
Research Article

From Pages to Pixels: Unveiling Student Experiences with Digital Storytelling in Extensive Reading Classes

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Abstract

The implementation of technology in education holds great promise, as it can increase accessibility, personalize learning, and enhance engagement. Digital storytelling has emerged as a dynamic educational tool that leverages multimedia elements to enhance learning experiences and foster a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Using a qualitative approach, this study tries to explore the student's perception of the implementation of digital storytelling as assignment output in extensive reading classes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather data. The participants of this study are students who took the same course, Extensive Reading class. The study's results indicated that students held positive perceptions regarding digital storytelling tasks. They perceived these assignments as captivating, pleasurable, and a source of creative inspiration. Students enthusiastically described the experience as a creative challenges project. Importantly, this positive outlook also manifested in their commitment to the assignments, as they dedicated significant time and effort to produce meaningful digital stories, demonstrating a strong sense of devotion and pride in their accomplishments.

Keywords

digital storytelling; extensive reading; technology in class; assignment

Introduction

In an era marked by technological advancements and the ubiquity of digital media, the integration of technology into education has become a prominent topic of discussion. This integration, often referred to as EdTech, has become a defining feature of modern learning environments. Research highlights that this transformation, underpinned by digital tools, platforms, and methodologies, has reshaped the way educators teach and learners acquire knowledge (Crittenden et al., 2019; Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010).

The implementation of technology in education holds great promise. It can increase accessibility (Mayisela, 2013), personalized learning (Schmid et al., 2023), and enhance engagement (Lailiyah &

Yustisia, 2022). However, this transformation is not without challenges, such as the digital divide (Gorski, 2005; Soomro et al., 2020), plagiarism (Batane, 2010; Lailiyah & Wediyantoro, 2022), and concerns over privacy and security (Amo Filva et al., 2021; Arpaci et al., 2015). Thus, the necessity to ensure that educators are equipped with the necessary skills to utilize technology effectively is an ongoing endeavor as technology will continue to develop (Caena & Redecker, 2019; Liao et al., 2017).

Education has witnessed a paradigm shift from traditional pedagogical approaches toward more innovative and engaging methods. Among these innovations, digital storytelling has emerged as a dynamic educational tool that leverages multimedia elements to enhance learning experiences and foster a deeper understanding of the subject matter (Alismail, 2015; Sadik, 2008; Wang & Zhan, 2010). Studies highlighted the benefits of digital storytelling, such as promoting problem-solving skills (Walters et al., 2018), students' student-centered learning (Raffone & Monti, 2019), critical thinking, and increasing students' motivation.

Digital storytelling integrates text, images, audio, video, and interactive elements to create one's immersive narratives that suitable for today's digitally fluent learners (Lambert & Hessler, 2018; Rahimi & Yadollahi, 2017). Several studies have mentioned the implementation of digital storytelling into educational environments as a potential teaching tool for conveying various subjects, such as Math (Sadik, 2008; Walters et al., 2018) and language learning (Amelia & Abidin, 2018; Moradi & Chen, 2019).

In an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, research has addressed its positive effect. Fu et al., (2022), for example, conducted a study investigating the use of a specific tool in developing digital storytelling and its influence on students' speaking skills. The findings indicated notable enhancements in students' speaking proficiency, particularly regarding fluency and language usage. The research emphasizes the effectiveness of digital storytelling as a valuable tool for promoting effective communication. Meanwhile, in another study, Castillo-Cuesta et al., (2021), who focused on EFL learners' writing skills, conducted a quasi-experimental study to investigate the effect of digital storytelling on students' writing proficiency. The result revealed a significant improvement in students' writing skills. Consequently, digital storytelling is perceived as a successful teaching strategy to promote participants' writing proficiency.

In the context of EFL reading instruction, the integration of digital storytelling into reading classrooms has gained considerable attention. Notable studies on this topic include those conducted by Al-Shaye (2021), and Rahimi and Yadollahi (2017). Al-Shaye's study in 2021 examined how the implementation of digital storytelling impacted participants' critical reading skills, critical thinking, and self-regulated learning skills. Using a quasi-experimental study, the result demonstrated significant improvement in these skills among participants when compared to a control group. Similarly, Rahimi and Yadollahi's work in 2017 explored the impacts of traditional, offline digital storytelling compared to digital storytelling delivered online on the enhancement of literacy skills (both reading and writing) among EFL learners. Their research delved into how the implementation of digital storytelling effectively improved the literacy skills of the experimental group in comparison to the control group. These studies collectively contribute valuable insights into the potential benefits of integrating digital storytelling into EFL reading instruction, shedding light on its positive impact on critical reading, critical thinking, self-regulated learning, and overall literacy skills development.

This current study seeks to understand how students perceive digital storytelling in the context of a reading classroom. The rationale behind this research lies in its potential to shed light on the intersection of traditional and digital literacy practices. Gaining insights into student attitudes toward digital storytelling will not only inform educators but also guide curriculum design and instructional strategies. Furthermore, the findings of this research may contribute to the ongoing discourse on the integration of technology in education, offering valuable insights into its effectiveness in promoting student



engagement and comprehension within the specific context of reading instruction. Thus, this study is driven by the following research questions:

- What are the students' perceptions toward using digital storytelling as a means to present their novel analyses?

Understanding student attitudes and perceptions is essential for educational research and practice. Attitudes encompass individuals' evaluations, emotions, and behavioral intentions toward specific educational methods or experiences. Perceptions involve individuals' subjective interpretations of their educational experiences. Both attitudes and perceptions can significantly influence students' engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes. Previous research has shown that students' attitudes toward educational technologies and methods can vary based on factors such as age, prior experiences, and individual preferences (for example Hainey et al., 2013; Lailiyah & Wediyantoro, 2021). Positive attitudes often correlate with increased engagement and improved learning outcomes (Paolini, 2015; Russo & Benson, 2005). Thus, investigating student attitudes toward digital storytelling in reading classrooms is a critical endeavor to inform educational practice.

Method

This study utilized a qualitative research design, focusing on in-depth exploration and understanding of the impact of digital storytelling in extensive reading classes. This research design is chosen for this current study because it offers a holistic, contextual, and participant-centered approach to exploring the participants' perceptions of the implementation of digital storytelling in extensive reading classes. In addition, it also allows the researcher to uncover the deeper, nuanced aspects of this pedagogical approach and gain a profound understanding of how it influences students' engagement and learning outcomes.

This research involved EFL students who were enrolled in the Extensive Reading class, at a university located in Malang, Indonesia. In addition to focusing on the importance of students' pleasure in reading, this course also emphasized students' discussion in analyzing the novel that they choose. To be eligible for this study, the participants were chosen based on inclusion criteria, such as students' enrollment in the class and their experience with digital storytelling assignments. Initially, there were 55 students enrolled in two classes. Using purposive sampling, the study involved 5 students as the participants. They were informed about the purpose of the study and ensuring them about the anonymity of volunteering for this study. A breakdown of participants' demographic information is provided in Table 1. Out of all the participants, 4 were female, while 2 were male. Their ages ranged from 20 to 21 years. The participants were homogeneous in terms of the number of years they had studied English. Furthermore, there were no differences among the participants when it came to their computer experience, as the majority of them had at least 5 years of experience working with computers.

Table 1. Participants of the study

No	Participant (anonym)	Gender	Age (in years)
1	Student A	Female	20
2	Student B	Female	20
3	Student C	Female	21
4	Student D	Male	21
5	Student E	Male	21

In collecting the data, semi-structured individual interview with the participants is conducted. This approach offers flexibility in exploring participants' experiences while ensuring that essential themes are addressed (Flick, 2022). For this purpose, a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions has been developed. These questions explored participants' experiences, perceptions, challenges, and benefits related to digital storytelling assignments.



The obtained interview data underwent thematic analysis, following the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This process involved becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for recurring themes, reviewing these themes, defining and labeling them, and ultimately composing the final report. Thematic analysis facilitated the identification of patterns, recurring concepts, and significant insights that emerged from the participants' narratives. These thematic categories included creativity, engagement, storytelling effectiveness, and alignment with learning objectives. Finally, to enhance the validity of the findings, a triangulation step was implemented by comparing the insights obtained from interviews with the content analysis of digital storytelling projects to validate the findings.

Procedure

In the Extensive Reading class, students were granted the autonomy to choose their novels for reading. At the beginning of the course, each student was tasked with selecting two novels for analysis, one for the first half of the semester and another for the second half.

In the initial part of the semester, students were instructed to choose a novel. In the subsequent class session, students presented their selected novels and outlined specific aspects they intended to explore in their analyses, such as identifying key characteristics within the novel and delving into the underlying moral value found in the novel. Throughout this process, the instructor played a supportive role by offering valuable feedback. Over the subsequent two class meetings, students engaged in independent reading to further immerse themselves in their chosen novels. By the sixth meeting, students were instructed to compile their analyses using conventional methods for their assignments, developing paper-based reports, which they then submitted to the lecturer for evaluation and grading.

During the second half of the semester, students followed the same steps as in the first half, with one notable addition. In this session, students were introduced to the concept of developing digital storytelling as a means of presenting their literary analyses. Consequently, after their individual reading sessions, students worked on the process of crafting scripts and storyboards for their digital storytelling projects. In the following two meetings, they focused on compiled visuals, videos, scripts, and audio elements, which they reviewed with the instructor to receive feedback and guidance. Students were then allocated time to finalize and complete these digital storytelling projects. Finally, the digital storytelling projects were uploaded to their social media platforms, facilitating additional discussion and engagement among students through social media posts related to their respective projects. This allowed for a dynamic and interactive aspect of their assessment experience.

In both types of assessments, the instructor provided students with clear criteria for evaluating their projects. The rubric was designed to assess students' analysis of essential information from the novel. Furthermore, the instructor adapted and utilized an assessment rubric available on the Rubistar website (<http://rubistar.4teachers.org/>) to ensure fairness and consistency in the evaluation process. The assessment rubric covers five categories, namely identifying important information, recognizing details, discerning facts, identifying opinions, and summarization.

Results

The following section presents the findings that emerged from a comprehensive exploration of students' experiences with digital storytelling assignments in the context of extensive reading classes. Through semi-structured interviews and content analysis of the digital storytelling projects, the study has yielded valuable perspectives and insights into how these assignments influenced student engagement and learning outcomes. The participants' narratives, coupled with the analysis of their creative projects, unveiled a multifaceted picture of the impact of digital storytelling on their educational journey. In addition, the results shed light on key themes, including engagement, personal growth, challenges faced, and the alignment of digital storytelling with learning objectives.



Given questions related to their experience, all of the participants showed positive attitudes toward using digital storytelling for novel analyses. They found it to be an engaging and creative way to convey their understanding of the novel. Student A, B, and D expressed their enthusiasm for digital storytelling, stating that they enjoyed working on these assignments because they found them exciting and enjoyable.

“This digital storytelling assignment is new in our reading class. The use of it breaks up the monotony of traditional essays and report. I feel like I have the freedom to be creative and express myself. Also, seeing my classmates' project (digital storytelling) on social media makes us feel like we're part of a creative community.”
(Student A)

Student A's response indicates a positive shift in attitude due to the introduction of digital storytelling assignments. The description of these assignments as a "breath of fresh air" suggests that use of the digital storytelling as a form of completing the task, breaks the monotony of traditional essays and reports, indicating a level of engagement and interest. Moreover, the emphasis on creative freedom underscores the idea that these assignments empower students to express themselves more freely. The reference to a "creative community" formed through social media suggests that peer influence and support can further enhance engagement and motivation.

“I really enjoyed working on the second assignments (digital storytelling) in our reading class. It was so much fun! I found it really exciting and enjoyable. Unlike the first assignments, I enjoyed sitting down with my computer and creating something unique. I loved choosing the images, writing the script, and even adding some music to make it all into a video. It was like I was crafting my own movie, and that made analyzing the novels much more engaging for me.” (Students B)

Student B's response is particularly noteworthy for the enthusiastic tone throughout. The use of phrases like "so much fun" and "crafting my own movie" clearly conveys a high level of engagement and enjoyment. The student's eagerness to engage in the creative process, from choosing images to adding music, suggests that digital storytelling assignments offer a unique and engaging way to present the novel analysis. This response exemplifies how positive attitudes can translate into active participation and dedication to the task.

"I found myself getting excited to analyze the novel into these interactive stories. It was like a creative challenge. I spent hours carefully choosing the visuals, adding text, and deciding on the perfect music to set the story," (Student D)

Student D's response shares similarities with Student B's in terms of excitement and dedication. They describe the assignment as a "creative challenge" and express a commitment to the task by investing significant time in selecting visuals, text, and music. The use of the term "immersive" reflects a deep engagement in the assignment. Additionally, the desire to create something meaningful indicates intrinsic motivation and a strong sense of purpose, contributing to a more enriching learning experience.

In addition, students' positive attitudes also showed from their active engagement in the process. Some students described how they willingly devoted time and effort to creating meaningful digital stories. Student C and E expressed their opinion.

“Working on this digital storytelling assignment was a very immersive experience for me. I am willing to put in a lot of time and energy because I want to create something meaningful. I found myself very involved in choosing the right visuals, writing the script, and making sure every detail contributed to the overall story. It's



not just about completing tasks; it's about crafting a video that I'm proud of.” (Student C)

Student C's response reflects the in-depth nature of the assignment mentioned by Student D. Attention to detail in selecting images and writing the script demonstrates a commitment to the quality of the assignment. The pride associated with "making a video I'm proud of" underscores a sense of accomplishment and personal investment in the task. These responses highlight how digital storytelling assignments can foster a sense of ownership and pride in students' work.

“I've always been curious about technology, so when our (extensive) reading class introduced a digital storytelling assignment, I was excited. I see it as an opportunity to experiment with new form of assignment. I think it's a new as I have to create a multimedia story for a class assignment!” (Student E)

Student E's response reveals a curiosity about technology and a positive outlook toward experimenting with new assignment formats. Viewing the assignment as an opportunity for creative exploration suggests an openness to innovative educational approaches. This response underscores how students with a willingness to experiment may engage more actively and positively in assignments like digital storytelling.

Overall, these responses collectively indicate that students have positive attitudes toward digital storytelling assignments. They find these tasks interesting, enjoyable, and creatively stimulating. A sense of community and peer influence, as mentioned by Student A, can contribute to a positive learning environment and further increase engagement. Additionally, the willingness to invest time and effort, as demonstrated by Students B, D, and C, reflects a sense of commitment and intrinsic motivation to excel at the task. Students who are curious about technology, such as Student E, can approach this assignment with enthusiasm and a positive outlook. Finally, as the interview focused only on general questions about students' experiences with the method, none of the participants mentioned the challenges they may have faced. Thus, from this perspective, the result of the study does not clearly state whether they did not encounter any difficulties.

Discussion

Traditional reading instruction often involves the consumption of printed texts, an approach that has persisted for centuries. However, the educational landscape is evolving, driven by advancements in technology and the increasing accessibility of digital media. In response to these changes, educators are exploring innovative strategies to engage students and promote literacy skills. One such strategy is digital storytelling, a method that transforms the reading experience from static, linear text to interactive, multimedia-rich storytelling (Anderson & Chua, 2010). The reading activity offers a change from the conventional approach by enabling students to not only consume stories but also become active creators and participants in their reading journey.

From the participants' responses, it is clear that they showed positive attitudes toward using digital storytelling as a means to present their novel analyses. The majority of students found digital storytelling assignments engaging, enjoyable, and creatively stimulating. This positivity was reflected in their descriptions of the assignments as "new," "exciting," and "fun." Students expressed enthusiasm, likening the experience to crafting their movies and embracing the creative challenge. The congruence between the results of this study and Yoon's (2013) study underscores the similarities in their findings. Specifically, both studies have identified a consistent trend: the use of digital stories tends to generate positive attitudes from students. It implies that the outcomes and patterns identified in the current study are consistent with those revealed in Yoon's (2013) earlier research.



A plethora of studies mentioned that positive attitudes toward the second language and collaborative learning enhance the effectiveness of language acquisition (Almekhlafi, 2006; Elyildirim & Ashton-Hay, 2006; Pham, 2022). In this current study, these positive attitudes had a significant impact on student engagement. The responses indicated that students actively invested time and effort in creating meaningful digital stories. They were willing to devote themselves to the tasks, as seen in their careful selection of visuals, text, and music. This level of engagement went beyond mere completion of tasks; it demonstrated a commitment to crafting high-quality assignments. Students took pride in their work, emphasizing the importance of creating a video they could be proud of. Moreover, positive attitudes appeared to foster a sense of community and peer influence. Students who viewed digital storytelling as an opportunity for creative expression and experimentation felt more connected to their classmates. This sense of belonging to a "creative community" contributed to an enriching and motivating learning environment.

In addition, Saritepeci (2021) also mentioned that the use of digital storytelling gives learners a high level of satisfaction during the learning process. Saritepeci's (2021) work aligns with the findings of this study and highlights the importance of considering learners' satisfaction as a significant outcome when integrating digital storytelling into educational contexts. It implies that educators and instructional designers should not only focus on learning outcomes but also learners' overall satisfaction and engagement throughout the learning process. Satisfaction addressed by participants of this study can be attributed to various factors, including the engaging and creative nature of digital storytelling activities, the opportunity for self-expression and creativity, and the potential for collaborative and interactive learning.

Conclusion

Understanding how students navigate the transition "From Pages to Pixels" and how they perceive digital storytelling within reading classrooms is significant for several reasons. It informs educators about the efficacy of digital storytelling as a pedagogical tool and guides how to optimize its integration into reading education. Moreover, the study contributes to the broader discourse on the evolving role of technology in education and its implications for literacy practices. The results of the study indicated that students showed positive views regarding digital storytelling assignments. They perceived these assignments as captivating, pleasurable, and sources of creative inspiration. In addition to this, students displayed enthusiasm, comparing the experience to the creation of their films and eagerly embracing the creative challenges.

These findings offer an understanding of the transformative potential of integrating digital storytelling into the extensive reading curriculum, providing educators and researchers with insights into effective pedagogical strategies in contemporary educational settings. However, as this study utilized a qualitative approach, the result may not represent a large-scale perspective. Thus, it is suggested to conduct a broader range of studies for a more comprehensive analysis.

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