Student English Teachers' Vantage Points of the Digital Short Stories They Designed for Young Learners

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ABSTRACT

Literature review unveils the need for exploring what student teachers of English think about their experiences of preparing digital stories for young learners, and investigating their perceptions with regard to the use of digital storytelling in the teaching of English to young learners. This instrumental case study aims to unpack pre-service English teachers' conceptions of their experiences of creating digital short stories and incorporating them into young English language learner classes. The qualitative data collected through conducting a qualitative survey and an in-depth interview with Turkish student teachers of English following their experiences of designing digital short stories for young learners was analysed, performing inductive content analysis. The results demonstrated the student English teachers held strong beliefs in the beneficial effect of digital short stories on fostering young English language learners' learning, and the process of developing digital short stories was not extremely challenging and furthered their technological competence.

KEYWORDS

Digital Short Stories, Student English Teachers, Young Learners

INTRODUCTION

Using stories as a component of instructional practices is conceived to serve as a medium for teaching, motivating and inspiring students (Bowman, 2018; Rajabi et al., 2018), engaging them in the learning process (Rutta et al., 2021; Moradi & Chen, 2019), and developing their critical thinking skills (Grigsby et al., 2015). As a result of developments in digital technologies over the last two decades, having shaped the way education is provided at diverse levels, digital storytelling has cultivated genuine appreciation of educators from discrete disciplines. For instance, digital storytelling has been used to promote second/foreign language teaching (e.g., Tour et al., 2021). In view of the affordances of digital storytelling such as awakening students' curiosity about what is covered in the lesson, it is unsurprising that it has been employed in the teaching of a second/foreign language as well.

The beneficial effect of using digital stories on teaching and learning the target language requires initial English language teacher programs to reframe their current coursework so that it can corroborate pre-service English teachers in acquiring and harnessing knowledge and skills they will

need as designing and using digital storytelling in the teaching of English. That could enable pre-service English teachers to practice designing, shooting and using digital stories to teach English to students of different ages. A literature review done in an effort to find research into exploring pre-service English teachers' reflections upon their experiences of creating digital short stories (DSSs) for young learners of English has shown this topic has not been scrutinized up to date. In light of this gap, the present research targeted broadening the literature on both digital storytelling and pre-service teachers' reflections on their experiences of creating DSSs through presenting findings as to pre-service English teachers' perceptions of the use of DSSs in young English language learner classes and their experiences of developing DSSs for them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Storytelling

Digital storytelling has accompanied other traditional teaching practices due to a number of advantages it offers, reported in the studies on it. For example, working in small groups to design and shoot videos could increase student engagement and motivation as was reported in the research by Niemi and Multisilta (2016). Likewise, the study by Flórez-Aristizábal et al. (2019) reported that interactive storytelling on computers increased student engagement and motivation. It was reported in Yüksel Arslan et al.'s (2016) study that the early childhood education teacher participants used digital storytelling because of its functions as a tool for increasing student motivation, converting abstract knowledge into concrete one, ameliorating children's misbehaviours, monitoring and demonstrating child learning. It was also demonstrated in Ryan and Aasetre's (2021) study that digital storytelling enabled deep learning. In addition, digital storytelling could enhance student literacy skills (Kearney, 2011). Çıralı Sarıca and Koçak Usluel (2016) explored the impact of digital storytelling on primary school students' visual memory capacity and writing skills. The findings indicated the statistically significant gains in the experimental group's writing skills as opposed to those of the control group and while the gains in the experimental group's visual memory capacity were higher, there was no statistically significant difference in it between the two groups. Pointing to the likelihood of resistance mounted by those used to traditional methods, Barber (2016) also reported the affordances that could be drawn from using digital storytelling such as improvements in critical thinking and digital literacy. Reporting similar results, Del-Moral-Perez's et al.'s (2019) research demonstrated digital stories created collaboratively by primary school students were effective in improving their communicative and digital competence.

The effect of digital storytelling on student learning has been investigated at primary and secondary education. Alongside its impact on student learning below higher education, that in higher education has been explored, too. For example, Suwardy et al. (2012) reported in their study that digital storytelling helped university students majoring in accounting contextualize accounting. Seeing the importance of contextualized teaching in facilitating student learning, that finding indicates the significant contribution that could be made by digital storytelling to accelerating student learning. Carried out in a higher education context, Ribeiro's (2016) study demonstrated that digital storytelling increased students' intercultural awareness.

Digital Storytelling in Language Learning

Though not as much as the ones on the impact of storytelling in promoting student learning (e.g., Brownlee, 2021; Kirsch, 2016; Walan, 2019), the use of digital storytelling in an attempt to enhance the effectiveness of language teaching, and linked to this, to stimulate language learner learning has also captured the attention of researchers (e.g., Schmoelz, 2018). The review of the studies on using digital storytelling in language teaching and learning unearths that it brings about beneficial effects on language learning and teaching. For instance, reviewing the studies on digital storytelling

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