demands of the 21st century, the researcher also believed that students must be adequately prepared in terms of their 21st century learning skills. No man is an island. Therefore, students must be able to communicate clearly, and collaborate with others. Undeniably, students needed a substantial amount of exposure and practice to develop and strengthen their 21st century learning skills to someday become more critical and inventive thinkers, problem solvers and innovators. It is hoped that research contributed to the body of knowledge as preliminary research on 21st century learning skills and language learning achievement.

DEVELOPING DIGITAL STORIES

The process of developing digital stories includes the stage of brainstorming, storyboarding, scriptwriting, rehearsing and presenting. Nevertheless, these processes were somewhat iterative, depending on many factors such as the learners' proficiency and teamwork or the complexity of their presentations, which required more attention and detail.

i.   Grouping Students

Students were placed into groups of three to four students per group. It is better to form groups because the students can be more engaged

by participating in group discussions, group-appointed roles and meeting others' expectations which contributes to the successful implementation of Digital Storytelling.

ii.   Brainstorming

The first step of Digital Storytelling begins with the brainstorming process. About one to two lessons were allocated for the process of dividing students into groups of three to four persons, and to allow for group discussions. The discussion sessions should include the processes of identifying a story, sharing of ideas and opinions with each other and roughly, developing the storyline.

One of the challenges of Digital Storytelling was finding a story/genre/theme. Lambert (2010) said that most of the time, people would comment that they have no stories to share because they may have the impression that their stories were not substantial or entertaining enough. This kind of outlook destroys one's creative abilities (Lambert, 2010). As people grow into adulthood, the art of storytelling was often perceived as frivolous, time wasting and irrelevant. Contrary to these beliefs, storytelling is important, emotionally impactful, and more memorable because every person possesses the innate sense of storytelling (Lambert, 2010). Similar to the traditional form of storytelling, Digital Storytelling consists of specific themes, topics, and point of view such as first-, second- or third-person point of view. Students were given options to share and create personal stories, a reiteration of historical events, autobiographies, and many more. To provide choices, flexibility and an opportunity for sharing and expanding their creativity, students could choose a storybook and adapt their Digital Storytelling from the perspective of a character in the book (Normann, 2011), or develop their own personal story based on the guideline provided in Table 2 by Lambert (2010).

Theme	Descriptions
A story about an important person or a public figure	▪ Character stories: Students can talk about how they love, how they are inspired, how they find meaning in relationships that are important to them. ▪ Memorial stories: Students can talk about people who have passed in order to remember and honour them, as part of the grieving process.
A story about an event	▪ Adventure stories: Students can talk about places they have been to on their travels, to reminisce and share their experience. Similarly, they may also talk about places they would like to visit in the future. ▪ Accomplishment stories: Students can talk about accomplishing a goal, such as graduating, learning or winning something prominent to them.
A story about a place in their life	▪ Nostalgic stories: Students can talk about a nostalgic place such as their hometown, an ancestral home; a park, town, forest, mountain, river, restaurant, by providing their insights.
Other personal stories	▪ Recovery stories: Students can talk about overcoming a challenge, crisis, disease, and others. ▪ Love stories: Students can talk about family, siblings or friendship. ▪ Discovery stories: Students can talk about learning new skills or creating something new.

Table 2. Suggested themes for developing personal stories in Digital Storytelling

Lambert (2010) suggested some topics/themes/genres as suggestions for students to produce their Digital Storytelling. A story about an important person or a public figure could relate to stories about inspiring characters or to honor public figures who had passed. In both pilot study and data collection, students had selected such themes for their Digital Storytelling. Students could also produce stories about important, outstanding events that had happened, and these events can be personal experiences such as experiences that they valued, or personal accomplishments. Next, students could present their stories in an important place/setting holding memorable nostalgia to them. Lastly, other recommendations also included stories on recovery from personal obstacles, love stories and stories on discovery of something new. Based on the pilot study and data collection, students preferred to produce stories on important public figures, love stories, and stories with familial values. This was perhaps because this task was done in a group setting, therefore, it could be challenging and uncomfortable to adopt a personal perspective in a group presentation.

However, there were no restrictions to selecting stories for Digital Storytelling, only guidelines so that students would have a purpose of the activity and objectives for the lesson in mind while creating the stories. The length of a Digital Storytelling session in an educational setting might vary. For instance, Smeda, et al. (2013) suggested that the length of a Digital Storytelling session could be between one to three minutes, while Robin (2016) recommended that the length of a Digital Storytelling session ranged between two and ten minutes.

In consideration of the objective of the study, which was to explore learners' accuracy, and enhance their linguistic aspects, the researcher perceived that the suitable duration of participants' Digital Storytelling should be between 15 to 20 minutes. This duration included the music, sound effect and any other visual and auditory content. Additionally, a suitable duration that was not too short or too lengthy would allow for proper elaboration and development of the plot and storyline.

iii. Creating The Storyboard

The subsequent lessons included creating a storyboard. Once the students have the general idea of their topic/theme and storyline, they start developing their storyboard. A storyboard is a combination of written or imagery depiction of the core elements that exist in a digital story (Robin, 2016). Therefore, each group's storyboard would be different from the rest, depending on their plot. However, instructors should bear in mind that every plot should contain characters, setting, exposition, conflict, and resolution (Robin, 2016).

It is the norm that the storyboard should be completed before the compilation of all the multimedia and the writing of the scripts. In order to make sense and maintain the audience's attention, the storyline needed to be chronological, relevant, and understandable to the audience. Additionally, the order in which the plot developed might also be organized during this initial stage to ensure maximum effect. While creating a storyboard might seem tedious, it is a fundamental part of the creative process, as it allowed students to project the finished product through the images and texts before the rest of the stage began. Storyboarding helped students to visualize the process of

putting the digital story together. Consequently, this helped identify any plot holes or missing elements in their stories that they may have overlooked.

Essentially, the process of creating the storyboard could take up to a time frame of four days to a week (Robin, 2016). For participants who were experiencing Digital Storytelling for the first time, more time was allocated for this process. Instructors play an important role in helping to develop the storyboard, such as acting as a sounding board, particularly in asking students to justify and to clarify the main ideas of the story. Instructors also acted as a facilitator in organizing the story chronologically and logically as students might miss certain aspects. Once the storyboard is finalized and completed, students will start to plan the visual elements in their story, namely the transition between scenes, animations, images, music, and soundtrack.

In this study, the researcher proposes the use of the free online software such as Photo Story or Storyboardthat, since storyboards could be produced either digitally by using software or manually such as on paper or drawing board. It was more cost-effective and timesaving to use any free, online software. Students, however, had the choice of using other computer programs, for example, Microsoft Word, or Microsoft PowerPoint, which were equally cost-effective and practical.

iv. Writing The Scripts

A script refers to the predictable oral exchanges for social situations such as greeting, apologizing, complementing, or inviting. Scripts are culturally and socially embedded, and they have a structure, pattern, and script even when uttered (Bashir, Azeem & Dogar, 2011).

Quite commonly, language learners experienced inhibitions where they were uncomfortable, not confident, or simply did not understand the language. Thus, this would place them in situations where they could not effectively participate in the discourse at hand. When learners occasionally attempt to use the language, they might be misunderstood due to pronunciation error or incorrect vocabulary, which will further rescind their confidence and motivation to learn the language.

Bashir et al. (2011) suggested for educators to create the knowledge and awareness among students that it is common for speakers to be misunderstood sometimes. Speakers also sometimes needed to clarify their discourse, regardless of their level of proficiency. This limitation could be overcome by learning and familiarizing oneself with the anticipated forms of linguistic exchanges such as language for clarifying and expressing misunderstanding. Additionally, students should also learn how to respond positively when they experience communication breakdowns. Educators can create an 'authentic practice environment' that imitates the real world to familiarize students, as well as develop their language skills, their resilience and confidence as language learners inside and outside the classroom (Bashir et al., 2011).

v.   Rehearsing

The next step before presenting their digital story was rehearsing. Normally, rehearsing was done during students' personal time to inculcate the element of surprise, as well as to eliminate interference from the teacher or other classmates. Students also tended to be nervous since Digital Storytelling is a form of public speaking. Thus, rehearsing should be done privately in seclusion to better prepare them. Students were given approximately a week to rehearse their presentation. At this stage, students should plan for contingencies such as an absent group member or technical difficulties.

Nevertheless, during both the pilot study and data collection stage, there were incidents where presentations were not able to proceed due to a sick member and technical difficulties. The instructor has anticipated a few such technical difficulties such as broken speakers and PCs, or incompatible software. In cases where a member of the group fell sick, the presentation had to be postponed to a later date which usually caused problems on everyone's schedules since presenting Digital Storytelling requires specific technological and physical (large, well-equipped classrooms) setups. Nonetheless, planning for such scenarios proved advantageous as it limited the chances of encountering unwanted and unexpected surprises.

In brief, rehearsing was an important part of preparation that most students tend to overlook. The phrase, practice makes perfect, is very important because it was observed that students often do not expect problems. Thus, they were not prepared for glitches or other unexpected surprises. Rehearsing is also crucial to estimate important details such as the duration and the necessary equipment or prop that were needed.

vi.   Presenting Digital Stories

The presentation of digital stories was done during the eighth week of the semester. The turns to present were chosen randomly, via ballots. In preparation for the presentations, some groups who put the extra effort in their presentations brought props, while some did not.

One setback that occurred in both pilot study and data collection was the technical difficulties. This was expected as one of the possible setbacks of using technology. One or two groups are very ambitious in their choice of software and these groups would usually experience these glitches. During the initial stages of brainstorming and storyboarding, students were constantly reminded to use common and compatible software such as the Microsoft PowerPoint because it is compatible with nearly every PC there is. If students chose another software or application, they should make sure the PC that was used on presentation day was compatible. Nonetheless, in cases where there were such technical difficulties, one or two groups had to modify and transfer their multimedia materials into much compatible software. The worst-case scenario was that students had to postpone their presentations to a later date to solve their technical issues.

Next, the presentation stage generally took about two class sessions. Some time was also allocated to set up the classroom, as well as the equipment. In addition to that, time was also allocated to set aside between groups for them so that they can set up their setting, slides, and presentations and test their audio and music.

Based on the researcher's observation, students' morale was at the highest during this event. Each member of the class, even the

most reluctant participant, would be supportive of everyone else's presentation. Undeniably, this group dynamic was what the researcher valued the most, as it was a morale boost in so many aspects such as public speaking and teamwork. Smeda et al. (2013, p. 16) posited that in past research, 'teachers observed that students were learning without realizing'. The researcher believed that Digital Storytelling was the ideal choice of pedagogical tool that reinforced the various complementary skills. It provides the learners the opportunities to develop an all-around skillset in an environment of meaningful learning (Smeda et al., 2013).

As a conclusion, the present research tapped into the use of Digital Storytelling as a pedagogical tool within the task-based approach. As Smeda et al. (2013) reported, the use of technology in education contributed to the growth in the various skills that learners possess. Most importantly, Digital Storytelling assisted students in mastering tasks such as spelling, sentence formation, and building, and forming a whole body of texts that they previously perceived as impossible (Smeda et al., 2013, p. 16). This finding and development in the body of knowledge could help shed light on helping learners overcome their reluctance in English. Table 3 provides an outline of the processes involved in developing a digital story.

Process	Instruction
Providing instructions and guidelines	▪ Students will form groups of four or five per group. ▪ The instructor demonstrates and shows samples of Digital Storytelling. ▪ The instructor provides guidelines and instructions to the students including a suitable duration, plot development, copyright issues and citing sources, and assigning roles to group members. ▪ Besides their fictional characters, students are also assigned roles in completing the task.
Establishing a plot	▪ Students will develop a story for their Digital Storytelling. ▪ Students will identify the protagonist, antagonist and other characters and assign roles to each member. ▪ Students will produce their storyboard using applications such as *Storyboardthat* or *Photo Story*. ▪ The purpose of the storyboard is to give the students and instructor a general idea of the plot and characters in the story.
Collecting multimedia resources	▪ Students will gather materials they will need for their story (images, sound effects, animations).
Scriptwriting	▪ Students will write a script and submit the first draft to the instructor for review. ▪ Then the necessary corrections, editing or additions are made. ▪ Second (or more) drafts of the scripts are produced, if necessary.
Arranging resources	▪ Once the scripts are approved, students begin arranging the scenes in the story, along with other multimedia materials. Microsoft PowerPoint is recommended although students can explore other tools. ▪ If necessary, students may modify their images, audio, content, and text.
Rehearsing	▪ Students will rehearse their scripts and narrations, together with their multimedia presentation (background, sound effects) ▪ Students should memorize their scripts. In instances where the students forget their lines, they may improvise on the spot.
Presenting	▪ Students will present their digital stories in front of an audience.

Table 3. Outline of processes in developing digital stories

CHALLENGES IN CREATING DIGITAL STORIES FOR STUDENTS

To create their own digital stories, students must be well-versed with the knowledge on how to use digital media and computer tools. To prevent incidents of students summing up with bad storytelling, teachers must provide students with sources of digital images and computer-based authoring software (Robin, 2006). Teachers are advised to provide resources such as 'A Questioning Toolkit' (http://www.fno.org/nov97/toolkit.html). 'A Questioning Toolkit' is one of the resources that provide exposure to

students to help them build more effective questioning methods in creating good scripts for their own digital stories.

The creation of digital stories can also cause issues of intellectual properties rights and copyrights. Without proper guidance, students may be tempted to simply use resources available on the internet such as images, music and other material for supplementary content in their digital stories. If teachers wish to educate and guide their students about copyright issues, they can do so by letting students create their own materials instead. With the present state of advanced technology, students can snap and use their own photos, record their own narration, and produce their own sound effects.

Alternatively, for those students who wish to use readily available materials and focus more on other aspects of digital storytelling, they may access resources available in the public domain. Some of the recommendations from Robin (2006) include websites such as the American Memory Collection from the United States Library of Congress (http://memory. loc.gov/ammem/), the New York Public Library Picture Collection Online (http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/), and the Free Kids Music website (http:// freekidsmusic.com/music). These are some of the websites with royalty- free content specifically curated for educational purposes.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR TEACHERS USING DIGITAL STORYTELLING AS A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL

Teachers must first make sure that the students have the access to the tools and technology needed for them to participate in creating their digital stories. Fortunately, the technology required for Digital Storytelling are only simple technologies that students use daily in their lives. Applications such as Microsoft Word and Microsoft PowerPoint are helpful and user- friendly in producing scripts and storyboards, as well as a presentation tool for students' digital stories. For those who prefer to write, produce, or create their own materials, students can use their own smartphones or digital cameras. Most faculties and schools make gadgets like digital camera, video camcorder, or scanners readily available for students' use in their learning too. Other inexpensive tools like microphones and voice recorders for recording of audio narrations are also easy to be acquired for students' use in many of these institutions too.

Next, teachers must also consider students' use of the internet, or rather the necessity for access to the internet in creating their digital stories. Besides the concern that students should be able to have a good internet connection relevant to the stages of Digital Storytelling, they should also have access to the technological hardware and software that are needed for this task.

In terms of time management, teachers should be aware that good, comprehensive Digital Stories are time consuming. Since students have to go through the five main stages (brainstorming, scriptwriting, storyboarding, rehearsing, and presenting), it takes a significant amount of time for each phase to be approved by the teacher before students are able to move onto the next stage. For instance, students may take several stages (usually two to three) drafts of scriptwriting for the storytelling and narration to be logical to the plot, possible to remember, and free of language errors. On the other hand, some students may also struggle in familiarizing themselves with the hardware and software. Robin (2006) advised teachers to adopt the peer review, a reflection process that allows for both students and teachers the opportunity to discuss and review their progress.

LANGUAGE ENHANCEMENT THROUGH DIGITAL STORYTELLING

Digital Storytelling can strengthen students' proficiency, consequently promoting good grammar and language usage. The different stages in Digital Storytelling can help in targeting students' speaking skills, specifically negotiation and general discussion skills in the brainstorming phase. Undeniably, the storyboarding stage helps develop students' language and vocabulary where students read, look up and learn new words in the process of developing their storyboard. Next, students can strengthen their writing skills and sentence structure in the scriptwriting stage. As mentioned before, usually ESL learners will produce two to three drafts of scripts, so this will further improve their language proficiency. In both stages of rehearsing and presenting, students enhance their speaking skills, particularly in public speaking.

Conclusively, Digital Storytelling in the language classroom provides students with opportunities to improve their English through the variety of language-targeted activities. Both areas of written and spoken language

are enhanced through the many stages and repetitive processes of drafting and practices.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article is to discuss the theories underpinning multimodal literacy and consecutively, Digital Storytelling. The article also outlined and explained the stages included in the creation of digital stories which are brainstorming, storyboarding, scriptwriting, rehearsing and presenting. As an educational and instructional tool, Digital Storytelling can be an adaptable and entertaining approach that can help students to enjoy the language learning process.

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