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Title

Investigating EFL Teachers and students Perceptions of Digital Storytelling to Enhance Engagement and Reading Comprehension: The Case of Second Year English Students of Biskra University

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English and Literature in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree in Sciences of the Language

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Declaration

I, **Balouta Abla**, do hereby declare that this submitted work is my original work and has not previously been submitted for any institution or university for a degree.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the incredible people who have filled my journey with love, encouragement, and unwavering support.

*To my wonderful **parents**, whose sacrifices, wisdom, and endless love have shaped me into the person I am today. Your unwavering belief in me has been my greatest source of strength, and I am forever grateful for everything you have done.*

*To my beloved siblings my sister **Loubna** and my brothers **Fathi, Yassine,** and **Abd Rahim**, who have been my pillars of support, my companions in laughter, and my guiding lights through every challenge. Your presence in my life means more than words can express.*

*To my dear friends **Souhila, Jehaina, Safa**, and **Amir**, who have stood by me through thick and thin. Your friendship, encouragement, and shared moments of joy have made this journey truly special.*

This dissertation is not just mine it reflects the love, kindness, and inspiration I have received from each of you. I dedicate this work to you all with deep gratitude and appreciation

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Abstract

With the increasing usage of technology in education, reading is no longer taught traditionally but rather through different tools such as digital storytelling. This study aims to determine how EFL teachers and second-year students perceive the use of digital storytelling as a tool to improve engagement in reading comprehension. The research is guided by the hypothesis that foreign language teachers and students perceive digital storytelling as an effective instructional tool for enhancing engagement and improving reading comprehension. Using a qualitative approach research design, the data are gathered through a semi-structured questionnaire, completed by 25 second-year English students at Biskra University, and four semi-structured interviews conducted with teachers of reading from the Department of Language and English Literature. The results show that most students find digital storytelling interesting and helpful in making texts easier to understand. Teachers also have positive attitudes, seeing digital storytelling as a creative way to encourage learner-centered instruction and classroom interaction. However, some obstacles are reported, such as time constraints, limited technical resources, and the need for training. These findings suggest that digital storytelling significantly improves reading engagement in EFL classrooms. The study recommends its inclusion in the curriculum, along with support for teachers through training and better access to digital tools. This research contributes to the literature on educational technology and highlights the value of innovative strategies in language teaching.

Keywords: Digital storytelling, EFL, Engagement, Reading comprehension

List of Abbreviations

DGT: Digital Storytelling

EFL: English for foreign languages

ESL: English as Second Language

Fl: Foreign Language

GTM: grammar translation method

L2: Second Language

LREs: Language-Learning Episodes

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General introduction

Introduction

In recent years, the integration of digital tools into education has significantly transformed traditional teaching methodologies. One particularly impactful innovation is digital storytelling, which combines narrative with multimedia elements such as images, audio, and video. This approach enables educators to create immersive and interactive learning experiences that not only capture students' attention but also foster deeper comprehension of the material (Kallinikou & Nicolaidou, 2019).

Reading comprehension is a crucial skill for academic success and lifelong learning. However, conventional reading instruction often relies heavily on text-based methods that may not fully engage students or accommodate diverse learning styles. Digital storytelling presents an engaging alternative, offering content in a relatable format that enhances both comprehension and retention (Smeda, Dakich, & Sharda, 2014).

Despite its promising benefits, there remains a gap in research examining the impact of digital storytelling on reading comprehension and student engagement, particularly in higher education contexts. Existing studies tend to focus on younger learners or specific storytelling elements, leaving a significant need for a broader understanding of its effects across diverse student populations (Niemi & Multisilta, 2016). This study aims to address that gap by investigating the perceptions of EFL teachers and second-year students regarding the use of digital storytelling as an instructional tool to enhance engagement and improve reading comprehension.

1. Statement of the Problem

While reading comprehension is essential for achieving success in higher education, numerous students face significant obstacles in honing their comprehension abilities. These obstacles include challenges in recognizing main ideas, drawing inferences, and summarizing texts. Traditional instructional methods for teaching reading comprehension often depend heavily on text-based approaches, which may not effectively engage students or address their diverse learning preferences, resulting in disengagement and diminished motivation (Smeda, Dakich, &Sharda, 2014).

This study aims to fill this gap by investigating how EFL teachers and second-year students

perceive digital storytelling as a tool for enhancing engagement and improving reading comprehension. Specifically, it seeks to determine whether digital storytelling is perceived as more effective than traditional methods in fostering student engagement and improving essential reading skills. The findings will provide insights into the potential of digital storytelling as an instructional strategy, offering guidance for educators and curriculum designers in integrating technology-driven approaches into EFL reading instruction.

2. Significance of the Study

This study is driven by the need to explore how EFL teachers and second-year university students perceive digital storytelling as a tool for enhancing engagement and reading comprehension. Given that many students struggle with identifying main ideas, making inferences, and summarizing texts, it is crucial to examine whether digital storytelling can be an effective alternative to traditional reading instruction.

By investigating these perceptions, this research aims to contribute to a better understanding of how technology-enhanced storytelling influences engagement and comprehension in EFL contexts. The findings will provide practical insights for educators and curriculum designers, helping them integrate more interactive and engaging instructional strategies into reading programs. Additionally, this study seeks to address the lack of research on digital storytelling in higher education, offering new perspectives on its role in fostering active learning and improved reading skills.

3. Research Questions

This research seeks to answer the following research questions:

The main question of this study is how do foreign language teachers and students perceive the use of digital storytelling as an instructional tool to enhance engagement and improve reading comprehension?

RQ1: What are students and teachers perceptions of digital storytelling as a learning tool?

RQ2: How do EFL teachers and students compare digital storytelling with traditional methods in terms of engagement and reading comprehension?

RQ3: In what ways do EFL teachers and students perceive digital storytelling as a tool that

enhances key reading skills, such as identifying main ideas, making inferences, and summarizing texts?

4. Research Hypothesis

Based on the above-mentioned research questions, we propose the following research hypothesis.

The main hypothesis of this study is foreign language teachers and students perceive digital storytelling as an effective instructional tool for enhancing engagement and improving reading comprehension.

RH 1: It is hypothesized that both EFL teachers and second-year students perceive digital storytelling as an engaging and effective tool approach to enhancing reading comprehension.

RH 2: It is hypothesized that Digital storytelling is perceived as a more engaging and effective method compared to traditional approaches in fostering students' reading comprehension skills

RH 3: It is hypothesized that EFL teachers and students view digital storytelling as a valuable pedagogical strategy for developing essential reading skills, including inferencing, summarizing, and identifying main ideas.

5. The General and Specific Aim of the Study

The general aim of this study is to explore the perceptions of EFL teachers and second-year students regarding the use of digital storytelling as an instructional tool to enhance engagement and improve reading comprehension in EFL classrooms at Biskra University.

More specifically, this research work aims to:

➢ Examine how EFL teachers and second-year students perceive the role of digital storytelling in fostering engagement in reading comprehension.

➢ Compare the effectiveness of digital storytelling and traditional reading methods in promoting student engagement and comprehension.

➢ Investigate the perceived impact of digital storytelling on students' ability to identify main ideas, make inferences, and summarize texts.

6. Methodology

This study follows a qualitative approach with a case study design within a pragmatism paradigm to investigate the perceptions of EFL teachers and second-year students regarding the use of digital storytelling as an instructional tool to enhance engagement in reading comprehension. The research integrates both qualitative and quantitative data, with qualitative data (teachers' and students' perceptions) serving as the primary focus, while quantitative data (engagement levels and comprehension measures) provide supporting evidence.

7. Population and Sampling

The target population consists of EFL teachers and second-year students from Biskra University. These participants were selected because Second-year EFL students are at a crucial stage in developing reading comprehension skills, making them relevant for evaluating engagement and comprehension with digital storytelling. EFL teachers bring valuable insights into the pedagogical effectiveness of digital storytelling compared to traditional instructional methods a purposive sampling method will be used to select participants who meet the study's criteria. The sample includes:

> ➢ 25 second-year EFL students, as they represent learners in the process of improving their reading comprehension skills.

> ➢ 4 EFL teachers, who will provide their perspectives on digital storytelling compared to traditional methods.

8. Data Collection Methods

To gather relevant data, this study will employ semi-structured questionnaires for students and semi-structured interviews for teachers.

1. Student's Questionnaire

Semi-structured questionnaire will be administered to students to assess their perceptions of digital storytelling in enhancing engagement and reading comprehension. It will include:

> ➢ Likert-scale questions to measure students' engagement and comprehension levels.

> ➤ Multiple-choice questions to explore students' preferences and experiences.

> ➤ Ranking questions to determine the perceived effectiveness of different instructional methods.

2. Teacher's Interviews

To gain deeper insights, open-ended interviews will be conducted with EFL teachers of reading. The interviews will focus on:

Their perceptions of digital storytelling's impact on student engagement.

Comparison between digital storytelling and traditional reading methods.

Challenges and benefits of integrating digital storytelling into reading instruction.

This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the perceptions of both students and teachers, aligning with the study's objectives.

9. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis will be used to identify patterns, common themes, and insights from the interviews and open-ended questionnaire responses.

Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, standard deviation) will summarize the Likert-scale questionnaire responses.

10. Structure of the Study

This research is organized into three primary chapters, each addressing a crucial element of the study.

Chapter One: Theoretical Framework

This chapter explores the concept of storytelling and digital storytelling as instructional tools in education. It provides an overview of traditional storytelling, its role in learning, and how digital storytelling has evolved as an innovative approach in modern education.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

This chapter examines the concepts of engagement and reading comprehension, their importance in EFL learning, and how they relate to digital storytelling.

Chapter Three: Data Analysis and Interpretation

This chapter presents and interprets the findings of the study, analyzing the data collected from students and teachers regarding digital storytelling's role in enhancing engagement and reading comprehension.

Chapter one

Digital Storytelling: its Role and Implication in Teaching Foreign Language

Introduction

In language education, particularly in EFL classrooms, digital storytelling has gained attention as a strategy to enhance learners' engagement and understanding in reading comprehension. By combining text, visuals, and sound, it provides students with a more contextualized and engaging way to interact with reading materials, helping them develop better comprehension skills.

This chapter explores the evolution of storytelling, its role in education, and the specific contributions of digital storytelling to EFL learning. By examining its potential to foster student engagement and improve reading comprehension, this chapter establishes the theoretical foundation for the study.

1. **Storytelling Key Principles**

To understand storytelling technique, it is essential to explore both what it entails and how it has evolved over time as a fundamental teaching practice.

1.1 What is Storytelling?

Storytelling is often seen as a way to encourage interaction between the storyteller and the audience. It involves the use of voice, dramatic expressions, mental images, and a structured narrative to communicate a message. The audience responds both verbally and nonverbally, providing feedback through facial expressions, gestures, or eye contact.

According to Appel et al. (2021, as cited in Ghafar, 2024), storytelling is defined as the interaction between the storyteller and the listeners, using voice, gestures, and facial expressions to engage them. This interaction helps shape the narrative and allows the audience to express their understanding of the story through their reactions, such as smiling, staring, or squinting.

Storytelling plays a key role in human communication, allowing individuals to share thoughts, experiences, and ideas about real or imagined worlds (Schachtner, 2020, as cited in Ghafar, 2024). Different scholars define storytelling in various ways. While some focus only on verbal interaction, others include different narrative forms. In this study, storytelling will be defined as the creative use of language to represent real or imagined experiences, people, and cultures (Joranger, 2023, as cited

in Ghafar, 2024).

It will also be understood as an act in which the storyteller engages the audience through voice, mental images, and dramatic elements while receiving both verbal and nonverbal feedback. This definition covers both the structure and content of narratives in language learning and literature. Some researchers distinguish between storytelling and reading aloud, while others consider reading aloud a form of storytelling.

Nowell et al. (2017, as cited in Ghafar, 2024) explain that storytelling involves voice modulation, creativity, gestures, and improvisation to highlight key messages, whereas reading aloud refers to reciting a memorized or written text. However, Al-Mansour & Al-Shorman (2011, as cited in Ghafar, 2024) argue that storytelling is a broad concept that includes reading aloud.

This study will follow the perspective that reading aloud is a form of storytelling since it can also involve gestures and expressive elements. However, further research is needed to explore how storytelling and reading aloud affect second-language learners differently. Until more evidence is available, reading aloud will be considered a part of storytelling.

1.2 **The Emergence and Evolution of Storytelling**

The evolution of storytelling is a rich and complex journey that mirrors humanity's cognitive and cultural growth. Beginning with ancient visual narratives like cave paintings, storytelling has continuously adapted to new forms of communication and technological advancements. Early oral traditions, such as India's Panchatantra and Mahabharata, were instrumental in preserving cultural heritage and imparting moral lessons across generations (Yuvaraj & Shanmugapriya, 2024).

Culturally, storytelling reflects a society's spiritual and educational experiences, shaping aesthetic values and social awareness, particularly in Eastern literature (Sutama,2023). It also fosters empathy, enabling individuals to connect with diverse perspectives through shared narratives (Garcia-Pelegrin et al., 2021).

Technological progress has further transformed storytelling, introducing interactive and immersive formats that democratize narrative creation and consumption (Lakshmi, 2025). Video games, for instance, redefine storytelling by engaging players in dynamic, participatory narratives, pushing the boundaries of traditional storytelling (Gantatyat, 2024).

Despite these advancements, the core purpose of storytelling to convey human experiences and emotions remains unchanged. Whether through oral traditions, the written word, or digital media, storytelling endures as a powerful tool for fostering connection and understanding in society.

1.3 Storytelling in EFL Classrooms

In the context of EFL classrooms, it is important to examine the various roles storytelling plays and the impact it has on language learning.

1.3.1 Storytelling as a Teaching Technique

During the nineteenth century, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction was primarily focused on linguistic mastery, as demonstrated by the prevailing teaching methods of that time, such as the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and the structuralist approach. However, since the 1980s, the role of literature in EFL teaching has substantially evolved. Instead of solely emphasizing correct linguistic structures, teaching began to prioritize communicative competence and critical thinking. Literature has since been recognized as a "springboard for the development of critical thinking and aesthetic appreciation" while also fostering students' cultural awareness (Bretz, 1990, pp. 335–338, as cited in Boukhalfa, 2017).

The integration of literary works, particularly storytelling, into the EFL curriculum has gained considerable attention, leading to various studies advocating for its implementation (Cook, 1994; Kramsch, 1993; Liddicoat & Crozet, 2000; Shanahan, 1997, as cited in Boukhalfa, 2017).

In contemporary education, teaching has shifted away from rigid principles toward a more flexible and less directive form of instruction. As Janassen and Hernandez-Serano (2002, as cited in Boukhalfa, 2017) note, instructional storytelling has become increasingly prevalent. Stories contribute to learning by presenting linguistic and structural elements explicitly while also fostering

mental engagement with the events described. Labov (1972, as cited in Boukhalfa, 2017) defines a narrative as "one method of recapitulating past experiences by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events" (pp. 359–360).

Similarly, Gerrig (1993, as cited in Boukhalfa, 2017) suggests that storytelling serves as an attention-focusing mechanism that aids in "inquiry, decision-making, and learning" (Andrews, Hull, & Donahue, 2009, p. 7). Various elements, such as plots (O'Brien & Myers, 1987, as cited in Boukhalfa, 2017), problems (Merrill, 2002, as cited in Boukhalfa, 2017), and contextualized situations (Salas, Wilson, Priest, & Guthrie, 2006, as cited in Boukhalfa, 2017), contribute to the effectiveness of storytelling as a teaching tool.

The function of storytelling has thus transformed from mere entertainment to a structured instructional method. According to Andrews, Hull, and Donahue (2009, as cited in Boukhalfa, 2017), storytelling can be categorized into four instructional methods:

- **Case-Based Instruction**: This method presents fixed problems and solutions, positioning the learner as an external observer of specific past situations. The focus is on exposing learners to concrete events with unknown outcomes (Barnes, Christensen, & Hansen, 1994; Wieviorka, 1992, as cited in Boukhalfa, 2017).

- **Narrative-Based Instruction**: Similar to case-based instruction, this approach also involves fixed problems and solutions. However, it differs in that the learner is positioned within the narrator's context, which fosters emotional engagement. The use of humor and multifunctional presentation distinguishes this method (Chatman, 1978; Cobley, 2001; Martin, 1986, as cited in Boukhalfa, 2017).

- **Scenario-Based Instruction**: Here, the problem is defined by fixed solution criteria, but learners engage in interactive, real-time experiences that allow for multiple possible solutions (Salas et al., 2006, as cited in Boukhalfa, 2017).

- **Problem-Based Instruction**: Unlike previous methods, this approach presents an ill-defined problem with unknown solution parameters. The learner takes an active role in directing

activities, using the problem to acquire abstract and declarative knowledge while improving knowledge transfer to real-world practice (Andrews et al., 2009; Hmelo-Silver, 2004, as cited in Boukhalfa, 2017).

Grouping these educational methods under the umbrella of storytelling highlights its deep connection with cognitive processes. As Andrews et al. (2009, as cited in Boukhalfa, 2017) explain, storytelling aligns with how the mind processes information by sequentially encountering contextually ordered stimuli and applying that knowledge to real-world events.

Ultimately, storytelling serves multiple roles in the EFL classroom. It captures students' interest, enhances the flow of ideas during lessons, improves retention of materials, reduces anxiety, and fosters strong relationships between teachers and students as well as among students themselves (Green, 2004, as cited in Boukhalfa, 2017).

1.4 The Effects of Storytelling

Storytelling is both a life experience and a linguistic experience, capable of reaching deep within learners, touching areas that regular teaching might not. Stories reflect the surrounding world and construct their own reality, meeting the emotional, cognitive, and psychological needs of children (Malkina, 1995, as cited in Reguig, 2019).

1.4.1 Emotional Effects

Most learners grow up in environments rich with narrative stories, whether real or fictitious, primarily aimed at entertainment. Deacon and Murphy (2001, as cited in Reguig, 2019) discuss the profound impact of storytelling, noting that stories influence a person's construction of knowledge and self. They help learners understand the world around them and their own lives. Storytelling can engage the emotional and affective realms of learners, allowing them to mentally participate in the story, identify with characters, and actively engage in events. Stories can move learners, leading to changes in beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.

Bettelheim (1976, as cited in Reguig, 2019) used psychoanalytic analysis on tales like The Three Little Pigs to demonstrate how children can draw important developmental conclusions. By identifying with protagonists, children learn that using their intelligence can help them overcome opponents. According to Bettelheim, each pig represents a stage in personality development, guided first by the id, then the superego, and finally controlled by the ego. The ego's power helps protect against dangers, making language learning an enriching experience. Teachers can exploit learners' preference for storytelling to address language-learning difficulties and improve aspects like vocabulary.

1.4.2 Educational Effects

Listening to and reading stories is not merely a recreational activity or an escape into fantasy; it plays an important role in teaching, especially languages. Teachers use storytelling in both second-language (SL) and foreign-language (FL) teaching, as well as first-language instruction, for various purposes. Stories are used as a comprehensible input in language teaching. Garvie (1990, as cited in Reguig, 2019) suggests that storytelling can be a major component in an acquisition-based teaching approach. The best way to achieve this is to introduce storytelling as a reading input, particularly pleasure reading, which is underutilized in Algerian EFL teaching.

1.4.3 Storytelling and Pleasure Reading

Storytelling and pleasure reading are closely connected. Reading a story creates a relaxed and secure atmosphere that engages students in the reading activity by maintaining their interest. Kita et al. (1995, as cited in Reguig, 2019) found that using familiar readers in English lessons increased students' motivation for extensive reading, leading to improved reading comprehension.

Pleasure reading, a form of extensive reading, is voluntary and allows readers to skip sections they find difficult or uninteresting, abandon books, or look up word meanings at their discretion. In extensive reading, learners read many pages of connected discourse graded to their achievement level, with adapted texts introducing new vocabulary at a fixed rate. As learners' reading abilities develop, they acquire a broad range of passive vocabulary, varying according to the material read. The success

of pleasure reading depends on comprehensibility, interest, relevance, and the availability of materials and learners' time.

1.4.4   Stories as a Reading Input

Rivers (1968, as cited in Reguig, 2019) emphasizes that reading is the most important activity in any language class. She views it as not only a source of information and enjoyment but also a means of consolidating and expanding one's language knowledge. Stories are highly efficient teaching materials, containing diverse grammatical structures, vocabulary, and types of discourse. They can be used to teach grammar, reading comprehension, listening comprehension, and vocabulary development.

1.5 Application of Storytelling in Language Acquisition

The role of storytelling in language acquisition has garnered considerable interest for how it can enhance language development, offering insights into the narrative function in second language (L2) learning, the acquisition of particular language skills, and its overall effect on language proficiency.

1.5.1   What is known about the function of narrative in the acquisition of L2?

Several researches have examined how storytelling affects the evolution of L2 grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation as well as the development of L2 receptive and productive skills. It is believed that oral narratives allow for the division of a text into tone units, the identification of tonic syllables for important information, the identification of information that is already known and thus not prominent, and the identification of storyline turning points where either familiar information is viewed from a different angle or new information is introduced. As a result, it is asserted that storytelling aids in young learners' awareness of intonation and rhythm.

1.5.2   Storytelling and the Acquisition of Certain Linguistic Abilities

Numerous studies have explored the potential influence of storytelling on the development of specific second-language (L2) skills, such as reading and speaking. For example, a ten-week

quantitative study investigated the impact of teaching English storytelling on the speaking abilities of 25 native Taiwanese primary school students in grades five and six. The research followed a small-scale design, with participants divided into an experimental group and a control group. While both groups used the same English textbook, the experimental group also engaged in narrative-based activities. To assess spoken language proficiency, pre- and post-tests were conducted for both groups. The initial results showed no significant differences between them. However, by the end of the study, the experimental group demonstrated a greater ability to produce longer and more intricate spoken expressions in L2 compared to the control group.

This improvement was attributed to students having the opportunity to actively practice newly learned vocabulary and sentence structures, as well as passively engage with storytelling. Nonetheless, Hsu does not clearly define what constitutes "more complex oral sentences" or specify the criteria used to measure complexity.

1.5.3   Storytelling and The Overall Growth of Language Proficiency

Several scientific studies have examined the impact of storytelling on the overall development of both receptive and productive language skills. For example, one study investigated how learners' motivation to acquire English as a second language (ESL) influenced their language skill development, particularly focusing on the role of storytelling in adult ESL learners' progress over a six-week period. The study involved five graduate and undergraduate students with a solid foundation in Basic English, who volunteered to participate. Data collection and analysis incorporated both qualitative methods, such as questionnaires, oral interviews, and field notes, as well as statistical methods, with sessions held twice a week for one hour each.

Participants were exposed to various types of narratives, including fables, folktales, and personal stories. They also engaged in storytelling by sharing their own experiences with teachers and peers, responding to written and spoken questions related to the stories they heard. The findings indicated that storytelling proved to be an effective pedagogical tool, benefiting learners who actively engaged in and enjoyed storytelling activities. In contrast, those who showed little or no interest in storytelling made minimal progress. According to Smiderle et al. (2020, as cited in Ghafar, 2024),

"two of the five study participants did not find storytelling activities entertaining," and these individuals had a lower level of English proficiency compared to those who showed a strong interest in storytelling.

Additionally, the study observed that learners with lower proficiency experienced significant stress when required to narrate stories and expressed frustration due to their difficulty in meeting classroom expectations. While the study suggests that limited English proficiency was the primary source of this stress, it is also possible that the specific approach to storytelling used in the classroom contributed to their anxiety. This research highlights that while storytelling can support second-language learners in developing their language skills, its effectiveness depends on the learners' proficiency level. If the storytelling activities are not appropriately tailored to the learners' abilities, they may lead to anxiety, frustration, and a lack of motivation.

Similarly, another study examined the impact of storytelling on the language proficiency of forty adult ESL learners, aged 30 to 50, who had been learning English as a foreign language (EFL) for six to twelve years. Over a seven-week period, participants listened to stories from fifteen different genres, including folktales and picture books. These stories featured recurring themes such as word and phrase repetition and rhymes. After listening to the stories, students engaged in various oral and written communication exercises designed to enhance their receptive and productive skills. For example, they were encouraged to write their own stories and narrate them to their teachers and classmates.

Post-test results indicated that students demonstrated improvement in all four-language skills reading, writing, speaking, and listening compared to their pre-test performance. This suggests that storytelling may contribute to the development of these skills. However, before drawing definitive conclusions, several methodological concerns regarding Dretzke et al.'s (2014, as cited in Ghafar, 2024) study must be addressed. Notably, the research does not specify the exact duration of the study or the amount of time students spent engaging in storytelling activities. Additionally, the assertion that storytelling is crucial for enhancing language competency is based on a "three-hour assessment that covers the four language skills."

1.6 Digital Storytelling

Digital storytelling, as a contemporary narrative method, explores not only what it means and how it has developed over time, but also highlights its importance and practical uses in our increasingly digital world.

1.6.1 Definition and Evolution of Digital Storytelling

In 2001, Prensky introduced the term "digital natives" to describe individuals born after the 1980s who have grown up immersed in a media-rich environment (Prensky, 2001, as cited in Yu & Wang, 2025). Acknowledging this generational shift, educators are increasingly encouraged to integrate digital tools to revitalize traditional teaching methods and promote digital literacy (Singh, 2021, as cited in Yu & Wang, 2025).

One innovative approach gaining global traction is digital storytelling, which originated in the United States and has evolved significantly over the past three decades, finding a place in both Asian and European educational contexts (Wu & Chen, 2020, as cited in Yu & Wang, 2025). Digital storytelling (DST) merges the timeless art of narrative with multimedia elements such as text, images, recorded audio narration, video, and music, creating a dynamic learning experience through computer software. The resulting stories, typically short (ranging from 2 to 10 minutes), are saved in digital formats that can be played on computers or other devices and are often uploaded to the internet for wider access.

Digital storytelling, also known as multimedia storytelling, transforms traditional storytelling by blending narration with multimedia components such as words, images, animation, and video to engage and enlighten the audience. As a powerful learning tool, it supports language learning by helping students enhance their speaking abilities through technology, allowing them to narrate stories in their own words and voices (Kallinikou & Nicolaidou, 2019). At its core, digital storytelling combines the craft of storytelling with multimedia elements, including graphics, music, and web publishing technology, while maintaining a specific point of view and focusing on particular topics.

According to Robin (2008, as cited in Kogila et al., n.d.), digital storytelling, as a form of video communication that integrates dynamic visuals, sounds, and rich narratives, serves as a valuable educational tool across all levels of learning, from kindergarten to university.

In today's media-rich environment, digital stories and educational films are increasingly common in online learning spaces, where they capture and sustain students' attention, making learning more enjoyable and stimulating. They also present complex ideas in accessible and visually appealing ways, enhancing comprehension and knowledge retention (Purcell, 2013).

This pedagogical strategy builds on the fundamental value of storytelling, which McDrury and Alterio (2003) describe as a human phenomenon that conveys personal and collective experiences, helping individuals understand their realities and identities. Unlike simple story reading, storytelling, as emphasized by Dujmovic (2006), involves recounting a tale from memory, transforming listeners into active participants rather than passive observers. By blending these narrative traditions with modern technology, digital storytelling fosters interactive and immersive learning experiences that resonate with today's digitally native students, positioning itself as a key component of contemporary education.

1.6.2   Importance and Applicability in the Modern World

Digital storytelling has become increasingly significant in modern society due to its wide range of benefits and applications across various fields. Some of the key advantages include:

– **Personal expression:** Through digital storytelling, individuals can convey their personal experiences and viewpoints, fostering a stronger emotional connection with the audience (Dunford & Jenkins, 2017).

– **Accessibility:** Digital stories are easily shared via social media and websites, allowing people to gain insights on a topic without the need to attend in-person events or presentations (Dunford & Jenkins, 2017).

– **Educational benefits**: Schools frequently use digital storytelling to enhance students' communication skills, encourage critical thinking, and deepen their understanding of narrative structure and character development (Athanasiadis, 2024).

- **21st-century skill development:** Creating digital stories helps learners build essential competencies such as digital, global, technological, and information literacy (Athanasiadis, 2024).

- **Collaborative learning**: Digital storytelling platforms facilitate teamwork, enabling students to exchange ideas, work collectively on projects, and learn from one another (Dunford & Jenkins, 2017)

1.6.3   Categories and Formats of Digital Stories

The categories and formats of digital storytelling, especially its varied forms, reveal the vast opportunities this innovative narrative technique provides across different fields of application.

1.6.3.1 Categories of Digital Storytelling

Digital storytelling combines traditional storytelling methods with digital media elements like text, images, audio, music, and video (Robin, 2016). This blend is created using computer software to craft narratives that typically focus on specific themes or perspectives. These stories are usually brief, lasting between 2 to 10 minutes, and are digitally formatted for playback on computers or other compatible devices. Often shared online, they are easily accessible through web browsers. Robin (2016) identifies three main categories of digital stories:

1) **Personal Narratives:** These stories highlight important events or experiences in a person's life. They aim to create emotional connections and offer personal reflections or insights.

2) **Historical Documentaries:** This category centers on depicting and explaining past events or historical moments. By incorporating multimedia elements, these stories offer a deeper understanding of historical contexts and significant occurrences.

3) **Informative/Instructional Stories**: Designed to educate or instruct, these stories present information about specific concepts, practices, or topics in a compelling and accessible format using digital media.

1.6.4   Variety of Digital Storytelling Formats

Digital storytelling takes many forms, each utilizing different techniques to engage audiences and convey narratives effectively. Popular formats include:

a)   **Horizontal Stories**: Presented in a scrolling horizontal format, these stories use images, text, and interactive elements to create an immersive experience (Paolini& Di Blas, 2014).

b)   **Video**: Dynamic and engaging, videos often include captions, animations, and sound effects to enhance the storytelling experience (Zengo, 2024).

c)   **Audio**: Providing a rich sensory experience, audio stories can feature voiceovers and sound effects to draw in listeners. (Zengo, 2024).

d)   **Animation**: Moving images, sliding text, and interactive elements help bring stories to life and capture attention. (Zengo, 2024).

e)   **Interactive Graphics:** Charts, graphs, and data visualizations are used to tell compelling stories and encourage audience engagement (*Visualisations and Narratives in Digital Media. Methods and Current Trends*, 2022).

f)   **Short and Vertical Video:** Popularized by platforms like AJ+ and Now This, these videos are often captioned and designed for social media (*Visualisations and Narratives in Digital Media. Methods and Current Trends*, 2022).

g)   **Long form Storytelling**: Pioneered by The New York Times' "Snowfall," this format uses scroll-triggered visual and text effects to create an engaging narrative (Harahap et al., 2024).

h)   **Structured News:** Utilizing a card-based layout, this format, seen on platforms like Vox.com, presents stories in a visually appealing and interactive way (*Visualisations and Narratives in Digital Media. Methods and Current Trends*, 2022).

i)   **Live Blogs:** Used for major events, live blogs provide real-time updates and insights (Cardello, 2022).

j)   **Lenticels:** A popular, shareable format made famous by platforms like Buzzfeed, presenting stories in a simple list format (Cardello, 2022).

k) **Newsletters and Briefings:** Offering a more in-depth perspective, these formats are used for sharing updates and insights (Cardello, 2022).

l) **Timelines:** Providing a clear chronological structure, timelines help audiences follow a story's progression (Cardello, 2022).

m) **Bots and Chat:** Chat-based apps, like the Quiz app, use conversational interfaces to deliver news and engage with audiences (Cardello, 2022).

n) **Personalized Stories:** Tailored to individual preferences, these stories allow for customized content experiences (Cardello, 2022).

By exploring and combining these formats, digital storytellers can craft engaging and powerful narratives that resonate with their audiences.

1.6.4 The Seven Key elements of digital storytelling

Lambert (2006) identifies seven essential elements that contribute to the creation of effective digital stories, highlighting the importance of structure, creativity, and emotional engagement in the learning process.

a) **Point of View:** Every story has a purpose, and the message should be clear and focused. The point should be directed toward the audience, ensuring that every element of the story supports the main message.

b) **Dramatic Question:** To capture the audience's attention from the start, a dramatic question should be posed early in the story, with a resolution provided by the end.

c) **Emotional Content:** The story should convey serious issues in a personal and impactful way, establishing a strong emotional connection with the audience.

d) **Voice:** A natural, conversational tone is important. Reading directly from a script can confuse the audience, so practicing and recording multiple takes will help select the best, most engaging voice.

e) **Soundtrack:** Music plays a significant role in setting the tone of the story and evoking emotion. While sound effects can add excitement, they should be used carefully to avoid distraction.

f) **Economy:** A fast-paced digital story should focus on the essential elements that drive the narrative forward. Avoid overloading the story with unnecessary details that do not serve the plot.

g) **Pacing**: music tempo, speech rate, image timing, and camera movements influence the rhythm of the story. The pace should generally remain consistent, with occasional variations to enhance the emotional impact or maintain interest.

These elements provide a framework for both creating and evaluating digital stories**.**

1.7 Language Teaching Materials: Traditional vs. Digital Storytelling

Language teaching materials play an important role in facilitating language learning, with teachers designing these resources to meet their students' needs and enhance the learning experience. According to Tomlinson (1998), language-learning materials include anything teachers and students use to support the learning process, ranging from textbooks and workbooks to videos and digital tools. Richards, Nation, and Macalister (2020) emphasize that these materials provide opportunities for independent study, self-assessment, and tracking learning progress. Over time, teaching materials have evolved into two broad categories: traditional and digital, each offering unique benefits.

1.7.1 Traditional Storytelling in Language Teaching

Traditional teaching materials have long been a cornerstone of language instruction. This approach often relies on textbooks, chalkboards, and printed exercises, with the teacher serving as the primary source of knowledge and students as passive recipients. As Cielo et al. (2019) notes, the traditional view of education positions the teacher as the sole provider of information. For example, the chalkboard, a classic resource, has been used for generations to present lesson plans, illustrate concepts, and engage students in classroom activities. Despite evolving into green and whiteboards, its purpose remains unchanged: facilitating direct, teacher-led instruction.

1.7.2   Digital Storytelling in Language Teaching

In contrast, digital storytelling represents a modern approach that leverages technology to enhance language learning. Tools such as videos, PowerPoint presentations, educational apps, and

interactive platforms like YouTube transform the classroom dynamic (Charpin, 2023). Rather than passively receiving information, students become active participants, engaging with multimedia content that fosters creativity and critical thinking. This method supports differentiated instruction, allowing learners to progress at their own pace while receiving instant feedback (Moradi & Chen, 2019). Digital materials also create opportunities for collaborative projects, where students can create and share their own digital stories, thus practicing language skills in authentic, meaningful contexts.

In conclusion, while traditional storytelling methods emphasize structure and teacher-led instruction, digital storytelling offers a more interactive and engaging learning experience. Combining elements from both approaches can create a balanced and effective language-learning environment.

1.8 Digital Storytelling and Foreign Language

By merging technology, creativity, and language skills, digital storytelling provides an innovative way to learn foreign languages, promoting effective communication and deeper cultural insight.

1.8.1 Digital Storytelling in Education and EFL Settings

Digital storytelling represents an important advancement in contemporary language education, transforming traditional pedagogical approaches through the integration of multimodal elements, including visual, auditory, and textual components (Belda-Medina, 2022). This innovative methodology not only preserves the inherent motivational qualities of conventional storytelling but significantly enhances them by incorporating digital literacy skills and facilitating more personalized learning experiences (Raffone, 2022).

Within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, empirical research demonstrates that digital storytelling effectively addresses diverse learner needs by providing immersive, interactive content that promotes comprehensive language acquisition (Kahanurak et al., 2023). Comparative analyses between traditional and digital storytelling methods consistently reveal students' marked preference for digital formats, which are perceived as more engaging, accessible, and effective for language comprehension (Ahmad & Yamat, 2020).

The pedagogical benefits extend across all fundamental language competencies, with particular efficacy noted in developing listening comprehension through authentic multimedia input and improving oral proficiency via creative production tasks (Budianto et al., 2021; Tyrou, 2022). Furthermore, digital storytelling serves as a powerful tool for cultural education, enabling learners to explore and express intercultural perspectives through narrative construction (Anderson et al., 2018).

While the advantages are substantial, current research identifies several areas requiring further investigation, including the need for targeted vocabulary support during digital storytelling activities and the development of more robust assessment frameworks (Ong & Vahid Aryadoust, 2022). Teacher training programs are increasingly recognizing the value of digital storytelling, with educators reporting positive outcomes regarding student engagement, creative expression, and cross-cultural understanding (Maruf & Halyna, 2023). As the field continues to evolve, ongoing research is essential to optimize implementation strategies and maximize the potential of digital storytelling across diverse educational contexts and learner populations.

1.8.2 Digital Storytelling for Pedagogical and Research Purposes

Digital storytelling leverages multiple technologies to craft an engaging and enjoyable learning experience. By integrating elements of fictional narratives across various digital platforms, learners engage with content in dynamic and interactive ways. This approach draws from learner-centered methodologies, encouraging students to use digital tools, mobile devices, and language skills to produce meaningful outcomes. The process allows participants to create and share their own stories, fostering collaboration, enhancing engagement, and promoting creative expression (Lambert, 2013; McGee, 2015; Niemi et al., 2014, as cited in Vivitsou, n.d.).

A pedagogical framework supporting this approach builds on models of peer interaction, networking, and digital media literacy development (Niemi & Multisilta, 2016, as cited in Vivitsou, n.d.). Through collaborative projects, learners build knowledge and skills while connecting with others across cultural and linguistic boundaries. Such activities often extend beyond the classroom, creating authentic communication opportunities where participants draw on diverse resources,

including peers, educators, and digital tools, to bridge language gaps and sustain intercultural dialogue.

Methodologically, a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches helps capture the depth of the learning experience. Interviews with students and teachers, analysis of story scripts, and online comments reveal insights into participants' perspectives and pedagogical choices. Patterns emerging from these qualitative data are identified through content analysis techniques, while quantitative measures track participation trends and levels of engagement. Together, these methods provide a comprehensive understanding of how digital storytelling can inspire learners, enhance language use, and create a rich, collaborative learning environment (Niemi & Multisilta, 2016; Vivitsou et al., 2016, as cited in Vivitsou, n.d.).

Conclusion

The chapter has examined the historical background, educational relevance, and practical uses of storytelling and digital storytelling within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. By integrating age-old narrative techniques with contemporary multimedia resources, digital storytelling presents a lively and interactive method that boosts student engagement, understanding, and language acquisition. The theoretical framework established here serves as a robust basis for analyzing the influence of digital storytelling on reading comprehension, paving the way for the subsequent empirical research. As educators increasingly adopt innovative teaching strategies, digital storytelling stands out as a potent educational tool that connects cultural narratives with modern learning technologies, enriching the language-learning journey for students.

Chapter two

Engagement and Reading Comprehension

In EFL learning

Introduction

Engagement is a pivotal element in the learning process, particularly in acquiring a new language. Within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), fostering student engagement is essential for improving reading comprehension, as it directly impacts motivation, focus, and cognitive processing. Reading comprehension is a critical skill that enables learners to understand, interpret, and critically evaluate texts in a second language. However, many EFL learners face challenges such as low motivation, unfamiliar vocabulary, and difficulty in constructing meaning from texts. These obstacles underscore the importance of employing innovative teaching methods to enhance engagement and support comprehension.

Digital storytelling has recently gained traction as an effective pedagogical strategy that integrates multimedia element such as text, images, audio, and animation to create engaging and interactive reading experiences. Research indicates that digital storytelling can boost student engagement by making reading more dynamic, emotionally resonant, and contextually meaningful. By combining visuals with narration, it offers scaffolding that aids comprehension and makes content more accessible for EFL learners. This chapter delves into the role of engagement in language learning and examines the cognitive and emotional factors influencing reading comprehension. It further explores how these elements interact to shape learning outcomes. Additionally, it reviews existing research on the relationship between engagement and reading success while highlighting how digital storytelling can bridge the gap between engagement and comprehension. The chapter concludes by addressing the challenges of fostering engagement in EFL reading environments and identifying gaps in current research that this study seeks to address.

2. Definition of Engagement

Engagement is a key concept that psychologists have studied extensively. Many researchers have tried to define and explain it in relation to other academic concepts. According to Newman (1992, as cited in Kouidri, 2023), engagement is the opposite of apathy and represents active

involvement, commitment, and focus. He explained that people experience different levels of engagement while talking, listening, observing, reading, thinking, or engaging in activities at work, play, or social settings. Engagement is shaped by specific activities and social contexts, making it a complex concept. In academic settings, engagement is often defined in terms of student participation in learning.

Engagement in learning is primarily about active involvement, where students participate mentally and physically with clear goals and purpose (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012; Reschly & Christenson, 2012, as cited in Hiver et al., 2024). It is influenced by context, including cultural and social factors like family, school environment, peer interactions, and classroom activities (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Pianta et al., 2012; Shernoff, 2013, as cited in Hiver et al., 2024).

Additionally, engagement always has a focus, whether on a topic, a person, a situation, or a learning task (Reschly & Christenson, 2012, as cited in Hiver et al., 2024). Recognizing how learners fit into their environments, helps explain engagement's impact on learning and ways to improve it. Lastly, engagement is flexible and evolving, meaning it can change depending on circumstances. While research on its development is still limited, studies suggest that students can become more engaged when given the right support and structured learning experiences (Appleton et al., 2008; Fredricks et al., 2004; Reschly & Christenson, 2012, as cited in Hiver et al., 2024).

2.1 Dimensions of Student Engagement

Engagement includes emotional, behavioral, and cognitive aspects. It is a broad concept that covers participation, enjoyment, and effort in learning (Wang et al., 2017, as cited in Kouidri, 2023). Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004, as cited in Kouidri, 2023) emphasized the need for more research on these dimensions, which are interconnected. While most studies focus on two or three dimensions, they all include key elements of engagement (Appleton et al., 2008).

2.1.1 Emotional Engagement

Emotional engagement refers to students' feelings toward school, teachers, learning, and peers. Positive emotions can encourage students to stay engaged and motivated. Christenson et al. (2012, as cited in Kouidri, 2023) described emotional engagement as the connection students feel to their school and how it influences their willingness to learn. Fredricks et al. (2004, as cited in Kouidri, 2023) added that emotional engagement includes feelings of belonging, acceptance by teachers and peers, and overall school attachment. This emotional connection plays a vital role in students' academic motivation.

2.1.2   Behavioral Engagement

Behavioral engagement refers to the effort and participation students invest in learning. In second-language (L2) studies, researchers initially measured it by counting the number of words spoken and how often students took turns in conversations (Bygate & Samuda, 2009; Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000; Platt & Brooks, 2002, as cited in Hiver et al., 2024). Some common examples of behavioral engagement include students willingly joining discussions, taking the lead in conversations, staying focused on a task, producing meaningful content, and continuing their work without needing extra help (Philp & Duchesne, 2016, as cited in Hiver et al., 2024).

While all types of engagement involve action, newer research views behavioral engagement as the effort students put into learning tasks, the quality of their participation, and their overall involvement in the learning process (Sang & Hiver, 2021, as cited in Hiver et al., 2024). Unlike simpler ideas of being "on-task" or "off-task," this perspective delves deeper into how engaged students truly are. It also helps researchers understand how behavioral engagement connects with other types of engagement, making it a broader and more meaningful concept.

2.1.3 Cognitive Engagement

Refers to the mental effort students invest in learning. It occurs when they focus attentively, remain engaged, and actively work toward understanding a topic or completing a task (Reeve, 2012; Svalberg, 2009, as cited in Hiver et al., 2024). In second-language (L2) classrooms, researchers often examine how students demonstrate cognitive engagement through verbal interactions, such as asking questions, discussing ideas, providing feedback, explaining concepts, and responding to others. Some studies also identify moments of language learning episodes (LREs), such as when students correct mistakes or clarify meaning, as indicators of strong engagement (Baralt et al., 2016; Lambert et al., 2017; Svalberg, 2017, as cited in Hiver et al., 2024).

Beyond verbal interactions, students may also exhibit cognitive engagement through nonverbal actions, including body language, facial expressions, eye movements, and posture. Additionally, private speech and exploratory talk where students think aloud as they attempt to understand a concept serve as further indicators of engagement (Hiver et al., 2021b; Fredricks and McColskey, 2012, as cited in Hiver et al., 2024). These signals help educators assess the depth of students' involvement in their learning process.

2.1.4 Social Engagement

Social engagement plays an important role in language learning. It involves interacting with others and being part of a learning community (Philp & Duchesne, 2008; van Lier, 2004, as cited in Hiver et al., 2024). This type of engagement is all about social connections, including conversations with classmates and the overall quality of those interactions (Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., 2011; Mercer, 2019, as cited in Hiver et al., 2024). Unlike other forms of engagement, social engagement focuses on relationships and how learners support each other through communication. Students show social engagement by working with peers, taking turns in discussions, exchanging ideas, and participating in-group activities (Lambert et al., 2017, as cited in Hiver et al., 2024). It is also connected to positive social behaviors, such as showing empathy, listening actively, and paying attention to teachers or

classmates (Storch, 2008, as cited in Hiver et al., 2024). Beyond communication, social engagement includes a student's connection to the classroom and learning environment, which can influence their overall learning experience (Järvelä & Renninger, 2014, as cited in Hiver et al., 2024).

2.2 Importance of Engagement for Language Learning Practice

Engagement plays an important role in both language learning and education in general, as it provides insight into how students think, act, and feel in learning environments (Oga-Baldwin, 2019). It is influenced by various personal and situational factors, shaping both student and teacher experiences in school settings (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020). Research has linked high engagement levels to positive educational outcomes, such as increased academic persistence, effort, achievement, aspirations, and mental well-being, while also reducing dropout rates and risky behaviors (Christenson et al., 2012).

In second-language (L2) learning, engagement has significant policy implications. Language development is essential for educational equity, but increasing emphasis on standards and teacher accountability has heightened the need for student engagement to ensure success (Hiver et al., 2021). As schools serve increasingly diverse communities, educators must take on broader roles in supporting students.

Many educational systems closely monitor engagement levels to identify struggling students who may benefit from targeted interventions (Fredricks et al., 2019). Teachers and practitioners recognize engagement as a key factor in effective learning and instruction. However, maintaining student focus amid distractions remains a challenge (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). Teachers often observe engagement-related issues in their classrooms, which are closely tied to student attention and participation. Studying engagement helps bridge teaching and learning perspectives, allowing educators to identify classroom conditions that shape student success and foster meaningful involvement (Fredricks et al., 2004).

2.3 The Significance of Reading

Proficiency in the English language requires the development of essential skills, which are categorized as either receptive or productive. Receptive skills, including reading and listening, involve understanding language input, while productive skills, such as speaking and writing, require language output. Learners develop receptive skills by engaging with spoken or written content and decoding its meaning. Among these skills, reading plays a crucial role in acquiring information, particularly in academic settings. It is one of the most widely used language skills worldwide. A lack of reading proficiency can negatively impact academic performance and create difficulties in various aspects of life beyond the classroom (Mundhe, 2015, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018).

Students who struggle with reading comprehension often find little enjoyment in reading. This challenge is frequently linked to a limited vocabulary, highlighting the strong connection between comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, EFL learners must build an extensive vocabulary to effectively understand texts. Additionally, learners who develop a negative attitude toward the foreign language often experience greater difficulties in comprehending reading materials. Prior knowledge, or schemata, also plays a significant role in text comprehension, as it enables learners to construct meaning (Nozen et al., 2017; Vacca, 2002, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018).

When EFL learners fail to activate prior knowledge or predict possible meanings, they may struggle with comprehension. This difficulty can stem from insufficient understanding of English word formation and structure. According to Nezami (2012, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018), one of the major challenges educators face today is the widespread deficiency in reading comprehension among higher education students, which can significantly impact their academic success. Many students with limited vocabulary knowledge or ineffective learning strategies often encounter persistent difficulties in reading comprehension (Nor & Rashid, 2018, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). These struggles may be the result of negative early learning experiences (Hart & Risley, 2003, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018).

Since a strong vocabulary is crucial for understanding written material, researchers have identified vocabulary depth, prior knowledge, and grammatical competence as key factors influencing comprehension (Koda, 2007). Nergis (2013, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018) emphasized that vocabulary depth, syntactic awareness, and metacognitive skills play an essential role in reading comprehension. Several studies also underscore the importance of grammatical knowledge in reading comprehension (Mehrpour & Rahimi, 2010; Mecartty, 2000; Zhang, 2012, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018).

Shiotsu and Weir (2007, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018) argued that a learner's syntactic knowledge significantly affects their ability to understand texts. In other words, students with weak grammatical skills may struggle to reach advanced reading proficiency. To comprehend texts effectively, learners must integrate their background knowledge with an understanding of word meanings and sentence structures (Koda, 2005, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). Given these challenges, this study seeks to investigate reading comprehension difficulties among EFL learners, particularly Arab students at University Sultan Zainal Abidin and University Malaysia Terengganu. The findings are expected to provide insights into the nature of these difficulties and offer potential solutions to improve reading comprehension among learners.

2.4 Definition of Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension refers to the ability to fully grasp and understand the meaning of a text. Collins Dictionary (2020) defines comprehension as having complete knowledge and understanding of something. In this sense, reading comprehension involves interpreting and making sense of written content. Various scholars have provided definitions of reading comprehension. Linse (2005, as cited in Agustin et al., 2023) describes reading comprehension as the ability to understand what is read and make sense of the words and ideas in a text. He explains that it involves finding meaning, acquiring new knowledge, and sometimes reading for enjoyment. To effectively comprehend a text, readers must recognize vocabulary, connect ideas, and apply their prior

knowledge to understand the text more effectively (HarperCollins, 2020; Linse, 2005, as cited in Agustin et al., 2023).

Reading comprehension is the ability to grasp both the direct and deeper meanings of a text using strategies that help readers' process information effectively. It is a complex interaction between the reader and the text, allowing meaning to be constructed. Three main elements contribute to successful comprehension: accuracy, which involves correctly recognizing words based on pronunciation and spelling; fluency, which refers to reading smoothly at an appropriate pace; and comprehension, which enables readers to understand and connect ideas within the text Ahmadi, Hairul, and Pourhossein (2012). These components support readers in developing stronger skills for interpreting and applying knowledge gained from their reading.

2.5 Reading Strategies to Enhance Comprehension

Reading strategies refer to specific approaches used during reading to enhance comprehension and improve information retention. These strategies help readers gain a clearer understanding of a text. According to Medina (2008), teaching strategies effectively support students in developing their comprehension skills. Essentially, reading strategies involve techniques or steps that students apply independently to improve their understanding while reading. Daniell and McNamara (2007) describe reading comprehension strategies as cognitive or behavioral actions performed in specific contexts to enhance comprehension. This suggests that readers must employ certain techniques to better understand key points depending on the situation. Various reading strategies are utilized by different readers, with some of the most effective ones being skimming, scanning, predicting, and making inferences (deduction).

2.5.1 Skimming

Skimming is a useful reading strategy that helps students quickly understand the main idea of a text without focusing on every detail (Maxwell, 1970; Diaz & Laguado, 2013, as cited in Aritonang et al., 2018). It allows them to scan for key words that provide clues about the general meaning, making it easier to interpret information faster and improve their reading process. According to Grellet (1981) and Winarti (2010, as cited in Aritonang et al., 2018), skimming has several benefits it helps students go through a text quickly to grasp the main idea, understand how the text is organized, and get a sense of the writer's tone or attitude. By practicing skimming, students can read more efficiently, recognize the structure of a text, and develop a better understanding of how authors express their ideas (Aritonang et al., 2018).

2.5.2 Scanning

Scanning is a reading skill that helps students quickly find specific details in a text, like dates, names, or places, without reading everything (Maxwell, 1970; Diaz & Laguado, 2013, as cited in Aritonang et al., 2018). Instead of going through every word, scanning allows students to focus only on important information, making reading more efficient. It also helps them follow the flow of the text while using their time wisely. By practicing scanning, students can locate key facts faster, understand text structure better, and improve their overall reading process (Aritonang et al., 2018).

2.5.3 Predicting

Prediction is a strategy that helps students guess what might happen next in a text or what the author will say. Before reading, students can make predictions based on clues like titles, pictures, keywords, and the way the text is organized (Güneş, 2009, as cited in Güneş & Işık, 2016). Making predictions keeps readers interested and helps them focus on important details. It also helps them choose the right book or text for their needs. Block et al. (2004, as cited in Güneş & Işık, 2016) and Reutzel and Cooter (2009, as cited in Güneş & Işık, 2016) explain that good readers predict before

reading to set goals and understand what to look for. Readers use headings, images, tables, and other text features to make smart guesses about the content. Additionally, Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2007, as cited in Güneş & Işık, 2016) and Çakıcı and Altunay (2006, as cited in Güneş & Işık, 2016) emphasize that predicting requires active thinking. Before reading a new text, students should connect what they already know to what they are about to read. This helps them prepare for new ideas and understand the material better. Overall, prediction is an important reading skill that makes learning more meaningful and engaging.

2.5.4   Inference

Inference is a thinking process that helps readers make sense of a text and keep its meaning clear (Elbro & Buch-Iversen, 2013, as cited in Bayat & Çetinkaya, 2020). Readers cannot fully understand a text just by looking at the words alone. Instead, they need to read between the lines and use clues from the text to figure out deeper meanings. Learning to read starts with basic skills like recognizing words and reading smoothly. Over time, students develop inference skills, which help them understand texts more deeply. Good reading involves linking new information with what you already know and filling in missing details to make the text easier to follow (Cain, Oakhill, Barnes, & Bryant, 2001; van den Broek, 1997, as cited in Bayat & Çetinkaya, 2020).

In longer and more complex texts, making inferences is even more important because it helps readers connect ideas and fully understand what they are reading. To make accurate inferences, readers need background knowledge about words and concepts in a text. They also need to combine early details with later parts to get the full picture (Kendeou, van den Broek, Helder, & Karlsson, 2014; Kispal, 2008, as cited in Bayat & Çetinkaya, 2020). These skills help students build meaning and keep the text organized and logical while reading.

2.6 The Relationship between Reading Strategies and Reading Comprehension

Reading is a skill that requires understanding both the words and their meaning in context. It involves decoding text, interpreting its message, and using thinking processes to analyze and summarize information. Successful reading comprehension happens when a person grasps deeper meanings and applies effective strategies to remember key ideas. Since comprehension requires active thinking, strategies play a crucial role in achieving it. Danielle and McNamara (2007) highlight that cognitive strategies become essential when a breakdown in comprehension occurs, as they help readers process and understand content more effectively. Additionally, Klingner, Vaughn, and Boardman (2015) suggest that skilled readers often monitor their comprehension unconsciously by employing metacognitive strategies such as self-questioning and critical thinking. Overall, reading strategies serve as the foundation for effective reading comprehension. They provide readers with the tools to structure their thought processes, ensuring deeper understanding.

2.7 The Relationship between Engagement and Reading Comprehension

The connection between reading comprehension and engagement is extensively documented since motivation and engagement are both imperative in improving reading proficiency. According to Guthrie et al. (2004), students who are motivated read more intensively, which translates to better reading comprehension? Such engagement encompasses intrinsic motivation, utilization of cognitive strategies, and active social interaction with written texts. For example, students who are provided with options regarding reading texts tend to perform better on reading assignments because autonomy stimulates deeper thinking (Reynolds & Symons, 2001). Similarly, using engaging texts improves motivation and comprehension with effect sizes being 1.15 for motivation and 1.64 for text comprehension. Empirical research demonstrates that students who read frequently with cognitive purposes enhance their reading proficiency (Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala, & Cox, 1999). In spite of its importance, motivation has usually been disregarded in experimental research on reading comprehension. Nonetheless, results indicate that students who participate in collaborative

discussions of texts have high comprehension levels (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000). Thus, Guthrie et al. (2004) advocate for instruction models that incorporate practices facilitating motivation, like autonomy, collaboration, and hands-on activities, coupled with cognitive strategy instruction to enhance engagement and understanding.

2.8   Digital Storytelling as a Tool to Enhance Engagement and Reading Comprehension

Multimedia stories have proven to be a powerful tool in enhancing reading comprehension by providing a rich context through visual and auditory elements (Verhallen, Bus, & de Jong, 2006). Children naturally rely on both text and images to understand stories, and multimedia features help focus their attention on key visual elements, which can significantly improve comprehension. For instance, studies have shown that multimedia stories enable children to recall more story elements and even infer characters' emotions and motivations more effectively than traditional static stories (Verhallen et al., 2006). However, it is essential that interactive features, such as "hotspots," are aligned with the storyline to avoid confusing students (Korat, 2010). When these features are consistent with the narrative, they can enhance the learning experience. Multimedia storytelling also boosts engagement by making stories more appealing and interactive (Moody, 2010). By incorporating sound and visual elements, and allowing children to manipulate the story, multimedia can increase their persistence and interest in reading. While some studies have found mixed results regarding enthusiasm and compliance, multimedia generally makes reading more enjoyable and engaging for children (Moody, 2010).

2.9 Reading Comprehension Challenges Among EFL Learners

Numerous studies have explored the difficulties students face in reading comprehension. Chawwang (2008, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018) investigated reading challenges among Thai EFL learners and found that most students struggle with understanding English texts. One of the primary reasons for this difficulty is limited vocabulary knowledge (Gunning, 2002, as cited in Al-

Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). Vocabulary plays a key role in comprehending complex reading materials, particularly academic texts with technical terminology (Carlisle, 2000; Qian, 2002, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). Students with insufficient vocabulary often struggle with recognizing superordinate terms, synonyms, antonyms, and words with multiple meanings (Nuttall, 2000; Carlisle, 2000; Vilenius-Tuohimaa, Aunola, & Nurmi, 2008, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018).

Text complexity is another factor influencing reading comprehension. A student's fluency in a language determines their ability to grasp deeper meanings in a text. Oral proficiency is particularly important as learners acquire new vocabulary through listening, which helps them infer the meaning of unfamiliar words from context (Dennis, 2008, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). Another challenge for EFL learners is understanding complex sentence structures. Sentences with multiple clauses and conjunctions such as "although," "because," "furthermore," and "however" often pose difficulties (Scott, 2009). Additional grammatical structures, such as coordinating conjunctions, prepositional phrases, participial phrases, and nominalizations, can make comprehension even more challenging (Nuttall, 2000, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). Beyond grammatical complexity, reading comprehension is also influenced by reading habits, text format, and the strategies used for understanding a text (Trehearne & Doctorow, 2005, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). Environmental factors also play a role in comprehension difficulties. A disorganized or noisy setting can hinder focus, making it harder for students to understand reading materials.

In contrast, learners in calm and structured environments tend to perform better in reading comprehension tasks (Dennis, 2008, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). Motivation and cognitive factors also impact reading ability. Some students can understand simple words but struggle with longer, more complex sentences (Laing & Kamhi, 2002; Anmarkrud & Bråten, 2009, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). Syntactic awareness is another key factor in reading comprehension. Research has shown that students who can recognize and correct grammatical errors, such as subject-verb agreement, tend to perform better in reading assessments (Cain, 2007; Franck et al., 2007, as cited in

Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). Shiotsu and Weir (2007, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018) even suggested that syntactic knowledge might be a stronger predictor of reading comprehension than vocabulary knowledge. Background knowledge also plays a crucial role, as students with prior exposure to a topic find it easier to comprehend related texts (Zhang & Shanshan, 2011; McNeil, 2011, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). Those who lack prior knowledge may struggle to make sense of new information, leading to misunderstandings (Nassaji, 2002; Chou, 2011, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). Moreover, students with poor phonemic awareness the ability to process individual letter sounds tend to struggle with word recognition, which in turn affects their reading fluency and comprehension (Torgeson, 2002; National Reading Panel, 2000, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018).

Additionally, limited working memory can hinder comprehension, as it affects the ability to retain and process information while reading (Alloway et al., 2009; Swanson et al., 2009, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). Research suggests that students with weak working memory find it challenging to recall details and connect ideas while reading, which negatively impacts their understanding of texts (Kintsch & Kintsch, 2005; Chrysochoou, Bablekou, & Tsigilis, 2011, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). Anxiety is another major barrier to reading comprehension. Studies indicate that high levels of anxiety can distract students, preventing them from focusing on reading tasks. Stress from academic pressures, such as exams or assignments, may further hinder their ability to comprehend texts effectively (Wu, 2011; Jafarigohar & Behrooznia, 2012; Grills-Taquechel et al., 2012, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). Grammar knowledge is also crucial in reading comprehension. Students with a weak grasp of grammatical structures often struggle to understand passages accurately (Koda, 2005, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018). Research has consistently shown a strong correlation between grammatical knowledge and reading comprehension ability (Bernhardt, 2000; Haarman, 1988, as cited in Al-Jarrah & Ismail, 2018).

In summary, several factors contribute to reading comprehension difficulties among EFL

learners, including limited vocabulary, complex sentence structures, environmental distractions, low motivation, weak working memory, poor phonemic awareness, anxiety, and insufficient grammatical knowledge. Given these challenges, improving vocabulary, strengthening syntactic awareness, and enhancing learning environments could help students develop better reading comprehension skills. This study aims to further explore these difficulties among Arab EFL learners.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the role of engagement in EFL reading comprehension, highlighting its emotional, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions. It explored key reading strategies that enhance comprehension and addressed common challenges faced by EFL learners, such as limited vocabulary, complex sentence structures, and low motivation. Additionally, it reviewed the connection between engagement and reading comprehension, emphasizing the role of motivation and interactive approaches. Finally, the chapter discussed digital storytelling as an effective tool for improving engagement and comprehension through multimedia integration. These insights lay the groundwork for the next chapter, which will explore the methodology for assessing digital storytelling's impact on EFL students' reading engagement and comprehension.

Chapter three

Fieldwork

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology and data analysis used to explore the perceptions of second-year EFL students and teachers regarding the use of digital storytelling to enhance engagement in reading comprehension. It begins by describing the research design and explaining the choice of a qualitative approach within a case study framework, guided by the pragmatism paradigm. The chapter also introduces the research sample, which includes 25 second-year English students and four EFL teachers from the Department of English at the University of Biskra. It presents the data collection tools used in the study: a semi-structured questionnaire for students and semi-structured interviews for teachers. The structure and administration of both tools are also explained. Finally, the data collected are analyzed and interpreted using both quantitative and qualitative methods for the questionnaire a descriptive analysis is used, and thematic analysis for the interviews, with the aim of understanding how digital storytelling influences reading comprehension and student engagement from both perspectives.

3.1 Research Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach framed within a case study design and guided by a pragmatism paradigm. The study integrates both quantitative and qualitative data to investigate the perceptions of EFL teachers and second-year students regarding the use of digital storytelling as a tool to enhance engagement and improve reading comprehension.

To collect data, a semi-structured questionnaire was administered to students, allowing for both numerical and descriptive responses. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with EFL teachers to enable an in-depth exploration of their professional views and experiences.

3.2 Population and Sample of the Study

The study targets second-year English students and EFL teachers at the Department of English, University of Biskra. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants

who are relevant to the aims of the research.

A total of 25 second-year EFL students were selected due to their current developmental stage in reading comprehension skills, which aligns with the focus of the study. In addition, four EFL teachers were chosen based on their experience in teaching reading and their familiarity with using or observing digital storytelling in their classrooms.

3.3 Data Collection Tools

The study relied on two primary instruments for data collection:

A semi-structured questionnaire, this tool included both closed-ended and open-ended questions and was administered to students to gather a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. Semi-structured interviews these were conducted with EFL teachers to explore their professional insights and experiences in more depth.

3.3.1 The Students' Questionnaire

The semi-structured questionnaire offered valuable insights into students' perceptions and experiences with digital storytelling. It combined structured, scaled questions with opportunities for elaboration, allowing for both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

3.3.1.1 Description of Students' Questionnaire

Section One: General Information (Q1 to Q3)

This section collects demographic information, including gender, age, and self-reported reading proficiency. These details help contextualize the students' responses and provide a background for interpreting the results.

Section Two: Perceptions of Digital Storytelling (Q4 to Q7)

This section investigates students' prior exposure to digital storytelling and their perceptions of its potential to enhance engagement and comprehension. The questions required students to select

responses and provide justifications or elaborations, encouraging thoughtful reflection.

Section Three: Effectiveness in Reading Comprehension (Q8 to Q10)

This part evaluates the perceived effectiveness of digital storytelling in developing key reading skills such as identifying main ideas, making inferences, and summarizing information.

Section Four: Open-Ended Reflections (Q11 to Q13)

In this final section, students were invited to share detailed reflections on the benefits, challenges, and potential improvements of using digital storytelling in EFL classrooms. These open-ended responses allowed for deeper thematic analysis and richer data interpretation.

3.3.1.2 Aim of the Students' Questionnaire

The students' questionnaire aims to investigate second-year EFL students' perceptions, experiences, and attitudes regarding the integration of digital storytelling as an instructional tool. By gathering insights directly from students, this study seeks to understand how digital storytelling influences their engagement in learning and contributes to the development of their reading comprehension skills.

3.3.1.3 Analysis of Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of four sections containing 13 questions. Participants were asked to justify their answers in order to detect common patterns and better understand their perceptions. After piloting, validating, and revising the final version, the questionnaire was distributed to 25 second-year English students at Biskra University.

Section One: General Information

Q1: would you please indicate your gender?

Table3. 1

Students' Gender Distribution

| Gender	Number of the students	Percentage
Female	22	88%
Male	3	12%
Total	25	100%
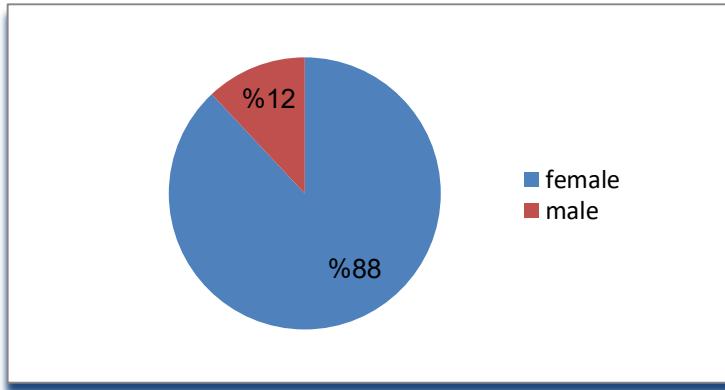
Figure 3.1

Students' Gender

Figure 01 reveals the specifications of Students' gender out of 25participants, 88% are female and 12% are males. Which indicates that female appears to be more interested in learning English as second language than male who may prefer scientific or technology related streams.

Q2: Specify your age range

Table 3.2

Students' Age Distribution

Age range	Number of the students	Percentage
18-20	11	44%
21-23	11	44%
+24	3	12%
Total	25	100%
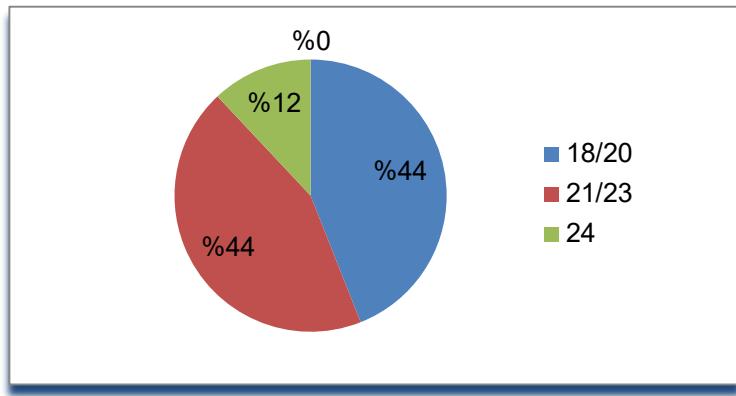
Figure 3.2

Students' Age

Figure 2 reveals students' age distribution. The results show a balanced sample, with 44% (11 students) between 18 and 20 years old, and another 44% (11 students) between 21 and 23 years old, which reflects the typical age range of second-year university students. Moreover, the findings indicate that 12% (3 students) are 24 years old or above, which may suggest they started university later or repeated an academic year. These age variations may influence their experiences with reading and the use of digital tools like storytelling.

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Q3: Describe your English Reading proficiency level

Table 3.3

Students' Self-Reported English Reading Proficiency Level

Proficiency level	Number of the students	Percentage
Intermediate	13	52%
Advanced	10	40%
Beginner	2	8%
Total	25	100%
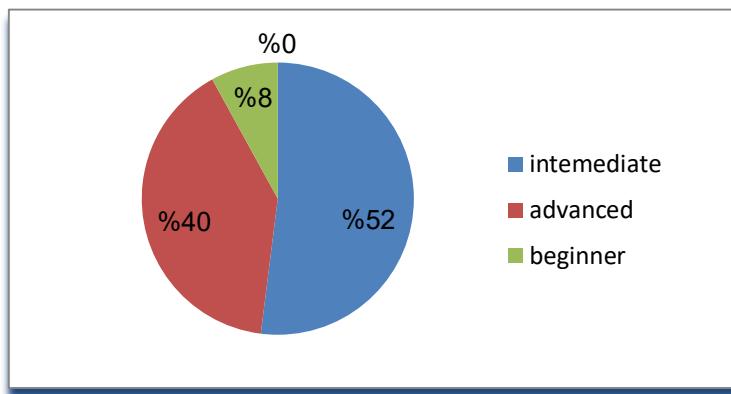
Figure 3.3

Students' English reading proficiency level

Figure 3 shows how students rated their English reading level. Most of them, 52% (13 students), said they are at an intermediate level. Additionally, the results show that 40% (10 students) said they are advanced, and only 8% (2 students) said they are beginners. This means that most students have a good understanding of English reading, which helps them give useful opinions about using digital storytelling in their learning.

Section Two: Perceptions of Digital Storytelling

Q4: State whether you have previously encountered digital storytelling in your studies. If yes, explain in what context and how it was integrated into your learning experience.

Table 3.4

Students' Previous Encounter with Digital Storytelling

| Response	Number of the students	Percentage
Yes	18	72%
No	7	28%
Total	25	100%
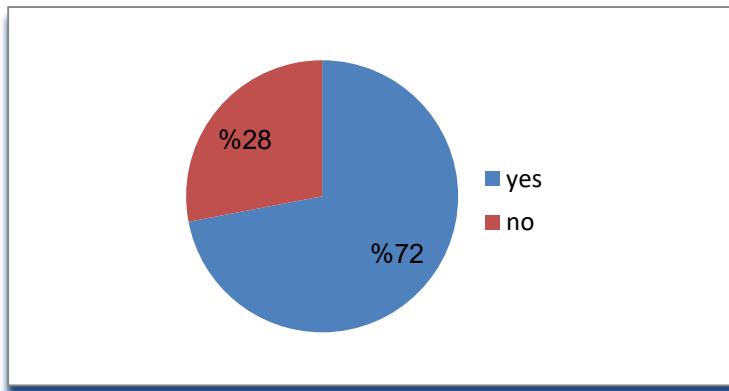
Figure 3.4

Students' Previous Experience with Digital Storytelling

Figure 4 shows students' answers about whether they had used digital storytelling before. Most of them, 18 students (72%), said no, while 8 students (28%) said yes. Those who answered yes gave different examples. Some explained that they used digital storytelling in reading classes with videos, pictures, and voice narration to help them understand stories better. Others mentioned using it in language courses to improve their writing and speaking by making short videos with voice, pictures, and music. A few said it helped them understand lessons more clearly and made learning more interesting. One student mentioned that it was used during a test, and another said they used slides and videos to explain topics better. In general, the answers show that digital storytelling made learning easier, clearer, and more fun.

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Q5: Assess the level of engagement digital storytelling provides compared to traditional reading methods. Justify your answer.

Table 3.5

Students' Perceptions of the Engagement Level of Digital Storytelling Compared to Traditional Reading

Response	Number of the students	Percentage
Engaging	12	48%
Somewhat engaging	7	28%
Neutral	6	24%
Not engaging	0	0%
Total	25	100%
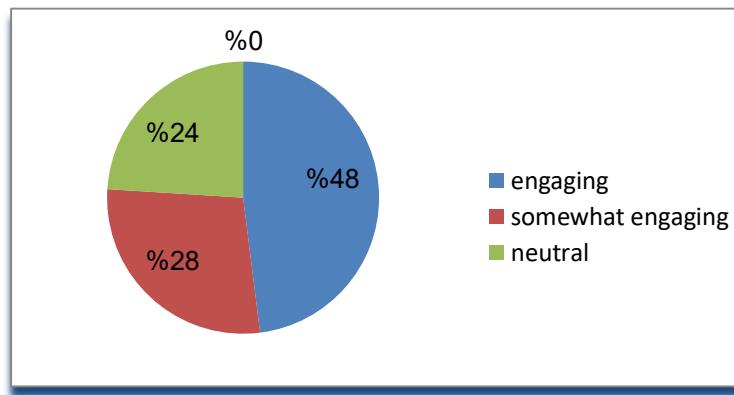
Figure 3.5

Students' Perceptions of the Engagement Level of Digital Storytelling Compared to Traditional Reading

Figure 5 presents students' opinions about how engaging digital storytelling is compared to traditional reading. The results were mostly positive. According to the findings, 48% of the students (12 out of 25) said it was engaging, 28% (7 students) said it was somewhat engaging, and 24% (6 students) were neutral. No student chose "not engaging at all," which indicates that most students enjoyed digital storytelling more than traditional methods.

Students who found digital storytelling engaging explained that they liked the use of pictures,

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videos, and sounds because these elements made the stories easier to understand and more enjoyable. They also mentioned that digital storytelling helped them stay focused, learn better, and connect emotionally with the characters. Those who answered "somewhat engaging" agreed that digital storytelling is interactive, but they also appreciated how traditional reading allows them to use their imagination and concentrate more deeply. Meanwhile, students who were neutral either had limited experience with digital storytelling or preferred traditional reading because it gave them more freedom to imagine and interpret the text in their own way. Generally, the majority of students agreed that digital storytelling offers a more fun, interactive, and effective way of learning, especially through the use of multimedia features like sound, images, and videos.

Q6: Evaluate whether digital storytelling enhances your understanding and retention of reading materials. Provide an explanation or example to support your response.

Table 3.6

Students' Evaluation of Digital Storytelling's Impact on Understanding and Retention

| Response	Number of the students	Percentage
Strongly agree	8	32%
Agree	13	52%
Neutral	3	14%
Disagree	1	4%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	25	100%

DIGITAL STORYTELLING IN EFL READING
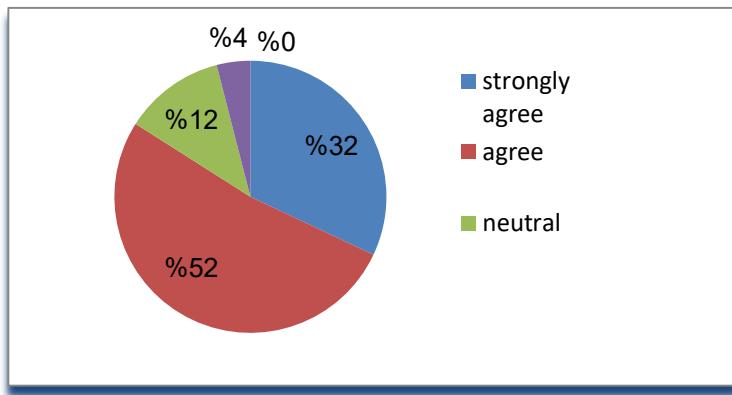
Figure 3.6

Students' Perceptions of the Impact of Digital Storytelling on Understanding and Retention

Figure 6 presents what students think about whether digital storytelling helps them understand and remember reading materials. The majority of responses were positive. According to the results, 32% of the students (8 students) said they strongly agree, and 52% (13 students) said they agree. This means that 84% of the students believe digital storytelling helps them learn better. In contrast, 12% (3 students) were neutral, and 4% (1 student) disagreed, while no one selected "strongly disagree."

Students who agreed or strongly agreed explained that digital storytelling is helpful because it uses pictures, sound, and videos, which make the content easier to understand and remember. One student, for example, shared an experience of learning about the water cycle through a digital story that included animations and sound effects, which helped them, remember the process much more clearly than just reading about it. Others mentioned that when they watch and listen to a story, they tend to remember more details. Some added that this method works especially well for visual and auditory learners, making the learning experience more fun and engaging. A few students said that feeling motivated and interested through digital storytelling helps them retain information better. On the other hand, the small number of students who were neutral or disagreed may prefer traditional reading methods or may not find digital tools as helpful. In summary, most students believe that digital storytelling is a powerful way to improve both understanding and memory when engaging with reading materials.

Q7: Identify the specific elements of digital storytelling that contribute the most to improving reading comprehension. Elaborate on why these elements are beneficial.

Table 3.7

Elements of Digital Storytelling that Enhance Reading Comprehension

Elements chosen	Number of the students	Percentage
Visual elements (image, videos)	20	80%
Narration and audio effects	11	44%
Storyline itself	9	36%
Interactivity	3	12%
Total	Multiple choices	100%
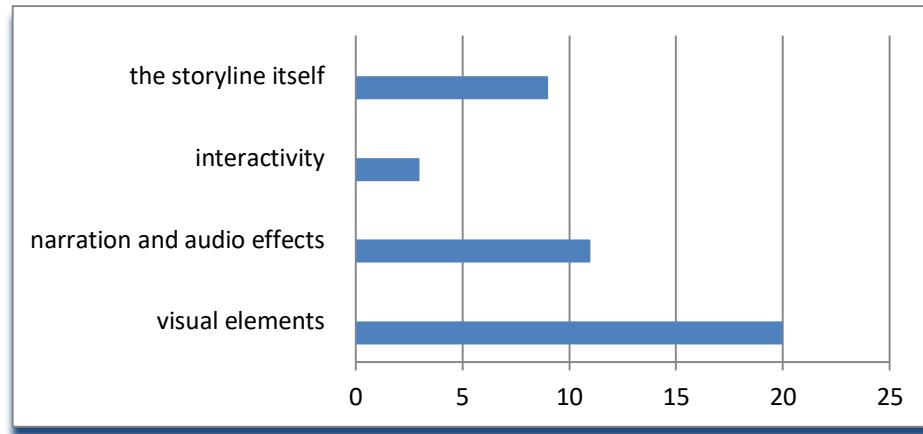
Figure 3.7

Students' Views on the Most Helpful Elements of Digital Storytelling for Reading

Figure 7 shows which parts of digital storytelling students find most helpful for reading comprehension. Most students (80%) chose visual elements like images and videos, saying they make difficult ideas easier to understand and remember. Additionally, 44% picked narration and audio because they help with pronunciation, emotion, and focus, while 36% chose the storyline itself, explaining that it keeps them interested and helps them follow the plot. Only 12% selected interactivity. Students justified their answers by saying that combining visuals sound, and storytelling makes learning more enjoyable, clearer, and easier to remember.

Section Three: Effectiveness in Reading Comprehension

Q8: Indicate the extent to which digital storytelling helps you identify main ideas within a text. Justify your answer.

Table 3.8

Students' Perceptions of Digital Storytelling in Identifying Main Ideas

Response	Number of the students	Percentage
Significantly	**13**	**52**%
Somewhat	**8**	**32**%
Not really	**4**	**16**%
Not at all	**0**	**0**%
Total	**25**	**100**%
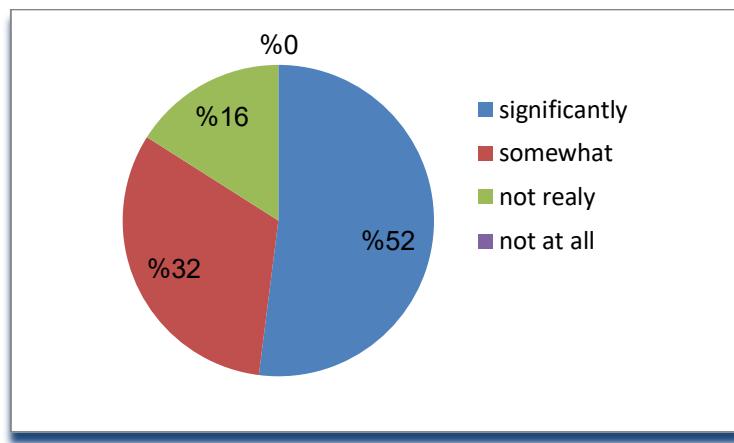
Figure 3.8

Students' Perceptions of Digital Storytelling in Identifying Main Ideas

Figure 8 shows how much students think digital storytelling helps them find the main ideas in a text. According to the results, 52% of students said it helps a lot, 32% said it helps a little, and 16% said it does not really help. No student said it does not help at all.

Students who said it helps a lot explained that visuals, music, and narration often highlight the important parts of a story, making it easier to understand the main message. They also mentioned that when they are more focused and interested, it becomes easier to follow the flow of ideas. On the other hand, those who said it helps a little pointed out that although digital storytelling is useful, it can sometimes be distracting, especially when the story contains too many emotions or visual effects

without a clear structure. The few students who said it does not really help explained that they sometimes pay more attention to the images and sounds than to the actual meaning, which causes them to miss the main ideas. Overall, most students believe digital storytelling helps them identify main ideas more effectively, but a few think its success depends on how clearly the story is designed.

Q9: Compare digital storytelling with traditional reading methods in terms of helping you make inferences. Justify your answer by sharing an experience or observation.

Table3. 9

Students' Comparison between Digital Storytelling and Traditional Reading in Making Inferences

Response	Number of the students	Percentage
Much more effective	17	68%
Slightly effective	7	28%
Less effective	1	4%
Not effective	0	0%
Total	25	100%
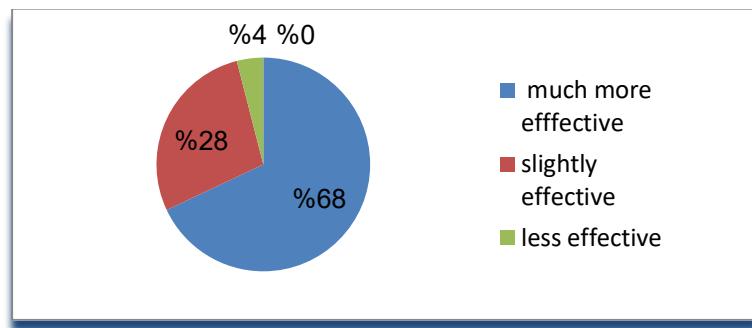
Figure3. 9

Students' Comparison between Digital Storytelling and Traditional Reading in Making Inferences.

Figure 9 shows how students compare digital storytelling and traditional reading when it comes to making inferences. According to the results, 68% of students said that digital storytelling is much more effective, while 28% said it is slightly effective. Only 4% said it is less effective, and no one said it is not effective at all.

Students explained that digital storytelling helps them understand hidden meanings because

it uses visuals, sounds, and facial expressions. For instance, background music or a character's expression can reveal emotions or hint at future events. Many students stated that these features make it easier to focus and understand the story. Some mentioned that traditional reading can also support making inferences, but it requires more imagination and effort. Only one student felt that digital storytelling was not very helpful for making inferences.

Q10: Assess your confidence in summarizing a story after engaging with digital storytelling.

Table 3.10

Students' Confidence in Summarizing a Story after Using Digital Storytelling

Confidence level	Number of the students	Percentage
Very confident	12	48%
Somewhat confident	8	32%
Neutral	5	20%
Total	25	100%
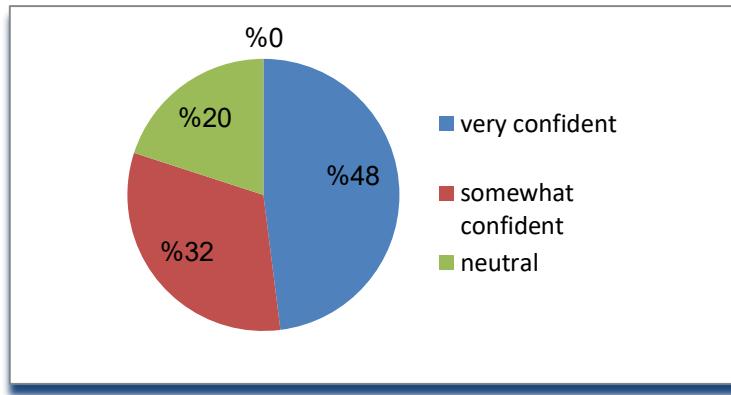
Figure3. 10

Students' Confidence in Summarizing a Story after Using Digital Storytelling

Figure 10 shows how confident students feel about summarizing a story after using digital storytelling. According to the results, 48% of students said they are very confident, 32% said they are somewhat confident, and 20% said they are neutral.

Many students explained that visuals, narration, and background music help them remember the important parts of the story. These features make it easier to understand the events and main ideas,

which support their ability to summarize effectively. Some students, especially those who are visual or auditory learners, mentioned that they remember information better when they see or hear it, making the summarizing process easier. However, a few students noted that too many effects or extra details in the story can be distracting and make it harder to focus on what really matters. Others pointed out that if the story is too short or lacks a clear structure, summarizing can also become more difficult. In conclusion, most students believe that digital storytelling helps them summarize stories better, although some emphasized that its effectiveness depends on how well the story highlights the main points.

Section Four: Open-Ended Reflections

Q11: Highlight any limitations or challenges you have encountered when using digital storytelling for reading comprehension. Elaborate on your answer.

In Question 11, students were asked to discuss any problems they faced when using digital storytelling for reading comprehension. Many students indicated that one major issue is distraction. They explained that too many visuals, sounds, or rapid transitions can make it difficult to focus on the main ideas of the story. Some noted that certain stories feel more like entertainment, which can divert attention away from the important educational content. For instance, one student commented, "The use of too many visuals and sounds can be distracting to be honest," and explained that the fast pace of animations or background music can overwhelm the core meaning of the story.

Another common problem mentioned was technical difficulties. Students reported that digital storytelling often requires internet access, devices, and electricity, which are not always available, especially in classroom settings. One student stated, "Sometimes the digital story don't work without internet, so if you are offline it will not work, and that will stop you from reading until you find the internet again," highlighting how poor connectivity can hinder access to digital materials. Additionally, some students pointed out that fast narration, complex language, or the absence of subtitles made understanding the story more challenging. A few students also indicated that sometimes scenes or visuals could be confusing, leading to misunderstandings about the main

message. Others, who had not yet used digital storytelling, believed that internet problems and a lack of proper equipment would be major obstacles if they were to use it in the future. On the whole, while students recognized the benefits of digital storytelling, they emphasized that issues such as distractions and limited access to technology must be addressed to ensure it becomes an effective learning tool.

Q12: Identify the key benefits of digital storytelling in enhancing reading comprehension. Support your response with examples or experiences.

In Question 12, students were asked to identify the key benefits of digital storytelling in enhancing reading comprehension. Most students agreed that digital storytelling improves both understanding and memory by combining visuals, audio, and narrative elements. They explained that this method makes learning more enjoyable and helps retain information more effectively. For instance, one student shared, "when I watch animes which are stories told using this technology, I do remember the tiniest details of that story and I do understand the plot so much better than reading the Manga," highlighting how visual and auditory experiences improve comprehension and recall. Students also pointed out that digital storytelling creates a more engaging environment that supports different learning styles. They emphasized those seeing characters' expressions and hearing tone of voice helps interpret meaning more accurately. Another student explained, "Visuals including images and videos clarify ideas, making complex concepts easier to grasp," showing that multimedia elements simplify abstract ideas and make learning more accessible. Additionally, students noted that digital storytelling fosters critical thinking by encouraging them to analyze plot, characters, and themes interactively, and that it maintains motivation by making learning feel more dynamic and less tedious compared to traditional reading.

In general, students agreed that digital storytelling makes reading more engaging, easier to understand, and helps them remember ideas better.

Q13: Suggest recommendations for making digital storytelling a more effective tool for improving reading skills.

In Question 13, students were asked to suggest recommendations for making digital storytelling a more effective tool for improving reading skills. Many students emphasized the importance of having a clearstory structure, avoiding unnecessary distractions, and providing additional language support. They advised that stories should have a clear beginning, middle, and end to help students focus on key ideas. One student suggested, "ensure clear structure: organize stories with a clear beginning, middle, and end to help focus on key ideas," highlighting the need for well-organized content that supports comprehension. Another major recommendation concerned minimizing distractions caused by excessive multimedia effects. Students advised balancing creativity with content and suggested using visuals that support rather than overwhelm the story. For instance, one participant emphasized the need to "use clear pictures that match the words to help with understanding," showing that careful visual selection helps enhance comprehension without causing confusion. Students also stressed the importance of technology access and teacher preparation. They recommended providing better internet connections, updated devices, and training teachers to use digital storytelling effectively. One student remarked, "Training teachers to include this new technology in reading sessions would be a very good first step towards integrating it," underlining the role of instructors in making digital storytelling successful. Additionally, students proposed adding subtitles, vocabulary lists, and comprehension activities within the stories to make them more accessible to a wider range of learners.

In summary, the students' suggestions indicate that if digital storytelling is carefully structured, less distracting, and better integrated into classroom practices, it can become a highly effective tool for enhancing reading comprehension.

3.3.2 The Teachers' Interviews

3.3.2.1 Description of the Teachers' Interviews

For this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four EFL teachers from the English Department at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra. The interviews took place between April 9 and April 11, 2025, in individual sessions held in a quiet environment to ensure a comfortable and open atmosphere. Each interview lasted around 20 to 30 minutes, during which the teachers provided their views, experiences, and feedback on the use of digital storytelling in EFL classrooms. The main objective of these interviews was to gather detailed insights into the teachers' opinions on how digital storytelling could enhance student engagement and improve reading comprehension skills. The information from these interviews served as a complement to the data gathered through the students' questionnaire.

3.3.2.2 Aim of the Teachers' Interviews

The main goal of the teachers' interviews was to explore their views on using digital storytelling as a teaching tool to improve student engagement and reading comprehension in EFL classrooms. The interviews aimed to uncover teachers' experiences, the benefits they perceive, the challenges they face, and how effective they believe digital storytelling is in enhancing their teaching methods. The information gathered from these interviews was intended to complement the data collected from the students' questionnaire, offering a well-rounded understanding of the role of digital storytelling in language education.

3.3.2.3 Analysis of the Teachers' Interviews

Q1: How long have you been teaching English as a foreign language?

Table3. 11

Teachers' Years of Experience in Teaching EFL

Teachers	Years of experiences
Teacher A	15 years
Teacher B	5 years
Teacher C	8 years
Teacher D	5 years

The answers to the first question showed that the teachers had different levels of experience in teaching English. Teacher A had been teaching for 15 years, making him the most experienced. Teacher B and Teacher D had 5 years of experience each, while Teacher C had 8 years. The teachers also mentioned that they began teaching English as a foreign language at different educational stages, starting from middle school, then high school, and later at the university level. This progression across various levels of education shows that they have a strong foundation and solid knowledge in teaching English as a foreign language.

Q2: Have you ever used digital storytelling in your classroom?

Teacher 1:"Personally, my experience with digital storytelling is limited, probably only a few times, but not in a digital format. I implemented digital storytelling in my speaking classes, but they were not in a digital form. The only time I used digital storytelling was when a Master 2 student asked for collaboration for her thesis, and she used it with my students."

Teacher 2:"During my secondary school teaching, I used digital videos, but at university, I have not used them, honestly speaking."

Teacher 3:"I have integrated digital storytelling to enhance students' engagement and make lessons more interactive.

Teacher 4:"Yes, I have used digital storytelling before to prepare some of the lessons for my

students."

Regarding the second question, the teachers showed different levels of experience with digital storytelling. Teacher A mentioned that he had used storytelling techniques in his speaking classes, but not in a digital format. His only experience with digital storytelling was through collaboration with a Master 2 student for her thesis. Teacher B stated that he had incorporated digital videos during his time teaching in secondary school, but had not used them at the university level. On the other hand, Teacher C indicated that he had applied digital storytelling in his lessons to increase student engagement and make the classes more interactive. Likewise, Teacher D reported that he had used digital storytelling to help prepare some of his lessons. Overall, the teachers' answers reveal that while a few have practical experience with digital storytelling, others are less familiar with its digital integration in teaching.

Q3: How do you perceive the role of digital storytelling in engaging students in reading activities?

Teacher A:"I think digital storytelling will serve as a trigger or stimulus for engagement. Students would likely enjoy the story in a digital format. Additionally, if the story is authentic and well-presented, I have no doubt that students will find it helpful."

Teacher B:"I will answer this question based on my experience. Yes, I see the use of digital storytelling as both important and beneficial for learners. Most importantly, it is motivating, which is what drives learners to be more engaged. They become more motivated to listen, read, and benefit from the vocabulary presented in the story. Yes, I agree with its value."

Teacher C:"Digital storytelling can captivate students' attention by combining narratives with multimedia elements. This combination will enhance their motivation to engage in reading activities and foster greater involvement in the learning process."

Teacher D:"It is crucial to involve students through non-traditional methods of teaching language, and digital storytelling is one such approach. By using digital storytelling, we can significantly enhance student engagement and motivation."

The teachers' responses collectively emphasize the significance of digital storytelling in

boosting student engagement in reading activities. Teacher notes that digital storytelling serves as a trigger for engagement, stressing that the story's authenticity and quality are key to its effectiveness. Teacher B highlights the role of motivation, stating that digital storytelling drives students to actively participate in listening and reading tasks, while also helping them expand their vocabulary. Teacher C points out that the integration of narrative and multimedia elements captures students' attention and motivates them to engage more deeply in reading. Teacher D adds that non-traditional teaching methods, such as digital storytelling, are essential for fostering student involvement. In general, all teachers agree that digital storytelling's motivational and multimedia features make it an effective tool for enhancing student engagement and creating a more interactive learning experience.

Q4: Do you believe digital storytelling can improve students' ability to identify main ideas, make inferences, and summarize texts? Why or why not?

Teacher A:"For inferencing and identifying the main ideas in a story, watching the story presented digitally, such as in the form of a movie, can give students visual support that helps them later recall events, unlike reading it solely as text. Therefore, if students experience the story digitally, they are more likely to remember the sequence of events, identify the main ideas, and make inferences more effectively. As for summarizing, I am uncertain. Summarizing is related to the ability to extract the main ideas, combine them cohesively, and write them down clearly. It requires writing skills, and since I have not used digital storytelling extensively in my teaching, I cannot definitively say whether it would significantly enhance students' summarizing abilities."

Teacher B:"In my experience, the more students are motivated, the more they are engaged. I firmly believe in this principle. One effective way to motivate and benefit students in reading is through the use of digital storytelling. It can help them generate ideas more easily and enhance their understanding of the concepts presented. Through digital storytelling, students are able to make connections between ideas, which facilitates the process of making inferences. Regarding summarizing, I strongly agree that digital storytelling can support students' ability to summarize texts. Since they can better generate and organize ideas, and make logical links between them after viewing the story, their comprehension is improved, and this stronger understanding enables them to

summarize content more effectively. Additionally, if the digital story is created either by the teacher or even by the students themselves, the benefit can be even greater in reinforcing these skills."

Teacher C:"Yes, digital storytelling can significantly enhance students' ability to identify main ideas, make inferences, and summarize texts. It encourages deeper engagement with the content through the use of visualization and interactive storytelling techniques, which stimulate critical thinking and comprehension."

Teacher D:"Yes, digital storytelling is an effective method that encourages learners to read while simultaneously boosting their comprehension strategies, such as identifying main ideas, making inferences, and summarizing texts."

The teachers' responses reflect a generally positive view regarding the effectiveness of digital storytelling in developing students' reading comprehension skills, particularly in identifying main ideas, making inferences, and summarizing. Teacher A emphasizes that the visual support offered through digital storytelling helps students better remember events, making it easier for them to extract main ideas and draw inferences; however, they remain hesitant about its impact on summarizing skills, noting that summarization also depends on students' writing abilities and their own limited use of this technique. Teacher B strongly believes that motivation is essential for engagement and argues that digital storytelling enhances both comprehension and the ability to summarize, as it helps students generate, connect, and organize ideas more easily. Teacher C agrees, stressing that the visual and interactive nature of digital storytelling promotes critical engagement with content and strengthens students' comprehension skills. Teacher D also supports the idea, describing digital storytelling as an effective approach that fosters reading motivation and boosts comprehension strategies, particularly in identifying key ideas, making inferences, and summarizing. Overall, the teachers collectively recognize digital storytelling as a valuable instructional tool that can significantly enhance students' reading comprehension and engagement.

Q5: How does digital storytelling compare with traditional reading methods in terms of student motivation and engagement?

Teacher A:"In terms of motivation, I agree that students are generally more motivated when

learning through digital means. Digital storytelling, in particular, can encourage students to stay focused, enjoy the learning process, and become more involved in discussions, compared to traditional reading methods. However, when it comes to task completion, it may require the development of additional skills beyond motivation and engagement."

Teacher B:"Based on my experience, we are currently living in a digital era where students are no longer as interested in traditional book reading. They are more connected to technology and visually oriented content, often using their phones and other digital devices. Therefore, I believe that digital storytelling can significantly enhance learners' motivation and engagement compared to traditional reading methods. This strategy is effective not only for university students but also for younger children. I have personally observed this with my own children, aged eight and four, who show greater interest and involvement when they watch digital stories rather than when I read stories to them. This is because traditional reading mainly stimulates the sense of sight, while digital storytelling engages multiple senses, leading to deeper involvement."

Teacher C:"Digital storytelling tends to be more motivating and engaging than traditional reading methods because it offers a more immersive, visual, and interactive learning experience, which captures students' attention more effectively."

Teacher D:"The new generation is highly receptive to digitalization, so they are more likely to enjoy and be motivated by strategies like digital storytelling compared to traditional reading approaches."

The teachers' views clearly show a shared belief that digital storytelling outperforms traditional reading methods in enhancing student motivation and engagement. Teacher A acknowledges that digital storytelling helps students stay attentive, enjoy the learning experience, and participate more actively in discussions, although they note that accomplishing tasks may still require the development of other skills. Teacher B highlights the shift in students' habits in the digital age, pointing out that learners today are more attracted to visual content and digital tools rather than traditional books. They stress that digital storytelling activates multiple senses, making learning more engaging, and support their point by referencing personal observations with younger children.

Teacher C emphasizes that the visual and interactive aspects of digital storytelling create a more immersive experience, which makes it more motivating than conventional reading. Similarly, Teacher D observes that the current generation's preference for digital environments naturally increases their motivation when digital strategies like storytelling are used. Overall, the teachers agree that digital storytelling offers a dynamic and engaging alternative to traditional reading, better suited to today's digitally oriented learners.

Q6: What are the challenges of implementing digital storytelling in EFL classrooms?

Teacher A: One of the major challenges is related to technology, as classrooms are often not properly equipped. Another issue involves selecting appropriate stories; teachers must be careful when choosing stories. If a teacher creates their own story, they are likely to be more familiar and comfortable with it. Additionally, difficulties arise when teachers are not well versed in using different applications and software. Effective integration of digital storytelling requires certain steps: preparing students through brainstorming, breaking the story into sequences, and encouraging students to express their impressions and opinions. Without following these procedures, it becomes difficult to integrate digital storytelling effectively.

Teacher B: The most serious problem is the lack of technological devices inside the classroom. Even if the teacher wishes to use digital storytelling, he or she may face difficulties. Sometimes, even basic resources like a data show or consistent electricity are missing. Thus, the primary challenge is mainly technical.

Teacher C: Challenges in implementing digital storytelling in the classroom include the need for access to technology, varying levels of digital literacy among both teachers and students, and the significant amount of time required to create and implement multimedia stories effectively.

Teacher D: There is often a lack of equipment, including basic tools like data shows. Some teachers are not well versed in using this strategy. Additionally, teachers' resistance to change and reluctance to shift from traditional reading methods to modern digital approaches pose further challenges.

The teachers' responses collectively highlight that the main obstacles to implementing digital

storytelling in EFL classrooms stem largely from technological and organizational issues. Teacher A emphasizes the lack of necessary classroom equipment and the challenges associated with story selection and teacher familiarity with digital tools, pointing out that without proper preparation and planning, digital storytelling cannot be effectively used. Teacher B strongly stresses that inadequate access to basic technological devices and reliable electricity makes it difficult for teachers to incorporate digital storytelling, identifying technical limitations as the central problem. Teacher C adds that differences in digital literacy among teachers and students, along with the significant time investment needed to create multimedia stories, are additional hurdles. Teacher D notes not only the shortage of technological resources but also the resistance some teachers show toward adopting modern strategies, preferring traditional reading approaches instead. Overall, the teachers' insights reveal that both material shortcomings and attitudinal barriers must be overcome to successfully apply digital storytelling in the language classroom.

Q7: Based on your experience, what recommendations would you give to educators who want to use digital storytelling effectively?

      Teacher A: While my experience with digital storytelling is somewhat limited, I can offer a recommendation. I suggest that educators who are knowledgeable about technological tools and the principles of digital storytelling should integrate it occasionally into their teaching practices. Using it from time to time can help break the monotony and make lessons more enjoyable for students. However, it should not fully replace traditional reading methods, as they still hold significant educational value.

      Teacher B: I firmly recommend that teachers and educators implement digital storytelling in their classrooms. It is a highly effective tool that enhances student enjoyment and engagement while providing constructive feedback. For these reasons, I strongly advocate for its use as a part of the teaching process.

      Teacher C: I recommend that teachers begin with simple digital storytelling tools. They should encourage students to create their own stories to foster creativity and ensure that the technology used aligns with the educational goals.

Teacher D: Digital storytelling is a powerful way to increase students' motivation to read and to break the routine of regular classroom activities. Therefore, I advise teachers to incorporate digital storytelling into their instructional strategies to refresh the learning environment.

The teachers' responses reveal a strong endorsement of digital storytelling as an effective instructional tool. Teacher A recommends that educators who are competent with digital tools should occasionally use digital storytelling to refresh classroom dynamics and enhance student enjoyment, while still recognizing the ongoing value of traditional reading methods. This shows an appreciation for a balanced approach to teaching strategies. Teacher B firmly encourages the integration of digital storytelling, highlighting its role in boosting student motivation, engagement, and feedback. His response reflects a belief that modern teaching practices should adapt to contemporary technological trends to meet students' preferences and learning styles.

Teacher C, taking a practical and student-centered view, suggests starting with simple digital tools and involving students actively by having them create their own stories. This strategy promotes creativity while ensuring that technology remains aligned with educational objectives.

Teacher D shares the perspective that digital storytelling is a highly motivating tool that can disrupt routine classroom practices in a positive way. By recommending its integration, he emphasizes its potential for reinvigorating students' interest in reading activities. Overall, the teachers collectively stress the importance of using digital storytelling thoughtfully and strategically to maximize student engagement while maintaining the balance with traditional literacy practices.

Discussion

The main objective of this study was to explore how second-year EFL students and their teachers perceive the use of digital storytelling as a method to boost engagement and support reading comprehension. Analysis of the collected data revealed important findings that support the integration of digital storytelling into language education. Student responses highlighted a clear preference for digital storytelling compared to traditional reading techniques. A Considerable percentage of participants (84%) believed that the combination of visual and auditory elements enhanced both their

understanding and memory retention. Furthermore, the ability to identify main ideas, draw inferences, and summarize stories appeared to improve when digital storytelling was employed, suggesting that multimedia learning tools support the development of essential reading strategies. Teachers' feedback reinforced these positive perceptions. They acknowledged the motivating power of digital storytelling and emphasized its alignment with the interests and technological habits of today's learners. However, they also pointed out challenges such as limited classroom technology and insufficient teacher familiarity with digital platforms, indicating areas that require attention for effective implementation.

Importantly, both students and teachers agreed that while digital storytelling adds important value, it should complement rather than completely replace traditional reading practices. When incorporated thoughtfully, digital storytelling offers a meaningful enhancement to the learning experience, encouraging both engagement and critical literacy development.

Conclusion

The analysis of the research findings reveals that digital storytelling holds strong potential for enhancing engagement and reading comprehension among second-year EFL students. Participants expressed generally favorable attitudes, noting that digital storytelling made learning more interactive, enjoyable, and accessible. Students particularly appreciated how multimedia elements clarified complex information and supported their ability to identify key ideas, infer meanings, and summarize narratives. Teachers' perspectives reinforced these outcomes, highlighting that digital storytelling motivates learners and contributes positively to their reading practices. Nevertheless, successful implementation depends on addressing obstacles related to technology availability and teacher training.

In summary, the study demonstrates that digital storytelling is a highly effective supplementary tool for EFL reading instruction, provided it is used strategically and combined with traditional literacy activitie.

General Conclusion and

Recommendations

General Conclusion

In recent years, increasing attention has been directed toward the integration of technology within language education, particularly regarding the use of digital storytelling as an instructional tool to foster engagement and enhance reading comprehension. In alignment with this growing interest, the present dissertation sought to investigate the perceptions of second-year EFL students and teachers concerning the implementation of digital storytelling to promote greater engagement in reading activities. The study aims to address key theoretical constructs while providing empirical insights into the participants' views on the effectiveness of digital storytelling in EFL contexts. To fulfill the objectives of the research, 25 second-year EFL students and 4 teachers from the Department of English at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra were selected through a purposive non-probability sampling method. Data collection was carried out using two primary instruments: a semi-structured questionnaire administered to students and semi-structured interviews conducted with teachers. Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data from the interviews were subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurrent patterns and themes. In addition, a validation process was undertaken to ascertain the reliability and appropriateness of the research instruments prior to their use. The structure of this dissertation comprised three chapters. The first two chapters provided a theoretical overview of the main concepts underpinning the study, including digital storytelling, student engagement, and reading comprehension, elaborating on their definitions, characteristics, and pedagogical relevance. The third chapter presented the fieldwork component, detailing the data analysis and interpretation, and concluded with the study's limitations and recommendations for future research.

The results presented in the third chapter demonstrated that students generally viewed digital storytelling as a highly engaging and beneficial learning approach. Many reported increased motivation and noted improvements in their ability to extract main ideas, draw inferences, and summarize reading texts. Elements such as visuals and narration were considered especially helpful

in supporting comprehension. Teachers also held positive perceptions, acknowledging the effectiveness of digital storytelling in fostering student participation and interest. Nonetheless, they identified certain challenges, particularly the limited availability of technological resources and the need for adequate teacher training to implement such tools effectively. These findings emphasize both the instructional value of digital storytelling and the practical considerations necessary for its successful integration.

In conclusion, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on the application of digital technologies in EFL education. It offers valuable insights into the perceptions of both learners and educators regarding the role of digital storytelling in enhancing reading engagement, thereby laying a foundation for further academic inquiry and pedagogical innovation in this field.

Limitation of the Study

Numerous limitations and challenges were encountered during the course of this research. Time constraints were a marked issue, as the study's limited duration restricted the depth of data collection and the opportunity to fully explore the research questions. Another challenge was the level of teacher collaboration. While I had initially sought to involve a larger number of teachers in the interview process, logistical and scheduling conflicts with their other commitments meant that fewer teachers were able to participate. Additionally, the sample size of students was another limitation, as a larger sample would have potentially strengthened the reliability and generalizability of the findings. However, it is important to note that these limitations did not undermine the value of the research. Despite these challenges, the data collected proved sufficient to address the research questions and fulfill the study's objectives, affirming that the quality of the research was not compromised.

Recommendation

In light of the findings of this study, several practical and measurable recommendations are proposed to support the effective integration of digital storytelling in EFL classrooms. First, EFL teachers should be encouraged to incorporate at least one digital storytelling project per semester into their reading curriculum to foster student engagement and improve comprehension outcomes. To ensure effective implementation, teachers should be provided with regular professional development workshops—ideally twice per academic year—focused on digital literacy, multimedia tools, and instructional strategies tailored to digital storytelling. Additionally, institutions should invest in the provision of necessary technological resources such as projectors, audio-visual equipment, and stable internet connections in all classrooms. Establishing a dedicated digital storytelling support team within the department could also help assist instructors in lesson planning and troubleshooting. Moreover, curriculum designers should consider embedding digital storytelling modules with clearly defined learning objectives and assessment rubrics aligned with reading comprehension standards. Finally, future research is advised to conduct longitudinal studies tracking student progress and to expand participant samples across various academic levels to better understand the long-term impact and broader applicability of digital storytelling in EFL education.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Student's Questionnaire

Dear students

This questionnaire aims to explore your perception of digital storytelling as an instructional tool for enhancing reading comprehension, digital storytelling uses digital tools like video or image to tell stories Your responses will help us understand how digital storytelling influence engagement comprehension , and learning experiences in EFL classroom

Your participation is anonymous, and your responses will be used solely for research purposes.

Please answer all questions honestly based on your personal experiences.

Section 1: Demographic Information

1   Indicate your gender.

Male   ☐

Female   ☐

2   Specify your age range.

18-20 ☐

21-23 ☐

24+   ☐

3   Describe your English reading proficiency level.

Beginner   ☐

Intermediate   ☐

Advanced   ☐

Justify your choice by providing examples of your reading habits or experiences.

………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………

Section 2: Perceptions of Digital Storytelling

1   State whether you have previously encountered digital storytelling in your studies.

☐

Yes

No ☐

If yes, explain in what context and how it was integrated into your learning experience.

………………………………………………………………………………………..

  2 Assess the level of engagement digital storytelling provides compared to traditional reading methods.

Very engaging ☐

Somewhat engaging ☐

Neutral ☐

Not engaging. ☐

Not at all engaging ☐

Justify your answer.

……………………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………

  3 Evaluate whether digital storytelling enhances your understanding and retention of reading materials.

Strongly agree ☐

Agree ☐

Neutral ☐

Disagree ☐

Strongly disagree ☐

Provide an explanation or example to support your response.

……………………………………………………………………………………………

  4 Identify the specific elements of digital storytelling that contribute the most to improving reading comprehension. (Check all that apply)

Visual elements (images, videos) ☐

☐

Narration and audio effects

Interactivity ☐

The storyline itself ☐

Elaborate on why these elements are beneficial.

……………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………

Section 3: Effectiveness in Reading Comprehension

    1 Indicate the extent to which digital storytelling helps you identify main ideas within a text.

Significantly ☐

Somewhat ☐

Not really ☐

Not at all ☐

Provide an example or justification.

………………………………………………………………………

    2 Compare digital storytelling with traditional reading methods in terms of helping you make inferences.

Much more effective ☐

Slightly more effective ☐

About the same ☐

Less effective ☐

Justify your answer by sharing an experience or observation

……………………………………………………………………………………………………….

    3 Assess your confidence in summarizing a story after engaging with digital storytelling.

Very confident ☐

Somewhat confident ☐

☐

Neutral

Not confident □

Explain what aspects of digital storytelling contribute to or hinder your ability to summarize.

………………………………………………………………………….

Section 4: Open-Ended Questions

1　**Identify the key benefits of digital storytelling in enhancing reading comprehension. Support your response with examples or experiences.**

…………………………………………………………………………………..

2　**Highlight any limitations or challenges you have encountered when using digital storytelling for reading comprehension. Elaborate on your answer.**

…………………………………………………………………………………..

3　**Suggest recommendations for making digital storytelling a more effective tool for improving reading skills.**

………………………………………………………………………………….

Appendix 2: Teacher's interview

Dear teachers

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. My name is Abla Balouta, and I am conducting research as part of my Master degree on the integration of digital storytelling in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms.

The aim of this interview is to explore your perspectives on digital storytelling as an instructional strategy, particularly in terms of its effectiveness in enhancing reading comprehension, student engagement, and learning outcomes. Your insights will be invaluable in shaping recommendations for educators and curriculum designers to implement technology-driven approaches more effectively.

This interview will consist of a few questions, and I encourage you to share your honest opinions and experiences. Please know that your responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes.

1. What is your teaching experience, and have you integrated digital storytelling in your lessons before?

2. How do you perceive the role of digital storytelling in engaging students in reading activities?

3. Do you believe digital storytelling can improve student's ability to identify main ideas, make inference and summarize text? Why and why not?

4. How does digital storytelling compare with traditional reading methods in terms of students motivation and engagement?

5. what are the challenges of implementing digital storytelling in EFL classroom?

6. Based on your experience what recommendations would you give to educators who want to use digital storytelling effectively?

الملخص

مع الاستخدام المتزايد للتكنولوجيا في التعليم، لم يعد تعليم القراءة يتم بالطرق التقليدية، بل من خلال أدوات مختلفة مثل السرد الرقمي. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد كيفية إدراك معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية وطلاب السنة الثانية لاستخدام السرد الرقمي كأداة لتحسين التفاعل مع فهم القراءة. تستند هذه الدراسة إلى الفرضية التي تفيد بأن معلمي اللغة الأجنبية والطلاب ينظرون إلى السرد الرقمي على أنه أداة تعليمية فعالة لتعزيز التفاعل وتحسين فهم القراءة. باستخدام تصميم بحثي يعتمد على الأساليب المختلطة، تم جمع البيانات من خلال استبيان يعتمد على الأساليب المختلطة، أكمله 25 طالبًا من السنة الثانية في اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة بسكرة، وأربعة مقابلات شبه منظمة أجريت مع أساتذة القراءة من قسم اللغة والأدب الإنجليزي. تظهر النتائج أن معظم الطلاب يجدون السرد الرقمي ممتعًا ومفيدًا في تسهيل فهم النصوص. كما أن للمعلمين مواقف إيجابية، حيث يرون في السرد الرقمي طريقة إبداعية تشجع على التعليم الذي يركز على المتعلم وتعزز التفاعل في الفصل الدراسي. ومع ذلك، تم الإبلاغ عن بعض العقبات مثل ضيق الوقت، ونقص الموارد التقنية، والحاجة إلى التدريب. تشير هذه النتائج إلى أن السرد الرقمي يحسن بشكل كبير تفاعل الطلاب مع القراءة في فصول تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. توصي الدراسة بإدراجه في المناهج الدراسية، إلى جانب توفير الدعم للمعلمين من خلال التدريب وتحسين الوصول إلى الأدوات الرقمية. تساهم هذه الدراسة في إثراء الأدبيات المتعلقة بتكنولوجيا التعليم وتبرز قيمة الاستراتيجيات المبتكرة في تدريس اللغات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السرد الرقمي، التفاعل، فهم القراءة