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Pre-service TEFL Teachers' Perception of Using Digital Storytelling in English Language Teaching

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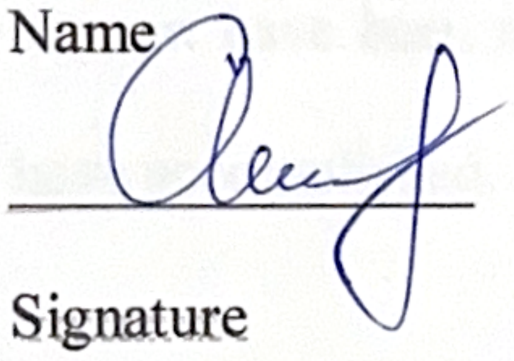
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Pre-service TEFL Teachers' Perception of Using Digital Storytelling in English Language Teaching

Abstract

The provided research examines the attitude of pre-service Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) teachers in Kazakhstan toward the application of Digital Storytelling (DST) as a pedagogical practice. Through use of the mixed-methods research design, the study combines the quantitative data collected in the form of questionnaires and qualitative data based on semi-structured interviews to explain prospective TEFL teacher's awareness, experience aspect, attitude, perceived benefits and challenges regarding the use of DST. The results demonstrate that, although the overall attitude toward DST tends to be rather positive, as expressed by most participants as an interesting and effective pedagogical tool, especially in developing speaking, writing, and critical thinking skills, the majority of them mention the lack of practical training and exposure addressed in their teacher education program. There were identified barriers such as different access to technology, the support of the institutions and different levels of digital literacy. This study also indicates that there is a requirement for more modest, practical training and incorporation of DST in teacher training programs. Such results encompass the general discussion of educational technology, offering context-specific information on how potential language teachers can be in a better position to conduct innovative digital practices in a classroom.

Keywords: digital storytelling (DST), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), pre-service teachers, pedagogical tool, language proficiency

TEFL болашақ мұғалімдерінің ағылшын тілін оқытудағы цифрлық әңгімелеуді қолдану туралы көзқарастары

Аңдатпа

Ұсынылған зерттеу Қазақстандағы ағылшын тілін шетел тілі ретінде оқытатын болашақ мұғалімдердің цифрлық әңгімелеу (digital storytelling) технологиясын педагогикалық әдіс ретінде қолдануға деген көзқарасын зерттейді. Аралас әдіснаманы қолдана отырып, зерттеу сандық сауалнама арқылы жиналған деректер мен жартылай құрылымдалған сұхбаттардан алынған сапалық деректерді біріктіреді. Зерттеу болашақ мұғалімдердің цифрлық әңгімелеу технологиясы туралы хабардарлығы, тәжірибесі, қатынасы, оның артықшылықтары мен қиындықтарын түсіндіруге бағытталған. Зерттеу нәтижелері көрсеткендей, қатысушылардың басым бөлігі цифрлық әңгімелеу арқылы сөйлеу, жазу және сыни ойлау дағдыларын дамытуда тиімді әрі қызықты педагогикалық құрал ретінде қабылдайды. Дегенмен, олардың көбі бұл технологияны тәжірибе жүзінде меңгеруге және мұғалімдерді даярлау бағдарламасына жеткілікті түрде енгізілмеуі жайлы пікір білдірді. Сондай-ақ, технологияға қолжетімділік деңгейінің әртүрлілігі, мекемелер тарапынан қолдаудың жеткіліксіздігі және цифрлық сауаттылық деңгейінің айырмашылығы сияқты кедергілер анықталды. Бұл зерттеу мұғалімдерді даярлау бағдарламаларына цифрлық әңгімелеу технологиясын нақты, практикалық оқыту арқылы жүйелі түрде енгізудің қажеттілігін көрсетеді. Осы нәтижелер білім беру технологиялары саласындағы кең ауқымды пікірталастарды толықтыра отырып, болашақ тіл мұғалімдерінің сыныпта инновациялық цифрлық тәсілдерді тиімді қолдануына қажетті жағдайларды қалыптастыру жолдарын ұсынады.

Кілт сөздер: цифрлық әңгімелеуді (DST), шетел тілі ретінде ағылшын тілі (EFL), болашақ мұғалімдер, педагогикалық құрал, тілдік құзыреттілік

Восприятие будущими учителями TEFL применения цифрового повествования в преподавании английского языка

Аннотация

Представленное исследование рассматривает отношение будущих преподавателей английского языка как иностранного (TEFL) в Казахстане к применению цифрового повествования (DST) в качестве педагогической практики. Используя смешанный метод исследования, работа сочетает количественные данные, собранные с помощью анкетирования, и качественные данные, полученные на основе полуструктурированных интервью, для анализа осведомлённости, опыта, отношения, предполагаемой пользы и возникающих трудностей, связанных с использованием цифрового повествования. Результаты показывают, что, несмотря на преимущественно положительное отношение к цифровому повествованию, характеризуемому большинством участников как интересному и эффективному педагогическому инструменту, особенно в развитии навыков говорения, письма и критического мышления, большинство из них указывают на недостаток практической подготовки и опыта, полученных в рамках педагогического образования. Были выявлены такие барьеры, как ограниченный доступ к технологиям, недостаточная поддержка со стороны образовательных учреждений и различный уровень цифровой грамотности. Исследование также подчёркивает необходимость более целенаправленной и практикоориентированной подготовки, а также включения цифрового повествования в программы подготовки учителей. Полученные результаты вносят вклад в общее обсуждение вопросов использования образовательных технологий, предлагая контекстно специфическую информацию о том, как будущие преподаватели могут быть лучше подготовлены к внедрению инновационных цифровых практик в учебный процесс.

Ключевые слова: цифровое повествование (DST), английский язык как иностранный (EFL), будущие учителя, педагогический инструмент, языковая компетенция

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Today, in the globalized world, knowledge of the English language has become one of the determinants of professional competitiveness and equal involvement in the global academic and cultural environment (Rao, 2019). The growing pedagogical requirement of flexibility in learning presumably led to the identification of inflexibilities of the traditional teacher-centered methodologies that emphasize on grammar and vocabulary building via controlled activities. As multiple investigations show, the conventional methods of teaching do not accommodate the individual needs of students which, consequently, leads to the minimization of motivation and low study results (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011, as cited in Hava, 2021). Due to such persistent challenges, educators and scholars have searched for teaching methods that could stimulate better learning processes. One such discovery was technology-enhanced practices that implied the utilization of digital storytelling (DST), as mentioned by Promos and Kordaki (2012), which has emerged as a promising area of interest.

According to Robbin (2008), digital storytelling is considered as an instructional method that combines narrative with digital media, allowing learners to share personal/academic stories by following the stages of topic selection, research, scriptwriting and production. He also suggested that this teaching approach in the era of technological advancements might contribute to 'digital natives' students' positive learning experiences.

Active meaningful and context-driven language use are components of this modern instructional approach to teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) which lies under some fundamental learning theories. From the prism of constructivist theory, EFL learners' knowledge is formed by being actively engaged in meaning-making (Jones, 2002). DST can be seen as involved in this activity because it has the potential to allow learners to create and reflect upon their own constructed stories and thereby convert abstract language input into output that takes on personal relevance. In addition, learners under task-based language teaching (TBLT) method follow a meaningful teaching framework which closely matches the principles of DST because they undertake the digital story creation process from task planning through research to scripting and target language presentation.

However, up to the present, Many Kazakhstani TEFL programs have partially adopted digital storytelling as an educational practice although numerous research works have validated its benefits. It can be observed that some educators continue to emphasize the memorization of grammatical and lexical units, ignoring contextualized and communicative language use (Zhorabekova & Tleuzhanova, 2021). Bakyt (2021) also outlined in the research findings that 'English teachers use digital storytelling in their teaching but not very frequently' due to insufficient digital literacy and limited methodological preparations. Thus, many teacher education programs are likely to follow a traditional pattern, and as a result, novice teachers often graduate without adequate preparation for implementing contemporary teaching methods such as digital storytelling, which could be highly beneficial in their future practice.

The effectiveness of DST in language education relies on teachers' perception regarding the approach, as well as their readiness and confidence in implementing it. Pre-service TEFL teachers play a very vital role in either enhancing or suppressing pedagogical creativity. Even though research has been conducted to ascertain the general impact of DST on language skills especially in Kazakhstan, where the embeddedness of technology in education is not homogenous, a deficiency of investigations focusing on how pre-service teachers perceive this approach remains. Their perceptions are worth analyzing in the effort to determine the practical viability of integrating DST in the future language teaching practice.

The rationale of the current study is to investigate the level of awareness and attitude of pre-service TEFL teachers in Kazakhstan regarding digital storytelling with specific reference to the opportunities and challenges of the method of digital storytelling use in English language teaching. The research investigates future EFL instructors' perceptions of this teaching approach because it contributes new knowledge to learner-centred language education studies. Finally, to offer useful suggestions that might improve the standard of English language teaching and learning, as well as to assist instructors and prospective teachers in guiding their professional growth with more confidence and creativity.

1.2 Problem Statement

It is generally accepted that throughout the past decade, the English language teaching field has incorporated modern technologies to boost student involvement while improving teaching quality. The digital storytelling application has become known as a helpful approach that

combines narrative with multimedia elements to provide engaging and student-centered learning classes (Barret, 2005). The pedagogical literature of EFL education extensively addresses digital storytelling yet empirical research study on how pre-service TEFL instructors perceive this approach alongside their opinion concerning possible advantages and challenges is limited. The insufficient academic studies about this matter are essential because teacher perspectives and attitudes contribute heavily to their upcoming instructional choices and readiness for innovative methods.

The problem is most pronounced in areas that adopt learner-focused educational approaches through reform, yet their teacher training programs need to evolve to match such changes in practice. When students train to be teachers without adequate training on digital tools, knowledge-to-practice gaps might emerge as a result of their poor understanding of digital tools such as DST. The understanding of future educators' attitudes toward DST regarding its educational benefits, system functionality and lesson objectives effectiveness will determine its complete utilization potential. The encountered challenges provoke doubts regarding the preparedness and readiness of new ELT teachers to implement digital storytelling techniques for their future classes. The development of teacher education programs in Kazakhstan needs a thorough analysis of DST perceptions because it will allow for relevant training strategies to emerge and effective digital tool integration in ELT classrooms.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study is intended to examine the conceptualization of digital storytelling as a pedagogical tool in teaching the English language by pre-

service TEFL teachers in Kazakhstan. It analyzes their point of view (particularly their awareness, experience and attitude) on how DST enhances language proficiency, increase student involvement and foster learners' creativity. Hence, it also focuses on both benefits and difficulties of integrating digital storytelling in EFL classrooms in Kazakhstani context. The combination of these factors gives a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of these future teachers in terms of their intentions to use DST in actual classroom settings.

The objectives of the study:

- to examine the current literature regarding digital storytelling as an ELT method;
- to investigate the awareness, experience and attitudes of pre-service TEFL teachers towards DST and their beliefs about its advantages and issues in a mixed-methods research;
- to present context-specific information regarding the introduction of DST in the TEFL practices and teacher training programs in Kazakhstan.

1.4 Research Questions of the Study

The following research questions were formulated in regard to this research/study in accordance with research objectives:

1. What are pre-service TEFL teachers' awareness, experience, and attitudes toward the use of digital storytelling in English language teaching?

2. What do pre-service TEFL teachers perceive as the main benefits and challenges of integrating digital storytelling into their future teaching practice?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this investigation falls within the context of the recent requirement for novel approaches to English language instruction in Kazakhstan, which is entirely in line with technological advancements presently. The study addresses the perceptions that pre-service TEFL teachers have about the application of digital storytelling in English Language Teaching (ELT) as well as their relationship with contemporary pedagogical tools. In this regard, it attempts to explain the impact of DST on engagement, creativity and student autonomy in language classrooms.

Results of this exploration can advance both the education and teacher training programs. To facilitate meaningful use of technology in the teaching of English, an awareness of pre-service teachers' attitudes towards DST is needed so as to guide the development of course content. It may also support teacher educators in developing provisions of trainings that will enhance confidence and competence of using multimedia tools effectively.

A wider scope of the study may build support for curriculum developers, educational policy makers, and training institutions of teachers who want to modernize the teaching of English as a foreign language. This research can have a wider contribution in the broader mission of trying to make English teaching and learning in Kazakhstan more interactive, inclusive, and future-oriented by demonstrating how digital storytelling can

potentially support language learning and the approaches to these that are learner-centered.

1.6 The Novelty of the Research

This study aims to understand the perceptions of pre-service TEFL teachers in Kazakhstan on using digital storytelling in English language teaching, with special focus on the awareness, experience and attitude towards the tool to be used in actual classroom context. Whereas the use of digital storytelling to develop language skills by using creative and learner centered activities becomes internationally recognized, its usage in the pre-service teacher education in Kazakhstan has not been extensively studied yet. This gap is to be addressed through this research. Finally, the findings attempt to provide practical implications for the TEFL curriculum improvement and teacher training in Kazakhstan and, in general, contribute to the ongoing global debate on new and technology-based language learning.

1.7 Thesis Outline

The master's thesis consists of six chapters, including Introduction, Literature review, Methodology, Findings, Discussion and Conclusion parts, following by a list of References and Appendices.

The Introduction section gives the big picture of the study background, offers the research problem, and explains why the issue of examining digital storytelling in TEFL teacher education needs to be investigated. It provides summaries of research questions and objectives as well as practical and theoretical significance of the study on the issue.

The Literature Review offers a continuous overview of the application of digital storytelling to EFL learning. This part is devoted to indicating the concept, examine its theoretical foundations, and explore its practical applications in educational environments. It analyzes previous studies to demonstrate what impact does DST have on language proficiency, motivation and student involvement. The chapter also identifies a research gap in the comprehension of the perceptions of pre-service TEFL instructors particularly in Kazakhstani context.

The Methodology chapter highlights the use of mixed methods to conduct the study presented here by outlining the participant selection criteria, the instruments (the questionnaire and the written interview), the data collection procedures, the ethical considerations and the ways to carry out the data analysis.

Results to the research questions were presented in the Findings chapter. The qualitative insights, in turn, where the quantitative data gives an overall image of awareness, experience and attitudes, indicate how the individual experiences with the future problems of incorporating DST into the existing concept of teaching practice are expected. The Discussion chapter interprets these results in the framework of the overall technology enhanced learning, and TEFL programs. It compares and contrasts the results to the results of previous studies and presents possible interpretations as well as pedagogical implications. The attention is drawn to how teacher training programs can provide what the participants said they need and what they are concerned with.

Finally, conclusion chapter summarizes the main findings and identifies how the study has limitations and offers some recommendations for action to TEFL stakeholders. Other research areas that can explore further on how digital storytelling takes place in the initial preparation of teachers are also presented in the chapter.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

It is important to note that in the combination of the timeless art of storytelling with modern multimedia resources, digital storytelling seems to offer an unconventional approach to English language instruction that is student-centered, creative, and experience-driven. In its turn, this practice is likely to reveal the downsides of traditional, text-dense instruction. The aim of this chapter is to describe how digital storytelling could turn EFL classrooms into more active places of learning by examining the theoretical foundations and their educational aspects.

2.1 Conceptual Framework of Digital Storytelling

The fact that telling a story is the most ancient form of human communication used to transfer knowledge, culture and values from one generation to the next is widely known. Such activity describes a natural human drive that serves as a fundamental form to organize experiences, gain knowledge, and express meaning (Dehghan, 2020; Mallawaarachchi, 2020). Throughout history, storytelling has been reframed to its environment and tools of the time, along with human interaction and learning manners.

Later, in the second half of the 20th century, the fast development of technology led to featuring additional visual, auditory, and interactive elements into storytelling that overshadowed traditional oral or written formats. Consequently, such evolution marked a turning point in an educational context. According to prior studies, the introduction of digital storytelling into classrooms could be traced back to the efforts of Lambert and Atchley in the late 1980s, when the two started experimenting with

personal narratives and multimedia (Robin, 2008). One of the earliest examples of the strength of combining storytelling and digital technology was Atchley in his interactive multimedia performance Next Exit (early 1990s): even individuals with minimal technical knowledge could make a strong personal story with new media (Calik and Seckin-Kapucu, 2021). The two co-founded the Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS) in Berkeley, California which is used to teach other people how to make digital stories (Robin, 2008). As the leader in the movement, CDS, a community arts group, introduced workshop materials and made digital storytelling famous. Significantly, StoryCenter was instrumental in shaping important foundations of DST and instructed plenty of storytellers and educators. Not only did the CDS popularize the practice of the digital story, but also produced a model based on seven key elements that continue to be used to guide digital story creation. Further, Robin (2008, as cited in Razmi et al., 2014) stated that digital tools are characterized by high accessibility and high adaptability; a factor that makes them appropriate at a time when learners are required to operate in environments that are complex and media-rich.

2.1.1 Definition and Scope of Digital Storytelling. As interest in the educational field is growing, it is important to specify what is meant by the term *'digital storytelling'*. Generally, in various studies, digital storytelling is defined as a practice that integrates traditional techniques of storytelling with new digital tools like audio, video, text, image, and animation (Robin, 2006; Yuksel et al., 2011). The educational technology team at the University of Houston also defines DST as such that at its simplest core, involves the act of using computer-based tools in telling stories, thus, incorporating the

art of storytelling with an assortment of multimedia tools such as text, images, audio, video, etc. (n.d.). Digital stories usually revolve around a particular subject or opinion and are usually kept to a few minutes, usually 2-10 minutes (University of Houston, n.d.). Similarly, Hava (2021) states that it includes devising short, narrative-based projects on a significant topic or personal experiences that typically last for up to 3-5 minutes. Additionally, according to Rule (2010), digital stories are very powerful because they can unite voice, music and visuals to increase the emotional impact and clarity of the narratives.

Digital storytelling is not considering the technology itself or the production of a high-quality movie, but it involves individual expression and a story, aided by technology. According to one of the pioneers of DST, Daniel Meadows (n.d., as cited in University of Houston, n.d., para. 4)., digital stories can be described as "short, personal multimedia stories told from the heart". That underlines the idea that DST is based on genuine voice and personal narration, not on high production quality. DST cannot, therefore, be confused with general multimedia presentations or even basic slideshows: a digital story needs to have a consistent narrative backbone such as a beginning, middle, end or some narrative sequencing rather than being just an assemblage of facts or pictures.

Consistent with earlier results, by definition, DST is cross-modal, and it includes text, imagery, voice, sound, and sometimes video, thereby explaining why it is also an efficient technique in the educational field. On the basis of previous findings, educators are prone to express their support for DST, as it actively involves students in creative and cognitive processes

in various ways. According to researcher Bernard Robin (2008, p. 220), digital storytelling has already become a "powerful teaching and learning tool" which engages both teachers and students actively. In order to produce a meaningful digital story in the classroom, students are asked to research a topic, write a script, and finally illustrate it with suitable media, thus simultaneously practicing writing, speaking, visual design, and technology use skills. Teachers have used DST projects to enhance everything from language arts (e.g. personal memoir stories) to social studies (digital stories on historical events) or to science and health education (explaining a concept or raising awareness through story).

As mentioned by Robin (2006, as cited in Calik and Seckin-Kapucu, 2021), educational digital stories can be classified into at least three broad categories, namely personal narratives (stories about a personal experience), historical documentaries (stories that talk about a historical event or theme) and informative or instructive stories (stories that describe or teach about a topic). This diversity is an illustration of the range of DST in education as it is not confined to a subject or genre. Students are able to exchange their memories, re-tell historical events, or give an explanation to some scientific phenomenon, meanwhile making the DST format fit their intention. Research claims that DST can be used in the classroom to raise the level of interest in the subject, elaborate on reflections and build up skills such as digital literacy and creativity (Robin, 2006). Today, one can find digital storytelling being practiced in "community centers, schools, libraries and businesses, from novice technology users to those with advanced skills", and in education it is used "in many different content areas and across a wide range of grade

levels" (University of Houston, n.d., para. 7). Overall, DST is a highly adaptable educational intervention, specifically the multimodal, narrative-driven focus of the approach means that it can be used to address a wide range of learning outcomes, recasting more traditional educational aims (such as writing, critical thinking, and collaboration) in exciting, motivating new forms.

2.1.2 Conceptual Distinctions from other Multimedia Practices.

Digital Storytelling may have some common characteristics with other digital media forms, including vlogging and podcasting; however, it is purposefully, structurally, and modally unique. Such differences are essential to be understood, particularly in teaching and learning situations where each of the above-stated mediums offers unique opportunities for student involvement as well as improvement in academic performance (see Table 1).

Table 1

Comparative overview of DST and other Multimedia Practices

Aspect	Digital Storytelling	Vlogging	Podcasting
Purpose	One-time, standalone narrative for a specific purpose (Robin, 2016).	Personal chronicle – ongoing updates to share one's life or ideas and build a community of followers.	Thematic series – deliver content or stories regularly around a common theme; often aims to inform or entertain.
Modality	Multimedia (integrates images, audio narration, music, and sometimes video clips for a rich audio-visual story).	Video-based (primarily video recordings, often a talking-head format with minimal editing).	Audio-centric (primarily audio recordings; may have optional visual elements, but sound is the main content).

Structure	Structured narrative – typically 2-5 minutes in length, scripted and edited with a clear narrative arc; a single cohesive story.	Episodic entries – informal, diary-like video posts released serially; forms an ongoing video journal or channel (Collins Dictionary, n.d.).	Episodic series –discrete audio episodes (e.g. weekly installments) often released on a schedule.
Educational Use	Creative story assignment – students craft a single multimedia narrative to reflect on a topic or personal experience (one-time project) (EDCI 336, 2021).	Video journaling – students record periodic vlogs (video diaries) to reflect on learning or practice communication (Burns, 2023).	Audio learning series – used to share course content or student discussions in audio form over time.

As illustrated in Table 1, Vlogging (video blogging) is a process of making and sharing personal media by means of video posts, usually on a site such as YouTube. Hassan (2023, p.2) defined vlogging as "a video blog" according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, stating that "vlogging means creating and communicating messages through video blogging". Similar to digital storytellers, vloggers usually use the first-person speech, talking about experience or sharing opinion directly with the audience. Nevertheless, they have major differences. Usually, vlogs are recorded in the form of a series of informal, diary-style video updates, usually filmed in one take with the vlogger addressing a camera directly. These documented monologues, which are occasionally complemented by simple visual effects or cuts, are an asynchronous form that solicits comments of the viewer but not live collaboration (Hassan, 2023). In contrast, a digital story is constructed rather like a short film: scripted and edited to have a particular narrative arc, and

employing a richer mix of media than a talking head format. The authors of DST typically allocate much time on the pre-production in order to present a single 2-5 minutes long storytelling with an emotional appeal, whilst vloggers can make less thought-out, unedited posts on a regular basis. To conclude, a vlogger and a digital storyteller can use personal voice and digital video, yet the DST seems closer to making a short documentary or a narrative film, whereas vlogging is a type of informal, serial broadcasting of your life or ideas.

Likewise, the podcast is another common type of personal voice mixed with storytelling in the audio (and occasionally video) format. Podcasting can be explained as a way of "publishing audio and video content on the web as a series of episodes with a common theme" and usually an RSS feed that a listener can subscribe to (Deal, 2007, p. 2). The typical examples of podcasts are talk shows, interviews, or serial stories that are provided once a week in an audio form. Digital storytelling and podcasting are, however, different in a number of ways. As stated earlier, DST is multimedia by nature compared to podcasting which is mainly audio with a visual element being secondary or optional. The digital story contains either pictures or a video, which is a significant element that supports the text, the voice of the narrator, and creates a better comprehension and emotional reaction in the audience because of the visual interpretation (Rahiem, 2021). In a podcast, however, the content has to be transmitted only by means of sound (spoken words, music, sound effects), and it is up to the imagination of the listeners to visualize it. In addition, a podcast is most often a continuing sequence of episodes that are subscribable, whereas digital stories are typically presented

in classroom displays, posted on a web site or at an event, and may not be included in an automatic feed. In brief, even though both podcasts and digital stories embrace the storytelling strength, podcasting resembles a scheduled radio program, and DST is closer to the creation of a brief movie or slideshow story.

2.1.3 Theoretical Foundation of Digital Storytelling. Various and complementary language learning theories underpin digital storytelling in tertiary EFL education, and they can be collectively used to explain its pedagogical effectiveness. Constructivism, which states that learners actively construct knowledge based on their experience and reflections instead of being passive recipients of the information, is one of such foundations. The use of digital storytelling in tertiary EFL learning has multiple, yet compatible, language learning theories that can describe the effectiveness of the technique in pedagogical terms. This approach is also associated with Piaget, who considered learners as meaning-makers towards constructing knowledge: "learners construct knowledge rather than just passively receive information" (Piaget & Cook, 1952, as cited in Kahanurak et al., 2023, p. 22, para. 1). The students construct new knowledge and accommodate it to their prior conceptual schemes as they design and create digital stories, which is an example of a constructivist assimilation -accommodation cycle.

Constructivism also involves learner-centered, inquiry-focused activity and the necessity to relate a learning experience to personal life experience. As an example, the progressive theory of education developed by Dewey demanded that new content should be associated with the personal experience of the learner to enhance the meaning (Talebi, 2015, p. 5, as cited

in Abderrahim & Gutierrrez-Colon Plana, 2021) and also "the information must be introduced in a manner that the student can connect the content to an earlier experience, therefore enriching the relationship with this new information" (Talebi, 2015, p. 5). The principle is put into practice by digital storytelling: students tend to use their personal experiences, culture, and interests to produce digital stories, thus connecting language learning to real personal backgrounds.

In constructivist DST classroom teacher performs the role of a guide, not a lecturer; he or she leads the creative process of learners but does not impose it upon them. Such a move not only invites narrative construction as a way of knowing and building knowledge but also has the inherent propensity to invite learner autonomy. By allowing the students to select their story topics, determining which multimedia features to include, and allowing them to be in control of the revision and editing process students acquire a sense of ownership of the learning. It has also been observed that by allowing EFL learners to control the content and format in DST, they are likely to achieve a sense of ownership concerning the learning process (Kupetz et al., 2006, as cited in Waloyo & Hidayati, 2024, p. 2, para. 2). The learners are placed in the role of the initiator, as they plan, create, and self-assess their digital stories, which develop essential skills of self-directed learning (Pasaribu, 2020, as cited in Waloyo & Hidayati, 2024, p. 2, para. 3). Overall, the project-directed, student-centered nature of DST makes it ideal as an illustration of constructivist pedagogy where the students are given the opportunity to build knowledge by telling meaningful stories in the presence of the instructor who offers appropriate scaffolding.

Communicative language teaching (CLT) approach is yet another fundamental framework underlying DST. CLT appeared as a response to the realization that language learning requires authentic communication and it is not about the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary pool but about the capability of using language in real life situations. The focus of this approach is the process of forming the communicative competence in learners, the ability to construct and interpret meaning in different contexts adequately (Hymes, 1972; Savignon, 2017).

Digital storytelling is strongly articulated with CLT principles as it offers a real, meaningful situation of communication. When creating digital stories, learners are asked to employ English in conveying a clear message to an audience and this involves them in using language in a context of meaning making rather than the practice of discrete forms.

The DST process is functional in the sense that it combines several language skills (speaking or voice narration, writing scripts, listening and reacting to the stories of peers, etc.) Since a story is originally a form of communication, when students tell stories, they are exercising not only linguistic correctness but also discourse skills (organizing a narrative to be told to an audience) and sociolinguistic skills (selecting a proper tone, style and content to their listeners) all a part of communicative competence.

Indeed, researchers have pointed out DST as a promising method of carrying out CLT in EFL classrooms. As another example, Al-Amri (2020) states that the nature of digital storytelling is what makes this particular activity an excellent option of EFL teachers that are looking to adopt CLT

due to the requirement of communicative activities in foreign language contexts.

Practically, DST involves plenty of opportunities to engage in authentic communication within the classroom: learners negotiate over the ideas, discuss the contents of stories, and perform their stories, thus balancing the deficit of real-life interaction in English in many EFL settings. The valuable help of DST in achieving the outcomes of CLT is demonstrated in a case study with Saudi EFL students carried out by Al-Amri (2020). The digital stories were created over 12 weeks by the students as a shared activity, and the experience provided them with sufficient chances to communicate within the classroom, which resulted in visible positive changes in the key language areas (pronunciation, grammatical usage, and vocabulary choice) that are parts of communicative competence (Al-Amri, 2020, p. 277, para. 4). These improvements indicate that, during the narrative storytelling activities, the learners were able to exercise using the target language in authentic manner as well as reinforce the linguistic and pragmatic competencies required in actual communication. Overall, then, by placing language practice within a narrative framework that is both interactive and goal-orientated, DST provides direct assistance to the aims of CLT, by helping to increase both student engagement and fluency, and to develop general communicative proficiency.

The third important theoretical basis of DST in language teaching is sociocultural theory which is based on Vygotskian views on learning. Sociocultural theory focuses on learning as social and collaborative process that is mediated by tools and interaction of cultures. According to this

perspective, knowledge is not one that is gained or acquired by an individual in a secluded manner but rather knowledge is co-constructed in the course of communication and engagement in socio-cultural practices.

The inherent property of digital storytelling is the establishment of a social learning environment that appeals to these principles. Creating a digital story can be very collaborative since students can brainstorm story ideas in pairs or groups, provide feedback to one another on scripts or produce a narrative together. Stories are usually shared with peers or a broader audience even in the case of their individual creation, thus opening the possibility of a dialogue and an exchange. This kind of interaction refers to the concept outlined by Vygotsky, stating that learning is the premise of cognitive development that can be achieved through social interaction in which conversation and collaboration prompt the comprehension (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in Abderrahim & Gutierrrez-Colon Plana, 2021, p. 39). Learners in a DST project will automatically find themselves in what Vygotsky referred to as the zone of proximal development: through the collaborative effort, and with the guidance of the instructors, they will be able to achieve more than they would individually.

Additionally, authors of the reviewed paper discovered that, in a collaborative digital storytelling activity, learners actively discuss language issues and co-create knowledge when they engage in the process of creating stories, improving the language use of one another (Nishioka et al., 2016, as cited in Waloyo & Hidayati, 2024, p. 3, para. 1). In a review by Moradi and Chen (2019, p. 1, para. 3), it is stated that the combination of technology and social-constructivist approach is essential to achieve current academic

objectives as contemporary learners build knowledge by means of actively using tools in real contexts.

That natural context in which language, culture and technology come together to support learning in DST is the context of authentic storytelling, usually based on student own cultural or personal narratives. The outcome is not just better language acquisition but also intercultural learning and self-discovery as students tell stories representing their experiences and hear the ones of the others. This theoretical prism therefore informs the reason why an activity such as DST, which bank on the power of social collaboration and culturally-situated storytelling can be very effective in the language proficiency of EFL learners.

2.1.4. Core Principles of Digital Storytelling. A set of core principles directs digital storytelling, resulting in its educational effectiveness, unlike other multimedia tasks. The most widely accepted model is the seven elements of digital storytelling found by the Center for Digital Storytelling (now StoryCenter). These are a clear personal point of view, a dramatic question that sustains the audience's interest, emotional content, clarity of voice, soundtrack, economy of language, and pacing. The use of these elements helps learners produce a concise but emotionally involving that lasts between 2 to 10 minutes (Sadik, 2008; Ohler, 2012). A combination of these items makes a digital story personal, intentional, and appealing to the audiences.

First of all, researchers emphasize the role of personal voice in DST. Putting a story into own words makes the experience more personal, and it may boost confidence and active participation of the storyteller (Hartsell,

2017, p.72). In fact, "the most important aspect is that the storyteller learns to create stories using their personal voice and interpretation to be shared with a larger community" (Hartsell, 2017, p.72). Bull and Kajder (2005) note that the inflection and tone of the voice of the storyteller in telling his/her own story has a personal intent that cannot be achieved in any other way; there is simply no way to tell your story without using your own voice (p. 49). For students, the support of their distinct voices is interpreted in higher education as the means of validating their experiences and their views. As one example, Benick (2012) determined that student-created digital stories can be used in post-secondary education to "authenticate the multiple voices of learning and make room to hear the many voices of students" (p. 148). Briefly put, the personal voice aspect in DST gives the students the opportunity to relate their story to their self, which makes it more interesting and real both to the author and the reader.

One more principle that goes hand in hand with this is the audience awareness. Digital stories are developed with the intention of sharing and therefore, getting to know the audience and how to effectively convey the message to them is important. Teachers using DST frequently have students ask themselves, at the beginning of the planning sequence, what the story is about and whom it is aimed at. The initial design step that Robin (2016) recommends to beginner digital storytellers is to examine the prospective audience of the story and create the narrative to match it (p. 19). Thinking about the audience assists in formulating the choices concerning the content, tone, and style is the rule that should be especially considered in higher education when digital stories may be created to inform or convince others.

That is, on the one hand, storytellers should not forget about personal expression but, on the other hand, they just cannot ignore the requirement of clarity and relevance on the part of the listeners, so there is a necessity to reconcile personal voice and the demands of the audience.

The importance of emotional content in DST is repeatedly mentioned in the literature. In his original list, Lambert adds such an element as Emotional Content that is defined as issues that become "personal and powerful in the story". Emotional content in an educational situation refers to the fact that the narrative will be handling themes or experiences that are truly important to the narrator and that will touch viewers in a personal way, on an emotional level. Some research indicates that the stories containing realistic emotional gravitas may be reflective and connecting. For example, De Caro-Barek (2022) devotes emotional content as one of the most persuasive aspects of DST since it "directly addresses the learners and helps relate the plot of the story to their personal lives" (p. 5). Digital stories that college students produce when sharing difficulties, they overcame in their lives or important moments that happened to them can be emotionally real, which will positively affect empathy and engagement in the classroom (Ribeiro, Moreira, & da Silva, 2014). Ribeiro et al. (2014) had noted that the DST process asks students to pause and think carefully about what they want to share and in what manner, and hence personal feelings tend to come out in the process; more to the point, the students subsequently share such narratives with one another and the faculty, thus opening up conversations and insights (p. 183). It corresponds with the larger aim in higher education to humanize the learning process and develop social-emotional capacity. But

the researchers also mention vulnerability: since DST implies sharing personal emotions, the teacher should create an empowering atmosphere (Salazar, 2014).

Technically, economy and pacing principles are essential in making digital stories on point and efficient. The meaning of economy in DST is the utilization of a minimum amount of content necessary to convey the story without overwhelming and distracting the audience. Classroom instructors frequently observe how students can have difficulties with this since they are inclined to add all the details, images, or any other pieces of information which can make the story less powerful. Bull and Kajder (2005) observe that there is a significant interplay between economy and pacing: when a storyteller attempts to force too many pages of script or ideas into a brief video, they rush through it, ruining the pacing (p. 49). The answer lies in taking those difficult choices regarding which elements of the story can be discarded in the process of revising the script, in order to have the finished story moving at a natural pace (Bull & Kajder, 2005, p. 49). The speed and rhythm of story delivery, which is called pacing, is the ally of economy. A digital story with a correct pace will contain both breaks and active scenes in equal measure, corresponding to the emotional points of the story. When a story is overly quick because of an attempt to fit in as much as possible content, the viewers will miss the point; when it is too slow, the viewers will lose interest. Practicing teachers who teach DST focus on two aspects of brevity and clarity: brevity, in staying on a tight, brief script (economy); and clarity, in timing, to give the audience a chance to assimilate each chunk (pacing). Indicatively, De Caro-Barek (2022) suggests that one should avoid

crowding the story with unnecessary details. keep it short and with a direct message is important as well as the pacing of the story should enable individual learners to follow the story at their comfort (p. 6).

Lastly, the multimedia aspect of DST introduces the visual and audio aesthetics of design into the equation – these are frequently spoken of in the context of utilizing the "power of visual imagery and soundtrack". One of the characteristics of digital storytelling is that it combines a traditional story with images, video and sound. The idea in this case is that the elements of the media must not overpower the story but instead contribute to it. Strong images can be used to depict setting, character or idea in the story, whereas sounds (music, sound effects, ambiance) can be used to support tone and message. The framework created by Lambert specifically included such elements as "the power of the soundtrack", realizing that music or sound can "support and embellish the storyline". When it comes to higher education projects, students are urged to be explicit when it comes to their media preferences. Robin (2016) recommends selecting visually fascinating images that help to promote and reinforce the story and recording the narration in high quality. Recent studies on the design of online learning environment reaffirm that the use of multimedia has to be deliberate. According to De Caro-Barek (2022), the inclusion of music or sounds can assist and reinforce the narrative and provide complexity to the story, providing a new level to the learning process (p. 6). But this principle also leads back to economy: every visual or sound, which is not in the service of the purpose of the story, must be omitted.

2.2 Digital Storytelling in Education

2.2.1 Teaching Models of Digital Storytelling in Language Teaching.

Digital storytelling has become a flexible pedagogical model in tertiary English language teaching and has assisted language growth via multimodal storytelling production. According to recent research studies, several types of DST models are implemented in the framework of step-by-step process and task-based models, which accommodate multiple language skills and involve both teachers and learners in new roles. The following section is a review of the popular models of teaching DST in higher education ELT contexts based on open-access research over the last decade. It also compares and contrasts the structure and stages of each model, their pedagogical explanation, the role of teacher and students and the language skills which are focused upon giving examples in the literature.

A notable model approaches the idea of digital storytelling as a multi-step process, guiding the learners through the process of creating a story idea to production. Within this method, teachers guide learners through a series of steps in producing a digital story, usually based on the traditional workshop model invented by the Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS) (Lambert, 2013). As an illustration, Moradi and Chen (2019) claim that DST includes four critical stages, namely, pre-production, production, post-production, and distribution. During pre-production learners generate ideas and research a topic, create a script, peer review and create a storyboard. In the production process students will be assembling and creating multimedia (images, audio, video) and will record voice over. During the post-production stage, they edit the digital story and finalize it and during the distribution

stage they show it to an audience or the class. According to Moradi and Chen (2019), a systematic DST procedure helps students to become more active in the learning process and results in a deeper commitment to contents.

Nevertheless, considering the views expressed by Ribeiro (2015), the use of technology is purposefully left to the last stage, as the priority is given to the face-to-face storytelling and peer feedback followed by digital assembly. This will help the students to concentrate on the narrative content and voice at earlier phases, as it corresponds to the constructivist idea that storytelling must remain human-driven even in the case of utilizing digital resources. After writing and voicing the stories, the learners then undertake the technical production (combining pictures, sound, video) and lastly share their finished digital stories with the rest of the class to reflect and critique.

The various implementations of DST that focus on the process tend to be based on the writing process paradigm and include steps such as planning, drafting, revising, and publishing in a digital form. As an example, Smeda, Dakich, and Sharda (2014) describe a six-lesson DST sequence that was applied in different grades (and can be adjusted to the university setting): lesson 1: brainstorm (developing a story idea), lesson 2: storyboard, lesson 3: collect materials, lesson 4: construct the digital story, lesson 5: editing/feedback, lesson 6: presentation. This type of staged framework can be used at university level where ELT students are given a digital story project to complete in phases. More importantly, every step of the procedure can address specific language-learning goals. So, for instance, in brainstorming and storyboarding, the students are trained to speak (in story circles or group discussions) and write (drafting narratives) in English; in

production, they can be trained to read (researching content or reading scripts) and listen (recording and listening to audio). At the last stage of presentation, learners are engaged in speaking (presenting or telling their own story) and listening to the stories of others, sealing the circle on an integrative language experience.

Recent reviews of the literature demonstrate that DST has been used in higher education in diverse forms of task designs. A systematic review of 20 studies by Sabari and Hashim (2023) revealed that digital storytelling tasks in ELT usually are in the form of classroom-based tasks (smaller DST activities performed during the classroom sessions), project-based tasks (longer-term projects lasting weeks and often involving group work), and tablet/mobile-based tasks (using mobile applications to tell stories). The project-based DST format is particularly prevalent at tertiary level such as an assignment where in addition to developing a digital story, during a semester students plan, create and present a digital story as a group project effectively a course project which motivates active target language use.

Compagnoni (2022) conducts research that explicitly connects DST and task-based learning and states that the insertion of digital storytelling into task-based strands of instruction can anchor language use in activities that are very contextualized and purposeful. In her case study of university students learning Italian, the DST activities were incorporated into task cycles, where the students had to negotiate meaning and create content and engage with peers, which can also be traced in the pre-task, task, and post-task phases of TBLT (Compagnoni, 2022).

Incorporation of digital storytelling in tertiary ELT presents an issue of redesigning the long-established teacher and student roles in addition to conventional implementation issues. In DST models the role of teacher changes to more of a facilitator and coach role and the students have more responsibility as creators and collaborators. As it is stated in multiple studies, the successful application of DST in the classroom involves the transformation of the "teacher-centered culture into the learner-centered instruction" (Wolf, 2012, as cited in Moradi & Chen, 2019, para. 3). As an illustration, in a process-oriented model proposed by Smeda et al. (2014), teachers monitored the students' academic performance stage by stage and assisted them accordingly, "depending on each individual student". More assistance was given to students with less digital experience and less assistance was given to more skillful students over time. Students were put in groups and guided by teachers in brainstorming ideas for their stories as well as providing formative feedback on storyboards and drafts. Teachers also occupied a key role in technical mentorship in later stages, showing how the video editing software works, how to locate and reference images and solving any problems (Smeda et al., 2014, p. 6).

Students, in their turn, are likely to perform better when they are considered as active constructors according to DST paradigms. They are not absorbed passively with content but rather need to make a sequence of creative and communicative choices: what story to narrate, how to narrate it efficiently in English, what media to integrate, how to re-systematize according to the feedback, etc. Smead et al. (2014) reported high levels of student engagement throughout the DST activities, with even the students

traditionally disengaged got excited when working with technology and told stories (many were thrilled to be "searching the internet" to find media and loved watching stories told by their peers, displaying elevated engagement).

2.3 Digital Storytelling in Kazakhstani Education

2.3.1 Application of Digital Storytelling in TEFL Programs. The recent research in the Kazakhstani higher educational setting demonstrates that digital storytelling (DS) has gained an active application to the teaching of the English language in order to promote the active participation and linguistic and cultural development of the students. In a research project conducted on the basis of L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, first year undergraduate students majoring in English who produced and performed their own digital stories about cultural content demonstrated significant improvements in four language areas (listening, speaking, reading, writing) compared to a control group with the traditional teaching methods (Zhussupova, 2017). According to Zhussupova (2017), the post-test results (writing and speaking) of the experimental class at the end of a 7-week DST project were approximately 10 per cent higher than in the control group since there was also a qualitative evaluation where students stated that storytelling allowed them to overcome their fear and become more confident when speaking. They suffered from anxiety when it came to making speeches or talks but they were more secure in the situation as long as they had time to organize their speech delivery (p. 28, paras. 3-4). It indicates that DS would foster a low-stress learning environment to perform oral skills and encourage the learner through personalization.

Similarly, Shokhayev et al. (2024) conducted a quasi-experimental study at one of the universities in Kazakhstan revealing that the instruction of literature by using digital stories resulted in higher achievements, knowledge maintenance, and positive attitudes in comparison to lecture-based teaching methods. The students in the DST-augmented literature course (regarding the works of the Kazakhstani writers) gained more comprehension and intensity towards the course material over a period of more than six weeks. The authors summarize that DST has a clear potential to situate literature content and positively impact on the learning retention and positive attitudes to the Kazakh literature in students (Shokhayev et al., 2024, p. 502, para. 2). These interventions demonstrate that using DST as a project-based learning tool in the classroom could contribute to the English language instruction since it is possible to provide students with a more manageable, tangible, and relatable approach to abstract information. Not only do students get a chance of practicing the language meaningfully but also learn to be creative and make cultural awareness through their own storytelling.

The usefulness of digital storytelling to combine both technology and language learning in a multicultural setting in Kazakhstan is also highlighted in another research. Zhussupova and Shadiev (2023) presented an article concerning the adoption of DST in a group of culturally diverse second year undergraduate TEFL students to improve academic practices of conducting public speaking activities. The students were led in the making of short multimedia stories (using pictures, recordings and words) about cross-cultural communication and tracked an increase in coherence and fluency of

oral presentation of 15 percent according to rubric compared to initial baseline. Importantly, the vocabulary and correct use of grammar were also the areas of improvement, where students achieved success due to repeated practices of retelling their digital stories (Zhussupova & Shadiev, 2023, p. 499, para. 3). This conclusion can be aligned with the state of research on the topic internationally and can verify in the Kazakhstani context the very possibility of DST being used to improve speaking coherence and reduce anxiety levels among learners. Likewise, technology-oriented reviews indicate DST as an innovative "pedagogical technology" that supplements the traditional methodologies due to the student's interest in multimedia. Tulegenova (2019) provides a list of DST tools (e.g. ZooBurst 3D storybooks, StoryBird, UtellStory) in her research study and remarks that in Kazakhstan, the education policy focuses on integrating ICT technologies at all levels. Despite being described as rather new and almost innovative in the education sector, DST is regarded as a prospective approach toward interacting with the so-called information generation of students (Tulegenova, 2019, p. 2, para. 3).

By 2019, universities were investing money into digital laboratories and other resources to facilitate such activities. That is why the digital storytelling has been enthusiastically adopted during the recent curriculum revisions it is easy to determine because it appeals to the digital literacy of the learners and allows practicing English multi-modal. In general, the literature shows that there exists an undoubted tendency: the introduction to undergraduate courses in English of the methods of DS leads to higher proficiency and motivation levels in studying the language, to the transition

to active learning procedures aimed at creating content. Altogether, the literature reports on an evident pattern: inclusion of DS in undergraduate English classes can lead to better language attainment and drive of students to learn, as it turns passive learning into active content creation.

Digital storytelling is used in the context of the Kazakhstani undergraduate TEFL teacher-training programs aiming at not only strengthening linguistic skills but also fostering the development of pedagogical skills and reflective practice. An article by Pentina and Kuznetsova (2024) covers the results of an action research study in which 68 pre-service English teachers (third-year undergraduates and first-year graduate students) were taught to develop and interpret educational stories, i.e., to develop their narrative competence. A sample of undergraduate students was instructed in making personal digital stories (using the experiences gained during their teaching practicum) and in reflective writing accounts of the experience. The findings demonstrated that the significant effectiveness of engaging in iterative digital storytelling and reflection on the trainees was an increase of self-analysis and critical awareness skills (Pentina & Kuznetsova, 2024). This latter resulted in professional maturity as the future teachers grew to analyze their personal story-making processes and view classroom events in a variety of ways. Kazakhstani universities, therefore, are incorporating DS in the curriculum not only in accomplishing language results, but as a pedagogy to create contemplating, student-centered instructors.

These benefits are supported by evidence used in other teacher-oriented studies that recognize challenges as well. Bakyt (2021) conducted a

master's thesis survey of early-career English teachers (of which many were recent BA graduates) regarding their experience with digital storytelling in schools. Virtually all the teachers believed that DS could bring "considerable benefits" in terms of training the students to speak, develop creativity, and critical thinking (e.g. by having the learners write and narrate their own stories). But at the same time, they acknowledged that they were not using digital storytelling often in practice due to existing issues. The most frequently mentioned barriers were the absence of technology, a lack of preparation in terms of methodology, and time constraints that inhibit frequent implementation (Bakyt, 2021, p. 10, para. 2). The educators reported that they required extra training regarding effective DST techniques. It is also a crucial finding since it implies that, although teachers in Kazakhstan acknowledge the pedagogical potential of digital storytelling, they need additional institutional resources (equipment, professional development sessions, and curricular time) to implement it steadily.

Importantly, the teachers that participated in the study conducted by Bakyt (2021) were positive about DS already after a little exposure, and they value the expanded possibilities it brings to their interaction with the students. This corresponds to the modernization of the educational sector in Kazakhstan, which is set with reference to digitalization and innovation in national policy documents, where the recommendations to teachers are to incorporate the use of new media into their educational process.

2.3.2 The Role of Digital Storytelling in TEFL Programs. The current policy on education in Kazakhstan has made several clear directives on 21st century skills as well as on ICT integration, stating that educational

institutions must prepare and graduate "competitive youth" for the modern workforce. Similarly, the 'Digital Kazakhstan' program developed in Kazakhstan (2017) has a goal of supporting teachers (making them digitally literate at the level of 83 percent by 2022) and requires educators to be trained continuously on innovations in digital technology. DST, in turn, might contribute to achieving these goals by combining language acquisition with media production, as future teachers work not only toward new digital standards but also towards new pedagogical ones.

It is also important to note that DST has also made a massive change in TEFL teaching and learning by moving it to the more learner-centered teaching instructions. According to Moradi and Chen (2019), DST offers a teacher a methodical way of organizing teaching by allowing students to be active partakers in the learning activity.

Effective implementation of DST requires digital and pedagogical skills of pre-service TEFL teachers. In the technological aspect, educators should be technically proficient in using a variety of multimedia tools (digital audio/video editing, slide shows, scanners, digital cameras, and so on) to ensure that the production of a story will be a possible task. They should also have information literacy to direct the students on how to research and analyze online materials in identifying stories. Shagataeva et al. (2021) provided the description of the Kazakhstan specific teacher competence framework that involves technical, communication, informational, and epistemological dimensions. This also means that future teachers must be capable of not simply using devices but also including the digital media in communication and to understand how digital content constructs knowledge.

Through critical examination of DST in education, Moradi & Chen (2019) suggest that DST empowers high quality learning experiences that cannot be achieved without technological intervention, giving learners a "competitive compelling voice". Therefore, in case the teacher-educators work on overcoming the challenges (training and resources), DST can become a potent instrument helping to realize their pedagogical goals and objectives in Kazakhstan meeting the challenges of the new century and referring to the resources and activity of the digital world. In such a way, DST is considered to provide an effective opportunity to implement the pedagogical interests of Kazakhstan, making the educational process more active, creative, and correlated with the digital demands of the new century.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The given chapter overviews the research methodology, participant sampling, data collection instruments, analysis procedures, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Design

This research attempts to establish the pre-service TEFL teachers' awareness, experience and attitudes towards the application of digital storytelling in EFL classrooms. Since this aim has a multifaceted nature, a mixed method research design was employed for this study. To combine the quantitative strength of generalizing with the qualitative power of contextual retrospection this approach was chosen so that there is breadth and depth of understanding the phenomenon.

The mixed methods research is very beneficial in case of investigating the multifaceted process in the field of education through multiple perspectives. This approach is especially convenient for understanding complex education practices from many angles. According to Creswell and Clark (2018), combining quantitative and qualitative studies enables one to gain a better understanding of study issues than using one method in isolation. In this work, the quantitative data was retrieved in the form of a structured questionnaire given to a certain sample of pre-service TEFL students. The goal of this approach was to understand the main trends in their awareness, attitudes and experiences regarding digital storytelling. This was possible as Likert scale items allowed rigorous statistical analyses of what participants responded to.

To enrich and supplement the results of the survey, the qualitative information was collected in the form of written semi-structured interviews with a small sample of respondents. In that sense, these interviews provided a deeper probe into the future EFL instructors' beliefs and their experiences about the integration of digital storytelling, as well as personal reflections concerning their perceived challenges and educational expectations. According to Creswell (2014), one of the characteristics of qualitative methods is that they enable researchers to collect detailed data-rich narration with the voices of participants in natural settings. The semi-structured structure provides the opportunity to elaborate responses and adhere to significant areas of the themes in accordance with the research questions.

3.1.1 Participants. The pre-service TEFL students of the undergraduate teacher education program at a university in Kazakhstan were recruited as participants to this study. These people were selected to be perfect candidates of the study because they represented the future generation of English language educators. Most of the interviewees were students who were mostly in their second to their fourth year of study and were being actively involved in practical pedagogical courses and modules which bring about a practical teaching experience. Through these courses, the pre-service teachers had an opportunity to reflect and assess the practical application of digital storytelling in the classroom as an authentic context. Knowledge of and preparation of this specific group of people to implement new technologies, such as digital storytelling, are essential to improve contemporary language education

The total number of pre-service teachers who participated in an online questionnaire constituted 50 during the quantitative phase of the study. In qualitative aspect, a sub sample of six participants was chosen via convenience sampling. They were chosen due to the reasons that they were willing to elaborate on their views and experiences with digital storytelling as well as on how their participation reflected a diversity of perspectives based on year of study, familiarity with technology, and responses to the survey. The semi-structured written interview format was used to deconstruct results from the questionnaire data and to delve much deeper into the key themed that evolved from questionnaire data around awareness, perceived benefits and implementation challenges.

3.1.2 Sampling. The researcher employed convenience sampling for both phases because it allowed the selection of participants who were available to take part in the research while offering valuable insights about digital storytelling in English language instruction. As the intended purpose of this study is to investigate the views of pre-service TEFL teachers instead of extrapolating to a bigger population, convenience sampling was suitable and manageable within the available timeframe and resources.

All participants were recruited from a public university in Kazakhstan and were enrolled in Peer Teaching, Methodology of Teaching English courses and other practice-related disciplines since were likely to contribute to discussions on the use of digital tools, such as digital storytelling.

Overall, sample constituted seven individuals who participated in semi-structured written interviews and 50 respondents who completed the online questionnaire.

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 Data collection instruments. The questionnaire (Appendix B) compiled of closed ended and limited open ended questions was developed on basis to explore the awareness, attitude and experience of the participants with digital storytelling. Likert-scale and multiple-choice questions resulted in tangible results from a bigger sample of pre-service TEFL teachers. Additionally, a selected group of participants were interviewed in written semi structured interviews (refer to Appendix C) to get a better understanding of what their perceptions were. Interview prompts were constructed first, to give flexibility while encouraging participants to return to specific experience and perspective on digital storytelling. Participants were able to provide thorough and thoughtful comments by submitting written replies through Gmail. These answers strengthened the study by making specific that the reasons for the participants' perspectives were practical issues, personal experiences with digital storytelling, and the like.

3.2.2 Data collection procedures. The data collection procedures of this mixed methods study were responsive to participant convenience and consent to offer a rigorous and ethically sound approach to the data collection. The procedures included the distribution of questionnaires, the selection and interviewing of participants, and the ethical handling and analysis of the collected data. Before participation, all respondents were informed about the nature and objectives of this study.

Recruitments of participants were conducted direct, through contact with the English language teaching department of the university in Kazakhstan, as well as via educational networks and personal outreach. A

total of 50 pre-service TEFL students were invited to answer a questionnaire that aimed to investigate awareness, attitude and experiences they had had in using digital storytelling in English language teaching. Furthermore, 6 participants were purposively selected for in-depth written interviews to gather more information on the themes brought forth from the survey.

The questionnaire was administered via Google Forms due to its opportunity for participants to respond flexibly and anonymously and for its accessibility and efficiency in reaching a wide range of participants across different regions. The consent letter was embedded at the top of the Google Form, directly above the survey questions. Participants were kindly informed to read and confirm their consent before proceeding.

For the written interviews, selected participants received an e-version of the consent letter along with the interview questions. This ensured transparency and gave participants the opportunity to review the ethical terms of participation in advance. Asynchronous interviews were carried out via Gmail, depending on the participant's preference, to allow adequate time for reflection and comprehensive answers for open questions. All interview participants were asked to fill out the responses in a peaceful area without any distractions.

With respect to the invitation messages and introductory texts for all written communication, the researcher maintained respectful, supportive and appreciative tone so that invited participants were treated with a sense of welcome, being valuable and contented when expressing their views.

3.3 Data Analysis

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, and therefore the data analysis consisted of two interconnected strands: quantitative analysis of survey responses and qualitative thematic analysis of interview transcripts.

3.3.1 Quantitative Data Analysis. The quantitative data were gathered through a structured questionnaire administered to pre-service TEFL teachers. The responses were exported from Google Forms into Microsoft Excel for processing. Descriptive statistical tools were applied to analyze the data, including frequencies, percentages, and means. This allowed for a general understanding of the participants' levels of awareness, familiarity with digital storytelling, digital confidence, attitudes, and perceived benefits and challenges associated with DST.

The descriptive results provided numerical insights into trends such as how many participants were aware of DST, how confident they felt using digital tools in teaching, and whether they believed DST to be effective in English language learning. These patterns were used to inform and triangulate the qualitative findings.

3.3.2 Qualitative Data Analysis. For the qualitative part, thematic analysis was used to interpret the responses from semi-structured interviews. As outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), this method is suitable for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data. The goal of this analysis was to gain deeper insight into participants' perceptions, experiences, and opinions related to DST in TEFL.

The analysis began with familiarization, during which the interview transcripts were read repeatedly and annotated with initial observations. Key

phrases and ideas related to the research questions were highlighted. Initial open codes were then generated to identify meaningful features of the data relevant to the participants' understanding of DST, their willingness to use it, and the perceived benefits and barriers in an educational setting.

Coding was conducted manually using Microsoft Word and Excel, due to the limited sample size. The initial codes were then organized into broader categories and later refined into final themes. These themes were constructed to reflect recurring ideas and to address the study's aims—particularly regarding attitudes toward DST, prior exposure, implementation concerns, and its potential in future teaching practice.

As a final step, the themes were linked back to the research questions and were illustrated with direct quotations from participants to enhance transparency and trustworthiness. This process ensured that the results genuinely reflected the perspectives of pre-service TEFL teachers and captured the nuanced views they hold regarding the pedagogical use of DST.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

In line with the widely accepted ethical standards in educational research, all participants involved in this mixed methods research had their rights protected. Before the data collection, participants were fully informed about the purpose and methods of the study. Specific details regarding the use of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were clearly communicated in plain language to the respondents and interviewees.

Voluntariness of the participation was also emphasized and notified about the possibility to withdraw from the study at any point without being subjected to any negative consequences. In the case of written interviews,

participants were also assured that their responses would be treated with full confidentiality.

The analysis and presentation of results did not include real names or identifying information of participants in order to safeguard the anonymity and privacy of participants. Pseudonyms and participant codes were used throughout the research documentation. The data gathered from the questionnaires were stored in a password protected digital folder while the responses of the interview were stored in a separate location and accessible only to the researcher.

The procedures for data handling, consent and participant protection for this study were pre reviewed by the appropriate Academic Research Ethics Committee which granted this study ethical clearance. Adhering to these ethical practices, the research mainly prioritized transparency, confidentiality and dignity of all participants in order to strengthen the integrity and credibility of the research process.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

The given chapter reports the findings based on responses collected from pre-service TEFL teachers with the use of a mixed-methods approach. The results are presented according to the sequence of both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a detailed analysis.

The first section conveys respondents' answers to multiple-choice, Likert-scale and checkbox questions that inquired about their familiarity with digital storytelling, confidence in working with digital tools, etc. Compared to survey findings, the semi-structured interview results provide a more in-depth insight into participants' personal interpretations and relations with digital storytelling.

4.1 Quantitative Data.

4.1.1 Participants' Background Information. The questionnaire was offered to 50 pre-service TEFL students who attended one research site. The initial two questions were aimed to determine the academic backgrounds of the participants. They were required to state their current year-of-study and to mention the teaching related courses they had already accomplished on the basis of their program curriculum This data was used to find out their level of preparation as professionals and the degree of their exposure to the pedagogical strategies and digital tools, which are more than likely to inform their perception of the digital storytelling application in language teaching.

A large number of the respondents constituted 25 students and were in their fourth year of study. Also, there were 16 students in the third year. The data furthermore encompassed 6 first-year respondents, but also 3 of the

students who were in the second year of study. In sum, responses were distributed across all years (year one through year four), meaning that the sample diversity was high, but predominantly included upper-level students (see Table 2).

Table 2

Participant Distribution by Year of Study

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Year of Study	1st year	6	12.0
	2nd year	3	6.0
	3rd year	16	32.0
	4th year	25	50.0

As to academic preparation, 'Pedagogy' was the most fulfilled course (84%), which was shortly followed by 'Pedagogical Practicum' (66%) and 'ICT in Education' (56%). At the same time, fewer participants had taken 'Innovative Trends in Education' (48%), 'Practice of English Language Teaching: Peer Teaching' (36%), and the least common was 'Instructional Technologies and Materials Development' with 26%. Regardless of this difference in outcomes, a significant number of participants had foundational education in pedagogy.

4.1.2 Participants' Prior Knowledge of Digital Storytelling. Based on this pedagogical background, the research focused on exploring the initial awareness of the participants on digital storytelling before they were engaged into this study. These questions were valuable in understanding the level to which DST has been implemented formally or informally in the learning experiences of the participants. The results indicate that the levels of awareness were different. In determining the level of awareness, the

participants were enquired if they had heard of the concept of digital storytelling before reading the definition contained in the questionnaire.

The results provided in Question 5 demonstrate that 80 percent of the respondents were at least slightly familiar with the concept of digital storytelling before the survey. Nevertheless, only 34 % of this group answered that they had a clear idea whereas 46 % expressed a vague or partial idea of it. The other 20 percent had never even known about the idea. Conversely, 20 percent had never heard about the idea prior to the survey (see Table 3).

Table 3

Participants' Awareness of Digital Storytelling

Question	Response Option	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Prior Awareness of DST	I had heard the term but didn't know exactly what it was	23	46.0
	Yes, I had heard of it and knew what it meant	17	34.0
	No, I had never heard of it before	10	20.0
Source of Learning about DST	In a program course (e.g., 'Innovative Trends in ELT', 'Pedagogy, etc.)	19	38.0
	Social media or internet	15	30.0
	I looked it up myself	8	16.0
	From friends group mates	5	10.0
	Other: in research articles	1	2.0
	Other: I just knew about it intuitively	1	2.0
	Other: in the survey	1	2.0

Participants were also requested to give an indication of the place where they were first introduced to the concept. In general, we also see that the first introduction to digital storytelling occurred on social networks or the web (30 percent of respondents), and in TFL courses (38 percent). Fewer

percentages stated that they did self-managed learning (16%) or learned about it through fellow students (10%). Remarkably, a very few numbers of respondents chose more than two or ambiguous alternatives under the heading of the "Other."

4.1.3 Confidence in Using Digital Tools.

In addition to assessing the digital competency, it was also necessary to investigate the level of confidence and comfort that pre-service TEFL teachers felt about the digital storytelling practices. According to the findings outlined in Table 4, the item with the largest mean was that concerning confidence related to using digital tools (mean = 3.78, SD = 0.92), thus participants on the whole perceived themselves being able to perform technical activities like video editing and audio recording. Knowledge on the process in the development of a digital story was minimal (mean = 2.84, SD = 1.05), indicating a moderate knowledge that was dissimilar among the respondents. Additionally, the individual exposure to the use of DST related practices, i.e. people share videos or edit their video materials with music and voice, produced average 3.02 (SD = 1.36), which indicates that the practice is being done sometimes. This might be due to the reason that DST is not very deeply ingrained in the undergraduate program and not every student might have been introduced to it throughout their study.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Confidence, Familiarity, and Frequency of Digital Storytelling Use

Question	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Confidence in using digital tools	3.78	0.92	1	5
Familiarity with DST steps	2.84	1.05	1	5
Frequency of engaging with DST	3.02	1.36	1	5

4.1.4 Perceived Pedagogical Benefits and Implementation Challenges. To have a greater insight into the connection between the perceived benefits of digital storytelling among pre-service TEFL teachers and their confidence of applying those benefits to teaching in the future, two analytic approaches were used. Each DST-based possible advantage was compared in relation to an overall preparation rating based on self-claimed confidence of the participants. The benefit of DST in promoting creativity was the most highly-rated (M = 4.08, SD = 0.90) and so was its potential to spark more interest in students to learn English (M = 3.90, SD = 1.11) as indicated in Table 5. The participants also recognized the value of DST on enhancing the inclusiveness (M = 3.78, SD = 1.11), engagement (M = 3.76, SD = 1.04) and language proficiency (M = 3.72, SD = 1.03). Although such perceptions were mainly positive, the overall mean of the readiness score was moderate (2.90, SD = 0.99), indicating that, even though the participants seem to understand the pedagogical worth of DST, they still believe that they are not ready to effectively implement it.

Table 5

Perceived Benefits of Digital Storytelling Compared to Aggregate Implementation Confidence

Item	Perceived Benefit		Overall Readiness	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Interest	3.9	1.11	2.9	0.99
Creativity	4.08	0.9	2.9	0.99
Engagement	3.76	1.04	2.9	0.99
Proficiency	3.72	1.03	2.9	0.99
Inclusiveness	3.78	1.11	2.9	0.99

4.1.5 Perceived Pedagogical Effectiveness of Digital Storytelling.

To explore the views of students regarding the effectiveness of Digital Storytelling approach in the teaching of English language, an open-ended question was presented. The identified typology of those responses was called "Students' Perceptions on Effectiveness of DST", which was broken down into several themes (Table 6).

Table 6

Students' Perceptions on Effectiveness of DST

Codes	Code Description	Examples
C	Creativity	"It improves students" creativity.", "DST is definitely creative and bring a new trend in teaching,.."
MM TU	Multimodality and Technology Use	"I think this method will be effective to young learners too and who remembers well by visually or audio.", "For example, by using digital tools of editing."
GE	General Effectiveness	"It can be very effective to engage students and increase their interest in learning English"
SE	Student Engagement	"I think it's good for enhancing student engagement and fostering creative thinking."
LSD	Language Skills Development	"Students get to practice speaking, writing, listening, and reading all at once.", "…it helps students to practice variety of skills like speaking fluently, writing.
CTC	Critical Thinking and Confidence	"Plus, when students create stories together, it builds teamwork and confidence."
CD	Conditional Effectiveness student/teacher readiness.	"It could be effective tool if used appropriately.", "Depends on how structured and clear the instructions are.", "…making sure that they know what you expect from them."

Overall, it can be seen that for a significant number of respondents (n = 45), Digital Storytelling was perceived as an effective and modern method

for teaching English. Most of the respondent stressed that DST encourages creativity and enables students to explore different ways to express themselves in ways that are unusual and, imaginative. The following responses show that this is the case:

"It improves students' creativity." (Respondent 1)

"DST is definitely creative and brings a new trend in teaching..."

(Respondent 3)

"It encourages creativity and helps them express themselves in English."

(Respondent 7)

"In our digital world, creativity is a thing that differentiates." (Respondent 45)

Multimodality and use of Technology (Code MM TU) The other widely distributed opinion (n = 16) was focused on the use of technologies and multimedia in DST. The positive aspect of appealing to audio, visuals use, and digital aids in a language acquisition among younger students or students with divergent learning styles was mentioned by respondents. The tools were deemed to be useful in the process of making abstract things more tangible and learning more dynamic:

"For example, by using digital tools of editing." (Respondent 4)

"It is good for young learners who remember well by visually or audio."

(Respondent 2)

It is remarkable that a high number of responses (n = 14) highlighted that DST considerably contributes to student participation and engagement in the classroom. The participants felt that students are better motivated and engaged in lessons when the students take part in developing digital stories.

"I think it's good for enhancing student engagement and fostering creative thinking." (Respondent 5)

"It's really engaging for students." (Respondent 8)

Combining several language skills also came up a lot (n = 12). Respondents pointed out that DST helps students speak, listen, read and write in a coherent manner which enable students to practice the disciplines at the same time. Combining several language skills also came up a lot (n = 12). Respondents pointed out that DST helps students speak, listen, read and write in a coherent manner which enable students to practice the disciplines at the same time.

Other respondents (n = 9) considered the usefulness of DST as conditional. They indicated that success of DST is dependent on preparation of teachers, incentive of students, access to resources and effective instructional support.

"There is a potential of it being a useful instrument when applied in the right manner." (Respondent 15)

"This will depend on the organized and spelt out instructions." (Respondent 16)

On the whole, the answers indicated how students perceived DST. Although the vast majority of the respondents were predisposed to mention positive aspects of the tool, some of them have also proposed the needs for serious planning and availability of resources.

4.2 Qualitative Data.

To complement the quantitative results and give more insights on how pre-service TEFL teachers perceive Digital Storytelling, a qualitative

aspect was added to the study. Although the survey data indicated some common patterns in the attitude of the participants, self-efficacy and perceived difficulties they may experience with respect to DST, it was critical to identify the inherent reasoning, beliefs and expectations participants may have in the classroom which could not be elicited using closed-ended survey questions.

Thematic analysis of the interview data was done as objects followed by the principles proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This approach has been selected because it is flexible enough to find, categorize, and interpret meaningful patterns within a fairly limited data set. Inductive approach to coding was adopted, where themes were extracted out of the data without any pre-defined category.

4.2.1 Conceptions and Initial Exposure to Digital Storytelling. The majority of participants showed an intuitive perception of digital storytelling, frequently including its connection with introducing the technology into the language learning process. Some were unfamiliar with the term, but they either used logical deduction to make a guess about its meaning, or they remembered learning some aspects of DST at undergraduate program.

"When I hear the term digital storytelling, I imagine creating a story using digital tools like images, videos, audio narration, and maybe music." *(Participant 7). "Digital storytelling might be the usage of technological advancements to tell a story." (Participant3).*

In addition, the exposure of participants to DST was different. Others found it in a given course in universities namely ICT in Education,

Methodology, or New Media in Education. Other people acknowledged that they had been already involved in DST-like activities by different names.

"In 'Innovative trends in education' DST was used widely both among teachers and students." (Participant 3). "Yes, in ICT and Peer Teaching we used tech tools, and DST was talked about." (Participant 4). "We discussed how to use digital tools to enhance student engagement, but DST itself was not a main focus." (Participant 2)

4.2.2 Educational Benefits and Pedagogical Potential. The respondents perceive DST as a very useful and involving language learning practice. Most of them pointed at its capacity to develop a variety of language skills, especially speaking, writing, and listening, as well as creativity, critical thinking, and cultural knowledge:

"DST is especially effective in developing students' speaking and writing skills, as it requires them to plan, write scripts, and present their ideas meaningfully." (Participant 2). "In early childhood and elementary education, I believe using videos and animations can be especially effective." (Participant 6)

DST was also appreciated because it was also motivational, particularly to younger learners or tech-savvy students. Some of the participants even mentioned that it is appropriate to visual and auditory learners and to culture, storytelling, or project-based lessons.

"Storytelling itself seems engaging and technological support may make it an even better experience." (Participant 3). "I believe DST can help students become more active and motivated in the classroom." (Participant 5)

4.2.3 Practical Application and Challenges in Implementation. A number of participants were directly involved in digital storytelling either in university assignments or teaching practicums. Overall, such experiences were positive and were insightful to the practical usefulness of DST in actual classroom practice.

"We chose to creatively present a traditional British story to our classmates... it turned out to be incredibly fun and rewarding." *(Participant 6). "I asked [7th-grade students] to create short digital stories about their favorite memories or imaginary adventures... it noticeably improved their speaking and writing skills." (Participant 2).*

Nevertheless, there were several challenges observed by the participants. The most common was technical issues like bad internet access or access to devices. Time and preparation were also a factor of concern particularly at the schools with low resources. Reflections on the necessity of the establishment of a balance between the digital involvement and teaching efficacy were present as well. A participant has mentioned that excessive use of DST may detach students in case it is not employed wisely.

4.2.4 Preparation, Support Needs, and Institutional Readiness. The need of proper training, collaboration with peers, and practical examples emerged as one of the major themes in responses to incorporate DST in teaching. Most of the participants wanted to attend practical workshops, step-by-step instructions and to see how DST is implemented in real classrooms. Though some participants admit that their current training programs have been improved, the majority of the participants expressed the opinion that DST and other tools like this one were not given enough attention in the

experiences of training teachers. They found a lack of ground reality especially in experience:

"I don't think we get enough training now." (Participant 4). "I think our current training gives a good start, but it would be better if DST was included in a more practical way." (Participant 7)

4.2.5 Future Prospects and Relevance in the Kazakhstani Context. Those who participated supported the idea of inclusion of DST in Kazak teachers training programs. They observed the gradual digitalization of the nation and considered DST to be in accordance to overall educational objectives. Some of the participants stressed that DST would help to convert traditional classrooms to a more student-friendly, interactive and culturally rich classroom.

"It should be more actively included in teacher training programs, especially in ICT and methodology courses." (Participant 7). "DST is not only a teaching tool — it's also a way to give students a voice." (Participant 2).

In summation, the results indicate that pre-service teachers are aware of the worth of digital storytelling as a teaching tool in the English language and specifically, with regards to building up language abilities and interest amongst the learners. Though the experience with DST was mixed, the participants emphasized its advantages in the fields of creative and student-centered learning as well as the lack of resources and training. There was a general consensus regarding the necessity of more manuals preparing and maximum traditionalization of DST in teacher preparation and, in particular, in the context of the education system in Kazakhstan today becoming more and more digital.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The chapter presents and explicates the results of the study regarding the two research questions the investigation was based on. Relying on interview and questionnaire data, the discussion critically reflects upon the pre-service TEFL teachers' awareness, attitudes, and exposure to digital storytelling, the perceived advantages of its use and challenges in English language teaching. Such results are explained and embedded into the context of related literature.

5.1 RQ1: What are pre-service TEFL teachers' awareness, experience, and attitudes toward the use of digital storytelling in English language teaching?

The results indicate that the majority of the participants were aware about digital storytelling, but the degree of recognition and level of literacy varied largely. The results of the questionnaires showed that, despite most having come across the term (some during studies at the university, others through independent learning or social networks), it was rated as moderate or low in familiarity by many respondents. This is consistent with Robin (2008), who observes that even as DST is becoming more visible in the educational field, organization of DST exposure in teacher education is inconsistent.

This disproportion of exposure was also supported with interview data. Participants expressed they had received formal training in classes such as ICT in Education or the Methodology, and some noted that they had never realized that they had been applying a DST-like practice in their assignments

but had been unaware of its terminology. One of the participants noted, "I had never heard of the name DST, but I was utilizing it in action" (Participant 3).

In spite of these different degrees of familiarity, there was a tremendous positive disposition toward DST as a whole. Participants linked DST to greater engagement of students, creativity and language proficiency, speaking and writing skills in particular. This validates the observation reported by Sadik (2008) that DST generates quality learning experiences and enhances language proficiency through integration of multimodal materials and semantical consistency.

Most experience with DST was at informal or assignment levels not in the university programs. Some participants had already produced digital stories as part of projects with the help of primitive programs (Power point, Canva, etc.) or monitored DST practices either in the course of practicums or in extracurricular classes, like "New Media in Education" (Participant 1, Participant 6). These results align with the work by Yang and Wu (2012) who propose that though pre-service teachers could be exposed to digital storytelling tools, not many receive any systematic pedagogical preparation on their application.

One of the other themes that appeared throughout the interviews was the desire to use DST in their future classrooms. Future educators did not consider it a simple instructional tool, but as an instrument of the student to express them and define who they were. This concurs with Alismail (2015) who emphasizes the potential of DST which is to promote the voices of learners and encourage learner independents. A participant mentioned that

DST is not simply a teaching tool, it is also a method to provide students with the voice (Participant 2).

However, it should also be said that some respondents simply connected DST to generally applying technologies or technology-based game-related elements (e.g., VR glasses, games), which indicates that they might have confused DST with digital pedagogy in general (Participant 1). This is an indication of the lack of conceptual clarity that speaks in favor of greater distinctions in the scope of teacher education programs, as Robin and Pierson (2005) made when requesting clearer and more precise training of future teachers in DST as a narrative-based approach.

5.2 RQ2: What do pre-service TEFL teachers perceive as the main benefits and challenges of integrating digital storytelling into their future teaching practice?

The identified benefits by the participants align with the literature that refer to the advantages of DST in growing engagement, creativity, and student-centered learning (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009). The participants assumed that DST was notably successful in project-based as well as teaching cultures and individuality. The combination of visual, audio, and text information was repeatedly mentioned to assist students with different learning styles as Mayer (2009) developed cognitive theory of multimedia learning which assumes that when verbal and visual forms of information are used, learning is more meaningful.

Many respondents emphasized that DST is perfectly suitable to elementary and secondary school students (e.g., Participants 4, 6, 7), and where attention and creativity are most important. One participant made the

following reflection, saying that, when children are both active and engaged in visual senses, they are more likely to consume new information (Participant 6). This is in agreement with Gregory and Steel (2008) who noted that DST is attractive to younger learners and was effective to retrieve information depending on degree of emotional and narrative connection.

Nonetheless, during the investigation, several obstacles were defined. The technical constraints like limited access to internet, unavailability of the devices and time restriction in the curriculum were the most prevalent issues. This reflects the concerns brought out in the literature (e.g., Robin, 2008; Hafner & Miller, 2011) on infrastructural and logistics barriers to the implementation of DST, particularly, in the resource-constrained settings.

Dependent on teacher preparedness also turned out to be a concern. Although the participants were keen on implementing the DST, most of them said that they lacked the technical ability or confidence on how best they could incorporate it in various classes (Participants 3, 4, 7). This confirms the observation made by Yang (2012) who found the implementation of DST needed both technological and pedagogical design literacy, which were in many cases poorly deployed in TEFL programs. Interestingly, although the participants saw DST as a strong teaching tool, some also admit that it can draw more attention or lead to disengagement when exerted excessively (Participant 3). This revelation cuts across other relatively optimistic portrayals of literature and acts as a keep in mind of a call to balanced incorporation. It also gives the impression that the teacher perceptions to DST are not purely open to optimism but are also characterized by reflective skepticism, which is positive sign of development of professional judgment.

Also, a significant number of respondents reported either agreeing or strongly agreeing that DST enhances student motivation as well as creative thinking but fewer reported that they felt comfortable with using DST on their own.

In general, the results indicate that pre-service TEFL students in Kazakhstan display favorable attitudes to digital storytelling as it may improve the levels of engagement, language acquisition, and creativity. Nevertheless, the conceptual imperfection, uneven curricular introduction, and shortage of applied training do not allow full-fledged integration in the current state. The results reflect those of the international studies and also point at contextual constraints to teacher education in Kazakhstan. These gaps might be filled by more explicit pedagogical framing and more extensive hands-on practice and familiarization to enable the use of DST to be more confident and successful in the future classrooms.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

This paper attempted to delve into the perceptions and understanding of pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Kazakhstan on the application of Digital Storytelling as a form of pedagogical tool in language pedagogy. The main purpose of the study was to explore their awareness, experiences, attitudes, and perceived issues with DST, and the overall objective was to examine how teacher education programs could incorporate digital tools in the instruction of language learning in a better way.

Based on quantitative questionnaires, and qualitative interview data, the study explored understanding of the participants, their experience, attitudes and perceived challenges with DST. The philosophy behind the study was in the understanding that DST as a multimodal and learner-centered pedagogical language tool has transformative power in EFL classrooms which was shared by Robin (2008), Sadik (2008), and Ohler (2013) who argue that DST is important in the improvement of student engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes. This study confirms most of the literature assertions but also provides evidence about the level of current DST education and awareness within Kazakhstan teacher education. It also emphasizes the necessity to reconsider the curriculums of teacher training to add to it the training on the digital tools in the more practice-oriented manner. In addition, the study provides a contribution to the wider context of the educational debate by showing how important it is that the preparation of future teachers should ensure not only the use of technology

but also its meaningful incorporation into pedagogical practice in concordance with the principles of constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1996).

6.1 Limitations of the Study

The study used a relatively small sample size, recruited in a small number of institutions, and this limits the generalizability of the results. The self-reported data was created using questionnaires and interviews, adding the possibility of the social desirability bias. Additionally, the study had concentrated more on the perceptions than direct observation of the DST usage in classrooms itself, so it is restricted in terms of estimating its real pedagogical effects. The acquaintance of participants with DST also differed rather considerably, as some were still in a practical area and others could only possess the theoretical background. This probably affected the quality of responses. Also, the external environmental factors, including digital infrastructure, institutional support, and the workload were not investigated, but they would probably have an impact on the adoption of DST.

6.2 Implications of the Study

The research will add to the increased knowledge in educational technology and language instruction and provide context-related observations on the issue in Kazakhstan which has been underrepresented in the international community concerning DST. It not only determines the perceived advantages and obstacles to the use of DST, but it also determines the systemic breakdown in teacher preparation programs. Presenting the voice of future educators, the study reveals their willingness to use innovative

solutions and underlines the importance of practice-based training in the formation of qualified digital educators.

Future research might extend the findings by focusing on the effects of DST on real classroom performance and student learning outcomes with either an experimental or a longitudinal design. The study may also aim at evaluating the training modules on training pre-service teachers in DST in terms of their increase in confidence, competence and digital pedagogy implementation. Moreover, it can be interesting to compare different regions or even education systems in Kazakhstan to get a bigger picture regarding contextual barriers and opportunities. A deeper exploration into the institutional and policy level of support or impediment to the adoption of DST would further enhance the knowledge on the same issue.

To conclude, it is possible to note that pre-service teachers have stated that they would be willing to incorporate DST in their classes despite their limited training and infrastructure. DST has greater potential to ensure language acquisition and basing on targeted preparation through augmented institutional support and can favor the creation of more progressive, inclusive classroom climate. The study shows the necessity of educational activities to be in line with the changing digital needs and more effective teaching of the future educators in using technology in pedagogy.

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Appendix A

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Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant,
You are invited to participate in a research study that investigates pre-service TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) teachers' perceptions, awareness, and experiences related to the use of digital storytelling (DST) in English language teaching. The study is being conducted as part of a master's thesis and your participation will provide valuable insights into the field of language education.

Research Purpose and Procedures.
The aim of this study is to explore how future English teachers in Kazakhstan perceive the use of digital storytelling in the classroom. You will be kindly asked to:

- complete a short online questionnaire consisting of 11 questions.
- participate in a written or online semi-structured interview where we will discuss your experiences and perceptions of digital storytelling.

The interview will take approximately 40–50 minutes. The interview may be audio-recorded with your consent for transcription and analysis. If preferred, you may instead provide written responses to the interview questions. Time and format will be arranged based on your availability.

Possible Risks and Benefits of Participation
Participation in this study involves minimal risk. All personal information will remain strictly confidential, and your identity will not be revealed in any reports or publications. Your input will contribute valuable insights into how digital storytelling can be used in English language teaching. Additionally, reflecting on your own experience may enhance your professional awareness of digital tools in education.

Confidentiality & Privacy.
All responses will be treated as strictly confidential. Data will be stored on a password-protected device accessible only to the researcher. Any quotes used in the thesis or publications will be anonymized. No identifying information will be shared with any university staff, supervisors, or third parties.

Voluntary Nature of the Study.
It is strictly voluntary as to whether to participate in this study or not. You have a right to withdraw your agreement to participate at any time.

Contacts information
In case of any questions or concerns about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, please contact the Researcher Aizhan Beketay, TEFL Master's student at SDU University, at 221302015@stu.sdu.edu.kz. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact SDU University institutional review board at rethics@sdu.edu.kz.

Statement of Consent.

I, _____, agree to participate in this study voluntarily. I have been made aware of the research purpose and objectives and clearly understand what is expected from me.

I know that it is voluntary to participate in this study and I have complete freedom to withdraw my consent at any time without providing any reasons and in this case there will be no negative consequences to me.

I understand that any personal information obtained in this study will be kept confidential.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher:

Signature: _____ Date:_____

Appendix B
Questionnaire

1) By clicking "I agree" you are indicating that you have read and understood this consent form and agree to participate in this research study.
   - I agree
   - I disagree

2) Please choose your current year of study in the bachelor's program:
   - 1st year
   - 2nd year
   - 3rd year
   - 4th year

3) Please choose from the list or write the courses you have taken so far related to the major of teaching English language *(check all that apply)*:
   - ICT in Education
   - Pedagogy
   - Pedagogical Practicum
   - Innovative Trends in Education
   - Practice of English Language Teaching: Peer Teaching
   - Instructional Technologies and Materials Development
   - Other_____

4) How confident are you in using digital tools (such as video editing, audio recording, etc.) in teaching English? (*please rate your confidence on the following scale)*
   1 = not confident, 2 = slightly, 3 = moderately, 4 = very, 5 = extremely
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5

5) Before reading the definition above in description, had you heard of digital
storytelling (DST)?
   - Yes, I had heard of it and knew what it meant
   - I had heard the term but didn't know exactly what it was
   - No, I had never heard of it before
   - Other_____

6) Where did you first learn about DST? (*check all that apply)*
   - In a TFL program course (e.g., Innovative Trends in ELT, Methodology, Peer Teaching etc.)
   - Social media or internet
   - From friends group mates

- I looked it up myself
- Other_____

7) How familiar are you with the steps involved in creating a digital story? *(please rate your familiarity on the following scale)*
1 = not familiar, 2 = slightly, 3 = moderately, 4 = very, 5 = extremely familiar
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

8) How often do you personally create or engage with digital storytelling in your daily life (e.g., posting video stories, editing personal content with music and voice, using storytelling formats on social media)? *(please rate your familiarity on the following scale)*
1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = occasionally, 4 = often, 5 = very often
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

9) Please rate how much you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
DST may help students become more interested in learning English.					
DST might support students in developing creative thinking skills					
DST could make lessons more engaging compared to traditional teaching methods					
DST might help improve students' English language proficiency					
DST can be used for teaching students at different English levels					
DST could be added to English teaching curriculum at university					

10) What challenges do you think teachers may face when using DST? *(check all that apply)*

- Lack of teacher digital skills
- Not enough school equipment
- Not enough time for teachers to plan lessons
- Students' poor digital skills
- Curriculum lacks creative tasks
- Other_____

11) Would you consider using DST in your future English teaching? If yes, how

- confident do you feel about doing so?
- I would not consider using DST
- I might consider it, but I don't feel confident
- I would consider it and feel somewhat confident
- I would definitely consider it and feel confident
- Other_____

12) In your opinion, how effective do you think DST is for teaching English?

Appendix C

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Interview Protocol

Introduction: Hello, and thank you so much for taking the time to join this interview. I truly appreciate your willingness to share your thoughts and experiences. My name is Aizhan Beketay, and I'm currently working on my master's thesis, which explores future EFL instructors' awareness, attitudes, and experiences with digital storytelling in English language teaching.

Before we begin, I'd like to kindly ask for your permission to audio-record our conversation because it will help me capture your insights accurately. Please know that everything you share will remain completely confidential and anonymous.

There are no right or wrong answers here—what matters most is your honest opinion. You're also welcome to skip any question or stop the interview at any point if you feel the need to. And if anything is unclear, feel free to ask me for clarification at any time.We'll start with a few general questions about your background, and then gradually move into your thoughts on digital storytelling. Ready to begin?

Starter Questions:

1. Can you tell me a little about your background in English language teaching studies? *What year are you in? Which teaching-related courses have you taken so far?*
2. What does "digital storytelling" mean to you? Can you describe what comes to mind when you hear this term, even if you're unsure? *If not, let me briefly explain it...*
3. Have you learned about DST during your university studies? *If yes, in which course or context?*

Attitudes & Opinions

4. What is your opinion about using DST in English language teaching? *What do you think it might help with — or not help with — in the classroom?*
5. In what kinds of lessons or student groups do you think DST would work well — or not so well? *Can you imagine situations where it would or wouldn't be useful? Can you think of any specific challenges or drawbacks of using DST in an English classroom — for either teachers or students?*

Experience & Practice

6. Have you ever created or used a digital story — either for a course, assignment, or personal project? *If yes, can you describe the experience?*
7. Can you recall any course (like Methodology, Peer Teaching, or ICT) that encouraged creative or tech-based teaching tools? *Was DST mentioned or practiced in those settings?*

Support & Future Use

8. If you were to use DST in your future teaching, what kind of support or preparation would be helpful — if any? *Would examples, training, or collaboration with peers help you feel more*

confident? Do you think current training programs provide enough preparation for using such tools?

9. How do you see DST fitting into teacher education in Kazakhstan — if at all? *Should it be included more actively in training programs?*

Closing Question

10. Is there anything else you'd like to add about DST or your thoughts on using it as a future teacher?

Closing Statement

Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts and experiences with me today. Your input is truly. If you have any questions or would like to add something later, feel free to contact me at 221302015@stu.sdu.edu.kz. I really appreciate your time and valuable insights.