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Effects of Digital Stories on the Development of EFL Learners' Listening Skill[*]

Nebahat Seren Akdamar[1], Selim Soner Sütçü[2]

[1] Department of Basic English, Atılım University, Ankara, Turkey
[2] Faculty of Science and Letters, Başkent University, Ankara, Turkey

Correspondence: Selim Soner Sütçü, Faculty of Science and Letters, Başkent University, Ankara, Turkey.
E-mail: ssoner@baskent.edu.tr

Abstract
The purpose of this research was to investigate the effects of digital storytelling on listening skills of language learners and their attitudes towards the use of digital storytelling. 64 secondary school students whose degrees were 6th and 7th grade participated in the study. The study was conducted in Adana, Turkey during the fall semester of the academic year 2020-2021. Quasi-experimental design with pretest-posttest control group was employed for the research. Listening comprehension achievement test and learners' attitude scale were the data collection tools of the research. The results of the study revealed that participants had statistically significant differences in their listening skills improvement and test group had higher competency in listening activities compared to the control group. The findings also provided additional information about learners' attitudes towards digital storytelling listening activities, including their motivation level and thoughts. Students' attitudes towards digital storytelling were positive and their motivation was significantly higher.

Keywords: Digital Storytelling, Listening Skill, Foreign Language Learning

1. Introduction

In the past several decades technological advances have played a vital role in language education. The globalization of the world and developments in technology require the people to take learning into another level and not only be capable to speak English but also be proficient in using it. This creates the phenomenon of English as lingua franca, the common communication language internationally in many fields such as science, business, and technology (Kırkgöz, 2008).

In Turkey, schools provide compulsory English as a foreign language (EFL) classes starting at 2nd grade in Ministry of National Education (MoNE) schools, even earlier in private schools and kindergartens. English language plays a vital role in Turkey, as well as the rest of the world, in catching up with the changing world and keeping up with the technological growth. The necessity of knowing English has forced educators to find new

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and efficient ways to boost the language learning process and create different learning environments by using educational technology. Computer technologies can assume important roles in realisation of effective language learning besides creating a student-centered learning environment in language classrooms and reducing teacher-centeredness hence encouraging learners to practice the language without the fear of making mistakes by reducing their "affective filter" (Al-Mahrooqi & Troudi, 2014). Increasing the student-centred learning requires experienced and technological teachers to guide students. As Giles and Kent (2017) state, teachers have the responsibility to be the bridge between students and technology to combine students' readiness about technology and how to use that efficiently for educational purposes.

1.1 Digital Storytelling and Language Learning

With the increasing use of technological tools in education, traditional ways of teaching language have evolved to technological journeys. Storytelling is a significant example of this. Stories have always been told in every culture over the centuries. Moreover, before the written era the first way of communication was oral stories by which people transmitted their cultural heritage; like their beliefs, history, traditions to next generations (Hamilton & Weiss, 1990). Besides these facts, storytelling touches our hearts, leaves a mark in our minds, enriches our emotions, makes us feel happy, sad, angry, excited etc. which together help us to store, organize and remember information. These qualities of stories make them a perfect pedagogical tool to use in language classes. Stories help children to involve themselves in the stories, build their interpreting skills and create a bound between the characters and themselves as well as being a bridge between the child's real worlds (Brewster, et al., 1992). Storytelling also enhances visual descriptions, cultural awareness, critical thinking, and mindfulness (Miller & Pennycuff, 2008). Moreover, storytelling helps better understanding because it is easy to comprehend when what is given by the lecturer is explained in flow of epilogue, plot, and prologue.

The development of technology and the use of mass media have improved the traditional storytelling process as well, and the term digital storytelling (also stated as "DST" or "DS") came out. Digital storytelling is one of the modern, entertaining, and useful tools that technology offers, and it is a great source of motivation for learners at any age. In DS digital content such as pictures, drawings, video clips, audio are used to create short movies. When used properly DS helps students produce and improve 21st century literacy skills also known as digital age literacies. In digital age the education process is supposed to adapt the perception of the edutainment which combines education and entertainment while accommodating learners to 21st century skills (Özer, 2016). DS is advantageous as it motivates learners, develops technological skills, improves self-esteem, and creates social learners as well as critical thinkers.

1.2 Digital Storytelling and Listening Skill

With all these benefits, DS could be most helpful for the improvement of listening skill in language education. The importance of building communicative competence and perceiving the inputs makes listening a crucial skill in language teaching. Listening is a complex process that requires learners to match the things they hear with already existing knowledge (Pangaribuan, Sinaga & Sipayung, 2017). However, teachers mostly expect the learners to build listening skills themselves by hearing things around them because listening skill was recognized as a passive skill that would improve without help. However, this notion has transformed into an active process theoretically (Walker, 2014). As learners are expected to learn as they hear the target language, the difference between hearing and listening precludes this idea. Hearing and listening are two different terms, hearing is perceiving sounds around us as sound waves and listening is paying attention to making sense of what is perceived (Imene, 2008). Thus, improving listening skills is usually ignored and students lack the skills of listening.

The development of the computer technology has enabled new methods that involve the use of multimedia and digital interaction and DS has appeared as one of those new methods which can be benefited by language learners greatly. DS activities planned for a specific purpose enrich comprehension and stimulate thinking while listening as well as reaching the target teaching aim (Datko, 2014). The occurrence of texts, sounds, graphics, and images in multi-media that provides visual, aural, and textual input raise the cognitive functioning of

learners besides provoking perception in listening (Meskill, 1996). DS improves the ability to analyse and criticize thoughts through listening and watching better than traditional storytelling and improves the quality of the sentence formation as well as guiding learners to organize their thoughts in a sequence to retell a story (A.S. Tabieh et al., 2021). DS empowers the ability to recall and comprehend information not only by listening but also with visuals which effect the permanence of the listening input (Türe Köse, 2019). Tubail (2015) states that providing a distinct method rather than traditional ones stimulates the interest of the learners and diverse use of media tools such as pictures, sounds and videos foster the listening comprehension level of students.

In their research Ciğerci and Gültekin (2017) investigated the effects of digital storytelling on 4th grade primary students' mother tongue listening skills in Turkish courses. Results showed that learners exposed to digital storytelling show more interest towards the course, feel more confident in listening activities and are willing to participate in the activities. In her master thesis Türe Köse (2019) investigated the effects of digital storytelling on 60-72-month group preschool children's listening skills in their mother tongue which is Turkish. The study showed that digital storytelling is effective to improve creative, critical, emphatic, selective listening skills of kindergarten students. Verdugo and Belmonte (2007) examined the improvement of listening skills of 220 six-year-old Spanish EFL students with the aid of digital storytelling. The research was conducted with an internet-based syllabus and instructors used an internet-based activity. Based on the pre and post-tests, questionnaires and classroom observation use of technology and use of digital storytelling improved listening skills of the students in many ways. Hamdy (2017) did a research to expose the effects of DS on reading and listening comprehension of university degree students. The findings revealed that experimental group that had DS treatment outperformed control group with significant scores that confirmed the positive outcomes of DS. Loniza, Saad and Che Mustafa (2018) investigated whether digital storytelling had any effects on kindergarten students' listening skills. Students in the treatment group scored higher in the listening comprehension test than the ones in the control group.

Though there are a few studies examining the use of DS in language learning, there is still a need for such a new technique that originated from storytelling to be well analysed and investigated with all its digital promises with learners at different age groups and levels. Hence, this study aims to contribute to the literature concerning the development of language learners' listening skills with the aid of digital storytelling and learners' motivation towards use of DS in addition to providing information for the teachers to integrate digital storytelling to their classrooms. Finally, this study aims to put forward an example for integrating a digital tool into teaching process that language teachers may benefit from and adapt to their classrooms. In order to achieve the purpose of the research, this study addresses the following questions:
1. Does digital storytelling have an impact on the development of students' listening skills and if so, to what extend does it affect the development of listening skills?
2. Does digital storytelling have an impact on students' attitudes towards listening skills?

2. Method

In this research the researcher aims to find out whether digital storytelling has an impact on students' listening skills or not. Research questions of the study lead to an experimental research design which is formed with at least one group that is treated and results are compared to a control group which receives no treatment (Boone, et Al., 2014). The study has quasi-experimental design with pretest-posttest control group. Quasi-experimental designs classify a comparison group and treatment group with similar characteristics and aims to test the effects of the treatment (White & Sabarwal, 2014). Pretest-posttest designs are mainly used to compare groups or measure the change from the treatment (Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2003). Digital storytelling is applied to experimental group as treatment and control group did not receive any digital story intervention, remained on the regular storytelling instruction. The classes were assigned randomly after confirming the parental permissions and receiving the volunteering acceptance paper of students to participate in the study. Due to the privacy policies the identities of the participants are kept anonymous. The study lasted for six weeks covering one lesson hour which is decreased to thirty minutes each week for each group. The data was obtained through a listening comprehension test which includes both multiple-choice questions and true-false questions to assess the level of understanding. Also, an attitude scale was applied to understand the students' attitudes towards digital storytelling and the instructor during the experimental process. Figure 1 below shows the design of the research.

Week	Experimental Group	Control Group
1st week	Pretest	Pretest
2nd week	Digital storytelling implementation	Flashcard storytelling implementation
3rd week	Digital storytelling implementation	Flashcard storytelling implementation
4th week	Digital storytelling implementation	Flashcard storytelling implementation
5th week	Digital storytelling implementation	Flashcard storytelling implementation
6th week	Posttest + Learners' Attitude Scale application	Posttest + Learners' Attitude Scale application

Figure 1: Research design

2.1 Participants

Convenience sampling was applied while selecting participants however due to the pandemic restrictions and regulations volunteering was the priority while assigning groups. The study was conducted in a secondary school with 7th grade and 6th grade classes with an average of 64 students. The students participated in this study are aged between 11 and 14. The research was implemented right after the end of distance learning and because of that most of the students were absent which is why this study is limited to only one seventh grade and one sixth grade class that are divided into two groups. Sixth graders were divided into two groups of 16 students who had lessons on different days because of pandemic regulations which became practical for the researcher to conduct the research as control and test groups for one identical class. Two students from sixth grade were absent during the research process, so the participants of the sixth graders were 30 students in total. Seventh graders are also divided into two groups of 17 students for the same reason and 34 students of seventh graders participated in the study in total.

2.2 Data Collection Tools

The data was collected through a listening comprehension test and attitude scale in this study. "Tests are generally used for knowledge-based questions." (Barkman, 2002, p.12). To understand the efficiency listening comprehension test included knowledge-based and vocabulary knowledge questions about the story given. Thus, to obtain data about the learners' listening skills a comprehension test with the comparison group was applied before and after the intervention to identify the progress of the listening skills. To identify the learners' attitudes towards use of DS an attitude scale was implemented at the end of the research process to see if DS had any impacts on motivation level of the learners.

2.2.1. Listening Comprehension Test

Listening comprehension test includes three parts A, B, and C. Part A consists of four multiple choice comprehension check questions. Part B consists of four true/false comprehension check questions. Part C consists of four multiple choice vocabulary knowledge questions. Items were distributed as:
Part A: Choose the correct answer (recognizing and understanding the story)
Part B: Circle true or false (finding the details of the story, understanding the moral)
Part C: Choose the correct answer (guessing the meanings of vocabulary)

In the preparation phase of the listening comprehension test researcher depended on previous studies in the literature, expert teachers' opinions, and textbooks. Types of achievement tests used in this field were analysed by the researcher to construct a suitable test for learners. Four experienced English teachers' opinions were taken

into consideration when developing the items for the test to ensure the appropriate test level for students. Two of the teachers were the main course English teachers of the sample classes and guided the researcher on students' English levels. Two other English teachers' advice was asked to substantiate the items of the test. Consequently, some items of the test were replaced with different terms for better understanding. The items of the test were developed in line with the textbooks, the syllabus, and the objectives of in class listening activities. To increase the effectiveness of the test each item's impact was analysed and evaluated by using item analysis method. Based on the measurement results, the items that make up a test were analysed, and decided whether to keep or exclude the items from the test. The listening achievement test consisted of 16 questions initially. As a result of the item analysis, four of the items were eliminated from the test due to insufficient results of item discrimination power index. Additionally, two of the items were revised and modified within the help of experienced teachers.

Table 1: Item Discrimination Index

| Item Number | Lower Group (n=17) | | Upper Group (n=17) | | |
	False Number of Students	True Number of Students	False Number of Students	True Number of Students	ri
A 1	13	4	4	13	0,529
A 2	14	3	9	8	0,294
A 3	14	3	6	11	0,471
A 4	15	2	10	7	0,294
B 1	13	4	2	15	0,647
B 2	11	6	7	10	0,235
B 3	11	6	3	14	0,471
B 4	12	5	4	13	0,471
C 1	11	6	7	10	0,235
C 2	12	5	7	10	0,294
C 3	15	2	7	10	0,471
C 4	15	2	9	8	0,353

The listening achievement test consisted of 16 questions initially. As a result of the item analysis, four of the items were eliminated from the test due to insufficient results of item discrimination power index. Additionally, two of the items were revised and modified within the help of experienced teachers.

2.2.2. Learners' Attitude Scale

The attitude scale prepared by Tubail (2015) is a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. There are five scores for the items, 1 means totally disagree and 5 means totally agree. The scale consists of 27 items disseminated into four domains, first domain "Attitudes Towards the Importance of Listening" consists of 6 items and other three domains "Attitudes Towards Enjoying Listening," Attitudes Towards Listening via Multimedia" and "Attitudes Towards Listening Teacher" consist of 7 items. Tubail (2015) measured the consistency and the reliability of the scale by Alpha Cronbach and Split-Half methods. The results indicated the reliability of the scale statistically positive. The validity of the scale is measured with both referee validity and internal consistency validity which was calculated by Pearson Formula that resulted with the values of the items consistent and valid. Split-Half technique resulted 0.79 which proves high reliability and Cronbach Alpha resulted 0.83 which proves the internal consistency. The reliability of the attitude scale in this study resulted 0.709 and it is sufficient.

2.2.3. Material Development

In the development process of the digital stories, the researcher collected illustrations from accessible websites that provide appropriate visuals for young learners. Stories were created by using "Movie Maker 10" software and "MS PowerPoint." Texts from the story scripts were added to the pictures of the stories as subtitles. Audio

of the story was added with the researcher's own voice recording. The seven elements of digital storytelling were taken into consideration in the development process of the digital stories.

Point of view: The researcher analysed the view of the authors and the morals of the stories.
A dramatic question: The researcher aroused interest of the learners by asking a dramatic question.
Emotional content: The researcher choose stories that emotionally connects learners to the main event.
The gift of your voice: The researcher added her own voice recording to the digital stories.
The power of the soundtrack: Only a cover page background music was added to avoid hearing problems during listening.
Economy: The stories were divided into sections and the length of the videos was determined according to the lesson hour.
Pacing: All the stories followed similar pace, providing enough time for reader to grasp the meaning.

2.2.4. Data Collection Procedure

Before the research implementation the participants were informed about the research process in detail and enlightened about the weekly plans of each lesson period. Additionally, the researcher apprised both groups about the tasks they would work on. Due to the recent pandemic restrictions the research was conducted during 6 weeks in one-hour lesson time which is reduced to thirty minutes each week for each class. Additionally, to pursue the pandemic safety precautions students in each class are divided into two groups by the school administration that averagely consists of 15 students on two different days. So, one group of the same class is assigned as control and the other group as experimental group in the study. First week a pre-test of the story called "Elves and the Shoemaker" that is prepared by the researcher was applied to measure the levels of the students' listening skills before the implementation of the research and before the application of the listening comprehension test researcher read the story aloud for both groups. During the four-week research process experimental group members were given well known stories with a moral lesson that is prepared by the researcher as a digital story. Voice recordings were added to the story when needed as audio files, sound effects and other visuals were taken from online audio effects platforms worldwide accessible. Participants in the control group saw the story as a usual text printed material with pictures, the researcher read the story out loud and had a usual storytelling hour. At the end of the research process, sixth week, a post listening comprehension test was implemented to both groups to see if there was any difference in the level of listening comprehension between the experimental group and control group that did not receive any digital treatment. An attitude scale was also implemented at the end of the research process to evaluate the thoughts and feelings of the learners towards listening.

2.2.5. Data Analysis

The study consisted of 64 students, including 32 control and 32 experimental groups. The analysis was conducted through the IBM SPSS Statistics 26 package program. While evaluating the data, frequencies (number, percentage) for categorical variables and descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) for numerical variables were given. Normality assumptions of numerical variables were examined with the Kolmogorov Smirnov normality test and it was observed that the variables were normally distributed. Therefore, parametric statistical methods were used in the study. The differences between two independent groups were analysed using the Independent Sample T Test. The differences between two dependent numerical variables were examined with the Dependent Sample T Test. Differences between the two dependent categorical variables were checked by Mc Nemar analysis. Statistical significance in the analyses was interpreted at the level of .05.

3. Results

3.1. Research Question 1

The findings related to the first research question of this study "Does digital storytelling have an impact on the development of students' listening skills and if so, to what extend does it affect the development of listening skills?" are summarized below.

In order to find out whether digital storytelling improved the success level of students in listening as mentioned in Research Question 1, the results of the pre and post-tests are analysed and explained with the help of independent and dependent T-tests. Table 1 indicates the findings of the success scores of the pre and post-tests within and between groups.

Table 1: Examination of the differences in Pre-Test and Post-Test for success scores according to groups

		Control (n=32)		Test (n=32)		Differences Between groups	
		Av.	S.S.	Av.	S.S.	t	P
Success Scores	Pre Test	46,09	15,04	43,95	12,65	0,618	0,539
	Post Test	45,70	14,50	65,04	10,75	-6,059	0,000*
In group differences		t^b=0,349	P=0,730	t^b=-10,158	P=0,000*		

*p<.05: t^a: Independent Sample T Test t^b: Dependent Sample T Test

As a result of the independent sample t test, there is no statistically significant difference between the control and test groups in terms of pre-test success scores (p> .05), while there is a statistically significant difference in terms of post-test success scores (p <.05). Accordingly, the post-test success scores of the test group are significantly higher than the control group. As a result of the dependent sample t test, there is no statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test success scores of the control group (p> .05).

Dependent sample t test results showed a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test success scores of the test group (p <.05). Accordingly, the success scores of the test group in the post-test increased significantly compared to the pre-test.

3.2. Research Question 2

The findings related to the second research question of this study "Does digital storytelling have an impact on students' attitudes towards listening skills?" are summarized below.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Regarding "Learners' Attitude Scale" and Its Sub-Dimensions According to Groups

	Control (n=32)		Test (n=32)		t	p
	Av.	S.S.	Av.	S.S.		
Attitudes Towards The Importance of Listening	2,58	0,43	3,32	0,42	-6,868	0,000*
Attitudes Towards Enjoying Listening	2,83	0,41	3,17	0,51	-2,926	0,000*
Attitudes Towards Learning Listening By Digital Storytelling	3,72	0,41	4,49	0,36	-7,870	0,000*
Attitudes Towards The Listening Teacher	3,16	0,43	3,96	0,51	-6,879	0,000*
Total Score	3,07	0,24	3,73	0,29	-9,875	0,000*

*:p<.05 t: Independent Sample T Test

As a result of the independent sample t test, demonstrated a statistically significant difference between the scores of test and control groups in terms of "Attitudes Towards The Importance of Listening", "Attitudes Towards Enjoying Listening", Attitudes Towards Learning Listening By Digital Storytelling, "Attitudes Towards the Listening Teacher" and "Learners' Attitude Scale". The test group's "Attitudes Towards The Importance of Listening", "Attitudes Towards Enjoying Listening", Attitudes Towards Learning Listening By Digital Storytelling "," Attitudes Towards The Listening Teacher "and" Learners' Attitude Scale "scores were found higher than the control group.

4. Discussion

The initial objective of this research which was to explore the effects of DS on listening skills improvement. The results confirmed that digital storytelling has a positive effect on improving listening skills of learners. Students using DS outperformed the other group students with regular listening instruction. DS helped learners to improve their listening success noticably. This finding is in line with the studies conducted by Atmowardoyo and Weda (2018) and Hamdy (2017).

Concerning the results related with students' attitudes and motivation level, students using DS marked more positive statements. Students in the control group demanded fewer listening activities while the students that used DS favoured for more, this is reflected in the items "I feel happy when we miss a listening class" and "I feel annoyed when doing any listening task". Majority of the control group students stated that they felt better when they missed listening activities and felt irritated when doing listening activities whereas the students using DS were unhappy to lose the opportunity of doing listening activities and were pleased to do listening tasks. "I wait impatiently for the multimedia listening classes" is another prominent item by the group with DS, which implies that the use of multimedia tools effects learners' perception of listening activities positively.

These findings are aligned with the studies carried out by Tubail (2015) and Yoon (2013). These studies indicate that replacing the traditional method that includes books and written sources with technology that includes media contributes to learner's attention, motivation, and learning. They further found that engaging learners with a new learning tool, surrounding learners with technological aids that contain mixed media types reduces the anxiety towards language learning and improves the eagerness to learn. The use of digital media tools such as videos, music, sounds, pictures increase positive attitudes while lacking these uses of media lower the interest, motivation and cause negative attitude towards listening.

This research also provides some pedagogical implications for the field of language learning. Instructors should seek for more information on how to apply digital storytelling into their curriculum while turning from the traditional storytelling or story reading activities because the guidance of the instructor is critical for the first impression of learners. Another suggestion is for schools and colleges to hold teacher training seminars or workshops on how to use technological tools efficiently in class and particularly give information of the DS process alongside others. Digital storytelling may be perceived as an easy-to-use tool however there are several steps of preparation for each level of students with different tasks that aim for a variety of knowledge from different perspectives. When schools provide enough training, sample lesson plans, the learning outcomes could be enhanced.

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