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Voices Heard, Voices Seen: From Classroom Praxis to Digital Stories Worth Sharing

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the primary benefits digital storytelling affords teachers and students. Maximizing the multimodal authoring conditions for optimal online/offline learning comprises the paper's main focus. Throughout, it is asserted that stories worth telling are stories worth sharing but only if embedded in dialogic constructs supporting authentic pursuits. Practical considerations important to understanding digital storytelling and its manifold applications, along with classroom-tested recommendations for digital creations, are then presented, followed by seven pedagogical implications requiring a more focused treatment. It is concluded that students are indeed capable of transforming themselves from passive consumers of technology into active creators of digital compositions, one voice, one story at a time.

Keywords: digital storytelling; digital creations; multimodal learning; authentic language

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Introduction

Since the beginning of time, people have been telling stories to express their needs and wants. What began as oral stories around campfires tens of thousands of years ago has now morphed into digital stories shared around the world in a moment's notice. And though the desire to share stories has remained the same over the millennia, the medium through which stories are nowadays told has not. Virtually all stories told today embrace a distinct *modus operandi* of digital features omnipresent in the art of storytelling itself. Laconically expressed, *digital storytelling* is the artistic practice of using a variety of computer-based tools to tell a 3-5 minute short, personal, multimedia story. Audio, video, voice, digital text, still or moving images, music or other sounds, graphics, titles, transitions and effects, or web links are some of the media tools commonly employed in multimodal authoring. Stories are about specific topics, people, places, events, and personal experiences and feature a recorded narrative with a particular viewpoint or emotional resonance. They are habitually told in the first person and are routinely accompanied by ambient sounds or instrumental music in the background.

The digital footprint of such stories alone makes digital storytelling a most viable option for teaching and learning. Predictably, digital storytelling has been enthusiastically adapted by teachers and students alike. Both pre-service and in-service teachers often employ digital storytelling as a means to express their understanding of the very profession they seek to serve. In so doing, they oftentimes feel the need to sumptuously adorn their digital creations with many bells and whistles without necessarily adding to the utility of the story's primary function: to curate across time and space ever so subconsciously our lived and imagined experiences of the world when so many stories are fighting for attention not readily realized in today's ever-changing world of instant communication. A similar fate befalls students tasked with designing their own digital masterpieces. They too spend much time amassing, editing, and reediting the latest and greatest digital features instead of summoning their intellectual capabilities to edit the message they wish the world to know, one voice telling one story that matters to the rest of us all, a story worth telling, a story worth sharing.

Making the most of such advantageous occasions in both online/offline learning environments demands a keen understanding of the distinct benefits digital storytelling affords teachers and students alike, the primary focus of this paper. Specifically, the paper focuses on optimizing the conditions of learning that are certain to influence the processes of digital creations and the ways under which students can experience diversity of thought and critical understanding. It is asserted that stories worth telling are digital stories worth sharing but only if they are dialogically developed *with a purpose* and *for a purpose*. Indeed, for optimal online/offline learning to be attained, digital stories must maximize the multimodal authoring conditions under which these stories are being developed and negotiated between and among students willing to share lived experiences not soon forgotten. Moreover, as we will show next, such "lived experiences" also need to be embedded in dialogic constructs that support authentic pursuits. Without them, both authenticity and purpose would be short lived and, more importantly, perhaps, diversity of thought and critical understanding would fail to emerge as a precondition of the dialogic interactions here engendered.

So contextualized, practical considerations are presented first to provide a foundation for the many different types of literacy, including information literacy, visual literacy, technological literacy, and media literacy. To appeal to students with differing learning styles or intelligences, firm recommendations are then offered, and the logistics and practicality of shepherding digital storytelling projects are highlighted as necessary. Finally, seven key pedagogical implications are presented as exemplary benefits too important to ignore in future professional discussions of digital storytelling.

Stories Worth Telling, Digital Stories Worth Sharing

It is often said that *all roads lead to Rome*. Yet everyone knows that *Rome was not built in a day*. By analogy, while all stories worth telling can become digital stories *per se*, not all stories worth telling are digital stories worth sharing. Contrary to popular belief, *digital storytelling* is not about the voluminous technical tools employed to tell an isolated story with eye-catching visual design, even those stories loaded with emotional force and personal appeal. Neither is it about creating flashy new media formats compelling public sharing nor even the transfer of perfunctory language skills and content knowledge implicating directionless recitation and synthetic purposes. But digital storytelling is all about the sound development of select multimodal literacy and life skills to spearhead critical understanding of personal reflection and dynamic engagement. It is about creating meaning-making events and deep personal testimonies, about sharing and connecting private experiences and perspectives to a community of learners, and about contributing and collaborating with others to achieve a higher level of human consciousness. And, yes, it is also about transforming other people's stories by discovering oneself in them, by lending one's own voice to the voices of others. Stories of success, stories of failure, of setbacks and difficulties, of triumph and loss, of heroes and villains, of failed ambitions and universal truths, of (un)certainty, humility, and honesty—without exception, they all compel us to listen deeply, follow the footsteps left behind, and feel empathy even for characters less so deserving. Stories are the windows into people's lives. Opening them unearths our common humanity. The rest is history. Our history.

Against the backdrop of such storied landscapes, it behooves teacher educators and language professionals alike to first create the conditions for learning that will optimize the purposeful “build-up” of digital creations, one voice, one story at a time. Doing so may well require instructional efforts lasting longer than “a day.” To be sure, achieving a higher level of human consciousness is an enduring quality not easily attained in a single day. More often than not, it takes several weeks to attain, at times even months. And even then, what is so often pursued by so many educational practitioners falls short of producing long-lasting effects in the very students tasked with creating and sharing digital stories. It bears repeating that *stories told without a purpose* are stories that will soon be forgotten in the sands of time, never ever to be heard again among the voices of the others. Conversely, *stories told with and for a purpose* are likely to be remembered as stories worth sharing, as stories worth building upon other people's lives, as stories worth unearthing the history of us all. The Covid-19 coronavirus outbreak alone, now a global pandemic in more than 220 countries and territories around the world, has furnished tens of thousands such stories worth telling for years to come. Life, death, struggle, survival, resolve, hope, fear, despair, depression, evictions, homelessness, hunger, (dis/mis)information, (mis)trust, lockdowns, shutdowns, closures, border controls, announcements, regulations, restrictions, masks, quarantines, unemployment, economic relief, stimulus packages, infodemics, vaccines, social distance, surveillance, punishment, pain, sorrow, protests, riots, analysis paralysis, together apart, fake news, new normal, and social media crackdown are but only 40 of the hundreds of themes heard from the lips of many since early 2020. Here is a particularly telling picture Liontas (2021a) painted in 305 words:

With the death toll rising daily, economic activity grinding to a halt, and (mis/dis)information in a constant state of flux, emotions are riding high, ethical dilemmas are put to the test, emotional health and wellbeing are now an open question. And yes, toilet paper and hand sanitizers are the latest missing-in-action games played across stores, big and small. New safety protocols, including health checks, mandatory use of masks/face coverings, distributed workforce, remote workplaces, social distancing in public spaces, empty sports and entertainment venues, faceless classrooms, zombombings and more, are fast becoming the 'New Normal' in the Age of Coronavirus. Add to that new words, phrases, shortenings, abbreviations, and terms—Pandemic, COVID-19, CARES Act, Flatten the Curve, Safer at Home, Self-quarantine, Social Distancing, Elbow Bumping, Virtual Learning, Webinar, Zoom—and the picture of living during this Corona-speak period of extreme and unprecedented uncertainty is far

from complete. The Coronavirus pandemic has changed the world around us forever: transparency now gives way to the politics of urgency, changing ideologies challenge the decrees of government agencies, uncivil discourse tests public policy. New fiscal forces in the trillions of dollars ripple through global economies like wildfire set ablaze by an enemy unseen. Turbulence ahead, we fasten our seatbelts, tighten our belts, pinch pennies around the house. We wash our hands time and again. We abandon old rituals like handshaking and hugging in favor of forming new habits: elbow bumping and a head nod from afar. Uncertainty feels destabilizing. Our sense of identity as language professionals is fractured. Social shifts heighten our growing anxiety of what changes tomorrow may bring still. We fall prey to the insecurities living rent free in our heads 24/7. One after the other, the Domino pieces fall in an unending spiral chain reaction. The Coronaphobia domino effect is all but complete. Enter paralysis by analysis. (pp. 1-2)

With more than 176,050,568 cases, 3,805,713 deaths, and 2,366,976,220 vaccine doses now administered worldwide (as of 6/14/2021, 12:22 PM, Johns Hopkins University & Medicine Coronavirus Resource Center, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>), the Coronavirus stories worth telling are far from over; sharing them in an unapologetic fashion is the ultimate testament to the human spirit bar none. To spearhead such purposeful digital efforts, educational practitioners, from elementary to graduate level classes, are counseled to employ a backward design as the organizing principle for their projects. The key processes of backward design (Tornwall, 2017) are to “identify desired results, determine acceptable evidence, and plan learning experiences and instruction” (p. 13). Without question, there exist numerous ways to employ digital storytelling in education in general and English language learning in particular. One of the first decisions regarding these promising curricular tools is *authorship*: is it best for instructors to create the digital stories they envision for prime instructional purposes and employ them as samples for future digital designs or should students be given complete freedom to build digital stories from the ground up as they see fit? If the latter, should students make inferences or extrapolations from instructor samples? The answers to these questions are a matter of pragmatic considerations and will depend heavily on the intellectual maturity of the students, needs, interests, and access to technological platforms and tools notwithstanding. It is thus quite conceivable that some educators may decide to create multiple stories and share them with students as a way to anchor learning and content knowledge. Conversely, they may decide not to show students any samples until the students have created their own so as not to unduly influence their path of self-discovery during digital authoring. (A detailed account of digital stories with a twist at the doctoral level is provided in Liontas, 2020b.)

And just as anchors are used to moor ships to the seabed to avert them from drifting due to wind or current, in like manner, an engaging, multimedia-rich digital story can serve as an anticipatory set or hook to capture the attention of students, increasing their interest in exploring new ideas and content materials in the process. The bed of a body of water becomes the ‘seabed of ideas’ to which drift anchors are tethered by chains to stabilize ships in heavy weather, metaphorically speaking, of course. By design, an anchor’s pair of curved and/or barbed flukes digs into softer bottoms or crevices in hard bottoms, as needed. Sea anchors increase the ‘drag through the water’ (the curriculum that is enacted by students for students) and act as a viable brake along ‘digital voyages of discovery.’ Always pushing through the sea bottom, the ‘anchor’ (digital story) represents strength of knowledge, support for multimodal literacy and life-skills development, stability in critical understanding, calmness of personal reflection, and steadfastness in dynamic student engagement. Every time sea anchors are lifted up from the ‘water of a port’ (educational level or language proficiency level), they represent a novel adventure for meaning-making events and personal testimonies, a new voyage discovering oneself in experiences and perspectives previously untapped yet often contemplated, the unfailing hope of all who seek new wondrous quests in the pages of history that live in the voices of us all.

Practical Considerations: Voices Heard...

As already argued, digital stories can support the learning of individual lessons within large units of academic or linguistic content. Most assuredly, they can facilitate dialogic discussion about topics addressed in stories and, more importantly, make abstract or conceptual content understandable and accessible to students. While some educators may lack cohesive plans for integrating multimedia into online/offline instruction, a growing number of teachers are increasingly interested in exploring ways to engage students in digital creations employing visual and audio elements, the judicious combination of which is believed to help students retain new information while concomitantly aiding the comprehension of more challenging material.

But digital storytelling can also be a potent tool for students who are taught how best to author stories. After viewing examples created by their teachers or other story developers, students may be given assignments in which they first research topics and then choose particular points of view. No doubt, this type of activity can generate further interest, attention, and motivation among students already familiar with today's demands for astute digital creations. By extension, this creative process can capitalize on the creative talents of students as they begin to research and tell stories of their own. It also can help students learn to use library and internet resources to research deep content while concurrently analyzing and synthesizing content that matters most to them. Moreover, students who participate in digital story creations may also develop enhanced communications skills by learning to organize ideas, ask questions, express opinions, and construct narratives. As students learn to create stories for audiences and present ideas and knowledge in individual and meaningful ways, they also have opportunities to share personal work with peers and gain valuable experience in critiquing their own and peers' work, especially when digital stories are published online, which further promotes gains in emotional intelligence and social learning. More importantly, perhaps, digital storytelling appeals to students with diverse learning styles and also fosters manifold collaborative practices when they work in groups. Student collaboration provides a distinct measure of previously unrealized gain in enhancing the overall student digital creation experience through collective ownership and deep personal accomplishment (see, for example, Liantas, 2020a, 2020b, 2021a, 2021b).

When students utilize storied creations with a purpose and for a purpose, digital storytelling, as a sound pedagogical construct, provides solid foundations in many different types of literacy, including information literacy, visual literacy, technological literacy, and media literacy. Combined, these represent "Twenty-First Century Literacy" (Brown et al., 2005). In response to new demands of the information age, teachers now integrate technology across the curriculum. Traditional literacy instruction involved the use of textbooks, skills lessons, ability groups, numerous worksheets and workbook pages, as well as writing only teachers read. In contrast, literacy in the 21st century requires children to not only communicate with classroom peers, but also to read e-books, receive and send email, locate and evaluate online information, prepare reports with presentation software, establish dialogue with learned individuals in other regions, and write for global communities.

Respecting second language (L2) education, the research literature to date (Breen, 2015; Chigona, 2013; Ding & Pawan, 2020; Gachago et al., 2014; Lambert, 2013; Liantas, 2020b, 2021a, 2021b; Meihami & Rashidi, 2020; Mercieca, 2017; Ng & Nicholas, 2015; Patton & Parker, 2017; Plešec Gasparič & Pečar, 2016; Robin, 2016) supports the positive impact storytelling can have on project-based student learning, learner affect and motivation, student-initiated interaction, community building, and learner resilience, to name but the most important contributions. Stories, as well as other learner-generated texts, can serve the core of project-based approaches to L2 education featuring the positive aspects of both constructivist and mastery approaches to learning (Weinstein, 2006). The processes of storytelling can additionally serve as effective means

for learning language and story genres and building communities of learners (Nicholas et al., 2011). For beginning-level students, listening to stories and acting them out can become motivational learning activities (Elkiliç & Akça, 2008). Indeed, interactive storytelling can encourage beginning-level learners to initiate and engage in more interaction with teachers and peers (Li & Seedhouse, 2010). Storytelling enables teachers and researchers to explore strategies language learners employ to cope with the stresses of living and studying in other countries (Nguyen et al., 2015). Collectively, the findings indicate that storytelling contributes to L2 education in a variety of ways. But the body of literature also underscores the need for clear learning objectives, which, based on students' learning styles and preferences embodied in the digital tools, software, and platforms available, must be met first if digital storytelling is to be leveraged successfully with English learners. Specifically, to develop learning objectives related to digital storytelling activities (e.g., researching, creating storyboards, recording narration) and products (e.g., digital stories, storyboards), teachers may turn to guides focusing on cognitive and types-of-knowledge learning outcomes, such as Bloom's revised taxonomy (Kratwohl, 2002). Consisting of cognitive (remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, create) and knowledge (factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive) dimensions, it can help teachers design purpose-driven learning outcomes based on what they consider the cognitive-knowledge capabilities of their students to be.

Since digital storytelling projects offer a degree of freedom regarding contents and processes, and, furthermore, because they engage students in communication through multiple modalities, they can indeed appeal to students with a variety of learning styles or preferences (Oxford, 2003). Teachers may also consider designing digital storytelling projects that appeal to students' strengths with multiple intelligences (Lontas, 2006). Specifically, students with visual learning preferences, or who are strong with visual-spatial intelligence, would benefit from focusing on the visual aspects of their digital creations such as images and graphics. Similarly, students with auditory preferences, or who have a well-developed linguistic intelligence, may find motivation in creating meaning through their voices in narration and choice of music. Conversely, students who are introverted may find digital stories relatively anxiety-free ways of expressing themselves if they create their digital stories in private and share them with peers when they are satisfied with their quality. In addition, students with thinking orientations could focus on analyzing causes or results of events in stories, while those who are feeling-oriented or strong with interpersonal intelligence may employ digital storytelling to explore the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. (For a complete account of learning styles and multiple intelligences, see Lontas, 2006, Table 2, pages 220–222.) Allowing students with different learning preferences, or aptitudes with different intelligences, a degree of freedom regarding the digital storytelling processes and products, can additionally make these projects consistent with differentiated instruction approaches (Blaz, 2016).

Lastly, teachers will need to consider the logistics and practicality of conducting digital storytelling projects in a variety of learning formats and modes of delivery (face-to-face, blended, hybrid, remote, synchronous, asynchronous, flipped learning). For example, will teachers and students have access to hardware, software, and internet connections in the classroom? If students need to work on digital stories at home, teachers need to consider access to these. Whether at home or in classrooms, students can readily employ such online tools as *VoiceThread* or *WeVideo* if quality Wi-Fi access is available. They may also make profitable use of software applications such as *Photo Story*, *iMovie*, or *Movie Maker*, tools that have been shown in successive studies (see "Pedagogical Implications" below) to be particularly effective during multimedia authoring. Teachers may also have students employ free audio recording and editing apps such as *Audacity*. Taken together, learning objectives, learning styles/preferences, multiple intelligences, and access to hardware and software, combined with a dialogic pedagogy to linguistic teaching-and-learning, point to a number of pedagogical implications, the most important of which we explore in the following section.

Pedagogical Implications: Voices Seen...

Based on the literature to date, there are many pedagogical implications digital storytelling affords language practitioners and English learners alike, especially when it is used as a tool with a purpose and for a purpose. A great many of them (Batsila & Tsihouridis, 2016; Castañeda, 2013; Chigona, 2013; Ding & Pawan, 2020; Gachago et al., 2014; Lambert, 2013; Liontas, 2020b, 2021a, 2021b; Ng & Nicholas, 2015; Patton & Parker, 2017; Robin, 2016; Yang, 2012; Yang & Wu, 2012) exemplify benefits too important to ignore, including *motivation, learning styles and preferences, language skill development, technology skills competence, learning experiences reflection, critical thinking, and voice and identity discovery*. These seven topics are discussed in more detail next.

- **Motivation.** The results of multiple studies on digital storytelling suggest it is a motivating way for English learners to learn target languages (e.g., Kim, 2014; Lee, 2014). Many learners, particularly those who are *digital natives*, may find creating, sharing, and viewing multimodal digital texts more interesting than creating the types of monomodal written texts that are typical in L2 contexts. Because it is easy to share digital stories, students may be more motivated to focus on the story quality, and the accompanying target language, if they know their communication will have an audience and a purpose. Liontas (2007) stressed the importance of this awareness stating “[w]hile writing without a purpose is unauthentic, *writing with a purpose but without an audience is useless*” (italics in original) (p. 4).
- **Learning Styles and Preferences.** Digital storytelling projects are particularly suitable and motivating for learners with different learning styles and preferences (Oxford, 2003) because such projects enable them to engage with and express meanings through multiple modalities. Specifically, English learners with visual learning preferences, for example, may find developing the images of digital stories to be motivational. Similarly, learners with auditory preferences may enjoy expressing themselves through narration and music. Even learners who are introverted may find sharing their voices through digital stories less of an anxiety-fraught experience than speaking in front of their peers (Liontas, 2006, 2020a, 2020b, 2021a, 2021b).
- **Language Skill Development.** Digital storytelling projects offer opportunities for English learners to engage in both receptive and active skill practice. Since learners typically narrate digital stories with their own voices, recording narration provides opportunities for speaking practice (e.g., Kim, 2014; Kimura, 2012). Listening practice comes from checking narration for errors (Castañeda, 2013) and watching peers’ digital stories (Ninet & Corachán, 2011). Writing narration transcripts provides opportunities for additional reading and writing practice (Batsila & Tsihouridis, 2016). Proof reading and editing peers’ narration transcripts can provide more practice. Storyboards also enable learners to coordinate written text with other digital stories modalities, such as images and background music (Yang, 2012). Additional writing practice can come from students writing analyses of model digital stories or providing written feedback on peers’ digital stories. Beforehand, however, teachers should help English learners develop the language necessary for assessing digital stories. Teachers may have learners form story circles to share feedback on narration transcripts and thoughts or plans for digital stories (Castañeda, 2013; Lambert, 2013). Added reading practice comes from learners conducting research for their projects. English learners are likely to feel motivated to discover information to include in their digital creations. One way to heighten focus and motivation and provide a rationale for digital storytelling projects would be to hold a “Digital Storytelling Festival” (Ninet & Corachán, 2011) during which learners would watch each other’s stories. Such festivals can function as relatively low-anxiety and less time-consuming alternatives to traditional one-on-one teacher-student oral assessments. To encourage careful viewing of classmates’ digital stories, teachers could have students engage

in peer assessments. Teachers can provide rubrics and offer models of types of language (e.g., constructive advice) English learners may employ in assessments. These kinds of activities also offer additional listening and writing practice. Teachers may also consider letting students revise their digital stories based on the feedback they receive. Willing students could then share their stories with wider audiences by uploading them to video hosting sites. No doubt, engaging in genuine communication with an audience that truly cares about making discernible and steady progress in the four language skills makes the output students produce even more real and meaningful.

- **Technology Skills Competence.** Digital storytelling projects can help English learners develop competence with various types of hardware, application software, and online tools that they employ while creating digital stories. The need to create or edit images for digital stories can become dynamic opportunities to help learners improve competence with image editing tools, such as *Adobe Illustrator* or *Photoshop*. They can develop efficiency with audio editing tools when they record and edit narration, as well as music files. Putting these multimodal elements together in a video can develop skill with video editing apps such as *MovieMaker* or *iMovie* (e.g., Bozdogan, 2012; Castañeda, 2013). They can also use similar online tools, such as *WeVideo*, which has a telecollaborative option. Digital storytelling projects are also opportunities for English learners to become familiar with slideshow software, such as *Photo Story* (e.g., Soler-Pardo, 2014), or presentation software such as *PowerPoint*, both of which students can employ to create digital stories. *VoiceThread*, which enables viewers to make multimodal comments, is yet another free-of-charge interactive slideware tool students may want to try using (Alameen, 2011; Kim, 2014). While digital storytelling projects represent opportunities for learners to gain valuable technological skills which they can later apply in private, professional, or other educational contexts, before starting out teachers should take care to conduct formal or informal surveys to gauge English learners' familiarity with these tools as well as any preferences they may have.
- **Learning Experiences Reflection.** Another use of digital storytelling for English learners is to employ it for reflection upon in-school and out-of-school experiences. Digital storytelling can be an ideal partner project for many hands-on or real-world pedagogical activities, including those employed in project-based (Du & Han, 2016) or experiential learning (Beard & Wilson, 2013; Kolb, 2015) approaches. Two of the four stages in Kolb's (2015) experiential learning approach involve reflection and developing abstract knowledge from learning experiences (Smith & Rayfield, 2017), which digital storytelling projects can facilitate. Reflection on experiential learning activities is also a means of developing abstract academic knowledge (Beard & Wilson, 2013). Conducting digital storytelling projects immediately following other learning experiences can help English learners express with words, and other modalities (e.g., images, music), what they experienced emotionally or kinesthetically. One important value of digital storytelling projects is that their multimodal affordances can help English learners express their knowledge in the target language. Digital storytelling's potential to facilitate reflection on learning experiences makes it particularly suitable for the aforementioned approaches to academic learning in general and language learning in particular.
- **Critical Thinking.** Digital storytelling projects are also opportunities to engage English learners in critical thinking (e.g., Yang & Wu, 2012). To promote higher order thinking, teachers may design digital storytelling projects to engage learners in deep reflection. For example, while English learners new to the target language may find it easier to begin with the uncritical (re)telling of story genres (e.g., autobiographies, recounts), as their critical thinking and linguistic competence improves teachers may challenge them to examine causes or impacts of events in their digital stories instead of just recounting them. Personally relevant stories should be particularly motivating. As noted earlier, coronavirus-related

stories and testimonials of grit, resilience, and human connection are exceptionally fertile ground here. To facilitate critical approaches, teachers may turn to resources such as Bloom's revised taxonomy (Kratwohl, 2002) in order to develop prompts for learners' digital stories. For example, they could have learners engage in critical *analysis* or *evaluation* of knowledge (*factual* or *conceptual*) or events present in their digital stories. By all accounts to date, these types of digital storytelling projects can promote, and do promote, learners' critical and higher-order thinking.

- **Voice and Identity Discovery.** The aforementioned positive outcomes of digital storytelling projects can contribute to English learners' competence to express their voices and develop and perform their identities as competent multilingual English learners (Butler, 2004). This is particularly important for those learners who find their social, educational, or professional opportunities limited, or find themselves marginalized within their own communities, if they lack the communicative competence necessary to express themselves in the ways they alone deem germane to their linguistic experience to date. Digital storytelling projects can therefore become opportunities for English learners to explore multilingual and multicultural identities and represent themselves and their cultures in positive ways. Finding one's voice is as critical as discovering one's true identity. Embracing both in an unapologetic fashion is the truest form of human consciousness achieved. (For a detailed overview of theoretical frameworks and subjects in language teacher identity research and how language teachers develop their identities through dialogic discourse with peers, see Liantas, 2020b.)

Conclusion

In this paper we outlined the potential value digital storytelling has for teacher education and language learning alike. We began by discussing the pivotal role storytelling can play in teacher education and instructional practice. Following that we discussed digital storytelling amid multimodal learning activities deemed feasible for a wide variety of learners. We then provided a review of the most important practical considerations supporting the potential value of digital storytelling in education and delineated the potential positive outcomes this digital art form can have for L2 learners. In the final section we presented the most pertinent research-driven pedagogical implications digital storytelling affords language practitioners and English learners alike. In closing, we believe digital storytelling projects represent a valuable tool in the toolkit of any L2 educator, especially when such creative initiatives are used as dynamic tools with and for a purpose. The skill to apply textual, graphical, audiovisual, and digital tools with restrained competence and purpose necessitates a creative and collaborative process that permits students of all grades and proficiency levels to co-construct their learning and grow from the experience of writing, storyboarding, producing, and sharing their storied creations. In so doing, they also appraise the information knowledge sources and semiotic resources utilized in their work, thereby transforming themselves from passive consumers of technology into active creators of digital compositions. In short, voices heard become voices seen. And stories worth telling become digital stories worth sharing. One voice. One story at a time.

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