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The Role of Digital Storytelling in Jordanian School EFL Classrooms: A Qualitative Exploration of Teachers' Perceptions

Abstract

The topic of digital storytelling in the field of EFL instruction has attracted increasing attention. However, its significance, effectiveness, and incorporation within educational settings in Jordan have not been thoroughly studied. In order to address this research gap, the present paper explores the teaching effectiveness, challenges, and practical applications of digital storytelling in Jordanian EFL classrooms, specifically through a qualitative analysis of teacher perspectives, incorporating semi-structured interviews with 26 EFL teachers recruited by purposive sampling. The thematic analysis revealed that EFL teachers in Jordan predominantly view digital storytelling as a valuable enhancement to English language teaching, notably for its ability to engage students and facilitate language learning. This positive perspective, however, is tempered by concerns over resource availability and curriculum integration challenges. The study also observed that digital storytelling positively impacts student engagement and language skills, with teachers reporting notable improvements in student involvement and language competencies. However, this impact varied among students, influenced by individual learning styles and access to technological resources. Lastly, regarding integrating digital storytelling into the curriculum, teachers identified several benefits, including the versatility of digital storytelling in achieving educational objectives and its effectiveness in facilitating interactive learning. Yet, they also faced challenges, particularly regarding inadequate technological infrastructure and difficulties aligning digital storytelling with rigid curricular structures. These findings provide crucial insights into the application of digital storytelling in EFL education in Jordan, reflecting its potential to transform teaching practices amidst practical implementation challenges. The paper concludes with limitations and future research suggestions, intending to encourage deeper scholarly and practical involvement with this novel teaching style.

Keywords: EFL, digital storytelling, Jordanian EFL teachers, Jordanian EFL classrooms, teaching methods, technology use, teachers' perceptions.

Over the past few decades, there have been significant changes in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, driven mainly by integrating technology into educational frameworks. This phenomenon holds particular significance within digital storytelling, a novel instructional approach that uses digital technologies to construct and communicate narratives. Using a combination of text, graphics, and audio in digital storytelling has been recognized as an effective tool for promoting language learning and enhancing educational involvement (Abdolmanafi-Rokni, 2014; Robin, 2008; Sadik, 2008).

However, the utilization of digital storytelling in specific educational contexts, such as EFL classes in Jordan, remains underexplored. This is particularly noteworthy in a nation where English instruction is compulsory but often delivered through traditional, teacher-centred methods, resulting in persistently below-average proficiency levels (Aljaberi, 2021; Aljaraideh, 2020; Al-Sharah et al., 2021; Mansi, 2019). The situation underscores the need for educational approaches that prioritize learner engagement, interactivity, and communication. In light of this, it is surprising that while previous scholarly work has extensively investigated the role of technology in EFL settings, there has been a relative lack of focus on the specific utility of digital storytelling (Haga, 2023; Luan et al., 2023). Moreover, empirical research examining the implementation of this pedagogical approach in Jordanian EFL classrooms is notably absent. To fill this research gap, the present study explores the educational effectiveness, challenges, and practical applications of digital storytelling in Jordan, specifically through a qualitative analysis of teacher perspectives. This study's findings can significantly influence curriculum design, pedagogical practices, and educational policies related to technology use in EFL contexts. Aligned with the primary research objective, the study posits the following research questions:

1. How do EFL teachers in Jordan perceive the role of digital storytelling in enhancing English language teaching and learning in their classrooms?
2. Based on teachers' observations, what impact does digital storytelling have on student engagement and language skills in EFL classrooms in Jordan?
3. What specific challenges and benefits do EFL teachers in Jordan identify when integrating digital storytelling into their curriculum?

Literature Review

Digital Storytelling: Definition and Components

Digital storytelling represents a modern narrative practice that artfully integrates the traditional craft of storytelling with diverse digital multimedia

elements, including images, audio, and video. This innovative approach enables individuals to articulate and disseminate personal, cultural, or historical narratives in an engaging and interactive format (Meletiadou, 2022). Digital storytelling converges conventional storytelling methods and modern multimedia components, resulting in a wide-ranging narrative structure (Setiyorini, 2020). Emerging as a dual-purpose medium encompassing artistic expression and pedagogical utility, multimedia incorporates text, music, images, and frequently video and animation to enhance the narrative encounter (James et al., 2019). The multimedia elements in question function not just as supplemental features but also as intrinsic components that augment the emotional and cognitive depth of the narrative. For example, the deliberate incorporation of audio can introduce additional dimensions of emotion and context. At the same time, visual components can effectively depict characters and environments, thus enhancing audience engagement to a greater extent (Robin, 2008).

Within educational settings, the application of digital storytelling encompasses more than just fostering student involvement (Yuliani & Hartanto, 2022). Producing digital storytelling transforms into an educational endeavour incorporating several linguistic proficiencies, encompassing written expression, spoken communication, and occasionally textual analysis and investigation (Ramalingam et al., 2022). Digital storytelling embodies contemporary pedagogical approaches, including communicative and task-based language teaching. It offers a comprehensive and holistic learning experience that aligns with modern educational principles (Robin, 2008).

Furthermore, this methodology also addresses the cognitive and emotional dimensions of learning. Creating a digital story necessitates integrating critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making abilities, as students are tasked with effectively structuring their thoughts and selecting the most appropriate multimedia components (Salem, 2022). The emotional involvement of students is heightened by the frequently intimate character of storytelling, resulting in increased recall and a more personally significant learning experience (Yang & Wu, 2012).

Practically, digital storytelling emerges as a pivotal pedagogical approach, harnessing the power of multimedia technology to revolutionize the educational narrative, moving beyond traditional storytelling methods to a more integrated multimedia experience. This innovative strategy enables learners to weave together text, images, audio, and video to craft engaging narratives, merging the art of storytelling with digital prowess (Maureen et al., 2020). Projects like the Personal Narrative Project allow students to explore and articulate personal experiences through detailed scriptwriting and the selection of multimedia elements, enhancing their narrative skills and language proficiency (Dreher, 2012). Similarly, the Cultural Exchange Project encourages students to engage with and present different cultural perspectives, promoting research skills, critical

thinking, and empathy (Oakley et al., 2018). These activities foster creative and digital literacy and enrich students' understanding of language and culture, illustrating digital storytelling's role as a dynamic educational tool. By providing immersive, context-driven language and cultural learning opportunities, digital storytelling is an essential asset in modern education, equipping students with the skills to navigate a digitally interconnected world.

However, successfully incorporating digital storytelling in educational environments requires specific technological requirements. The successful deployment of this novel teaching tool is influenced by various aspects, such as the availability of hardware and software and the technical literacy levels of teachers and students (Sadik, 2008; Meletiadou, 2022).

Technological Tools in Digital Storytelling

Integrating diverse hardware and software technologies is critical in digital storytelling, particularly within EFL instruction. Essential hardware components for EFL digital storytelling include an array of devices such as computers, tablets, smartphones, and digital cameras, each playing a distinct role in the creation, editing, and presentation of digital narratives tailored to language learning (Robin, 2008; Christiansen & Koelzer, 2016). Computers and tablets, recognized for their robust processing capabilities and full multimedia support, are predominantly utilized for EFL story creation and interactive engagements (Churchill, 2020). Smartphones, with their widespread accessibility and advanced features, have become indispensable tools for capturing audio-visual content in EFL contexts. Moreover, digital cameras provide superior options for high-quality visual storytelling, enhancing the visual appeal of language learning materials.

On the software spectrum, many applications and platforms are employed to streamline the creation and dissemination of EFL digital stories (Urbieto & Peñalver, 2021). Advanced video editing software like Adobe Premiere Pro and Final Cut Pro enables intricate narrative constructions and productions, suitable for EFL content creation. More accessible software such as iMovie and Windows Movie Maker offer essential editing functionalities, facilitating the creation of EFL learning materials for beginners (Castillo-Rodriguez et al., 2022). Specialized digital storytelling software like Storybird and Book Creator, which provide tailored templates and resources, are especially beneficial for constructing educational stories in EFL settings (Kazazoglu & Bilir, 2021).

Incorporating Learning Management Systems like Moodle, Blackboard, and Canvas has been pivotal in embedding digital storytelling within EFL curricula, simplifying content distribution and accessibility for language learners (Masters, 2020; Yu & Lu, 2021). These systems furnish educators with assessment tools

and interactive feedback mechanisms, enriching the EFL learning experience within a storytelling context.

The emergence of augmented reality and virtual reality technologies marks a new frontier in immersive storytelling experiences, particularly beneficial in EFL education (Karacan & Akoğlu, 2021). Augmented reality applications blend digital content with the physical world, creating interactive and enhanced narratives conducive to language learning (Yastibaş et al., 2022). Virtual reality further immerses users in entirely virtual environments, offering unparalleled opportunities for engaging in historical recreations or scientific simulations, thus enriching the EFL learning experience (Arvanitis & Krystalli, 2021; Merchant et al., 2014).

The technological landscape in digital storytelling for EFL is both diverse and progressive, encompassing a broad spectrum of hardware and software engineered to create, edit, and disseminate stories dynamically and interactively. This technological progression has not only refined the storytelling experience but has also broadened the scope of educational applications, especially within the realm of EFL classrooms.

Efficacy of Digital Storytelling in Language Learning

Digital storytelling has received considerable interest due to its potential to enhance multiple aspects of language learning. Numerous studies support the beneficial effects of digital storytelling on language learning: expanding vocabulary, enhancing listening comprehension, and fostering cultural awareness (Sadik, 2008; Tran, 2021; Yang & Wu, 2012). Creating a digital story frequently requires a profound involvement with language, as students are motivated to investigate novel terminology and idiomatic idioms to communicate their narratives proficiently. This involvement expands their lexical repertoire and offers a significant context for utilizing newly acquired words, consequently augmenting retention and comprehension (Huang, 2022; Lim et al., 2022).

Furthermore, using multimedia elements in digital storytelling provides a distinct opportunity for enhancing one's listening skills (Zhong & Shen, 2002). Students are presented with diverse auditory components, including narrative, background music, and sound effects, all of which collectively enhance the auditory encounter. The intricacy of this phenomenon can enhance students' listening comprehension skills, allowing them to interpret significance from a diverse range of auditory stimuli (Yang & Wu, 2012).

In addition to its language aspects, digital storytelling also functions as a means to facilitate cultural discovery (Shen & Peng, 2022). Including cultural themes or settings in narratives can serve as a means for students to acquire knowledge and understanding of diverse cultural norms, beliefs, and practices.

Including cultural enrichment in language learning increases the experience by emphasizing the socio-cultural dimensions of language usage (Sadik, 2008).

In addition to the advantages above related to language learning, digital storytelling has garnered praise for its capacity to cultivate a diverse set of non-technical skills that are increasingly recognized as essential in the modern educational environment of the 21st century (Abdolmanafi-Rokni, 2014; Orak & Al-khresheh, 2021). Creating a digital story necessitates a significant level of critical thinking, as students must carefully strategize their narratives' structure, select suitable multimedia components, and seamlessly integrate them into a cohesive storyline. According to Aljaberi (2021), engaging in planning and executing tasks fosters creativity and necessitates teamwork, mainly when undertaken as a collective endeavour. Consequently, this practice cultivates crucial skills that transcend the boundaries of the language classroom.

The Role of Digital Storytelling in EFL Contexts

The genesis of digital storytelling in EFL can be traced back to around 2008, marking a period of significant experimentation and early adoption in language education (Wu & Chen, 2020). During this nascent stage, teachers began exploring the potential of digital narratives to enhance language learning, recognizing the unique blend of visual, auditory, and textual elements that these tools offered (Pandhiani, 2022). Pioneering efforts during this period laid the groundwork for integrating digital storytelling in EFL curricula, demonstrating its effectiveness in engaging learners and facilitating language learning. Notable early studies and implementations, such as those by McLellan (2007) and Robin (2016), highlighted how digital storytelling could be harnessed to develop essential language skills, particularly vocabulary enrichment, grammatical understanding, and oral proficiency. These initial explorations played a crucial role in shaping the methodologies and pedagogical strategies that are now widely recognized in the field of EFL.

Digital storytelling has established a well-regarded track record of improving linguistic abilities following these early developments. The inherent focus of digital storytelling on language makes it an ideal tool for teaching EFL (Abdolmanafi-Rokni, 2014; Aljaberi, 2021; Indriani & Suteja, 2023; Tatli et al., 2022). Yuliani and Hartanto (2022) underscored its practicality within online English courses, specifically focusing on its relevance for pre-service teachers. Studies conducted by Alemi et al. (2022), Dewi and Sari (2022), and James et al. (2019) have provided evidence that the utilization of digital storytelling can substantially enhance English language learners' speaking and writing skills. Octaviani and Hesmatantya (2018) expanded the scope of the study

to encompass the assessment of story-retelling abilities in kindergarten pupils, emphasizing the tool's adaptability across several educational tiers.

In EFL teaching, storytelling emerges as an essential pedagogical instrument. Its application transcends conventional didactic methodologies, fostering the holistic enhancement of linguistic abilities (Yuliani & Hartanto, 2022). Fundamentally, storytelling assists in the augmentation of vocabulary, the comprehension of grammatical intricacies, and the development of narrative competencies. These elements are pivotal in thoroughly mastering spoken and written English (Abdolmanafi-Rokni, 2014). Storytelling narratives' engaging and contextual nature provides a conducive environment for language learning, propelling learners to organically assimilate and employ new vocabulary and structural patterns (Indriani & Suteja, 2023).

The integration of digital storytelling marks a significant enhancement in language learning, representing a step in applying contemporary teaching strategies. By integrating multimedia facets like audio, visual imagery, and interactive elements, digital storytelling significantly enhances the conventional narrative paradigm (James et al., 2019). This contemporary adaptation effectively captivates diverse learning preferences and broadens language education's scope and inclusivity. Digital storytelling in EFL contexts renders the learning process more immersive and expands the horizons of cultural and contextual comprehension, thus providing learners with a more expansive viewpoint (Robin, 2008).

Furthermore, extending beyond linguistic skill development, digital storytelling has also demonstrated significant psychological and socio-cultural benefits. Zarifsanaiey et al. (2022) found that digital storytelling can enhance social and emotional intelligence, suggesting its potential for holistic educational development. Complementing these findings, studies by Fan (2022) and Pandhiani (2022) revealed that this approach fosters critical engagement among learners and strengthens their sense of identity. Belda-Medina (2021) highlighted its role in positively influencing teacher candidates' attitudes towards diversity and inclusivity, while Rusda et al. (2023) used digital storytelling to reinforce environmental literacy. Such research accentuates that digital storytelling is a tool for academic growth and a catalyst for social consciousness and proactive engagement in societal issues.

Studies by Kim et al. (2023) and Luan et al. (2023) reveal that incorporating digital storytelling markedly elevates the quality of education. It notably bolsters student engagement, stimulates creative thought processes, and aids in the comprehensive grasp of intricate ideas. The interactive and multimedia-enriched digital storytelling approach is critical to creating an engaging and immersive educational environment. According to Kim et al. (2023), the tool facilitates students' active participation in self-expression. Luan et al. (2023)

also demonstrated its potential to enhance students' inclination to communicate in a flipped classroom environment. Zuhriyah (2023) and Fitri et al. (2022) have made valuable contributions by providing empirical evidence that highlights the favourable influence of the tool on students' views and motivations. Despite the positive results observed, there is a notable emphasis on the necessity for enhanced pedagogical and technological readiness. Belda-Medina (2021) and Fitri et al. (2022) have emphasized the need for forthcoming research and practical applications to consider this particular element, thereby paving the way for further advancements in this rapidly developing sector. This call for exploration and advancement in digital storytelling aligns closely with the context of English education in Jordan, where innovative approaches are essential to address the existing challenges in language learning.

In the context of Jordanian EFL classrooms, the integration of digital storytelling is garnering special attention, mainly due to its alignment with the rising trend of digital literacy among students and its potential to modernize traditional language teaching methods (Aljaraideh, 2020). This approach, known for its interactive essence, not only stimulates active engagement and creativity in learners but also effectively enhances language competencies within a dynamic and culturally diverse educational setting. The positive impact of storytelling, especially in its digital form, on language learning has been well-documented (Meletiadou, 2022; Salem, 2022; Yang & Wu, 2012), highlighting the benefits of narrative-based techniques and the amplifying effect of technology in language learning.

Despite compulsory English education in Jordan, proficiency levels often fall short of regional and global benchmarks (Aljaraideh, 2020; Mansi, 2019). The prevalent use of conventional, teacher-oriented teaching methods, which focus heavily on memorization and grammatical rules, has been critiqued for not adequately fostering practical communication skills (Canals & Al-Rawashdeh, 2018; Al-Sharah et al., 2021). In this light, digital storytelling emerges as a promising pedagogical alternative. It emphasizes thorough mastery of linguistic skills and fosters critical reasoning and cultural comprehension, addressing the gaps in traditional methods. For Jordanian students, who often face limited opportunities for authentic language use and cultural immersion, digital storytelling could be particularly advantageous. However, successfully implementing this innovative approach requires overcoming logistical challenges such as curriculum modification, teacher training, and developing a robust digital infrastructure.

Despite the considerable body of research on the function of technology in educational contexts, including EFL classrooms, a notable deficiency exists in understanding the precise usefulness and influence of digital storytelling. The disparity is especially notable in non-Western contexts such as Jordan, where conventional instructional approaches prevail, and English language

ability is not optimal. Previous research predominantly concentrates on generic technological tools or the possible advantages of digital storytelling, such as learning vocabulary and developing critical thinking skills. However, there is a notable oversight in these studies about the impact of digital storytelling on communicative abilities and cultural comprehension. The primary objective of this study is to fill the existing knowledge gaps by investigating the utilization and effects of digital storytelling in EFL classrooms in Jordan.

Research Method

Research Design

The research design utilized in this study is based on a qualitative paradigm, specifically adopting a phenomenological approach. The study's primary aim is to understand the role of digital storytelling in EFL classrooms in Jordan. The rationale for selecting this design is supported by the phenomenological emphasis on investigating subjective experiences, thereby providing a detailed understanding of EFL teachers' beliefs, perspectives, and difficulties (Neuman, 2014; Yin, 2018). The utilization of the phenomenological approach facilitates a deeper examination of the experiences of educators, surpassing superficial descriptions and delving into the intricacies of incorporating digital storytelling into teaching methods. The framework offered facilitates the systematic examination of the multifaceted nature of these experiences. It demonstrates a particular proficiency in uncovering fundamental themes and recurring patterns that shed light on the motivations and methods behind digital storytelling. Also, it explores the perceived advantages and obstacles encountered throughout its implementation. Including this methodology enhances the study's methodological rigour, assuring that the findings make a valuable contribution to the current body of research.

Participants

The research utilizes a purposive sampling method to select 26 EFL teachers from diverse educational settings in Jordan, deliberately chosen for their direct relevance to the study's focus on digital storytelling in EFL instruction. This technique ensures the inclusion of participants likely to provide rich, varied insights due to their unique experiences and perspectives in implementing digital storytelling techniques in different educational contexts (Emmel, 2013).

In Jordan, as mentioned earlier, English language education is a compulsory component of public and private school curricula, beginning from the first year of primary education. On average, students engage in five hours of English instruction per week, a commitment reflecting the importance placed on English proficiency in the national educational agenda. The curriculum, standardized and overseen by the Jordanian Ministry of Education, is designed to develop linguistic skills and foster a deeper cultural understanding, integrating global perspectives with language learning (Alkhaldi & Kayapinar, 2022). However, it is essential to note that the practical application of this curriculum is subject to variation across different schools. Factors such as the availability of resources, the institution's technological infrastructure, and the teaching staff's specific expertise can influence how English is taught, resulting in diverse educational experiences in English language learning across the country (Alzubi, 2023).

The participants in this study represent a cross-section of this system, working under varied conditions. While some teach in well-resourced urban schools with extensive access to technological tools such as interactive whiteboards and digital storytelling software, others come from less advantaged rural or suburban areas, where such resources are limited. This disparity in access to technology is a significant factor in the adoption and effectiveness of digital storytelling techniques in their classrooms.

The selected teachers' ages range from 26 to 54 years, providing a spectrum of perspectives influenced by generational differences in pedagogical approaches and familiarity with digital technologies. Their educational backgrounds are equally diverse, spanning from bachelor's degrees to PhDs in fields related to English language education. This range ensures a variety of theoretical perspectives and practical experiences in EFL teaching. The sample also encompasses a broad range of teaching experiences, from newcomers to experts, contributing to diverse views on the challenges and potential of digital storytelling in EFL instruction.

The primary aim of selecting such a varied group is to capture a deep understanding of the role, challenges, and advantages of digital storytelling in the context of Jordan's EFL teaching environment. Table 1 details the participants' demographics, educational backgrounds, and teaching contexts.

Table 1
The Participants' Characteristics

Variables		Frequency	Percentage [%]
Gender	Male	20	77
	Female	6	23
Qualifications	Bachelor's	15	58
	Master's	10	38
	Doctorate	1	4
Teaching Experience	1–5	5	19
	6–10	10	38
	11–15	4	15
	More than 15	7	28
Total		26	100

This table provides a detailed breakdown of the characteristics of the 26 EFL teachers participating in the study. The gender distribution indicates a higher representation of male participants (77%) than female participants (23%). Regarding academic qualifications, the majority hold a Bachelor's degree (58%), followed by Master's degree holders (38%), and a minority with a doctorate (4%). The teaching experience among the participants varies, with the largest group having 6–10 years of experience (38%), followed by those with more than 15 years (28%). Participants with 1–5 years and 11–15 years of experience constitute 19% and 15% of the sample, respectively.

This participant profile, particularly the gender distribution, shows a deviation from the global trend in the teaching profession, where females often outnumber males. It is crucial to understand that the higher proportion of male participants in this study is partially influenced by the structure of the Jordanian education system, where male and female teachers often work in separate schools. This separation made it more feasible to access male teachers during the research, contributing to the higher representation of males in this sample. Moreover, the purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure the inclusion of participants who could provide informed and diverse insights into integrating digital storytelling in EFL instruction rather than strictly aiming for a gender-balanced representation. As a result, while the gender distribution in this study diverges from broader trends, it uniquely reflects the specific dynamics of the EFL teaching environment in Jordan, thereby providing valuable perspectives on using digital storytelling in this distinct educational context.

Instrument

The primary data for this study was collected through semi-structured interviews, an approach chosen for its balance of directed focus and participant-driven expression (Yin, 2018). The interview is structured into two main parts. The first part collects demographic information from the participants, including gender, qualifications, and teaching experience. This helps in understanding the diverse backgrounds of the EFL teachers involved. The second part of the interview consists of five open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses on specific aspects of digital storytelling in EFL education. These questions explore the teachers' perspectives on the role of digital storytelling in EFL pedagogy, their observations of student engagement during digital storytelling activities, challenges faced in its implementation, perceived benefits, and suggestions for better integration in educational settings. For a detailed view of the interview structure, refer to Appendix 1, which contains the interview format.

Content Validity and Reliability

Multiple efforts were taken to validate and ensure the reliability of the data analysis methodologies to ensure the scientific rigour of the study. A panel of three subject matter experts specializing in EFL instruction thoroughly evaluated the content validity of the interview questions. The feedback they provided was used to improve the questions and ensure they accurately captured the elements of interest (Neuman, 2014). To ensure internal reliability, a pilot study was done with five EFL teachers who were not among the main study participants. The pilot study results were analysed and cross-checked to determine the effectiveness and clarity of the questions. This preliminary practice gave valuable insights into the reliability of the interview questions and allowed for any necessary tweaks before the main study (Cohen et al., 2017).

Data Collection

The data collection for this study was executed with thorough attention during the first semester of the academic year 2023–2024. Central to this phase were the semi-structured interviews conducted with 26 carefully selected EFL teachers in Jordan, chosen for their diverse experiences and expertise. These interviews were scheduled with consideration for the participants' convenience to facilitate maximum engagement and responsiveness. The settings chosen for these interviews, primarily within the teachers' educational institutions, were

intended to provide a comfortable and familiar atmosphere conducive to open and honest communication.

Before the interviews, each participant was given a detailed briefing about the study's objectives, the procedures to be followed, and the ethical standards upheld, including strict adherence to confidentiality and the voluntary nature of their participation. Informed consent was duly obtained from all participants, ensuring compliance with ethical research guidelines.

The interviews were audio-recorded with the participant's explicit permission to ensure accurate capture of their responses for thorough analysis. These recordings were then transcribed in detail and systematically coded. The coding process was integral to the analysis, identifying significant themes and insights and ensuring a structured and wide-ranging examination of the data. This methodical approach was crucial in guaranteeing the reliability and depth of the research findings, thus providing a nuanced understanding of the role of digital storytelling in EFL instruction.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to interpret the qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews in this study, a method lauded for effectiveness in qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2017). This approach proved ideal, enabling a deep and structured exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives organized into distinct thematic categories. The intricate process involved the meticulous coding of interview transcripts, a critical step in identifying and analyzing emerging themes. These themes, representing the core elements of participants' responses, were systematically organized to reflect the depth and complexity of the data. The flexibility and comprehensive scope of thematic analysis made it the method of choice, ensuring a nuanced interpretation of the rich, detailed narratives provided by the participants.

Ethical Consideration

The key objective was thoroughly explained to participants before the main study. They were also informed that their participation was entirely voluntary, that they had the right to confidentiality, and that they could opt out of the study at any time. Informed permission forms were signed and collected, and rigorous steps were implemented to anonymize all identifiable information, ensuring participant confidentiality.

Findings

This section explores the insights from interviews with 26 Jordanian EFL teachers, focusing on their perspectives on using digital storytelling in educational settings. The data are organized into five major thematic categories: teachers' perceptions of digital storytelling, integration with instructional practices, student engagement levels, encountered challenges, and observed benefits. These themes cooperatively provide an in-depth understanding of the multifaceted role of digital storytelling in the EFL classroom, revealing its advantages and limitations.

Teachers' Perceptions of Digital Storytelling in EFL Teaching

This theme elicited various opinions from the interviewed teachers. The preponderance of responses was generally favourable. Exclamations such as "excellent," "very high," and "advances the educational reality" encapsulated the enthusiasm felt by the majority of participants regarding the function of digital storytelling in the classroom. They elaborated that it serves multiple purposes, including breaking up "stagnation and monotony" in the classroom and enhancing students' "knowledge" and "abilities and talents." Several participants remarked that it "enables students to comprehend the most challenging subjects and topics" and facilitates "unconventional summaries of academic topics." One participant summed up the consensus: "I believe digital storytelling plays an important role in enhancing students' English language learning." However, not all of the responses were positive. Two participants described digital storytelling as "moderate," "kind of good," or "fairly good." One participant stated that "difficult availability" prevented them from using it frequently. Despite these divergent opinions, the consensus was that digital storytelling has a positive impact on enhancing English language instruction, albeit with some reservations and challenges.

Integrating Digital Storytelling into EFL Instructional Practices

Teachers provided different insights into their varied strategies and outcomes regarding digital storytelling. While several teachers strongly supported digital storytelling, citing its positive impact on student engagement and learning outcomes, there were differing levels of implementation and perspectives. For instance, one participant shared a successful application, "I used a cartoon story to help my students learn pronouns, and the method generated a high level

of engagement.” This highlights the use of multimedia as a tool for teaching specific language elements.

Teachers detailed diverse pedagogical objectives achieved through digital storytelling. One noted its utility in vocabulary learning: “Digital storytelling helped my students learn new vocabulary through listening.” Another highlighted its effectiveness in enhancing listening and speaking skills: “I have used it to improve my students’ listening and speaking skills with positive results.” However, the extent of digital storytelling usage varied among participants. While some had integrated it frequently into their lessons, others were yet to employ it, as indicated by a teacher’s remark, “No, I have not had the opportunity to use digital storytelling in my classroom.”

The thematic analysis of the interviews also revealed a multifaceted landscape in the utilization of digital storytelling among participants, characterized by a spectrum of frequency, duration, and diverse student demographics. A teacher elucidated the selective integration of digital storytelling, noting, “Digital storytelling is a strategic choice in my classroom, especially for lessons where student engagement tends to wane. It is not a staple but a special addition for enhancing understanding of complex topics.” This reflects a judicious use of digital storytelling for maximizing impact in specific instructional contexts. Another teacher provided insight into the application of digital storytelling with younger learners: “In my experience teaching lower grades, Digital Storytelling has been instrumental in capturing the fleeting attention of young minds. It is a monthly feature in my lesson plans, seamlessly blending with traditional teaching methods to enrich the learning experience.” This highlights the role of digital storytelling in augmenting regular curricular activities tailored to the needs of younger students. In contrast, a teacher working with older adolescents shared a different perspective: “My approach with Digital Storytelling for students aged 15 to 16 is quite measured. I employ it for project-based learning or when unpacking more abstract concepts. It is not frequent, but its occasional use throughout the semester brings a dynamic edge to the learning process.” These insights underscore digital storytelling’s nuanced and varied application in EFL teaching. The teachers’ narratives reveal how the flexibility of digital storytelling makes it a valuable teaching tool across various age groups and learning objectives, adaptable to the evolving requirements of diverse classroom environments.

A few teachers expressed reservations about comparing digital storytelling with traditional methods. One teacher’s comment, “The first skill anyone learns is listening, not speaking,” suggests a preference for conventional listening-based approaches. Despite these varied experiences and views, the prevailing sentiment among the majority favoured the effectiveness and versatility of digital storytelling in enhancing EFL instruction.

Student Engagement and Language Skills Development in EFL through Digital Storytelling

Teachers provided illuminating insights into the impact of digital storytelling on student engagement in EFL classrooms. A substantial increase in engagement levels was a common thread in their responses. One teacher vividly described the change: “The level of student engagement was high; they were visibly more attentive and participative.” Another echoed this sentiment, adding, “Students were not just listening; they were actively involved. Their participation soared, especially during storytelling sessions.” This heightened engagement was particularly pronounced in smaller to medium-sized classes. A participant teaching a mid-sized class shared, “In my class of 20 students, digital storytelling transformed the learning dynamics. Students who were usually reticent participated enthusiastically.” The same teacher elaborated, “It was not just about listening to stories; students became eager to share their own, which is a huge leap in engagement.” These observations suggest that digital storytelling captivated students and actively involved them in learning, making the classroom environment more dynamic and interactive. Teachers attributed this to the compelling nature of storytelling and the multimedia elements that resonated well with the students, fostering a more immersive and participative educational experience.

In addition to engagement, participants also shed light on the influence of digital storytelling on language skills development. They observed improvements in critical areas such as vocabulary expansion, enhanced comprehension, and increased fluency in spoken English. For instance, one teacher observed: “Digital storytelling has significantly contributed to vocabulary building in my younger learners,” while another reflected: “Students demonstrate greater speaking confidence and fluency during storytelling activities.” However, the impact on language skills was not uniformly experienced across all educational contexts. Participants noted variations based on factors like the age of students and class sizes. Younger learners in smaller groups were reported to show more substantial gains in language skills, whereas in classes with older students, particularly in larger groups, the effectiveness in enhancing language skills varied more.

Teachers stressed the significance of having the proper technological and educational framework for successfully implementing digital storytelling. One participant pointed out, “Effective digital storytelling relies heavily on the right tech setup. Without interactive whiteboards or reliable internet, it is challenging to engage students fully.” Another highlighted the role of the classroom environment, saying, “It is not just about the technology. The classroom atmosphere needs to be dynamic and conducive to storytelling.” Challenges in catering to diverse student groups were also noted. A teacher shared, “In larger classes,

it is hard to find stories that appeal to everyone. When the content does not resonate, student engagement drops sharply.” This sentiment was echoed by another teacher who observed, “Diverse interests in my class mean I need a variety of storytelling approaches to maintain effectiveness, which can be quite demanding.” These reflections underline the complexities of implementing digital storytelling in varied classroom settings, particularly emphasizing the necessity for appropriate technological resources and a versatile approach to accommodate diverse student needs and interests for optimal engagement and language skill enhancement.

Teachers generally recognized digital storytelling as an effective tool for boosting student engagement in EFL classrooms. While positive, its impact on language skill development depended on various contextual factors. This underscores the need for tailored digital storytelling approaches to optimize engagement and language learning outcomes effectively.

Challenges and Obstacles in Digital Storytelling Implementation

This theme illuminated some difficulties teachers face in successfully integrating digital storytelling into EFL classrooms. Infrastructure constraints emerged as a significant barrier, with teachers frequently noting the lack of essential technology and resources. One teacher highlighted, “Interactive whiteboards are rarely available for every lesson,” and another lamented the general “lack of computing and software resources in educational settings.”

Curricular limitations also posed challenges, particularly in integrating digital narratives into existing, content-heavy syllabi. “Fitting digital storytelling into our dense curriculum is challenging,” one teacher observed, pointing to the intricacies of aligning narratives with specific linguistic objectives. Time constraints further compounded these difficulties, with teachers feeling pressured to deliver results efficiently, notwithstanding the substantial preparation time digital storytelling modules demand. One participant noted, “Digital storytelling takes time to prepare, which adds pressure to our tight schedules.”

Class size and a lack of adequate instructional tools were additional hurdles. Statements like “The student-to-teacher ratio is quite high in some classes” and “We only have one room equipped for interactive learning” were common, reflecting the logistical challenges in implementing digital storytelling. Furthermore, some teachers expressed their limitations in creating integrated educational materials and addressing the diverse needs of their student populations.

Adding to these challenges, three teachers mentioned not utilizing digital storytelling due to resource scarcity or a lack of interest, both on their part and among students. “I have not used digital storytelling, so I cannot comment on

its benefits,” admitted one teacher, while another voiced frustration about the “lack of interest or response” from students. This spectrum of experiences and perceptions underscores that while digital storytelling is a promising pedagogical tool, its effectiveness is influenced by various factors, including resource availability, teacher and student enthusiasm, and broader educational culture. Despite these challenges, it is noteworthy that some teachers encountered minimal or no significant obstacles in implementing digital storytelling, indicating a diverse range of experiences across different educational settings.

Benefits and Advantages of Digital Storytelling in EFL Teaching

Teachers praised its versatility and adaptability in various learning environments. One teacher highlighted, “Digital storytelling facilitates the easy storage and reuse of educational materials,” which is particularly beneficial in settings with limited resources. This aspect of digital storytelling allows for efficient content recycling, making it a cost-effective teaching tool. Another teacher lauded digital storytelling as “an advanced and efficient pedagogical instrument,” pointing out its capability to streamline and enhance learning. This efficiency is seen in how digital stories can condense complex information into engaging, digestible formats, making learning more accessible for students.

A significant benefit noted was the role of multimedia elements, like audio and video, in enriching learners’ sensory and cognitive experiences. Such multimedia integration caters to different learning styles and preferences, potentially leading to higher retention rates and a deeper understanding of the subject matter. One teacher observed, “The use of multimedia in digital storytelling has visibly increased student engagement and interaction,” suggesting that this approach can effectively capture and maintain students’ attention, a crucial element in effective language teaching. Moreover, teachers recognized the potential of digital storytelling to foster a more interactive and participative classroom environment. One teacher said: “Students become active learners rather than passive recipients of information, engaging with content in a way that encourages deeper involvement and understanding.”

The consensus among the teachers was that digital storytelling, with its blend of multimedia elements and engaging narratives, offers a rich, dynamic, and efficient method for language teaching. It not only aids in appealingly presenting information but also significantly contributes to an interactive and immersive learning experience, enhancing the overall quality of EFL education.

Discussion

Discussion of Research Question 1

The findings were predominantly skewed positive when examining the first research question about EFL teachers' perceptions of digital storytelling in Jordan. This favourable view is likely influenced by several key factors inherent to the educational context in Jordan. Digital storytelling signifies a transformative shift from conventional teaching methodologies, aligning with the contemporary emphasis on dynamic, student-centred learning approaches. This evolution is well-documented in educational research (Robin, 2008; Yang & Wu, 2012), supporting its growing adoption and effectiveness in diverse learning environments. Teachers explicitly appreciated how digital storytelling revitalizes conventional teaching, with one stating, "It brings a fresh perspective to our vocabulary lessons and enhances language skills like listening and speaking interactively."

The alignment of digital storytelling with specific educational outcomes in EFL was another critical factor contributing to its positive reception. Teachers found that digital storytelling effectively dovetails with essential language learning objectives. This is evident in comments like, "Digital storytelling directly supports our curriculum goals, particularly in engaging students more deeply with the language." Teacher preparedness and proficiency in utilizing digital tools also play a significant role. Those with training or a natural inclination towards technology in education might perceive digital storytelling more positively, seeing it as a valuable tool in their instructional arsenal. Furthermore, the cultural relevance of digital storytelling content and its role in enhancing student engagement cannot be overlooked. Customized stories that reflect local contexts and students' interests likely increase engagement and make learning more meaningful and enjoyable. A teacher highlighted this aspect: "Students connect better with culturally relevant and engaging stories, making the learning experience more impactful." Generally, this broad optimism is consistent with prior research highlighting the benefits of digital storytelling in language teaching (Fan, 2022; Fitri et al., 2022).

However, despite these positive aspects, a minority of teachers expressed reservations, primarily due to practical implementation challenges like limited resources and integration issues with the existing curriculum. Such concerns are echoed in broader educational technology literature (Canals & Al-Rawashdeh, 2018; Haga, 2023) and reflect the need for adequate support and resources for successful implementation. To put it briefly, while the general percep-

tion of digital storytelling in EFL instruction is overwhelmingly positive, as evidenced by the teachers' testimonies, it is nuanced by practical considerations. The findings suggest that addressing these challenges and leveraging the method's alignment with educational goals and cultural relevance are crucial to maximizing its potential in the EFL classroom.

Discussion of Research Question 2

In exploring the impact of digital storytelling on student engagement and language proficiency, the study reveals a multifaceted array of outcomes influenced by various factors. Teachers reported a noticeable increase in student engagement, which aligns with research endorsing interactive learning environments (Mansi, 2019). For example, one teacher noted, "Digital storytelling has significantly increased student participation and attention in my class," suggesting the method's ability to engage students more profoundly. The variation in engagement levels among different groups can be attributed to individual learning styles and technological familiarity. Students accustomed to digital environments likely find digital storytelling more engaging, while those with limited tech exposure may experience a steeper learning curve. Moreover, socio-economic background also plays a role, as students with greater access to technology outside of school are more likely to engage actively with digital storytelling methods in the classroom. This disparity highlights the need for equitable access to technological resources to ensure all students benefit from digital learning tools.

The study's findings also underline significant improvements in language proficiency, especially in vocabulary and conversational skills, as a direct result of integrating digital storytelling in EFL classrooms. Teachers have observed notable advancements, with one teacher remarking, "Since integrating digital storytelling, there has been a noticeable improvement in students' vocabulary and conversational abilities." This observation aligns with the effectiveness of multi-modal language-learning approaches as highlighted by Tran (2021). The immersive quality of digital storytelling, which synthesizes visual, auditory, and narrative elements, offers a contextual and engaging language learning experience. It not only aids in the retention and application of language skills but also fosters active learner participation. This participatory aspect is crucial, leading to deeper cognitive engagement and enhancing language retention, thereby underscoring the method's critical role in developing language skills.

Furthermore, the success of digital storytelling in fostering language proficiency is significantly influenced by external factors, as highlighted by teachers. The availability of necessary resources, such as interactive whiteboards, and a conducive learning environment are pinpointed as essential for maximizing

the pedagogical benefits of digital storytelling. This reliance on contextual elements for effective digital storytelling implementation resonates with previous findings in educational technology research (Rusda & Puspitasari, 2023; Sadik, 2008), which emphasize that educational technology's impact often hinges on supportive external conditions. Therefore, the efficacy of digital storytelling in enhancing language skills is not only a function of its inherent educational features but also depends on the broader educational ecosystem in which it is implemented. In a nutshell, while digital storytelling has positively impacted student engagement and language proficiency, its effectiveness is mediated by a constellation of factors. These include not only the individual characteristics of students but also the broader infrastructural and institutional context. Teachers' optimism towards the advantages of digital storytelling underscores its potential as an instructional tool. However, this potential is fully realized only when these diverse elements are adequately addressed, a sentiment that resonates with broader discussions in educational technology.

Discussion of Research Question 3

A multifaceted picture emerges in addressing the third research question, which probes the specific challenges and advantages Jordanian EFL teachers face in integrating digital storytelling. A key challenge identified by teachers is the lack of adequate infrastructure, notably the absence of interactive whiteboards and sufficient processing resources in some schools. This issue, as one teacher vividly described, "limits our ability to engage students with digital stories fully," reflects systemic flaws within the educational sector, a concern echoed in prior research (Aljaberi, 2021).

Furthermore, the rigidity of the existing curriculum was frequently cited as a barrier to integrating digital storytelling effectively. Teachers noted that "fitting digital stories into our tightly-packed curriculum is a constant struggle," indicating institutional limitations favouring traditional instructional approaches and a potential gap in preparing teachers for innovative methodologies. Time constraints also surfaced as a significant concern, aligning with broader educational discourse emphasizing the need for careful planning and resource allocation in adopting new teaching methods (Lim et al., 2022).

On the flip side, teachers identified several advantages of digital storytelling, which offer a counterbalance to these challenges. The ability to save and reuse digital storytelling materials was highlighted as a precious feature, especially in resource-limited contexts. As one teacher said, "The reusability of digital stories helps us overcome some resource challenges." This practical aspect of digital storytelling contributes to its appeal as an effective instructional tool. Teachers also underscored the versatility of digital storytelling in achieving

diverse educational objectives, from skill enhancement to cognitive engagement. “Digital storytelling allows us to target multiple learning goals engagingly,” shared a teacher, reflecting the method’s capacity to cater to different pedagogical needs. This advantage aligns with the growing body of research supporting multimodal, interactive methods in education for enriching learning experiences (Belda-Medina, 2021; Indriani & Suteja, 2023).

In summary, exploring the third research question reveals a landscape where challenges coexist with significant advantages, shaping teachers’ perceptions and implementing digital storytelling in EFL settings. Despite facing infrastructural, curricular, and time-related hurdles, the method’s adaptability, practical benefits, and pedagogical effectiveness present compelling reasons for its integration into teaching practices. This intricate back-and-forth of difficulties and advantages, embedded within the broader context of educational technology, underlines the evolving nature of teaching methodologies and the need to navigate these dynamics effectively.

Implications

This study sheds light on significant implications for the theoretical framework and practical execution across educational domains, notably in pedagogical methodologies, curriculum innovation, and policy formulation.

Theoretical Implications

The favourable reception of digital storytelling among teachers in Jordan highlights its transformative potential in language education methodologies. This enthusiasm underscores the ability of digital storytelling to augment the EFL curriculum, laying a theoretical foundation for incorporating technology-driven educational tools. It challenges conventional teaching models, promoting a transition towards interactive, learner-centric educational environments. This study contributes substantially to the ongoing dialogue about technology’s role in education, advocating for a critical reassessment of current pedagogical approaches by showcasing the capacity of digital storytelling to engage learners actively and bolster language acquisition.

Practical Implications

Identified challenges in curriculum enhancement, notably the absence of vital technological infrastructure and difficulties in aligning digital storytelling with established curriculum objectives, are pivotal. Educational bodies and policymakers are urged to prioritize allocating resources to bridge these gaps, whether by securing investments for the requisite technology or initiating professional development programs to equip teachers with the skills necessary for implementing digital storytelling effectively. A tangible example of the application of digital storytelling in EFL classrooms involves students crafting digital narratives that reflect personal experiences or align with curriculum themes. An assignment might require students to create a digital story about a cultural festival, integrating research, narrative development, and multimedia production. This approach influences theoretical language skills in tangible scenarios and cultivates cultural sensitivity and digital literacy. The efficacy of digital storytelling is contingent upon the availability of resources and institutional backing. Implementing policies that support integrating digital storytelling's curriculum—such as financial investment in technology and teacher training—is critical. Schools might, for example, introduce policies that ensure access to tablets or digital storytelling software, guaranteeing that all learners can engage in these enriching educational activities. Achieving the full educational potential of digital storytelling in EFL teaching necessitates a unified approach among educators, administrators, and policymakers. This collaborative effort should address logistical and infrastructural challenges, creating an environment conducive to the success of digital storytelling as an educational tool.

Limitations and Recommendations

The study has various limitations that should be considered and pave the way for further research. First, the study is limited to EFL teachers in Jordan, which may limit its relevance to broader situations. Further studies may benefit from a more diverse participant pool, possibly extending the research to different school systems or nations. Second, the study relies heavily on qualitative interview data, which may introduce subjective biases. Future studies could improve the validity of findings by combining qualitative and quantitative data sources, such as standardised tests or surveys. Third, the study focuses entirely on teachers' perspectives, ignoring students' experiences and reactions to digital storytelling. Future efforts should aim for a more thorough understanding

by including the students' perspectives. Considering these limitations, future studies could better understand how digital storytelling affects EFL education.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research sheds significant light on the complexities and opportunities associated with using digital storytelling in Jordanian EFL classrooms. The study affirms a generally positive perception among teachers regarding the utility of digital storytelling as a tool for engagement and improving specific language skills such as vocabulary acquisition, speaking, and listening. These findings support the developing consensus regarding the advantages of interactive, multimedia-based pedagogies by corroborating the positive evaluations found in prior educational research. However, the study also highlights the numerous obstacles teachers experience when incorporating digital storytelling into their curricula. These range from infrastructural limitations and lack of resources to curricular constraints and time pressures. These obstacles align with broader issues identified in the literature on educational technology, indicating that teachers confront universal challenges outside of Jordan. The research provides a well-rounded comprehension of the function and influence of digital storytelling in EFL classrooms. It emphasises its potential to considerably enhance language learning experiences and the practical obstacles that impede its widespread adoption. Thus, the study is essential to the discourse on educational technologies, providing educators, policymakers, and future researchers with actionable insights.

Funding

'The authors extend their appreciation to the Deanship of Scientific Research at Northern Border University, Arar, KSA for funding this research work through the project number "NBU-FFR-2024-2905-03."

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The Interview

Demographic Information

Gender	☐ Male	☐ Female		
Qualifications	☐ Bachelor's	☐ Master's	☐ Doctorate	
Teaching Experience	☐ 1–5	☐ 6–10	☐ 11–15	☐ More than 15

Interview Questions

1. How do you see the role of digital storytelling in enhancing the teaching and learning of English in your classroom?
2. Could you describe your strategies for integrating digital storytelling into your EFL lessons? How do you adapt these methods for different classroom contexts or age groups, and what specific goals do you aim to achieve with this approach?
3. In your experience, how has digital storytelling influenced not only student engagement but also their language skills in your classroom? Can you share examples where you have observed notable changes in student participation, interest levels, and improvements in specific language abilities during digital storytelling activities?
4. What are the challenges you have faced in integrating digital storytelling into the English language curriculum? This could include technical issues, student engagement, or educational concerns.
5. In your opinion, what are the main advantages of using digital stories in the English language classroom? Have you noticed any specific improvements in students' language skills, engagement, or other areas?