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Digital Storytelling in TEFL: A Case Study on Fostering Oral Proficiency and Motivation

Relatrice
Prof.ssa Alberta Novello

Laureanda
Caterina Meggiolaro
n° matr. 2062499 / LMLCC

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Stories have power.

They delight, enchant, touch, teach, recall,

inspire, motivate, challenge. They help us understand.

They imprint a picture on our minds - *Litherland, 1991, p. 3*

Abstract in italiano

Nel contesto educativo attuale, emerge sempre di più la necessità di coinvolgere gli studenti su molteplici livelli di alfabetizzazione, adottando un approccio educativo consapevole delle influenze culturali e sociali nel processo di apprendimento, nonché della crescente complessità della comunicazione nel mondo moderno. È su queste premesse che si colloca lo studio di caso proposto nel presente elaborato, basato sull'analisi di un'unità didattica volta a potenziare la competenza orale in lingua inglese come lingua straniera (EFL) e a promuovere la motivazione di un giovane studente di livello A1+ attraverso l'implementazione del Digital Storytelling in ottica costruttivista e di post-metodo. Il percorso didattico, articolato in fasi di pre-produzione, produzione e post-produzione, si prefigge di offrire un'educazione linguistica multimodale e di preparare lo studente a interpretare in modo efficace il mutevole panorama informazionale dell'era digitale. Dall'analisi dei dati, sia quantitativa che qualitativa, risulta una progressione nella partecipazione orale dello studente, un miglioramento della fiducia in sé stesso e della sua autonomia, non senza alcune criticità nel mantenere costante il livello di attenzione durante le fasi più complesse dell'unità, evitando distrazioni durante l'implementazione digitale.

Abstract in English

In the current realm of education, there is an increasing need to engage students on multiple levels of literacy, adopting an educational approach that is aware of cultural and social influences in the learning process, as well as the growing complexity of communication in the modern world. On these premises, the case study presented in this thesis focuses on the analysis of a teaching unit aimed at enhancing oral proficiency in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and promoting the motivation of a young A1+ level student through the implementation of Digital Storytelling, within a constructivist and post-method framework. The teaching unit, structured in phases of pre-production, production, and post-production, seeks to provide a multimodal linguistic education and prepare the student to effectively navigate the shifting informational landscape of the digital age. From the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, positive results emerge regarding the student's oral participation, increased self-confidence, and growing autonomy. However, some challenges were observed in maintaining consistent attention during the more complex phases of the unit, with distractions arising due to the audio-visual emphasis of the digital implementation.

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Introduction

Profound is the influence of storytelling as a universal human experience that transcends culture, time, and technological progress. Storytelling is not merely a form of entertainment; it is a potent vehicle for education, emotional connection, and self-expression. Stories provide frameworks for meaning, allowing us to navigate the complexities of the world and human relationships. Whether conveyed through oral traditions, written texts, or visual media, stories have always served as bridges connecting individuals and communities, fostering empathy, and expanding understanding.

In the digital age, the ancient art of storytelling has undergone a transformation. The advent of modern technologies has not diminished storytelling's intrinsic power; rather, it has amplified its reach and potential. Today, we embedded the *digital* into the storytelling, merging traditional narrative techniques with multimedia elements such as text, images, sound, and video, creating a dynamic platform for communication and learning. This blending of old and new gives rise to innovative ways of sharing and interpreting stories. Digital storytelling (DS) allows individuals to craft narratives that can be extremely personal (Mittiga, 2018), often leading to deeper emotional discovery.

Digital storytelling's educational value lies in its alignment with the 21st-century demands for multiliteracies and digital literacy (Robin B. R., 2008). The former reflect the multimodal nature of modern communication, requiring students to not only read and write but also interpret and produce multimedia texts, which is essential, as highlighted in the thesis, for students living in a rapidly evolving digital world. Digital literacy, on the other hand, does not have a universally accepted definition. Gilster (1997) initially described it as "the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide range of sources when it is presented via computers" (p.1), but more recent views, like Beetham & Sharpe (2011, as cited in Spante, et al 2018), expand the concept to include critical thinking and cognitive skills, defining it as "the functional access, skills and practices necessary to become a confident, agile adopter of a range of technologies for personal, academic and professional use" (p.1).

Educational digital storytelling (EDS) offers a powerful medium for fostering these essential skills. It empowers students to become creators of their own narratives by combining traditional processes such as writing, research, and critical thinking with

modern digital tools like audio, video, and animation (Robin B. R., 2008). This practice enhances their digital literacy while promoting deeper engagement with learning materials. According to literature, the integration of DS into language learning has demonstrated significant benefits, especially in improving students' proficiency in core language skills—listening, reading, speaking, and writing (Souvik, 2023). Furthermore, DS fosters collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking, all of which are central to the pedagogical goals of modern education (*ivi.*).

The effectiveness of DS is further amplified when paired with constructivist methodologies. Constructivism, as explored in the thesis, emphasizes active learning, where students construct their own understanding of the world through experiences and reflection. DS aligns well with constructivist principles by offering learners a hands-on approach to creating meaning. As they craft their digital stories, students engage in a process of self-discovery, applying new knowledge in a context that is meaningful to them. This reflective practice mirrors the constructivist notion of learning as a dynamic process of building and adapting knowledge. Piaget's theory of cognitive development, which suggests that learners actively construct meaning rather than passively absorb information, is a fitting framework for understanding how DS functions in education. Similarly, Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) further supports the idea that students' cognitive growth occurs through interaction and collaboration within a supportive environment. Digital storytelling, as a social and interactive process, facilitates this kind of development by allowing students to work within their ZPD, where they can challenge themselves and receive guidance from teachers and peers as they create their stories. This aligns with Vygotsky's perspective that learning is a social activity (1987), enhanced through mediated interaction with tools and cultural resources, like the multimedia elements used in DS.

At the core of this thesis is a case study that focuses on an 11-year-old Italian student at the A1+ level of English proficiency. The primary aim is to explore effective strategies for promoting oral skills and enhancing motivation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) through a teaching unit based on one-on-one lessons at a private institution with a a teacher. To achieve this, the thesis follows a detailed, research-driven process that seeks to construct the most suitable teaching unit using Digital Storytelling, guided by a constructivist and a post-method pedagogical framework. This approach emphasizes

learner engagement and the creation of meaning through hands-on experiences. The structure of the thesis is designed to logically and progressively build towards the development of this teaching unit, while reflecting on the research goals and outcomes.

The *first chapter* begins with an exploration of the enduring power of storytelling in education, examining its historical roots and its role as a universal tool for meaning-making across different cultures and eras. The chapter then transitions into an analysis of how the advent of digital tools has transformed traditional storytelling into a dynamic, multimodal experience. The section focuses on how Digital Storytelling can be integrated into language learning, especially in the context of fostering essential 21st-century skills like digital literacy and multiliteracies. Towards the end of the chapter, the discussion shifts to the specifics of the case study central to this thesis. An overview of the case study is provided, detailing the characteristics of the participant and the learning environment, the web tools utilized, the key research questions driving the investigation and the data collection methodologies implemented. This section sets the stage for the detailed exploration of the study's design and implementation, which is further elaborated in the subsequent chapters.

In the *second chapter*, the thesis shifts its focus to a more detailed exploration of the constructivist framework implemented in the teaching unit. This chapter delves into the contributions of Piaget's theory of cognition, examining key concepts such as adaptive knowledge, cognitive equilibration, and the learner's role as an active constructor of meaning. Alongside Piaget, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is also explored, with particular emphasis on his concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), highlighting how social interaction and teacher facilitation play a crucial role in learning. The chapter further defines the concept of post-method pedagogy and clarifies that the teaching approach in this case study was developed by merging the flexibility of post-method with constructivist principles. This fusion is grounded in the concept of the "strategic teacher," as proposed by Paolo Torresan (2022), who emphasizes a responsive and adaptive teaching style. By bridging these pedagogical models, the chapter establishes how the teaching unit was designed to meet the student's needs in a dynamic, student-centered learning environment.

Chapter three marks the transition from theory to practice, opening with an in-depth analysis the development of oral communication skills in EFL contexts. The chapter explores the expectations for an A2-level learner specifically in relation to oral production skills. While the student in the case study was at an A1+ level, the chapter explains that, following the scaffolding concept, the teaching aimed to guide the learner toward achieving A2-level competences. The expected oral skills for an A2-level learner were drawn from the descriptors outlined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which set clear benchmarks. The chapter then details the design of the teaching unit, structured into three distinct phases: pre-production, production, and post-production. Each phase was thoughtfully developed to guide the student through the intricate process of understanding narrative structure, including sequencing, emotional engagement, and story flow. The student was then led to conceptualize and create his own story, animate it using Scratch, and develop dialogues to bring the characters to life. Each lesson is thoroughly detailed, focusing on the specific strategies the student was encouraged to implement in each activity, following Paolo Torresan's (2022) *compendium of teaching strategies*. Additionally, the lessons outline the learning objectives and competences, using Alberta Novello's (2022) framework for the didactic design of linguistic activities. This structured approach ensured that the student had clear guidance on how to successfully complete each task, while also promoting the development of targeted language skills and aligning with the overall educational goals of the unit.

The *final chapter* of the thesis focuses on the results of the teaching unit, beginning with a presentation of the animated story the student created as the culmination of the project. This chapter then delves into a comprehensive examination of both the quantitative and qualitative data collected throughout the teaching process. It explores the class observation grids completed by the teacher after each lesson, as well as the pre-unit questionnaires filled out by the student's parents, providing insight into their expectations and perceptions of the student's relationship with the English language. Post-unit questionnaires, completed by both the student and the parents, offer a reflective assessment of the student's progress and motivation. In addition, the chapter analyzes the teacher's notes from in-class observations and the student's personal reflective logs, which provide a more intimate view of the learner's engagement and challenges. The

chapter concludes by synthesizing these findings, highlighting the positive outcomes, including the student's improved oral skills and motivation, while also addressing the main limitations of the study, offering a balanced perspective on the effectiveness of the teaching unit.

Chapter 1. Digital Storytelling, Literacy, and EFL: A Literature Review and Case Study Foundations

1.1 Embracing the Ancient Art of Storytelling in the Digital Age

> People have always told stories. It has been part of our tradition and heritage since the time we gathered around the fire to share our stories. Today people still tell stories, but now we have new media tools with which to share them. A digital story can hence be seen as a merger between the old storytelling tradition and the use of new technology. (Normann, 2011, p. 1)

Storytelling is a universal human activity, deeply embedded in every culture and community across the globe. From ancient myths and legends to modern novels and films, stories have always been a fundamental way for people to share experiences, convey emotions, and impart knowledge. Through stories, we entertain, educate, connect with one another, and transcend our personal perspectives to embrace a wider outlook. This rich tradition of storytelling reflects our innate desire to make sense of the world and communicate our understanding to others.

Stories permeate the books we read, the movies we watch, the conversations we have, and the dreams we share. They allow us to step into the shoes of others, experiencing different lives and viewpoints, thereby fostering empathy and understanding. Whether it is a parent reading a bedtime story to a child, friends recounting their adventures, or a community preserving its history through oral traditions, storytelling is a means of connecting with others on a deep, emotional level.

In this age of digital innovation, the essence of storytelling remains unchanged, but the mediums through which stories are told have expanded dramatically. Digital storytelling merges traditional narrative techniques with modern technology, creating new opportunities for creativity, engagement and learning opportunities. By integrating multimedia elements—such as texts, images, audios, and videos—digital stories can better capture the richness and complexity of human experiences.

As Jerome Bruner suggests in "The Narrative Construction of Reality," narratives play a crucial role in how we construct and interpret our realities (Brune, 1991). This view highlights that storytelling is not just a means of entertainment or communication but also a fundamental cognitive tool through which we organize and interpret our representations of reality. Recognizing this transformative and profound power, Digital Storytelling has,

in recent years, become a powerful tool for teaching and learning, captivating both educators and students alike (Robin B. R., 2008). More specifically, it "has been increasingly integrated into second language (L2) classrooms" since it creates "opportunities for second language (L2) learners to share their voices and views in open and interactive environments, discuss cultural topics, and develop language skills" (Oskoz & Elola, 2016, p. 157, 158).

1.1.1 Understanding Digital Storytelling: Definition and Core Values

In educational settings, Digital storytelling fundamentally enables students "to become creative storytellers through the traditional processes of selecting a topic, conducting some research, writing a script, and developing an interesting story", which is then enriched with "various multimedia elements, such as computer-based graphics, recorded audio, computer-generated text, video clips, and music" (Robin B. R., 2008, p. 222).

At its core, Digital Storytelling, as firstly conceptualized in the 90s at the non-profit community arts organization Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS) in Berkley, California, focuses on producing and sharing stories based on personal experiences or memories. This practice, spearheaded by Joe Lambert, co-founder of CDS, consists in creating 2-3 minute long stories, where storytellers use their own voice to create their own narratives, ensuring a deeply personal connection that often relates to other people, places, interests, or significant elements of their life (Normann, 2011). The origins of Digital Storytelling are deeply rooted in "community-building and social engagement": its primary function is "to assist individuals in sharing stories from their own lives, incorporating a significant autobiographical element, through the use of various media" (Mittiga, 2018, translated by the author, p. 318). This personal touch makes these stories quite emotional and impactful for the storytellers themselves. Aiming to extend beyond the mere construction of a narrative, facilitators at CDS are committed to addressing sensitive subjects and emotional topics that are deeply personal to the storytellers, so much so that CDS provides evolving ethical guidelines for storytelling workshops (Digital Storytelling Center, s.d.). By adopting an ethically conscious practice, facilitators ensure the emotional and psychological wellbeing of all participants, particularly those who might be experiencing significant emotional.

Additionally, the ethical framework makes sure to emphasize the importance of cultural awareness and the influence of power dynamics in relationships too. Namely, CDS advises facilitators to adopt a stance of *cultural humility*, involving a process of "self-reflection and self-critique", which does not necessarily require "an examination of someone else's belief system", but rather focuses on "giving careful consideration to one's own assumptions and beliefs" (Digital Storytelling Center: Ethical Practice, s.d., p. 7). Building on the importance of cultural humility, it becomes clear how Digital Storytelling originally adopts a sociocultural perspective, acknowledging the profound impact that culture and power dynamics have on relationships. From what has been discussed so far, it is evident that the origins of digital storytelling are deeply rooted in community-building and social engagement. Its primary function is to assist individuals in sharing stories from their own lives, incorporating a significant autobiographical element, through the use of various media.This sociocultural framework is deeply intertwined with the core values that CDS bases its workshops on: Deep Listening, Integrity, Respect, Creativity, Compassion, Social Justice Commitment, Cooperation, and Humility (Digital Storytelling Center, s.d.). These values collectively embody empathy, accountability, innovation, and collaboration, which are fundamental to Lambert's Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling—a framework often cited as essential for crafting impactful narratives (Robin B. , The educational uses of digital storytelling, 2011). It offers facilitators a structured approach to Digital Storytelling, guiding storytellers through the process of shaping personal stories into compelling digital narratives. The table below summarizes the Seven Elements as follows:

The Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling
1. **Point of View** – what is the perspective of the author?
2. **A Dramatic Question** – a question that will be answered by the end of the story.
3. **Emotional Content** – serious issues that speak to us in a personal and powerful way.
4. **The Gift of your Voice** – a way to personalize the story to help the audience understand the context.
5. **The Power of the Soundtrack** – music or other sounds that support the storyline.
6. **Economy** – simply put, using just enough content to tell the story without overloading the viewer with too much information.
7. **Pacing** – related to Economy, but specifically deals with how slowly or quickly the story progresses.

Table 1. The Elements of DS *(Robin B. , The educational uses of digital storytelling, 2011, p. 2)*

Over the years, Lambert's approach to Digital Storytelling has evolved significantly though: initially focused on helping storytellers find and articulate their stories through well-crafted scripts, his emphasis has shifted towards a rebuilding of the approach from mere elements to practical steps. It is, therefore, no coincidence that Lambert and the contributors at CDS renamed them "Seven Steps of Digital Storytelling." This new approach is outlined comprehensively in the publication by CDS named "Digital Storytelling Cookbook", in which each step is precisely illustrated (Lambert, Digital Storytelling Cookbook, 2010).

According to the publication, the first step requires storytellers to explore the essence of their own stories. Starting with simple questions like "What's the story you want to tell?" or "What do you think your story means?", storytellers are encouraged to delve deeper than the surface narrative in order to understand their life's context and transition from mere awareness to a deeper understanding of their evolving self. This reflective process helps them find and *own their insights* (*ivi*. p. 9).

The next step builds on the insights by exploring and *owning the emotions* embedded within storytellers' narratives, so that they can decide which feelings to convey to their audience. Recognizing the complex and contrasting emotions in a story, such as joy mixed with fear or grief intertwined with appreciation, enhances the depth of the narrative (*ivi*.).

Finding the moment is another critical step, which focuses on identifying a singular, illustrative moment that captures the story's insight. Our lives are filled with numerous moments, but some hold more meaning than others. The moment of change—whether dramatic or subtle—serves as a powerful entry point: audiences like to hear about change "because they're looking for answers about change in their own lives" too (*ivi*. p. 14).

The fourth and fifth steps are centered around engaging the senses in Digital Storytelling: the former consists in *seeing the story* considering how images can bring it to life, understanding their explicit and implicit meanings and learning that the way you combine them "will create additional layers of meaning" (*ivi*. p. 17). The latter, on the other hand, focuses on hearing the story, particularly the storyteller's voice, to convey emotional tone and enhance the narrative. It is about how the voice-over, ambient sounds, and music work together to deepen the audience's connection to the story.

After selecting the visual and audio elements, Lambert states that it is crucial to *assemble the story* and structure the narrative so to maintain engagement and highlight key points, especially by determining how much to tell the audience and at what point.

By the end of the process, storytellers should have embarked on a journey of self-discovery, witnessing the evolution of both narrative and message. Therefore, in the final step of *sharing the story*, it is crucial to address questions regarding the audience's identity, the evolving story purpose, the chosen presentation format.

While this seven-step process proves pivotal to guide storytellers through the storytelling journey, it is also fair to consider that its effective implementation in educational settings necessitates flexibility to accommodate the diverse needs and skills of students. Several studies in literature have adapted this approach to their specific educational goals, demonstrating its versatility and effectiveness across different contexts and subjects, such as "literary studies, creative writing, American Studies, social and cultural history, teacher training, ESL and gender studies" (Clarke & Adam, 2012, p. 161).

The following section will explore how Educational Digital Storytelling inserts itself into today's educational landscape, where digital skills are considered pivotal for navigating the complexities of the modern digital era. It will demonstrate how EDS contributes to enhancing digital literacy and fostering multiliteracies.

1.2 Enhancing 21st Century (Multi)literacies Through Educational Digital Storytelling

The rapid advancement of digital transformation is affecting every aspect of human life, requiring new generations to adapt to the changes brought about by the digital age in both the economy and society. As a result, mastering digital skills is becoming a vital aspect for contemporary students' education. Thus, the education system must recognize the increasing importance of evolving and refining its teaching methods to meet the needs and characteristics of students living in the digital era (Stjepić & Vugec, 2022).

Educational Digital Storytelling (EDS) is frequently touted as an effective learning method enhanced by technology. It is recognized for promoting the so-called *21st Century Skills* or *Digital Age Literacies*, which encompass various competencies:

- digital literacy, enabling communication within an expanding community for discussions, information gathering, and seeking assistance;

- global literacy that is the capacity to interpret, respond to, and contextualize messages from a global perspective;

- technology literacy, meaning the proficiency in using computers and other technologies to enhance learning, productivity, and performance;

- visual literacy, which refers to the ability to comprehend, create, and communicate through visual images;

- information literacy, meaning the skill to locate, assess, and synthesize information (Robin B. R., 2008, p. 224).

According to Eshet-Alkalai, on the other hand, in addition to photo-visual literacy and information literacy, digital literacy encompasses several other key components:

- reproduction literacy, which is "the ability to create meaningful, authentic, and creative work or interpretations by integrating existing independent pieces of information";

- branching literacy, which refers to the "good sense of multidimensional spatial orientation, that is, the ability to avoid losing orientation when surfing through the labyrinth of lanes that characterizes the hyperspace" of the Internet;

- socio-emotional literacy, which is "the most complex of all types of digital literacy" because the user must be "very critical, analytical and mature" in order to "avoid 'traps' as well as derive benefits from the advantages of digital communication" (Eshet-Alkalai, 2004, pp. 98, 99, 102).

1.2.1. What exactly is Digital Literacy?

Digital literacy has increasingly been recognized as essential in educational contexts across various stages of learning, having gained prominence since the late 20th century in fields such as open, distance, and digital education (Castañeda & Marín, 2022). Despite being a widespread concept in the didactic field and in numerous official documents of the European institutions and national ministries of education, there is still a lack of clear understanding of it (Esteve-Mon, Llopis-Nebot, & Adell-Segura, 2020). It is used inconsistently in literature and is defined differently by a wide range of different authors and sources (Stjepić & Vugec, 2022). This is also attributed to the fact that the conceptualization of DL is closely intertwined with "the technological evolution itself and the requirements of the new technological scenario", as well as "the transformation

of the main aspects that define the way information is produced and shared in multimodal approaches" (Castañeda & Marín, 2022, p. 1091). This implies shifts "in the code (from verbal to multimedia)," in "the main support (from paper to screen)," and "in structure (from a linear-reading structure to a hypertextual and hypermedia)" (*ibidem*).

To provide a clearer picture of how rich is the conceptual history of digital literacy, here is a timeline developed by Castañeda and Marín, which highlights "the rising importance of integrating not just instrumental components of the new communicational aspects but also the intellectual, informational, and other skills related to the role of information and technologies in people's life" (*ibidem*). The evolution of the European Union's definitions of DL also illustrates this shift. Prior to 2010, definitions had a predominantly instrumental focus, whereas, more recent definitions emphasize critical engagement and active participation (*ibidem*).
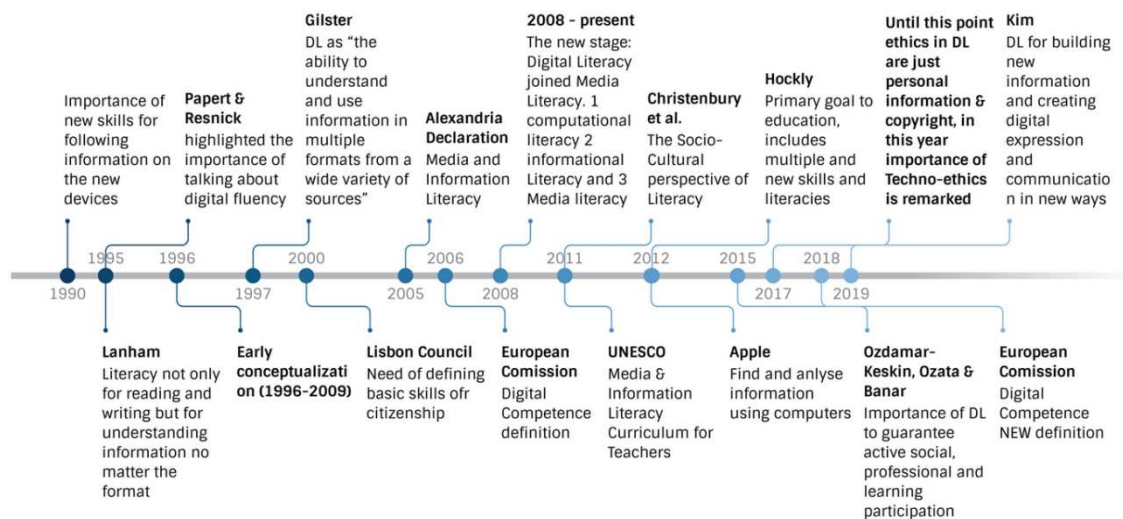
Figure 1. The Evolution of Digital Literacy *(Castañeda & Marín, 2022, p. 1091)*

Certainly relevant to this study is the definition provided by the Piano Nazionale Scuola Digitale (PNSD), published by the Italian Ministry of Education (MIUR) in 2015, which states:

> The dimensions of digital skills are diverse: from being an educational tool and a means for developing crosscutting skills, to a new literacy primarily rooted in computational thinking, and more broadly associated with significant social and economic changes, tightly intertwined with information and regulations (Ministero dell'Istruzione, 2015, p. 70, translated by the Author).

What immediately stands out is the vagueness of this statement, which encompasses a broad array of concepts without clearly defining specific aspects or offering concrete insights. Furthermore, describing digital skills as a "new literacy primarily rooted in

computational thinking" is somewhat ambiguous. While computational thinking is indeed a foundational aspect of digital literacy, the definition does not clarify how computational thinking relates to other components of digital skills. In fact, according to Ng's model, digital literacy is the result of the intersection between three different dimensions, namely technical, cognitive and socio-emotional.
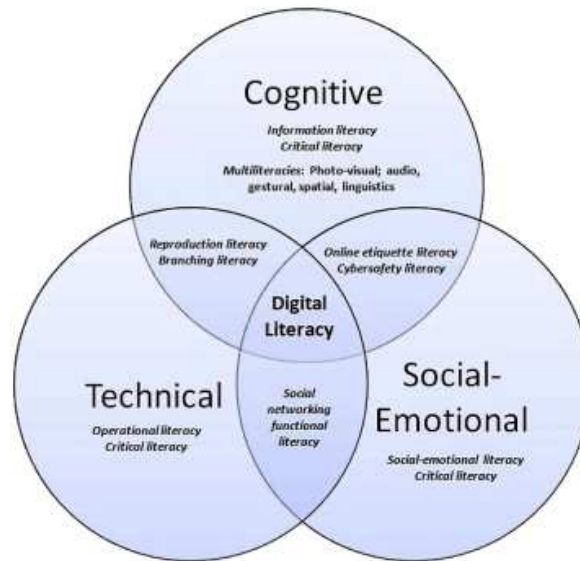
Figure 2. Digital Literacy model *(Ng, 2012)*

Furthermore, the document appears to characterize digital skills as "a new literacy," which seemingly conflates the terms digital skills and digital literacy, traditionally recognized as distinct concepts in the literature. Specifically, the former involve "the application of IT skills to solve a particular problem"; whereas, the latter pertains to "the ability to find and use the information received from a variety of digital sources" (Stjepić & Vugec, 2022, p. 64).

Eventually, later in the document, the PNSD acknowledges the existence of some dimensions to digital literacy, specifying that "digital technologies support all dimensions of cross-cutting skills (cognitive, operational, relational, metacognitive)" (*ivi*. translated by the Author). However, it doesn't provide specific examples on how they manifest in practice or how to use technology to develop each of these skills in the classroom environment.

According to national guidelines provided by MIUR, what is required of an Italian student in the first cycle of education (age 14) is to have "good digital skills," to "use

communication technologies consciously to search for and analyze data and information," to distinguish between "reliable information and that which requires further investigation, control, and verification," and to "interact with different subjects worldwide" (*ivi*. p. 74). Achieving these ambitious competences is complicated even for today's younger generations, often referred as *Digital Natives*, term first coined by Prensky (2001). They may have grown up completely immersed in the world of new technologies, navigating the internet daily through smarthpones and handheld devices, but "exposure to technology cannot be equated with ability to use it" (ECDL, 2015, p. 2). Despite the growing expectations for digital literacy among today's students, several scholars have noted that especially first-year university students "often fail to transfer digital competences available in their private lives to their learning environments" (Kopp, Gröblinger, & Adams, 2019, p. 1453). It is important to differentiate between the digital skills gained through personal use and those required for academic purposes. To develop the latter, it is essential to design appropriate training programs for both students and teachers, ideally incorporating these programs from the initial planning stages of digital transformation efforts (*ivi*.). In doing so, it is essential to keep in mind the common characteristics that shape the members of Digital Natives and that "contribute to the new ways of shaping teaching and learning methods in schools and universities" (Stjepić & Vugec, 2022, p. 74). The following table, created by Sarkar, Ford, and Manzo (2017), outlines the main characteristics of the Digital Native learning style, shaped by their upbringing and experiences surrounded by technology:

Characteristic	Description
Technology Infused Learning Environment	Expect technology to be part of the landscape of learning. Like to learn in an environment that uses technology to enable them to acquire knowledge, be more connected and be more productive.
Flexible Schedule	Prefer to learn in flexible, personalized and customized schedules. They prefer an informal learning structure and their learning is unconstrained by time and space.
Short Attention Span	Possess a short attention span. They have a craving for speed and an inability to tolerate a slow-paced environment.
Immediate Feedback	Expect immediate feedback and "payoff" for effort.
Collaborative Learning	Prefer to learn in a collaborative environment. They exhibit a preference for teamwork and connectivity to peers.
Active Learning	Prefer learning through activity rather than reading or listening.
Mobile Devices	Display a near universal adoption of mobile devices like smartphones, tablets etc. – the more portable the better.

Table 2 The Digital Native Learning Style *(Sarkar, Ford, & Manzo, 2017, p. 2)*

These characteristics of digital natives' learning styles will be carefully considered in the design of this project. Their familiarity and comfort with digital environments make them ideal candidates for EDS, which aligns perfectly with their collaborative and multimedia-oriented preferences. The next paragraph will delve into why EDS can be particularly effective for this audience and for developing the multiliteracies required in today's digital society.

1.2.2 Multiliteracies and EDS

As it has been mentioned already, given today's multimedia-rich environment, students are now inherently poised to extend their foundational literacy skills in order to effectively engage with and critically analyze the diverse textual and visual components encountered in *multimodal ensembles* (Serafini, 2014). By multimodal ensembles, Serafini refers to "texts that utilize a variety of modes to communicate or represents concepts and

information" (*ivi*. p. 12). He then goes on to clarify the subtle yet essential difference between modes and media. A mode "draw on semiotic resources for the articulation, representation, and interpretation of texts", encompassing "material, psychological, technological, and sociocultural aspects" (e.g. photos, sculptures, songs, and written language). In contrast, media refers to "the technologies used for the rendering and dissemination of texts" (*ivi*. pp. 14, 15). Lately, there has been significant interest in examining how modes work together, interact, and sometimes conflict with each other in conveying information and presenting narratives (*ibidem*).

Today's students need to become adept at decoding the multimodal nature of modern communication, yet as they advance through their education, they are typically expected to focus on print-based texts. This emphasis can cause them to miss out on valuable opportunities to understand the new levels of meaning created by the interaction of different modes in multimodal communication.

This brings us to the concept of multiliteracies, which expands the traditional notion of literacy to include a variety of cultural, linguistic, communicative, and technological literacies. Multiliteracies emphasize the ability to understand and produce meaning across diverse modes and media, acknowledging the complexity and richness of modern communication. By incorporating multiliteracies into education, students are better equipped to navigate a landscape where traditional relationships of culture, knowledge, and learning are profoundly disrupted. This shift challenges the binary distinctions we have previously ascribed to these relationships, such as creator/audience, producer/consumer, and writer/reader (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012).

The key to these changes is an intensified cognitive and practical engagement on the part of individuals who were once more passive recipients of culture and knowledge. This shift transforms the direction of knowledge and culture flows and alters the balance of creative and epistemic agency, enabling students to become active, informed participants in a dynamic, information-rich world (*ivi*.).

More specifically, digital and online literacies often involve representing a socially and culturally constructed self. Teachers can harness this natural desire among learners to perform self-representation, helping them shape and design their social futures (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, as cited in Hong & Tan, 2020). The metalanguage toolkit available in

multiliteracies offers young learners a range of functional grammars as representational resources to create the different selves they wish to portray online, both socially and academically. Critical framing allows students to gain personal and analytical distance (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, as cited in Hong & Tan, 2020) to interpret the social context and purpose of meanings in multimodal texts.

Cope and Kalantzis, well-known for their significant contributions within the New London Group, a collective of scholars convened in the 1990s to delve into literacy and new technologies in education, first introduced the concept of multiliteracies in their influential work "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures" (1996). The four initial orientations proposed in that publication were later adapted into the 'Knowledge Processes' of the Learning by Design project, which advocates a participatory approach to learning. Here, learners are empowered to actively shape their own meanings and understandings (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012), aligning with the shift towards student-centered, context-based, and multimodal methods in language learning modalities (Campagnoni, 2022). This pedagogical approach centers on a series of knowledge processes referred to as "things you can do to know," which students engage in during their learning journey (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012). Teachers can design learning experiences or collaborate with learners to select and sequence these knowledge processes based on justification. These processes encompass: "experiencing", where learners reflect on familiar or unfamiliar contexts; "conceptualizing", involving categorization and theoretical connections; "analyzing", which includes functional and critical analysis; and "applying", where learning is tested in real-world contexts or creatively transferred (*ivi*.).

In Giulia Campagnoni's recent exploration of EDS within teaching Italian as a Foreign Language, multiliteracies emerge as a pivotal framework that enriches language teaching. In her own words: "Findings from the data suggest that the use of the digital storytelling platforms led to the appearance of multiliteracies", which manifested "as a combination of communicative functions aimed at increasing audience engagement, sense of agency and personalisation of digital contents" (2022, pp. 238, 240). Her findings highlight how DS platforms can enhance learner engagement, agency, and customization of content, underscoring their potential to enrich language learning environments.

The upcoming section will delve into a comprehensive literature review focusing on studies that explore the use of DS in language learning context. It will emphasize how DS is implemented and highlight areas within the research that this study aims to address.

1.3 Digital Storytelling in Language Learning

A recent review of educational applications of Digital Storytelling (DS) by Wu and Chen (2020) reveals that EDS "is mostly conducted in humanities and social sciences subjects, such as culture, gender, language/language and literacy, social psychology, and social studies" (Wu & Victor Chen, 2020, p. 5). However, language and literacy stand out as the primary subjects where EDS is applied (*ibidem*). It, in fact, has been recognized for its ability to enhance language learners' proficiency in all four language skills, namely listening, reading, speaking and writing (Ramírez Verdugo, 2013; Sevilla Pavón & Serra Cámara, 2013, as cited in Oskoz & Elola, 2016).

A comprehensive review of the literature on DS in the language classrooms reveals several key findings. Different participant groups were surveyed about its feasibility across diverse global contexts, including Turkey (e.g. Balaman, 2018; Simsek, 2020; Keşli Dollar & Tekiner Tolu, 2015), Ecuador (e.g. (Castillo, Quiñónez Beltrán et al., 2021), Malasya (e.g. Zakaria & Abdul Aziz, 2019), South Korea (e.g. Kim P., 2018; Kim & Ho Lee, 2017), Taiwan (e.g. Yang & Wu, 2012; Chiang, 2020), Spain (e.g. Gregori-Signes, 2008; Soler Pardo, 2014; Reyes Torres, Pich Ponce, & García Pastor, 2012; Ramírez-Verdugo, 2023), Greece (e.g. Kallinikou & Nicolaidou, 2019), Colombia (e.g. Herrera Ramírez, 2013), USA (e.g. Sepp & Bandi-Rao, 2015; Castañeda, 2013). The studies encompassed a wide range of group sizes, from relatively small classes of around 10 students, as in Castañeda's case study (2013), to large groups of up to 110 students (Yang & Wu, 2012). The partecipants also varied in age, from early-childhood learners, as in Ramírez-Verdugo's case study of DS in a CLIL context (2023), to adult college students, as in Chiang's Storybird-mediated DS project (2020). Consequently, the educational levels spanned from pre-primary to tertiary, and the English proficiency level ranged from basic user (e.g. Rahimi & Yadollahi, 2017) to novice-high/intermediate-low (e.g. Castañeda, 2013), intermediate (e.g. Chiang, 2020) and intermediate high (e.g. Kim & Ho Lee, 2017). The duration of the studies also varied, ranging from 10 to 20 lessons of approximately 2 hours each (e.g. Korosidou & Bratitsis, 2023; Kevser, 2021) to a

middle ground of 5 months with 2 lessons per week lasting 90 minutes (Rahimi & Yadollahi, 2017) and up to a full year, as in Yang & Wu's study (2012). Both qualitative and quantitative methods, such as open-ended questions, interviews, observations, achievement tests were employed to gather feedback, indicating that the majority of studies utilized mixed-methods. It was found that researchers mostly used open-ended surveys and individual or group interviews at the end of the project to gather students' perceptions of partaking in the classes (e.g. Chiang, 2020). Additionally, some studies adopted a non—equivalent control group method, using pre- and post-test to assess students' IT literacy and English proficiency in different linguistic areas both in the control and experimental groups in order to then compare the results (e.g. Rahimi & Yadollahi, 2017; Chiang, 2020). Typically, students in both groups were given identical tasks, like story creation, except the control group used conventional methods, whereas the experimental group employed a web-based multimedia storytelling system. (e.g. Hawg, et al., 2014). However, as Huang (2023) highlights in his study on implementing DS tasks in L2 classrooms, there is a "limited (though growing) body of research" on this topic, with only Hawg (2016) and Yang (2020) having "adopted formal assessment tools to evaluate this effect", both of which were "self-developed English speaking tests." This "might incite issues related to the validity of the derived test scores"; therefore, it is imperative that researchers employ only standardized tests in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings.

According to Wu and Chen's (2020) cross-analysis of orientations and outcomes[1] reveals that studies with linguistic orientations have yielded positive reconstructive and appropriative outcomes, although in some cases these outcomes are anticipated but not fully evident. Reflective and reflexive outcomes have not yet been demonstrated in any study related to language learning (*ivi.*).

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[1] In their systematic review of DS educational implementations, Wu and Chen (2020) identify several key orientations in the reviewed studies: appropriative (meaning, appropriation of given concepts), agentive (meaning, embodiment of agency), reflective (meaning, reflection on experiences), reconstructive (meaning, critical reconstruction of given concepts) and reflexive (meaning, identity formation in action). They also classify the possible outcomes of the studies into various categories: affective (learning attitudes and emotional engagement), cognitive (thinking outcomes such as critical and creative thinking), conceptual (the understanding of concepts or reconceptualization), academic (study skills and research skills, academic performance), technological (technical skills, media skills), linguistic (language skills: e.g., writing, reading, expression, genre), ontological or identity-related (self-awareness and awareness of other social groups), social (collaborative skills, teamwork skills, and communication skills).

The same two researchers also noticed that "a rosy picture of positive outcomes is generally reported in the EDS literature across all orientations" (Wu & Victor Chen, 2020, p. 9). They formulated two possible reasons for this: "the novelty effect of educational technology", which refers to "students' initial increased endeavor and attention as a response to the introduction of novel technology/ media"; or "the drawer effect or publication bias", which considers how "non-significant results are less likely to be published as compared to exciting, significant positive results" (*ibidem*).

In this thesis, a fundamental commitment of the author is to maintain academic rigor and transparency. Despite the tendency in EDS literature to predominantly report positive outcomes, this study will endeavor to avoid bias. The research aims to present a comprehensive and objective analysis of the implementation of DS, acknowledging both positive and negative outcomes. The purpose of this thesis is, therefore, to contribute to a balanced understanding of DS efficacy in educational settings. Every effort will be made to ensure that all findings, whether they support or challenge prevailing trends, are faithfully reported and analyzed, thereby fostering a thorough perspective on the impact of EDS in language learning contexts.

1.3.1 The Process of Implementing Digital Storytelling in the Language Classroom

Since Digital Storytelling in a language classroom involves both linguistic skills and technological knowledge, which can be time-consuming for learners without prior expertise, many Language DS studies adopt a process-oriented approach that follows a task-based methodology (*ivi.*).

Therefore, studies usually "break down the DS process into sequential stages that help learners develop their content, fine tune their writing and oral components, facilitate the integration of text, images, and sound, and polish their final DSs" (*ivi.* p. 160). As already anticipated, the phases of the DS process are adapted depending on the age group of the students and the learning objectives of the projects. Typically, they involve an initial phase where students engage in preliminary research using a wide range of sources (e.g., interviews, journals, websites, or analysis of other digital stories) to help them develop their DS content (*ivi.*). In some cases, it has been proven effective to divide students "into groups and allocate topics for them to discuss between themselves, share their ideas with

each other and brainstorm the story in different ways" (Smeda, Dakich, & Sharda, 2014). Most often, the teacher assigns a specific topic for the students to base their stories on, but this is not always the case. As Normann points out in her Master's dissertation, there are two kinds of stories that students may be asked to create in the language class: the first one goes back to Lambert's traditional idea of digital storytelling, which consists in telling something personal mostly related to important people in the students' lives. From an educational perspective, this type of stories put "emphasis on the use of new technology to work with traditional literacies, such as speaking and writing" (Normann, 2011, p. 3). The second one, on the other hand, involves "stories related to a content topic within the core subject English" and are "mainly about historical content or about literature, but obviously narrated in English" (*ivi*. p. 4). In this case, students "might be told in first person, e.g. when students take on the role of a character in a book, or of a historical avatar", demonstrating that "even 'academic', school based stories, as opposed to personal stories, might have a personal element in the narration" (*ibidem*). In this case, this approach clearly can help students to better memorize and understand parts of their English curriculum by making the content more engaging and relatable.

In the second phase of the DS process, after the content has been refined, instructors focus on improving language accuracy through multiple draft revisions or targeted grammar exercises in class. This method helps learners concentrate on their grammar and vocabulary while also enhancing the structure and organization necessary for achieving narrative cohesion and coherence in their texts (Smeda, Dakich, & Sharda, 2014). However, it is important to note that the literature on DS in language teaching highlights "a seeming linguistic conundrum" because while positive linguistic outcomes are often observed in areas such as "plot-based story structure, multimodal expression, and the DS genre", they are not as evident in grammar patterns and vocabulary (Wu & Victor Chen, 2020, p. 9). A reason for this could be that "facilitators often highlight the generation of ideas and rarely point out the grammatical or vocabulary errors by storytellers" (*ibidem*). This discrepancy might also be attributed to the nature of DS itself, which emphasizes narrative creation and multimodal expression over the meticulous study of grammatical structures and lexicon. The process of crafting a digital story inherently focuses on broader linguistic skills like storytelling, coherence, and creativity, which may not directly translate into improved grammatical accuracy or vocabulary expansion.

Therefore, in the second phase, it is more often observable that students focus on enhancing narrative cohesion and working on rather than concentrating on grammatical precision and vocabulary expansion. In most studies, creating a storyboard has been found useful during this phase to clarify the main ideas of the story and help students plan the visual aspects of their narrative. Additionally, using a storyboard technique assists students in transitioning from merely discussing ideas to actively planning their story. In other words, it helps convert "an orally invented story into a digital, illustrated text." (Korosidou & Bratitsis, 2023, p. 160).

The third and fourth phases focus respectively on the importance of the visual and audial component in digital stories, where instructors emphasize the quality and relevance of the selected images (from either personal life or online resources) and music. If needed, students may be taken to "a series of literary tours" that help them "gather pictures and videos to include in their DS productions" (Oskoz & Elola, 2016, p. 160). Depending on the type of project and on the educational objectives, students may be asked to "focus on the actual recording and on the pronunciation of their scripts" (*ibidem*).

In the fifth stage of the process, students usually learn the digital skills necessary to use the DS software. Some of the most commonly used software includes Windows Moviemaker or iMovie (Smeda, Dakich, & Sharda, 2014), Storybird (Castillo, Quiñónez Beltrán et al., 2021; Chiang, 2020), Final Cut Express (Zhussupova & Shadiev, 2023), Story Jumper (Kevser, 2021). The use of PowerPoint has also been noted in some studies that are now somewhat dated, such as in Robin and Pierson's "A Multilevel Approach to Using Digital Storytelling in the Classroom" (2005). However, recent research by Rahimi and Yadollahi (2017) indicates that creating digital stories with online platforms can significantly outperform the improvement in EFL proficiency compared to using PowerPoint as an offline program. More specifically, the two researchers investigated the impact of collaborative online and offline storytelling on English reading and writing skills in High school students with basic proficiency. They divided them in two groups: the control group was asked to use PowerPoint, whereas the experimental group was asked to use the online platform Story Jumper. The findings showed that students in the former improved their language literacy more than those in the latter, and spent more time working with the computer. This was attributed to Story Jumper's interactive

environment, which allowed for quicker story creation with ready-made multimedia elements, giving learners more time to focus on writing (*ivi.*).

In the final step of the DS process, students may have the option of presenting their stories to the class or to an outside audience so to provide a sense of accomplishment. They otherwise can share their DS projects online on YouTube, Vimeo, podcasts or other electronic distribution systems.

Although it is crucial to provide structure for the creation of digital stories, Oskoz and Elola rightly note, quoting Castañeda, that "the digital storytelling process is creative and cyclical" (Oskoz & Elola, 2016, p. 161). Consequently, the entire process is nonlinear, allowing students to move back and forth between different phases.

1.3.2 A research gap in DS literature: Oral skills development in the language classroom

According to one of the latest systematic reviews on Digital Storytelling in language learning carried out in 2022, out of 1605 publications on the topic of Digital Storytelling, a total of 71 journal papers investigated its use as a methodological framework for teaching first and second languages (Lim, Zakaria, & Aryadoust, 2022). Clearly, studies on the use of Digital Storytelling in the language classroom are abundant, and researchers have explored its effectiveness in various language skills, highlighting its significance in "speaking (Alley-Young, 2017, as cited in Lim, Zakaria, & Aryadoust, 2022), listening (Tanrıkulu, 2020a, as cited in Lim et al., 2022), reading (Sukovic, 2014, as cited in Lim et al., 2022), and writing (Girmen & Kaya, 2019, as cited in Lim et al., 2022)."

However, the same study reveals that out of the 71 studies reviewed on Digital Storytelling for language learning, only 6 focused on oral skill development (*ivi.*). This disparity highlights a significant literature gap, suggesting a need for more research dedicated to understanding how Digital Storytelling can enhance oral language skills. Implementing Digital Storytelling in the language classroom can involve students creating and sharing their own digital narratives, which can improve their speaking abilities by providing authentic and engaging opportunities to practice language use in a meaningful context. Research should aim to explore the longitudinal effects of Digital Storytelling on oral skills so that educators can better understand how to foster comprehensive language development. For this reason, this area of limited research forms

the background to the case study examined in this thesis and will be critically analyzed to understand the impact of Digital Storytelling on oral skill development in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom.

1.3.2.1 Literature Review on the Effectiveness of Digital Storytelling in Enhancing Oral Skills

Studies examining the effectiveness of Digital Storytelling in enhancing oral skills have yielded promising outcomes. For instance, Kim (2014) conducted a study using a Digital Storytelling framework that involved self-assessment of learners' speaking performance to understand their progress using self-study resources. By employing an approach based on metacognitive awareness, students were encouraged to create their own conversational texts to narrate silent movie clips. This method provided a creative and structured platform for practicing pronunciation, discourse, vocabulary, grammar, and sentence complexity, thereby enhancing their overall speaking skills. (*ivi*.)

In their publication "Digital Storytelling in EFL Classrooms: The Effect on Oral Performance," Seyed Jalal Abdolmanafi-Rokni and Masoud Qarajeh investigated the impact of Digital Storytelling on students' motivation and oral skills. The researchers conducted a study comparing a control group, which used traditional storytelling methods (storytelling aloud performed by a teacher or narrator in an educational setting), with an experimental group that utilized Digital Storytelling via the internet and websites. The results demonstrated a significant increase in motivation and engagement among students in the experimental group, attributed to the engaging and interactive nature of Digital Storytelling. Additionally, post-test assessments revealed marked improvements in the experimental group's speaking skills, including better pronunciation, fluency, and overall oral performance (Abdolmanafi-Rokni & Qarajeh, 2014).

Similarly, Hawg and Shadiev (2014) investigated the application of storytelling in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms to enhance speaking skills by having students create individual and interactive stories using a web-based multimedia system. Their findings revealed that students using the system to create their stories significantly outperformed those who did not in post-test evaluations, indicating that the digital version of storytelling was beneficial for improving speaking skills. Additionally, there was a significant correlation between speaking performance and the number of animation

representations with learning achievement, suggesting that animations helped students remember vocabulary and practice speaking to describe their animated stories. The study also found that speaking performance on individual storytelling was a significant predictor of learning achievement, highlighting that students working individually were more focused and had greater opportunities for practice.

Supporting these findings, a study conducted by Afrilyasanti and Basthomi (2011) further underscores the positive impact of DS on students' speaking skills. Their research documented that all students could participate actively and supportively in DS activities, with active responses evidenced by their enthusiastic involvement in speaking tasks and supportive responses demonstrated by their ability to justify their statements effectively. The study revealed that students displayed a strong awareness of their audience and emotive content during their storyboard presentations. All participants agreed that DS significantly aided their learning of speaking skills. Observations highlighted that the narrating process in DS allowed students to practice speaking extensively. The repetitive nature of storytelling helped improve their pronunciation, and by listening to their recorded voices, students could self-assess and improve their fluency. Overall, this study aligns with Porter's (2008) proposition that digital storytelling fosters 21st-century communication skills, including creativity, higher-order thinking, and multiple literacies.

Furthermore, Tsou, Wang, and Tzeng (2006) demonstrated the beneficial effects of DS on elementary school students' confidence in learning English, emphasizing that the multimedia components of DS make language practice more engaging and less daunting. Their research tackled common issues faced by EFL teachers in Taiwan, such as limited experience with integrating storytelling, challenges in finding suitable stories, and insufficient cultural and language proficiency for conducting storytelling in English. To address these challenges, the researchers designed a multimedia Storytelling Website and carried out a ten-week experiment with two groups of students. After the experiment, the group utilizing the Storytelling Website showed marked improvements in sentence complexity and language proficiency. This group retained more vocabulary, phrases, and sentences, which enhanced their language skills. The students using the Storytelling Website reported higher confidence in their English learning and greater enjoyment of the storytelling process compared to the control group, which employed traditional storytelling methods.

Building upon these insights on the efficacy of DS in enhancing oral skills, the subsequent paragraph will delve into the specific study underpinning this thesis, providing a detailed examination of research objectives and methods.

1.4 Study Overview: Participant, Setting, Objectives, Research Questions and Data Collection

In the following section, the participant, setting, purpose of the study, research questions and the research design will be carefully outlined. It is noteworthy that in this study, the author assumes dual roles as both the researcher responsible for designing the study, collecting data, and analyzing results, and as the teacher responsible for facilitating the learning environment, implementing instructional strategies, and assessing the participant's progress. While this allows for an intimate understanding of the learner's context and interactions, it may introduce potential biases or challenges in maintaining objectivity during data collection and analysis.

In this study, the author acknowledges the dual roles of researcher and teacher. Instead of attempting to maintain professional distance, which would be practically impossible due to the inherent nature of their interaction, a reflective approach will be adopted. This reflective approach aligns with Julian Edge's concept of *reflexivity*, which emphasizes the "mutually-shaping interaction between the researcher and the research" in a "cycle with no obvious beginning" (2011, p. 35). In his own words:

> "I become a certain person who asks certain questions, but then I may have become this person because of the questions that I have asked. We are working in an interpretive cycle according to which we understand the world (its events, experiences and texts) on the basis of our current state of knowledge in interaction with currently incoming data. […] An abiding message is that to escape the influence of our own expectations requires dedicated effort. All of this corresponds to a version of what the nineteenth-century German philosopher, Dilthey, called a hermeneutic circle (Rickman 1988:167): The hermeneutic circle involves the alternation between the detail and big picture, the historical and the systematic, acknowledging no best place to start, and that there is a paradox involved in saying that our knowledge arises from our experience and that our experience is shaped by our knowledge" (*ibidem*).

Julian Edge's reflections on reflexivity offer an insightful perspective on the interpretive cycle embedded within research, highlighting how the researcher's influence on the research process is reciprocal, continuously shaping and being shaped by it. In his book "The Reflexive Teacher Educator in TESOL: Roots and Wings", Edge delves deeper into this mutual influence. He explains how researchers impact their research through their

choice of topic, formulation of research questions, and methods of data collection (*ivi*., p. 36). He also suggests that there are several strategies to mitigate potential biases in qualitative research, such as data triangulation, member checks, peer review, and coding validation, some of which will be utilized in the present study as well. However, Edge emphasizes that reflexivity goes beyond merely guarding against these influences. It involves "noticing them, accepting them, exploring them and making them a part of the research" (*ibidem*).

In the context of this study, not only is the bi-directionality of the relationship between the researcher and the research crucial, but we must also consider the complex tri-directionality involving the researcher, the teacher, and the research. Rather than describing an endless cycle of influence between the research and the researcher, we must recognize a more intricate triangle of influence that bi-directionally affects each angle of the triangle. This triadic relationship encompasses the roles of researcher, teacher, and research, each continually interacting and shaping the other. The researcher, in their dual capacity, not only influences the research through methodological choices and interpretations but also affects the teaching process and outcomes. Conversely, the experiences and observations gathered from teaching shape the research insights and questions, while the research findings reciprocally inform and refine teaching practices.
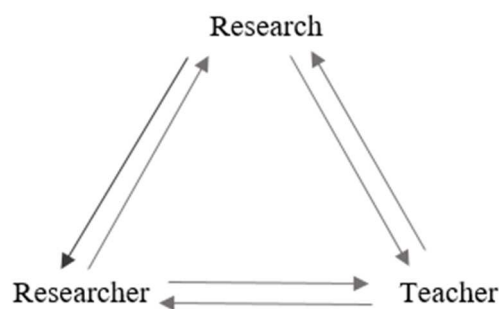
Figure 3. Triadic Influence Model

By embracing this interpretive model, the study aims to provide a richer, more authentic understanding of the impact of DS on language acquisition and oral skills development and provide a deeper engagement with the research process.

1.4.1 Participant and Setting of the Study

This research project explores the impact of DS on motivation and oral skills development in EFL within a unique context—an 11-year-old EFL student at the A1+ proficiency level receiving private lessons outside of his regular public school curriculum. The private lessons will take place over a four-week period, with sessions scheduled twice a week, each lasting approximately 90 minutes, totaling seven lessons. Parental consent for the student's participation in the project was secured as a fundamental requirement (see Appendix 1), following the provision of an informative module outlining the project's details (see Appendix 2).

The private lessons will be conducted at a specialized private organization, located in a small town in Vicenza, Northern Italy. The private school typically tutors students with learning disabilities, although the student involved in this project does not have any known learning disabilities. The organization provides tailored support to a diverse range of learners, and was considered a great fit for this project because it offers an ideal environment for a focused, individualized instruction, while drawing on the organization's extensive resources and expertise.

At the outset of this research project, the participant and the author had already established a tutor-student relationship for approximately 9 months. This extended period of instruction enabled the author to gain a comprehensive understanding of the student's characteristics and learning preferences, as well as to identify the most effective instructional strategies for him.

From the very start of the collaboration with the student, nine months prior to the study, he had been attending these private lessons to improve his oral skills in English. This ongoing focus on enhancing his oral proficiency is also the reason he was chosen, as it aligns perfectly with the objectives of the study. Moreover, during the lessons, the student had been demonstrating increasing interest and enthusiasm in using apps and the computer, so much so that the author chose to engage him occasionally in short digital games, which led to noticeable positive outcomes in motivation. However, he had never been exposed to a structured project using digital tools outside of his regular curriculum. This prior experience with technology, coupled with the positive motivational outcomes observed, made him an ideal candidate for exploring the potential of DS in a more

formalized, structured learning context. Additionally, his specific needs and objectives made him a perfect candidate to address the gap in DS literature regarding its impact on individual oral skill development in private EFL education.

1.4.2 Selecting the Right Web Tool for the Study

Various online digital platforms were reviewed and evaluated for the Digital Storytelling implementation, with Scratch emerging as the preferred choice due to its accessibility and the student's familiarity with the platform.

Scratch is an online widely recognized user-friendly programming environment that enables beginner young users to create interactive stories, games, and animations. Its intuitive interface and drag-and-drop functionality make it particularly suitable for educational purposes, especially with young students at a secondary level of instruction. Furthermore, Scratch was selected because the student already possesses a working knowledge of the platform, which eliminates the need to spend additional time teaching its fundamentals. This decision allows for more focused attention on story development and language learning. Although the student had not previously explored creating storytelling animations, having previously collaborated on a public school game project, this existing familiarity provides a solid foundation for quickly adapting to the new DS functions.

1.4.3 Objectives and Significance of the Study

Existing studies have highlighted the efficacy of DS in enhancing language skills in group settings. However, the personalized nature of one-on-one instruction offers an opportunity to delve deeper into the individual learner's response to DS in language learning. By focusing on a single student, this study aims to provide detailed insights that go beyond what is typically observed in classroom environments. The research is designed to also examine how DS can effectively support language learning in private EFL education, addressing a gap in current literature and contributing to a deeper understanding of effective teaching strategies in this specific educational context. The findings will not only benefit the individual student but also inform broader teaching practices for similar settings.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to offer valuable insights to educators working in the niche context of private education. By exploring the integration of DS into

one-on-one lessons, the study aims to provide teachers with new methods and approaches that can enhance learning experiences for students. Specifically, it seeks to demonstrate how DS can be effectively used while maintaining a constructivist perspective of collaboration. In this model, teachers not only act as mentors but also as collaborators, fostering a dynamic and participatory learning environment where students are actively engaged in co-creating knowledge, even beyond the confines of a classroom environment.

1.4.4 Research Questions

As already anticipated, the investigation aims to better understand the impact of DS on oral skills in EFL and on the motivation of the student under scrutiny. Therefore, the study poses the following questions:

- To what extent can a DS project motivate a student to learn English as a Foreign Language in one-on-one private lessons with a teacher?
- To what extent can a DS project improve English oral skills of a student in one-on-one private lessons with a teacher?

1.4.5 Data Collection

As a single-case study, which is typically used "to test a theory, particularly to invalidate the theory or to distinguish it from competing theories", the main objective here is to assess the feasibility of linguistic development through multimedia collaborative learning in a small one-on-one class environment (Gagnon, 2009, p. 40). Multiple types of data collection will be employed to assure proper data triangulation, which consists in systematically checking "the information collected from one source against at least one and preferably several other sources" (Denzin 1978; Jick 1979; Miles and Huberman 1994; Van Maanen 1979; Woodside and Wilson 2003, as cited in Gagnon, 2009, p. 60). In other words, triangulating data is essential as it reduces bias and strengthens the validity of findings by cross-verifying information obtained from different perspectives and methods.

Firstly, teacher observation diaries will be used to investigate perceptions, insights and concerns during the implementation of the teaching unit, both regarding student's behaviors and interactions, as well as successes and challenges encountered in implementing the project.

Additionally, building upon EDS innate convergence of student-centered learning strategies including reflection for deep learning (Wu & Victor Chen, 2020), a data collection techniques employed in this study will be student reflective logs. At the conclusion of each lesson, the student will be asked to complete reflective logs to introspect on his learning experience. These logs aim to document the student's insights, challenges, and progress, thereby promoting a deeper understanding of how DS enhances his English oral skills and whether motivation remains consistent throughout the entire project. By encouraging regular self-assessment and critical thinking, the reflective logs contribute to a comprehensive assessment of the impact of DS within a personalized, one-on-one educational setting.

Lastly, pre- and post-project questionnaires will be distributed to the participant and their family to evaluate whether his motivation and interest in the English language, as well his perception of skills improvement, have changed following his participation in the project.

Chapter 2. The Constructivist Learner and the Post-Method Teacher: Theories and Pedagogical Shifts

As already discussed, the integration of digital technology in education has the potential to significantly enhance the quality of teaching and learning. However, technology alone is not enough to drive educational improvement. The real challenge lies in effectively embedding digital tools within pedagogical practices to fully realize their benefits (Ley, et al., 2021). Ultimately, the goal of a digital classroom, meaning "a smart classroom where computer technology is integrated during the course", is "to transform teaching and learning into an enriching process for both teachers and students" both in terms of "efficacy and optimal output" (Singh, 2021, p. 21). In a traditional classroom, the teacher is usually the main source of knowledge, and at times students may be passive learners, whereas a digital classroom widens "the scope of interaction between the teacher and students" (*ivi*. p. 24). The foundational baseline is that "with the use of technology, students become active learners, not just consumers" (Tovar Viera & Velasco Sànchez, 2020, p. 37). However, in many educational settings, technology is often treated as a separate entity from pedagogy and content, leading to a focus on training teachers to use specific software without fully considering its pedagogical implications (*ivi*.). Often, the primary challenge with using new technologies in education is the teachers' insufficient knowledge or expertise (Singh, 2021) In other cases, teachers may possess adequate technological skills but struggle to effectively integrate them into their pedagogical practices (Tovar Viera & Velasco Sànchez, 2020). Furthermore, unqualified teachers may overly rely on digital tools, using them to manage the classroom rather than to teach effectively. This dependence can undermine the purpose of technologies, which is essentially to enhance instruction. For some, digital devices may serve as a way to mask a lack of teaching skills or commitment to the profession (Singh, 2021).

One way to effectively overcome the challenges of integrating technology into the language classroom is to adopt a well-defined pedagogical methodology that provides a clear framework for using these tools. A consistent finding underscored in the study "English Teachers' Integration of Digital Technologies in the Classroom" by Thu Ha Bui (2022), as well as in various other empirical studies (Ertmer et al., 2012; Cheung, 2021, as cited in T. H. Bui, 2022), states that the integration of digital technologies in

educational settings is significantly influenced by teachers' pedagogical beliefs. These beliefs not only shape teachers' intentions to adopt digital technologies but also manifest in their classroom practices. For instance, Bui (2022) notes that educators with constructivist pedagogical beliefs tend to perceive technology as a valuable resource for enhancing teaching methods, motivating students, and improving learning outcomes. Additionally, the study references Liu et al. (2017), who found that such constructivist beliefs positively influence teachers' perceptions of digital technologies, including their ease of use, perceived usefulness, and overall attitudes. Building on this, Sadik's research (2008) further emphasizes that meaningful technology integration necessitates a constructivist approach, which focuses on social interaction and helps students develop the ability to create new knowledge, solve problems, and apply creativity and critical thinking. In line with this, a particularly effective approach to integrate technology meaningfully in the classroom is designing curricula around authentic tasks that actively engage learners in constructing their own understanding through reflective experiences (*ivi*.).

Within the context of this thesis, Digital Storytelling is an ideal fit with constructivist pedagogy, as it fosters a learner-centered environment where students actively and critically reconstruct knowledge in meaningful ways (Aliagas-Marin & Argallo, 2016). Furthermore, DS aligns with key educational theories, including Piaget's concept of the learner as an active constructor of meaning, Vygotsky's view of learning as a cultural process. In light of the inherent flexibility, openness to ambiguity, and encouragement of innovative thinking central to constructivism (Kaufman, 2004), the author has chosen to integrate constructivist methodologies within the post-method era framework for this case study. The post-method era, which advocates for moving beyond rigid and prescriptive teaching methods to embrace flexibility, autonomy, and context-specific approaches, offers the adaptability needed to respond to emerging research. This approach aligns with the evolving nature of teacher education programs, allowing for the adaptability and responsiveness to emerging research that the post-method era demands, particularly in the context of teaching oral skills through DS in EFL education.

This study aims to create a learning environment that actively supports these methodologies, ensuring that students can engage with the material in a way that is both meaningful and conducive to deep, constructivist learning.

In this chapter, the aforementioned learning theories and methodologies will be explored in two separate sections, respectively providing a deeper understanding of constructivist approaches and of the post-method philosophy.

2.1 Section I: Key Aspects of Constructivism - Jean Piaget's Theory of Cognition

In 2000, D.C. Phillips, Professor Emeritus of Education at Stanford University, authored "Constructivism in Education", where he explores the philosophical and social theories that laid the groundwork for what we now call constructivism. In this work, Phillips highlights the complexity of constructivist learning theory, noting its diverse origins, various schools of thought, and multiple disciplinary approaches. He identifies two main branches of constructivism—*social* and *psychological*—that have since then gained consensus within the field.

The former suggests that the knowledge and disciplines we recognize are socially constructed by humans, shaped by factors such as politics, ideologies, values, power dynamics, the desire to maintain status, religious beliefs, and economic interests (Phillips, Constructivism in Education, 2000). It, therefore, argues that these bodies of knowledge are not objective reflections of reality, but are rather shaped by the socio-economic and political contexts in which they are formed.

The latter refers to a developmental theory centered on the belief that individual learners actively create their own understanding of different phenomena. These interpretations are often unique to each person, shaped in part by their prior knowledge and experiences. The process of constructing meaning can also occur within a social group, where members collaborate, share ideas, and validate each other's interpretations. When the group reaches a consensus on how to describe or understand a phenomenon and its connections, these shared meanings evolve into formalized knowledge (*ivi.*).

While both approaches assume "that meaning or knowledge is actively constructed in the human mind", social constructivism "focuses on how the development of that formal knowledge has been created or determined within power, economic, social and political forces", whereas psychological constructivism "focuses on the ways in which meaning is created within the individual mind" (Richardson, 2003, p. 1625).

In the next paragraph, I will explore constructivism from a cognitive perspective, focusing on how knowledge is actively built by learners rather than simply absorbed. This process involves *cognitive structures* that, according to Chomsky, may be innate, or, as Swiss developmental psychologist Jean Piaget argued, are formed through learning and experience. Piaget's view, which predominates among constructivists (Noddings, 1990), will be the central focus, particularly his pioneering contributions to what Phillips referred to as psychological constructivism.

2.1.1 Piaget's Concept of Adaptive Knowledge

The foundational concepts that distinguish modern constructivism from other cognitive theories were first developed by Jean Piaget (1896- 1980) approximately 80 years ago. Constructivism was defined by Nel Noddings as *postepistemological*, because it deviates from traditional epistemological views in philosophy (Von Glasersfeld E. , 1995). In fact, unlike traditional theories that view knowledge as an objective reflection of the external world, Piagetian constructivism advocates for a different perspective, asserting that the aim of accurately representing the external world should be replaced with the concept of *viability* (*ivi.* p.7). This means that, much like in biology, where an organism's viability is determined by its ability to survive in its environment, concepts, models, and theories are considered viable in constructivism if they prove to be effective within the contexts in which they were created (*ivi.*). In other words, "knowledge is an adaptive activity", in which individuals evaluate concepts and actions based on their success in achieving the intended purposes (*ivi.* p. 8).

As highlighted by Von Glasersfeld in "Constructivism: Theories, Perspectives and Practice" (1996), Piaget's notion of adaptation differs from the evolutionary epistemology school of Koranz Lorenz, who believed that adaptedness in human beings could come from either phylogenetic or individual experience. The former accumulates in the genome by the process of natural selection, whereas the latter is acquired ontogenetically through interacting with the environment. In 1965, Konrad Lorenz rethought his earlier ideas on innateness, engaging with Lehrman's argument that no trait develops entirely separate from environmental influence (Cofnas, 2017). While Lorenz agreed that genes and environment always interact to produce phenotypes, he still believed that certain traits—those we traditionally consider "innate"—have special

significance. According to Lorenz, these traits carry information gained over the course of a species' evolutionary history, stored in the genome, rather than being learned through individual experience (*ivi*.). This perspective suggests that innate behaviors are not just those that appear early in life, but those informed by the evolutionary adaptations of the species, encoded in their genes.

Piaget, on the other hand, believed that

> one cannot draw conclusions about the character of the real world from an organism's adaptedness or the viability of schemes of action. In his view, what we see, hear and feel – that is, our sensory world– is the result of our own perceptual activities and therefore specific to our ways of perceiving and conceiving. Knowledge, for him, arises from actions and the agent's reflections on them (Von Glasersfeld E. , 1996, p. 4).

Therefore, there is no single 'correct' way to view anything, whether tangible or abstract, as everything is relative to the observer's perspective. This suggests that knowledge is inherently subjective, rooted in personal experience rather than fixed in any absolute form, making cognition a dynamic, individualized process.

In the following paragraph, I will delve into Piaget's view of knowledge development as a process "that leads from a state of near equilibrium to a qualitatively different state of equilibrium by way of multiple disequilibria and requilibrations" (Piaget, The Equilibration of Cognitive Structures: the Central Problem of Intellectual Development, 1975, p. 2).

2.1.2 Cognitive Equilibration and the Learner as Constructor of Meaning

Despite being known primarily for his contribution to child psychology, as can be assumed from his extensive references to biological concepts, Piaget's work is deeply influenced by his background in the life sciences. As he himself observed, studying human development in psychology inevitably requires making epistemological assumptions—such as those concerning the relationship between mind and world, and the interplay between biological and psychological processes (Müller, Carpendale, & Smith, 2009). However, "his interpreters tended to focus on the empirical side of his work and did not pay enough attention to the epistemological foundation of his approach" (*ivi*. p. 2), even though to truly grasp the depth of his theories on cognitive development, it is vital to acknowledge the significant impact his early studies in biology had on shaping his psychological insights.

By instance, his early observations of plant growth and snail adaptive behavior in different environments led him to theorize the concept of *cognitive equilibration,* which is central to Piaget's understanding of how children develop knowledge. In this dynamic process, a behavior triggers the evolution of new structures by creating an imbalance within the genetic regulatory system. This disruption leads to mutations in the genome, which in turn foster new adaptations to the environment (Von Glasersfeld E. , 1996). After extensive research, he concluded that the mechanism driving cognitive change in humans mirrors that of evolution, where organisms reconcile two opposing internal processes: *assimilation*—the integration of new information into existing schemes—and *accommodation* —the adjustment of existing schemes "to take account of particular features of the new object or situation" (Müller, Carpendale, & Smith, 2009, p. 4). *Equilibration* occurs between these phases as "the process of balancing what is already understood with what has yet to be understood, the dual process of assimilating and accommodating of one's environment" (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018, p. 124).

It is noteworthy that when Piaget uses the terms *schemes* or *structures*, he is referring to a dynamic set of mental systems that help us make sense of what we perceive (Brooks & Brooks, 1993). The development of structures characterizes, according to the Swiss scholar, the growth process; in fact, "because of equilibration, the structure expands to include 'the reach beyond the grasp' but also seeks organization and closure, keeping the structure always 'under construction'" (Fosnot, 1996, p. 18). Therefore, in Piaget's own words:

> cognitive equilibration never reaches a stopping point, even on a temporary basis, and that this situation is not to be regretted […]. The fact that states of equilibrium are always exceeded is the result, on the contrary, of a very positive force. Any knowledge raises new problems as it solves preceding ones (Piaget, The Development of Thought: Equilibration of Cognitive Structures, 1977).

This observation underscores the dynamic nature of cognitive development: the continuous process of equilibration reflects the inherent drive of human cognition to push beyond its limits, always seeking new knowledge and deeper understanding. This perspective reinforces the idea that learning is never truly complete but is an ongoing process of exploration and refinement.

Additionally, equilibration should not be viewed as a static equilibrium or a linear process of assimilation, followed by conflict and then accommodation (Fosnot, 1996). It rather

consists in a "dynamic dance of progressive equilibria, adaptation and organization, growth and change" (*ivi.* p. 14). In the same way, the development of knowledge evolves through a series of adjustments, adaptations, and reorganizations, continuously shifting as they encounter new experiences and resolve cognitive conflicts. Based on this reasoning, human learning is inherently constructive, as individuals continually form new knowledge and understanding by building on what they have previously learned. Each new experience allows learners to adapt and refine their existing knowledge, deepening their understanding over time (Chand, 2022).

When applied to pedagogy, Piaget's cognitive theory stresses the fact that learning is an active rather than a passive process (Phillips, The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: The Many Faces of Constructivism., 1995). Rather than simply absorbing information, learners actively engage in a dynamic process of successive adaptations to their reality, continuously constructing and refining their knowledge by shaping and testing their own understanding of the world (Chand, 2022). To put it more bluntly, as Selepe and Moll (2016) argue:

> if children are placed in a carefully designed, conducive (i.e. a facilitated) learning environment and left to their own devices, then they will construct their own new understandings of the world. They are after all active learning organisms seeking to adapt to the knowledge environment in which they find themselves - they continuously seek to assimilate unfamiliar knowledge into their prevailing cognitive structures, and to develop new structures by accommodating themselves to the knowledge they have assimilated (p.9).

In this scenario, learners become constructors of meaning, as they are actively "involved in a process of meaning-making and knowledge construction" (Zajda, 2021, p. 38).

2.1.3 Social Factors in Child Development and the Teacher-Mediator

Although Piaget's theory of cognitive development emphasizes the child's individual exploration of the world, he did not subscribe to the idea that knowledge is constructed in isolation (*ivi.*). It is important to note that while much of Piaget's work, particularly after 1940, centered on the development of knowledge—topic of this chapter so far—it would be inaccurate to suggest that he entirely overlooked the implications of social factors in the learning process (DeVries, 1997). Sure, he believed that conceptual structures shaping meaning and knowledge are unique to each individual, and because of this, no two learners can be assumed to share the exact same understanding (Von Glasersfeld, 1996). However, throughout his career, Piaget not only explored the

development of knowledge but also examined the social factors that influence a child's growth. Moreover, he delved into how cognitive, affective, social, and moral development are shaped by social interactions and processes (DeVries, 1997).

Starting with the cognitive sphere, Piaget critiqued the 'individualist thesis', which suggests that logical thinking and knowledge are formed purely through individual activities. He argued that this view is flawed because it is only through cooperation and interaction with others that individuals can fully develop their logical reasoning (Selepe & Moll, 2016). Namely, our need for logic arises from interacting with differing points of view, prompting us to seek verification of our own beliefs. In his later publications, Piaget even went so far as to assert that social and cognitive development are deeply intertwined, stating that progress in social growth and logical reasoning "go completely hand in hand" and represent "two indissociable aspects of a single reality that is at once social and individual" (Piaget, Logical Operations and Social Life, 1995, p. 145, as cited in DeVries, 1997).

Moving on to the moral and affective development, Piaget believed that as children encounter various social actors, interactions, and environments, they gradually build up their repertoire of behavior patterns. The way they interpret these social experiences shapes their development, potentially leading to different personality traits (DeVries, 1997). Piaget believed that the gradual differentiation of a child's interests, feelings, and values, as well as the increasing stability and coherence of their emotional development, is closely tied to intellectual growth, with both being shaped by social relationships based on *reciprocity*, which consists in "a sort of spontaneous mutual engagement and mutual valuing that involves interindividual feelings" (*ivi*. p. 6). What is crucial to the ego development of the child is the liberation from the thought and will of others. The way to achieve this condition is through *cooperation* with an adult who shows interest in the child's feelings and ideas. This aligns with Piaget's concept of *autonomous morality*, which, unlike heteronomous morality—where individuals follow rules imposed by others out of obedience to authority—is guided by "self-constructed, self-regulating principles" based on "personal convictions" (*ivi*. p. 2). To raise children who do not engage in mindless conformity in their personal interests and moral values, it is essential to foster an adult-child relationship based on mutual respect and cooperation, rather than coercion. This approach helps "develop minds capable of thinking independently and creatively,"

while also nurturing moral feelings and convictions that consider "the best interests of all parties" (*ibidem*).

On these premises, a constructivist teacher should strive to create a more equal relationship with their students by encouraging independent thinking and valuing the outcomes of their thought processes. This allows students to reinterpret and rework adult guidance through their own personal experiences, fostering a sense of personal ownership and necessity in their learning. Therefore, the constructivist teacher's role is to go beyond the simple transmission of information, which is often the norm in traditional education systems. In such systems, learners are frequently expected to work in isolation on tasks that emphasize low-level skills, with the goal of merely identifying and reproducing pre-taught knowledge. Instead, a teachers should aim to "use active methods, which give broad scope to the spontaneous research of the child or adolescent and require that every new truth to be learned be rediscovered or at least reconstructed by the student" (Piaget, To Understand is to Invent. The Future of Education, 1973, p. 15). Otherwise said, "what is desired is that the teacher cease being a lecturer, satisfied with transmitting ready made solutions; his role should rather be that of a *mentor* stimulating initiative and research" (*ivi.* p. 16 italics added by the author).

In addition to interactions with adult experts, Piaget argued that children's social development is deeply influenced by their peer interactions. This is particularly important for the formation of "social and moral feelings, values, and social and intellectual competence," as children are more likely to achieve a sense of equality and reciprocity with their peers (DeVries, 1997, p. 1).

Building on this perspective, Piagetian psychological constructivism also highlights the importance of social interaction in learning. While he focuses on individual reconstruction of knowledge, the inclusion of social dimensions shows that the development of knowledge is not only a solo process but also one that occurs within expert communities or peer-to-peer groups, like classrooms. Though the emphasis in psychological constructivism remains on the individual's active role, learning within a group adds another layer—one of shared negotiation and meaning-making through dialogue.

Unlike social constructivism, however, psychological constructivism does not delve deeply into the critical societal influences such as power, politics, or status, focusing instead on how individuals contribute and collaborate to form collective understandings (Richardson, 2003). The next paragraph will expand upon the ideas of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, known for his work in the early 20th century, who, unlike Piaget, believed that socio-cultural activity is the 'engine' of cognitive development, rather than the other way round (Selepe & Moll, 2016).

2.2 Vygotsky and the Sociocultural Engine of Learning

Social constructivism was first developed by Lev Vygotsky, who, unlike Piaget and his followers, supported "pedagogical and research methods that honor human diversity and emphasize the influence that social and historical contexts have on teaching and learning" (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2012, p. 5). He believed that learning was not merely the result of internal processes such as assimilation and accommodation but was fundamentally determined by the social and cultural environment at a cognitive level (Zajda, 2021). As Vygotsky (1987, p. 106) himself stated, "we believe that development proceeds not toward socialization, but toward converting social relations into mental functions".

To outline a general framework of Vygotsky's large contribution, Samaras A. highlights in her publication titled "Self-Study for Teacher Educators" (2002) four main principles characterizing Vygotskian studies:

1. The individual is the driver of change, but always within the framework of a social community. Vygotsky stressed that personal development progresses through participation in social, goal-oriented activities.
2. Real development occurs through active involvement in meaningful cultural practices. While the Russian scholar recognized the importance of a child's individual awareness, he placed significant emphasis on how this awareness is shaped by evolving social connections.
3. Mental processes are deeply connected to the tools we use, particularly language, which are shaped by social and historical contexts.
4. While a student's current abilities are important, real growth occurs when teachers push students beyond their current limits by encouraging problem-solving and

reflection. This process, guided by formative assessments, helps foster higher mental functions through collaborative dialogue and mediation.

These key points will be further elaborated in the following sections, where Vygotsky's ideas on language and culture, along with his concepts of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Scaffolding, will be explored in greater depth.

2.2.1 The Role of Culture and Language in Cognitive Development

Vygotsky placed "the origin of consciousness at the intersection of the intertwined and reciprocal development of language, tool use, society, and culture" (Mahn H. , 1999, p. 343). According to him, culture and language are the primary lenses through which people perceive, communicate, and interpret the world around them. His contributions to social constructivism are particularly significant in his exploration of the relationship between language, thought, and the role of social engagement in cognitive development.

When examining the cultural and linguistic element, it is crucial to begin with Vygotsky's view on how unconscious, biological mental functions evolve into conscious, sociocultural ones. Essentially, he "viewed humans as the creators and the creations of context" (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2012, p. 28). Vygotsky emphasized the child's role in co-creating meaning through social interactions and highlighted the importance of *word meaning* in the development of thought. As exceptionally analyzed by Mahn H. (1999):

> For Vygotsky, the key to the acquisition of consciousness was the development of the use of tools and signs to mediate human activity. […]The essential aspect of this analysis is the historical development of *word meaning* and *verbal thinking* both for the individual and for humanity. […] In tracing the origins of word meaning phylogenetically, Vygotsky concentrated on the transformation of early humans into meaning makers and the need this created for humanity to marshal nature's productive forces to meet the increasing demands of the nascent social formations. Through this activity human culture and nature were inextricably intertwined, unified, and transformed while retaining their own distinct tensions (pp. 341- 3422).

In this context, Vygotsky argued that the key to the acquisition of consciousness was the development of the use of tools and signs to mediate human activity. He believed that cultural tools, designed to shape and manage human behavior, play a crucial role in transforming basic mental functions into more sophisticated ones. In this process, "due to the development and usage of cultural means, natural mental functions (like natural perception that does not possess knowledge of form, size, and color) turn into higher ones" (Veraksa, 2022, p. 8). That is why, Vygotsky viewed culture as a system of symbolic structures that significantly influence a child's cognitive development.

When considering the linguistic aspect, Vygotsky "rejected the Cartesian dichotomy between thought and language. He saw the two processes as developmentally woven together" (John-Steiner, 2007, p. 137). In truth, he believed that thought and speech initially develop independently, without an inherent link; however, around the age of two, they begin to influence each other, as children start to effectively utilize social tools like verbal communication (Burkholder & Peláez, 2000). More specifically, in one of his major publications "Thinking and Speech" (1934/ 1987), where Vygotsky expanded on his theories by critically analyzing Kohler's, Jean Piaget's and William Stern's research, he proposed that before thought and language merge into word meanings, children explore the world through nonverbal means, a phase he called the prelinguistic stage (John-Steiner, 2007). In the first two years of life, children also express their emotions through actions like crying, laughing, etc.—what Vygotsky termed the preintellectual stage of speech development. After that, children's "thinking becomes verbal and speech intellectual" (Vygotsky, The collected works of L. S. Vygotsky. Volume 1. Problems of general psychology, 1987, p. 112, as cited in John-Steiner, 2007) and they start expressing their needs through language.

2.2.1.1 The Internalization of Speech and Concept Formation

When a child's speech integrates with their actions, it leads to a reorganization of behavior, allowing the child to use language to manage their own activities (Mahn H. , 1999). This *internalization* of speech shifts social interactions into personal, internal processes. As Vygotsky (1978) famously stated:

> Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals (p. 57).

This phenomenon is the process by which higher mental functions, initially developed through interactions between adults and children, gradually become internalized. Through this process, the child absorbs and transforms the socially constructed external world into their own internal, psychological processes, therefore internalizing socially determined cultural heritage (Tzuriel, 2021).

His exploration of how thinking and language converge in verbal thinking laid the groundwork for his investigation into concept formation and in building systems of meaning (*ivi.*). In her chapter in the "Cambridge Companion to Vygotsky", Vera P. John-Steiner (2007) highlights Vygotsky's exploration of how children master complex concepts like 'justice' through a gradual process, supported by both formal teaching and their everyday social interactions. Vygotsky emphasizes that the full understanding of such concepts is scaffolded by "cultural and intergenerational transmission, verbal thinking, and practical application" (p. 138). She further mentions how, according to Vygotsky, by the time children reach school age, language evolves beyond simple communication and takes on a deeper function, serving as a tool for thinking and planning. As the audible speech "turns inwards" in what the Russian psychologist named *private speech*, children are able to better confront challenging tasks (*ivi.*).

This learning process is made possible with the support of an adult *mediator*—whether a parent, teacher, or more knowledgeable peer. It is through mediation that successful learning can be achieved, which takes place within what Vygotsky refers to as the 'zone of proximal development' or ZPD. ZDP and the related concept of Scaffolding will be explored further in the following paragraphs.

2.2.2 The Zone of Proximal Development

The concept of ZDP was developed toward the end of Vygotsky's career and remains only partially elaborated, due to his brief, yet highly productive, life of just 37 years. Therefore, it was necessary to introduce at least a segment of his wide theoretical framework so to properly contextualize ZDP.

Vygotsky defines it as "the distance between the *actual* developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of *potential* development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Lempert Shepel, 1995, p. 429, italics added by the author). Therefore, Vygotsky used ZDP to differentiate between "what students are capable of achieving on their own" without any guidance or help, and "what a child or student can accomplish with the assistance of another's expertise" (Mahn H. , 1999, p. 347).

In relation to Vygotsky's idea of learning within the ZPD, I find compelling what Lempert Shepel (1995) highlights about Elkonin's (1989) idea regarding the role of "eternal

dissatisfaction with oneself" in personality and psychological development, reflecting the dynamic interplay between the real and ideal self. He suggests that the driver of personal growth is the continuous striving towards the ideal tension, which mirrors Vygotsky's notion of ZPD, where individuals grow by reaching toward skills that lie just beyond their current grasp. Elkonin's underlying idea is that transition periods allow for the creation of new ideals, while stable periods consolidate them.

The way to turn potential development, meaning the ideal self, into actual development or the real self is through the previously-mentioned process of internalization (Tzuriel, 2021). This means that a child's initial actions, which are at first performed externally, are gradually transformed into internal processes with the help of guidance from a more knowledgeable individual.

In fact, in "Thinking and Speech" (1987) Vygotsky argues that

> [...] instruction and development do not coincide. They are two different processes with very complex interrelationships. Instruction is only useful when it moves ahead of development. When it does, it impels or awakens a whole series of functions that are in a stage of maturation lying in the zone of proximal development. This is the major role of instruction in development. This is what distinguishes the instruction of the child from the training of animals (p. 212).

Vygotsky's point in this passage is that teaching is most effective when it leads development, rather than simply following it. When instruction anticipates a child's next stage of growth, it activates or stimulates mental functions that are still maturing. This type of instruction differs significantly from the training of animals, as it actively engages and enhances the child's emerging abilities rather than just shaping behavior. Below is a scheme of where the sweet spot of potential development for a learner is located.
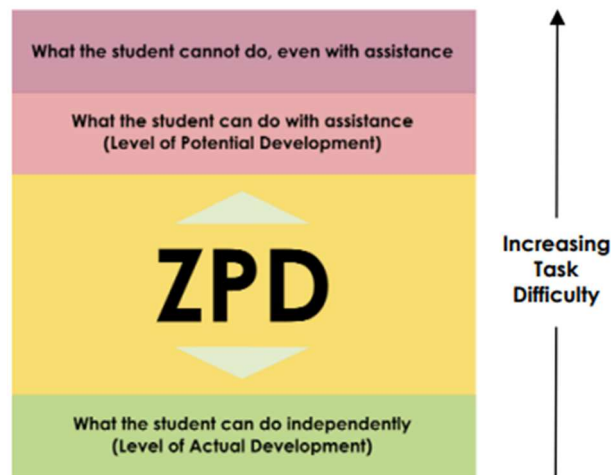
Figure 4. ZDP Explained (Lui, 2012, p. 2)

Therefore, instruction that targets each student's ZPD should be appropriately challenging—not too hard and not too simple—so that it helps the student advance by building on their existing abilities. Students are most open to learning when the material is within their ZPD because it aligns with their current developmental stage. Vygotsky proposed that teaching material that matches or falls below a student's current level of understanding lacks the necessary challenge to encourage further growth. Conversely, content that exceeds a student's comprehension is ineffective in fostering learning (Lui, 2012).

As Mahn H. (1999) rightfully pointed out, Vygotsky argued that all school-based learning is built upon personal previous experiences; consequently, each learner "will create unique paths of development based on their exceptionalities and will have qualitatively distinct zones of proximal development" (p. 347). Vygotsky illustrated this concept through an example in "Mind in Society" (1978), where he described two children of the same age who demonstrate equal performance levels in standard tests. However, when provided with guidance, one child is able to solve more complex problems than the other, revealing a higher ZPD. This variation in ZPD illustrates the importance of personalized learning, as Vygotsky reaffirmed in his work "Educational Psychology" (1997), emphasizing that a key requirement of effective pedagogy should involve deliberately setting personalized educational objectives for each student (Daniels, 2007). Therefore, effective teachers should pay close attention to identifying each student's unique ZPD, as this is crucial for tailoring instruction effectively. This process should be personalized

and continuously revisited, as the ZPD evolves alongside the student's development. By carefully observing and assessing each learner's progress, educators can pinpoint the appropriate level of challenge that pushes students beyond their current capabilities without overwhelming them.

2.2.2.1 The Notion of Scaffolding

The term "scaffolding" is frequently associated with Vygotsky's work, yet he never actually used the term in his studies. It was only years later that this concept became theoretically connected to his idea of the ZPD, as its early use was largely pragmatic (Stone, 1998, as cited in Puntambekar & Hubscher, 2005). The first explicit connection between scaffolding and Vygotsky's theories was made by Cazden (1979), which may explain why many scholars often associate scaffolding with Vygotsky's theoretical legacy (Shvarts & Bakker, 2019).

In their historical investigation of the term, Shvarts and Bakker (2019) point out that while Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) are often credited with introducing the concept, Ausubel (1963) had actually used it earlier, though it was not fully defined or theorized. Bruner (1987) later referred to scaffolding while discussing the ZPD in the context of Vygotsky's ideas, further contributing to the misconception that Vygotsky himself introduced the metaphor (Shvarts & Bakker, 2019). However, the real authorship of the term seems to be linked to Bruner himself, who came up with this term in an article dated March 1973, three years before the publication of the famous article to which most think to be first appeared in (*ivi*.).

To better understand why scaffolding is often linked to Vygotsky, it is essential to first explore the concept of scaffolding itself. It illustrates the temporary support that tutors, teachers, or parents provide during a child's learning process, similar to how scaffolds are used to support the construction of a building. In fact, much like in construction, educational scaffolding has five characteristics: "it provides a support; it functions as a tool; it extends the range of the worker; it allows a worker to accomplish a task not otherwise possible; and it is used to selectively aid the worker where needed" (Greenfield, 1999, p. 118, as cited in Puntambekar & Hubscher, 2005). However, the most relevant aspect of this metaphor is that the support given to learners as they develop new skills or knowledge is only temporary: just as scaffolding in construction is taken down once a structure can stand on its own, educational scaffolding is gradually removed when the

learner becomes capable of performing tasks independently. Additionally, in a scaffold activity, adults control only "those elements of the task that are essentially beyond the learner's capacity, thus permitting him to concentrate upon and complete only those elements that are within his range of competence" (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976, p. 9).

In examining the functions of mentoring, Wood et al. (*ivi.*) identify several key actions that an adult should implement in a scaffolded activity. Initially, the tutor must *recruit* the learner's interest, guiding them away from playful distractions and towards the task at hand. To aid this transition, the tutor will *reduce* the complexity of the task by breaking it into smaller, manageable components "to the level where the learner can recognize whether or not he has achieved a 'fit' with task requirements" (*ivi.* p. 98).

As the learner advances, the tutor needs to *maintain* direction by keeping them focused and motivated, so that "past success" do not "distract from the ultimate goal" or prevent the learner from risking "a next step" (*ibidem*).

Then, the tutor should *mark* critical features of the task, helping the learner recognize and correct discrepancies between their efforts and the expected outcomes. Managing *frustration* is another critical responsibility; the tutor must ensure that the process remains encouraging and not overly stressful, thus preventing excessive dependence on their support.

Finally, the tutor *demonstrates* solutions by modeling ideal responses, allowing the learner to observe and imitate refined approaches to problem solving.

Puntambekar & Hubscher (2005) highlight that two central characteristics defining scaffolding: *intersubjectivity*, which is "attained when adult and child collaboratively redefine the task so that there is combined ownership of the task", providing motivation to students to engage in the task; and *ongoing diagnosis* "of the child's current level of understanding" so that the teacher, by drawing "from a repertoire of methods and strategies", is able to provide the appropriate support "based on the child's changing knowledge and skills" (p. 3). The underlying principle is that the lerning/teaching process is dialogic and interactive, because "although the teacher plays a vital role inthe instructional process, the child is also an active participant" (*ibidem*).

In this scenario, as aptly emphasized by by Selepe & Moll (2016), the teacher becomes

> a *knotworker*, an organiser of classroom learning activities through making decisions about what will be done in class, what topics will be given time, which topics will be covered and when, etc. – in short, continuously mediating the complexity of the activity systems of knowledge consumption

and production to learners. The important thing, though, is that all of this is done by the teacher in constant discourse with the learners, in active engagement with them through the use of the cognitive tools of language (p. 12).

2.3 Section II: Language Teaching in the Post-Method Era

Section II of this chapter shifts focus from the foundational theories of constructivism, as explored through the works of Piaget and Vygotsky, to an examination of the "Post-method" era in language education. This new paradigm represents a move away from rigid, prescriptive methods toward a more flexible and adaptive approach that acknowledges the complexity of language learning and teaching. Central to this era is the recognition of the importance of tailoring educational practices to the unique needs of each learner, which aligns with the constructivist emphasis on individualized learning experiences.

In this context, the discussion will explore how the principles of the "Post-method" era, particularly as articulated by Paolo Torresan in his work "Alfabeto di 73 Lettere" (2022), are applied to the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Specifically, it will discuss the integration of Digital Storytelling as a pedagogical tool to develop oral skills, illustrating how this approach fits within the broader framework of post-method education. By examining the alignment of DS with post-method principles, this chapter aims to demonstrate how innovative, learner-centered strategies can effectively enhance language acquisition while reflecting the evolving demands of contemporary language education.

2.3.1 Method Vs. Approach

Language learning in the current post-global era, influenced by the advancements of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, is closely connected to the post-method framework. This era reflects ongoing efforts "to construct classroom-oriented theories of pedagogical practice instead of knowledge-oriented theories of pedagogy" (Lusianov, 2020). Essentially, the post-method era empowers teachers to develop pedagogical practices that are centered on the needs of the classroom, rather than being strictly guided by traditional, theory-based methods of instruction Thus, adopting a single, unified teaching approach is neither feasible nor effective. Instead, "it is necessary to select teaching strategies and techniques that, on each occasion, can help meet the socio-pragmatic needs of the specific

interactional context, taking into account the learners' proficiency levels and characteristics." (Torresan, 2022, p. 7, original text translated by the author).

Defining the terms *approach* and *method* often reveals a hierarchical structure, with the approach representing the broader, overarching framework, and the method being considered the more specific, detailed practice operating within that framework. For instance, Lusianov (2020) argues that the former operates at the theoretical level, involving "theories, assumptions, and principles about language and language learning," meanwhile the latter exists at the practical level, where "these theories, assumptions, beliefs, and principles are put into practice" (p. 360). Again, Burnham (1992) offers a similar perspective, suggesting that an approach reflects how professionals align with various aspects of their work, influenced by theoretical constructs and social frameworks such as cybernetics, constructivism, or social constructionism. However, an approach should not be seen merely as a "collection of theories, concepts and working ideas. It embodies a practitioner's disposition towards their work", and also "comprises the values and assumptions associated with aspects of their selfhood such as their (dis)ability, intellect, sexuality, gender, race, religion, age […]" (p. 5). A method, on the other hand, pertains to the specific organizational patterns and practices employed to implement an approach. It describes how the theoretical framework is put into action, detailing the protocols and activities used by practitioners (*ibidem*). In other words, within one approach, there may be more than one method.

With time, scholars have noticed that this bipartition (or occasionally tripartite division, when techniques are further categorized under methods) often struggles to survive in today's complex learning environments, as the boundaries are not so clearly defined anymore (Torresan, 2022). We are, therefore, entering in an era where "the bond that once connected the terms 'approach' and 'method' has dissolved, as the latter has gradually detached from the former, inevitably falling into obscurity […]" (*ivi*. p. 14, original text translated by the author).

Kumaravadivelu (1994) argues that traditional methods and approaches in language teaching fail to produce consistently effective outcomes nowadays because they are unable to address the inherent diversity and complexity of real-world learning and teaching contexts. As highlighted by Lusianov (2020), this perspective underscores the

shortcomings of relying solely on fixed methods or approaches, while also bringing attention to the critique of method as a 'colonial' construct. This comparison highlights how methods are designed and dictated by theorists, sidelining practicing teachers by enforcing rigid and inflexible techniques, and procedures that overlook the specific contextual dynamics of the classroom. This power imbalance relegates teachers to mere consumers of predetermined pedagogical knowledge, without empowering them to adapt or innovate based on their specific teaching environments (*ivi*.).

The post-method era seeks to dismantle this top-down structure, shifting power back to teachers by encouraging the development of practices tailored to the local classroom-context. As a result, rather than relying on a single, universal method, teachers are given the autonomy to select and apply various approaches based on situational factors such as culture, student diversity, curriculum demands, and other localized considerations. This approach, often referred to as "glocalization," blends global pedagogical frameworks with local practices, fostering a more adaptable and context-sensitive form of language teaching that integrates global knowledge while responding to the specific needs of the local community (Lusianov, 2020).

The teacher assumes a leading role in applying their sense of plausibility and practical intelligence towards what Torresan (2022) calls "wise eclecticism," which, rather than narrowing the boundaries in search of the ultimate Method, broadens them by considering all possible approaches, combined with the intention of providing guidelines that indicate the direction to follow (p.17).

This approach has been central to the case study at the core of this thesis, where the aim was to blur the lines between theory and practice as much as possible, while still operating within a strong constructivist framework. The constructivist paradigm, in fact, shares many elements with the post-method conception, particularly in its flexibility and responsiveness to context.

2.3.2 Bridging Constructivism with Post-Method

Luisanov (2020) states that, quoting Kumaravadivelu (2003), post-method era or pedagogy is heavily influenced by constructivism, essentially because it draws inspiration from Postmodernism.

Postmodernism emerges in opposition to modernism, therefore rejecting "the search for the truth, the fixed and absolute truth, which can lead to an intolerance of diversity and difference and to a purely materialistic and instrumental view" (Luisanov, 2020, p. 362). Instead, it embraces "a multiplicity or variety of realities, none of which has any more legitimate claim than any other to be viewed as the reality" (*ibidem*). Additionally, the postmodernist sees reality as a construct shaped through social interactions. It argues that reality emerges from the interplay of various factors, including social structures, class dynamics, and power relationships, which all contribute significantly to the formation of what is perceived as real (*ivi.*).

Kumaravadivelu (2003) outlines three core principles of post-method pedagogy: particularity, practicality, and possibility. The principle of *particularity* emphasizes that "any language teaching program 'must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu'" (*ivi*. p.544 as cited in Kumaravadivelu, Towards a Postmethod Pedagogy, 2001). Therefore, effective language teaching should be tailored to the unique characteristics of the learners, teachers, and institutional contexts involved, acknowledging the influence of local socio-cultural conditions.

Practicality "refers to the relationship between theory and practice", advocating for a bottom-up approach where teachers generate knowledge from their own experiences rather than passively applying externally created theories, therefore aiming "for a personal theory of practice" generated by the practicing teachers themselves (*ibidem*).

The principle of *possibility* addresses the role of language ideology and learner identity, fostering an environment where learner "can critically reflect on the social and historical conditions contributing to create the cultural forms and interested knowledge they encounter in their lives" (*ibidem*). The aim of this approach is to "help them appropriate the English language and use it in their own terms according to their own values and visions" (*ibidem*).

These principles resonate deeply with the core tenets of constructivism, particularly those previously analyzed in this chapter. The principle of particularity echoes Piaget's notion that learning should be responsive to the individual's developmental stage and unique context. Like Piaget's constructivism advocates for an educational approach that

acknowledges and builds upon learners' existing knowledge and socio-cultural backgrounds, also post-method emphasizes tailoring instruction to the specific needs of learners and the educational environment. In a similar vein, the principle of practicality aligns with Vygotsky's social constructivism, which emphasizes the role of social interaction and contextual factors in learning. And so does the principle of possibility by stressing the importance of enabling learners to engage critically with language through their own values and cultural contexts. This principle acknowledges the dynamic interplay between learners' identities and their educational experiences, allowing them to shape their understanding of language in personally meaningful ways, which aligns with Vygotsky's notion of cultural tools. Overall, the post-method pedagogy's emphasis on context-sensitive, learner-centered, and socially constructed knowledge reflects key aspects of both Piaget's and Vygotsky's constructivist theories.

In conclusion, the convergence of constructivism and post-method pedagogy creates a rich synergy that enhances language teaching practices in profound ways. This synergy allows educators to craft instructional approaches that are deeply responsive to the unique needs of learners and their environments. By drawing on the strengths of both constructivist theory and post-method philosophy, educators can develop more flexible, contextually relevant pedagogies that honor the complexity and diversity of the learning process. The discussion will now transition to Torresan's examination of educational strategies (2020), delving into the concept of the *strategic teacher* and how these insights further illuminate the practical application of post-method frameworks in effective language instruction.

2.3.3 Moving Beyond Traditional Methods: Being a Strategic Teacher

In his publication "Alfabeto di 73 Lettere" (2020), Torresan compares the classroom environment and the lived experience of each student to the fascinating image of a tree. The roots represent the teacher's motivation, the trunk symbolizes the language being studied, and the branches correspond to the strategies being used. The blooming flowers are the new activities proposed by the teacher, the ripening fruits are the skills acquired by the students, and the flowing sap represents the language that is continuously practiced and enriched. The Italian researcher emphasizes that "depending on which principle is given more attention, and thus which strategies are most implemented, some branches may bear more flowers and fruits than others." (ivi. p. 39, original text translated by the

author). This naturally leads to a deeper discussion on what he means by principles and strategies.

According to him, a *principle* is "the articulation of a *what*, whose content is intelligible to everyone; whereas, a strategy constitutes a plan for implementation, a *how*" or, otherwise said, "a plan of action" (ivi. p. 43).

He identifies six key principles that a post-method teacher should strive to implement: instilling confidence in the student (by reducing anxiety, encouraging meaningful repetition, using L1 when necessary, and providing thoughtful feedback), enhancing student autonomy (by creating opportunities for metacognitive reflection and stimulating critical thinking), promoting the practice of the four skills (by planning integrated pathways where, for example, comprehension connects to production, and subordinating the study of linguistic components to the practice of skills), considering students' needs and interests (by capturing their attention, fostering unity, and adapting the curriculum to meet everyone's needs), adopting a complex view of language (by considering that language is a collection of components that reflects a culture), and sustaining the teacher's motivation (*ivi*.).

Drawing from Germain's (1991) concept of 'didattema' and Kumaravadivelu's notion of 'strategy' (2003), Torresan develops his own definition of teaching *strategies*. He creates a total of 73 strategies, which form the foundation for the development of the teaching unit in the case study presented in this thesis. By drawing upon this compendium, the instructional design will be guided and informed, allowing for flexible implementation in accordance with the specific needs and contexts of the learners involved. Additionally, the implementation of Torresan's strategies will be coupled with the instructional design framework for language activities provided by Alberta Novello in "La Classe di Lingue Inclusiva. Gli studenti con altissime abilità" (2022). This combined approach will be analyzed in Chapter 3.

In this context, the attempt of the author will be to fit into what Torresan (2022) calls a "strategic teacher", who views every activity as flexible, adaptable, and open to change. Through a keen, insightful approach, they perceive potential variations in each activity, engaging with strategies in a dynamic way. In this perspective, the teacher begins to make extensive use of the *abductive* reasoning, which is the ability to "generate hypotheses through vision, intuitively, associatively, and divergently" (p. 54). In this way, "while

relying on principles to guide their choices (by, therefore, deducting) and forming hypotheses based on students' responses (by inducing), the teacher demonstrates a unique inventive capacity (namely, abduction)," which allows them to improvise confidently, tapping into their creativity and intuition (p. 55, original text translated by the author). Below is an overview of Torresan's teaching strategies that will be used as a reference for defining the teaching unit in the next chapter.

Strategies that generate specific behaviors in students	
Cognitive strategies To have students: - identify occurrences - match - compare (ideas, concepts, images, texts) - discriminate - recall from memory - skim quickly - practice divergent thinking - express a judgment - formulate hypotheses, rank, reorder, repeat - choose (eligibility) - select - synthesize - rework - visualize - group - list (elicit) **Dynamic and socially mediated strategies** To have students: - move - share personal anecdotes - reflect - collaborate with others - play	**Linguistic strategies** To have students: - compare - complete - manipulate - make explicit - compensate - reconstruct - transcribe - encourage questioning - promote inner dialogue **Metacognitive strategies** To have students: - reflect on beliefs and attitudes - plan - control and monitor - review **Regulative strategies** To have students: - refine sensitivity - relax - perceive resonances - consider successful experiences - consolidate habits
Strategies related to the management of materials and resources	
Cross-cutting facilitation strategies - use familiar elements - provide for the use of the native language - encourage comparison with multiple languages	**Strategies for modulation and self-production** - differentiate - characterize an activity for a certain degree of openness/closure

o define an appropriate progression o allow for assessment **Facilitation strategies for skills practice** o manage text accessibility o facilitate text production **Holistic strategies** o interweave codes o plan integrated activities o set up mirror activities	o generate activities based on students' ideas (self-production) **Challenge strategies** o give out authentic texts o give out oversized texts o create situations with communicative pressure **Consolidation strategies** o recap o progressively deepen the topic o recycle

Teacher communication strategies

Ostensive strategies o illustrate o present o justify one's choices **Strategies for managing speech** o monitor the speech o regulate the speaking	**Emotionally impactful strategies** o evoke surprise o use humor o tell stories o share personal experiences o acknowledge

Strategies applied to student presentations

Verification strategies

o ask questions
o correct

Table 3. Paolo Torresan's Teaching Strategies (ivi. p. 51-52)

Chapter 3. Structuring the Teaching Unit: From CEFR Guidelines to Practical Case Study Implementation

Chapter 3 of this thesis delves into the literature on oral skill development in EFL and on motivation, reflecting the research questions of this study, while also outlining in detail the structure and objectives of each lesson of this teaching unit. Essentially, the chapter is organized in two parts.

The first one clarifies the development of oral skills in EFL, referencing the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) to outline the specific expectations for the A2 level. By delineating the competencies and benchmarks associated with this level of proficiency, this segment sets the stage for understanding the progression of the student in this case study from an A1+ to an A2 level in oral production. The emphasis will be on defining the core oral production skills around three main functions, interpersonal, transactional, and evaluative. Additionally, this section explores the literature on motivation in learners, exploring the theories of Balboni (2006) and Ryan & Deci (2000).

In the second section, the focus shifts to the structuring of the teaching unit designed to support this educational developmental trajectory. The unit is structured into three distinct phases: pre-production, production, and post-production. Each one of them is meticulously detailed with specific objectives and outlined activities to support the learning process. Lessons within each phase will be analyzed to explain their objectives and the planning of activities intended to facilitate the student's progress in language communicative competences and digital skills.

3.1 Speaking skills in EFL

Teaching speaking in a foreign language presents a unique challenge because learners require a strong and foundation in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation to effectively produce the language (Tamayo, Almeida, & Pillajo, 2024). Compared to English as second language learners, developing speaking skills is a challenging task for learners of EFL, as they get very less opportunities to use the target language outside the classroom (Rao, 2018).

Despite English being a globally recognized language, few are fluent speakers, illustrating the widespread difficulty in achieving fluency (*ivi*.). That is because speaking skills often receive way less attention in curricula compared to teaching just grammar and vocabulary, which can restrict students' ability to produce spoken language, increase their self-consciousness and will eventually lead to inadequate preparation on oral proficiency (*ivi*.).

3.1.1 Addressing Sources of Oral Communication Challenges

Students most frequently struggle with oral expression due to stress factors, such as speaking or presenting in front of fellow student "within the artificial limits of classroom", which may leave them "severely embarrassed and inhibited when opportunities arise for them to speak" (Bhattacharjee, 2013, p. 16). Moreover, when learners perceive their classmates as more proficient speakers, they often experience anxiety, which can cause them to remain silent (*ivi*.). Some students become highly aware of their language limitations and feel insecure about their existing knowledge (*ivi*.). Others may believe they are projecting a lower level of intellectual ability than they actually have and in order to preserve their self-image among their peers, they choose not to take the risk of speaking in class (*ivi*.). The classroom environment plays a significant role in influencing these dynamics: in a teacher-centered setting, students often have limited opportunities to express themselves; additionally, factors such as teacher bias can further restrict equal participation, making it difficult for all students to contribute vocally (*ivi*.).

Horwitz et al. (1986) were the very first scholars to introduce the concept of foreign language anxiety as a specific syndrome and identified three related types of anxiety, some of which have already been mentioned: 1) communication apprehension, 2) fear of negative evaluation, and 3) test anxiety. Understanding these three forms of anxiety provides a foundation for comprehending the broader concept of foreign language anxiety.

The first type refers to the worry associated with speaking in a foreign language. Factors related to personality traits such as shyness, quietness and reluctance can contribute to this form of anxiety (Miskam & Saidalvi, 2018). As reported by Miskam & Saidalvi (2018), McCroskey and Anderson (1976) noted that communication apprehension can

negatively impact performance in communication-focused settings, such as foreign language classrooms, thereby exacerbating language anxiety.

The second type involves concerns about making a poor social impression, leading to a strong apprehension about being judged by others, to "avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation of receiving negative assessments" (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 128, as cited in Miskam & Saidalvi, 2018).

The third type of anxiety, test anxiety, is characterized by "performance-related stress stemming from the fear of failure" (*ivi*., p. 127). In their review of the literature, Cassady and Johnson (2002) outlined the cognitive aspects of test anxiety, which include several key elements: fear of failure, worries and expectations of failure, thoughts about avoiding evaluative situations, and distractions unrelated to the task. The self-worth theory of achievement motivation is another framework used to explore test anxiety. According to this theory, success in challenging tasks is linked to personal rewards and social validation. Individuals are driven to achieve success and avoid failure because failure is seen as a reflection of their inadequacy, leading to feelings of worthlessness (Covington, 1985). As a result, repeated failures in evaluative situations can erode one's sense of self-worth, contributing to increased test anxiety (*ivi*.).

In this case study, the issues related to peer anxiety were not pertinent due to the one-on-one nature of the lessons. However, stress might still arise if the student views the teacher as overly authoritative. In this instance, the established relationship over a 10-month period of private lessons fostered a collaborative dynamic, with the teacher being perceived more as a supportive tutor than an intimidating figure. Additionally, the absence of formal evaluations at the end of the project mitigates stress factors associated with testing and assessment, which, as previously noted, can contribute to anxiety and adversely affect performance. Although it is important to acknowledge that, when implemented effectively, assessment can be a motivating factor for students, especially when it includes elements like *sharing assessment criteria* and *feedback*, fostering *familiarity with assessments*, and using *formative evaluation* (Novello, 2022). Additionally, promoting *awareness of the evaluation process*, ensuring *variety and fairness in assessments*, and providing *remedial tools* help support learning (*ivi*.). Finally,

practices like *effective error correction*, encouraging *self-assessment*, and using a *portfolio* allow students to track their progress and stay motivated (*ivi*.).

Although this teaching unit does not formally conclude with a traditional evaluation, some of these assessment forms will still be incorporated. The concept of a portfolio of self-reflection logs will be used for metacognitive, informal self-assessment, allowing the student to reflect on his learning process. Additionally, effective error correction will be applied throughout the unit, helping the student learn from mistakes and continuously improve without the pressure of formal grading.

Additionally, since "students' personality factors (extrovert, introvert, talkative, shy, taciturn) affect their performance in the oral production" and it is believed that "extrovert students outperform the introvert in the oral work" (Bhattacharjee, 2013, p. 16), it is worth mentioning that the student in this case study is an extremely talkative boy who is naturally inclined to speak frequently, share personal anecdotes, and generally does not face significant challenges with speaking, at least in his native language. Observations from the 10 months leading up to and during the study reveal that he demonstrates very little shyness when speaking. When unsure about how to express something, his primary coping strategy involves seeking assistance from the teacher to translate his thoughts from Italian to English. His main difficulty lies in his tendency to organize his ideas in his mother tongue before translating them into English, which consumes additional time and effort.

3.1.2 CEFR Framework and Language Proficiency: Understanding and Implementing Communicative Language Competences

Mastery of a language goes beyond linguistic competence alone. To communicate efficiently, language must be understood in its entirety, encompassing all its nuances and components. This holistic view emphasizes that effective communication requires more than just knowledge of grammar or vocabulary; it involves understanding the full scope of language in (socio-cultural) context (Novello, La Classe di Lingue Inclusiva. Gli studenti con altissime abilità, 2022). As Alberta Novello (*ivi*.) points out, Piccardo et al. (2011) emphasize that overall language proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages or CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020), extends beyond linguistic abilities—such as reception, production, interaction, and mediation—

to include broader competencies like declarative knowledge (savoir), practical skills (savoir-faire), social awareness (savoir-être), and learning capacity (savoir-apprendre), along with what are referred to as communicative language competences. This approach emphasizes the need to not only acquire these competencies but to effectively implement and adapt them across different communicative contexts, using strategic approaches to navigate and respond to various real-world interactions.

Communicative language competences are divided into three subcategories, which will be referenced in the tables to clearly outline the objectives of each lesson in the teaching unit explained throughout this chapter. Each lesson is designed to focus on specific aspects of these subcategories, ensuring a comprehensive development of the student's oral skills, in alignment with the overall goals of the teaching unit.

It is therefore essential to clarify how the CEFR (*ivi*.) classifies communicative language competences, in order to facilitate a clearer understanding of the tables presented later. These competences are divided into three key subcategories: linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competences. *Linguistic competence* refers to the mastery of the language system itself, including lexical competence (vocabulary knowledge), grammatical competence (understanding sentence structure and rules), semantic competence (meaning of words and sentences), phonological competence (pronunciation and sound patterns), orthographic competence (writing conventions and spelling), and orthoepic competence (correct pronunciation of words).

Sociolinguistic competence relates to understanding and appropriately using language in social contexts, such as recognizing social relations, politeness conventions, expressions of folk wisdom, and adjusting language according to register differences, dialects, and accents.

Finally, *pragmatic competence* focuses on the functional use of language, involving discourse competence (organizing language coherently in communication) and functional competence (using language to achieve specific purposes, such as requesting, apologizing, or persuading).

In addition to offering a comprehensive framework for a holistic approach to language teaching, the CEFR provides a detailed breakdown of language competences into specific components, defining proficiency levels across various domains. The CEFR aims to

enhance learners' skills and abilities by offering a structured approach. As a European initiative, it presents a standardized framework for evaluating language proficiency transparently (Piccardo et al., 2011). The CEFR serves as a crucial resource, detailing the levels of competence learners can attain and distinguishing between different aspects of language use to significantly advance language education.

According to the proficiency levels outlined in the CEFR grid, the student's current competences in this study fall between the A1 and A2 levels. Given this positioning, it was considered appropriate to plan the activities based on the A2 level, ensuring that the lessons provide the necessary scaffolding to support the student's gradual progression while bridging the gap between these two proficiency stages. The following paragraph will outline the expected oral skills for the A2 level, providing a clear framework for what competencies are anticipated at this proficiency stage.

3.1.2.1 Understanding Oral Comprehension and Production Skills at A2 Level according to CEFR

At the A2 level, as delineated by the CEFR, students are expected to demonstrate specific competences in terms of both reception and production skills. As previously mentioned, the CEFR provides a clear framework for what learners should be able to understand and convey in various contexts. Since the lessons in this case study include exercises involving listening to storytelling and discussions with the teacher—thereby engaging reception skills as well—it is important to introduce these aspects briefly. Although the primary focus of this case study is on the production aspect, particularly oral skills, incorporating an overview of reception competences provides a more comprehensive understanding of the student's overall language abilities. The information presented in the tables below will serve as the foundation for the planning of the teaching unit, ensuring alignment with the objectives set forth by the CEFR for the A2 level. By detailing specific competences and expectations, the table provides a clear framework for structuring the lessons to meet these standards. This approach guarantees that the teaching unit is designed to address the targeted skills and knowledge required at the A2 proficiency level, thereby facilitating a structured and effective learning experience that adheres to the European CEFR guidelines.

Reception Competence Area	Expected A2 Level Skills

Audio-Visual Competences	Can identify the main point of TV news items reporting events, accidents, etc. where the visuals support the commentary. Can follow a TV commercial or a trailer for or scene from a film, understanding what topic(s) are concerned, provided the images are a great help in understanding and the delivery is clear and relatively slow.
	Can follow changes of topic of factual TV news items, and form an idea of the main content.
Overall Oral Comprehension	Can understand enough to be able to meet needs of a concrete type, provided people articulate clearly and slowly.
	Can understand phrases and expressions related to areas of most immediate priority (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment), provided people articulate clearly and slowly.

Table 4. Audio-visual Competences and Oral Comprehension Skills according to CEFR (2020, pp. 48, 52)

As far as oral production is concerned, the categories are organized around three primary functions: *interpersonal*, *transactional*, and *evaluative*. Additionally, there are two more specific genres: "Addressing audiences" and "Public announcements." The "Sustained monologue: describing experience" category is centered on the ability to provide detailed descriptions and narratives (Council of Europe, 2020). On the other hand, "Sustained monologue: putting a case (e.g., in a debate)" focuses on presenting and defending an argument, which can be delivered in extended speaking turns during conversations or discussions (*ivi*.). The "Sustained monologue: giving information" is a new addition from 2018, created by adapting certain descriptors from the "Information exchange" scale to better fit monologue situations rather than dialogue (*ivi*.).

Oral Production Competence Area	Expected A2 Level Skills
Overall Oral Production	Can give a simple description or presentation of people, living or working conditions, daily routines. likes/ dislikes, etc. as a short series of simple phrases and sentences linked into a list.
	Describing Experience:

Sustained monologue	Can tell a story or describe something in a simple list of points. Can describe everyday aspects of their environment, e.g. people, places, a job or study experience. Can give short, basic descriptions of events and activities. Can describe plans and arrangements, habits and routines, past activities and personal experiences. Can use simple descriptive language to make brief statements about and compare objects and possessions. Can explain what they like or dislike about something.
	Can describe their family, living conditions, educational background, present or most recent job. Can describe people, places and possessions in simple terms. Can express what they are good at and not so good at (e.g. sports, games, skills, subjects). Can briefly describe what they plan to do at the weekend or during the holidays.
	Giving information: Can give simple directions on how to get from X to Y, using basic expressions such as "turn right" and "go straight", along with sequential connectors such as "first", "then" and "next".
	Putting a case (e.g. in a debate): Can explain what they like or dislike about something, why they prefer one thing to another, making simple, direct comparisons. Can present their opinion in simple terms, provided interlocutors are patient.
Public Announcements	Can deliver very short, rehearsed announcements of predictable, learnt content which are intelligible to recipients who are prepared to concentrate.
Addressing audiences	Can give a short, rehearsed presentation on a topic pertinent to their everyday life, and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions, plans and actions. Can cope with a limited number of straightforward follow-up questions.

	Can give a short, rehearsed, basic presentation on a familiar subject. Can answer straightforward follow-up questions if they can ask for repetition and if some help with the formulation of their reply is possible.

Table 5. Oral Production Competences according to CEFR (2020, pp. 61-65)

3.2 Motivation in Language Learning

Motivation has long been recognized as a crucial element in language teaching, with a focus on the learner serving as a consistent theme in educational proposals from both past and present scholars (Novello, La Classe di Lingue Inclusiva. Gli studenti con altissime abilità, 2022). In discussing the fundamental role of motivation in the language classroom, Novello (*ivi.*) discusses Balboni's (2006) insights on how various forms of pleasure can enhance motivation. The Italian Linguist and Professor identifies three main sources of motivation: "duty," "need," and "pleasure." According to his model, "duty" drives learning but often results in only short-term retention, "need" is effective only until it is met, and "pleasure" engages both hemispheres of the brain, making it a particularly powerful motivator (Novello, 2014). Therefore, in Balboni's triangular model, pleasure is positioned at the apex and is divided in several strategies to foster motivation in language learners: the *pleasure of learning*, achieved through the feasibility of activities and awareness of progress; the *pleasure of variety*, through diverse materials, exercises, and activities; the *pleasure of challenge*, incorporating activities that are stimulating and challenging; the *pleasure of novelty*, addressing students' ongoing need for new stimuli; the *pleasure of systematization*, by discovering the rules and mechanisms of the language; the *pleasure of play*, using playful teaching methods adapted to different ages to engage students in a stimulating manner; the *pleasure of perceived autonomy* with the foreign language; and the *pleasure of fulfilling one's duty*, which rewards being a diligent student (Novello, La Classe di Lingue Inclusiva. Gli studenti con altissime abilità, 2022).

Balboni's triangular model evolved over time. In his later work (2008), he presents a continuum model where these factors are interconnected. For instance, a sense of duty can evolve into a more intrinsic motivation as it fulfills new linguistic and communicative needs. Similarly, once a need is satisfied, it can lead to pleasure. This dynamic interaction means that each type of motivation can potentially generate the others, contributing to a more engaging learning experience (Novello, 2014).

Balboni's theory is grounded in several foundational theories, including the work of Ryan & Deci (2000) on Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Their research provides a critical framework for understanding how internal and external factors influence motivation. In fact, according to them, motivation in an individual can differ not only in the level, but also in the orientation, meaning, "the underlying attitudes and goals that give rise to action—that is, it concerns the why of actions" (*ivi*. p. 54). Based on these goals, they differ between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivations: the former "refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable" and usually "results in high-quality learning and creativity"; the latter "refers to doing something because it leads to a separable outcome" (p. 55). Contrary to common belief, extrinsic motivation should not always be seen as a lesser form of motivation. In fact, "students can perform extrinsically motivated actions [...] with an attitude of willingness, reflecting an internal acceptance of the value or utility of the task" and therefore leading to effective learning (*ibidem*).

SDT is supported by several sub-theories, each addressing different aspects of motivation. Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET)**,** one of the sub-theories presented by Ryan & Deci (1985), focuses on how external factors, such as rewards, feedback, and pressure, can either enhance or diminish intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). CET emphasizes that intrinsic motivation is strengthened when individuals feel competent and autonomous. For instance, positive feedback can enhance a sense of competence, thereby boosting intrinsic motivation, but only if accompanied "by a *sense of autonomy* or, in attributional terms, by an *internal perceived locus of causality*", in other words, "they must also experience their behavior to be self determined if intrinsic motivation is to be maintained or enhanced" (*ivi*. p. 58).

Another crucial sub-theory is Organismic Integration Theory (OIT)**,** which explains the internalization process—how extrinsically motivated behaviors can become more self-determined. OIT outlines a continuum of extrinsic motivation, ranging *from external regulation*, where behavior is controlled by external rewards or threats—perceived by the individual as highly controlled or alienated—to *introjected regulation*, where actions are driven by internal pressures such as guilt or ego involvement (*ivi*. p. 62). More autonomous forms include *identified regulation*, where the individual "has identified with the personal importance of a behavior and has thus accepted its regulation as his or her

own", and *integrated regulation*, where the behavior is fully assimilated into the individual's sense of self.

Overall, SDT suggests that effective motivation, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, depends on the satisfaction of three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Environments that support these needs foster higher levels of motivation and internalization, allowing individuals to engage more meaningfully and sustainably in activities, even when they are extrinsically motivated. In this teaching unit, particular emphasis is placed on enhancing the *autonomy* aspect, which is essential in language learning, since in language acquisition consistent practice is crucial, and achieving this goal is only possible when students possess a high level of autonomy. As Little (1991, p. 4) defines it, autonomy is "a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action. It presupposes, but also entails that the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of his learning."

Drawing from this definition, the teaching unit encourages the student to actively cultivate this autonomy through the use of reflective logs. After each lesson, the student will compile these short but hopefully effective logs, promoting a deeper engagement with the learning process. This reflective practice allows the student to evaluate their progress, make informed decisions about their learning strategies, and take ownership of his language development, thus fostering the independent action and critical reflection essential to autonomy.

3.3 Structure of the Teaching Unit

The teaching unit developed for this case study drew inspiration from the four phases identified by Shao-Ting Alan Hung (2019) in his work on digital storytelling. Hung's framework for the creation of digital stories is structured around four distinct phases: 1) pre-production, 2) production, 3) post-production, and 4) distribution. Each of these phases serves a critical function in guiding learners through the process of Digital Storytelling, ensuring they are able to connect their stories to the subject matter while simultaneously engaging with multimedia elements to enhance their narratives (*ivi.*). This framework, which has been applied successfully in EFL contexts to support learners' engagement and cognitive skill development, served as the foundation for this teaching

unit, though certain modifications were made to better suit the learning needs of the student involved in this case study.

Each of the following subparagraphs will delve more into each phase and the corresponding lessons, detailing how they were implemented in the case study. For each phase, tables will be provided outlining the didactic objectives of the lessons. These objectives are grounded in Paolo Torresan's strategies for language learning (2022) and structured according to Alberta Novello's framework (2022) for organizing language activities. The tables will offer a clear view of how each lesson was designed to support both the development of oral skills and the digital storytelling process, highlighting the specific linguistic and cognitive goals for the student at each stage.

It is also worth mentioning that most of the teaching unit is structured to maximize in-class work and minimize homework assignments. Since these lessons are extracurricular and independent of the student's formal school curriculum, expecting the student to complete homework outside of the 90-minute lessons would be unrealistic and potentially counterproductive. Firstly, the primary goal of these sessions is to supplement and reinforce the student's learning without adding to their already substantial academic workload. The student likely has existing homework and commitments from his regular school, making additional assignments from the DS sessions an undue burden. By focusing on intensive, hands-on learning during the lessons, the student can benefit maximally from the time spent in a supportive, structured environment without the stress of additional out-of-class work. Moreover, the format of one-on-one lessons allows for tailored instruction that addresses the student's immediate needs and learning pace. It also enables the possibility to cover more material efficiently and to engage in interactive, collaborative learning activities that might be difficult to replicate independently at home.

3.3.1 Pre-Production Phase

In Hung's model (2019), the *pre-production* phase encompasses five key steps: selecting a topic through prompting questions, conducting preliminary research, co-writing scripts with peer feedback, orally practicing traditional storytelling, and developing a storyboard. However, to ensure that the student in this study—an 11-year-old EFL learner at the A1+ level—could fully grasp the concept of narrative structure, the pre-production phase was expanded to include an additional component: listening to and analyzing a story. This

modification aimed to provide the student with a clear example of storytelling, helping them understand how narrative elements, emotions, and timing work together to create an engaging narrative. This stage also introduced the student to the narrative arc, which would later serve as the basis for their own storytelling process.

Unlike in Hung's framework, where peer interaction and feedback play a significant role in the collaborative writing process, these elements were not feasible in this case study due to the nature of the classroom environment, which involved one-on-one lessons with the teacher. Nevertheless, to ensure that the student received guidance and support throughout the process, the teacher took on the role of a consistent collaborator, acting in line with the constructionist approach that views the teacher as a mediator and facilitator. Through this ongoing interaction, the teacher provided continuous feedback and helped the student navigate the challenges of story creation, ensuring a supportive environment that mirrored the collaborative aspects typically found in peer-based projects.

Additionally, the oral practice component, which in Hung's model occurs during the pre-production phase, was moved to a later phase in this study. Given that the focus of this phase was on listening to and critically analyzing the structure of stories, it was deemed premature to expect the student to engage in oral practice at this early stage. Instead, this phase emphasized developing critical thinking skills to help the student comprehend what makes a compelling story. Oral storytelling practice was integrated into the post-production phase, where the student was better equipped to focus on pronunciation, fluency, and expression after having built a solid understanding of narrative structure.

3.3.1.1 Lesson 1: Engaging with and Analyzing *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss

In the following section, a table will be presented to illustrate the structure of this lesson (see Appendix 3) comprehensively. This table will detail the various components of the lesson, including the specific abilities and competences that are activated, as well as the associated activities and homework assignments.

Lesson objectives	*Skills*	*Competences*	*Lesson activities*	*Homework (if any)*
• Understand the main themes and	Listening Speaking	*Linguistic:* Vocabulary	Brainstorming	Creative activity

information of "The Lorax" • Develop listening and comprehension skills • Enhance vocabulary related to environmentalism • Engage in discussions about the story's messages		Pronunciation practice of new vocabulary	Vocabulary matching exercise	
		Sociolinguistic: Register	Matching images with words	
		Pragmatic: Turn-taking Cohesion Coherence	Identifying sequences of events	

Table 6. Lesson 1: Adaptation of the table for the didactic design of linguistic activities by Alberta Novello (2022, p. 114)

Phase 1: Preparatory Exercises

The very start of the first lesson begins with a discussion of the meaning of environment and environmental issues with a vocabulary matching exercise, which introduces the student to the central theme of the story he is about to engage with: *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss (1972). This activity allows the student to activate his prior knowledge and reflect on his own beliefs and attitudes toward environmentalism, ensuring that he can better relate to the narrative.

A. **Vocabulary Matching Exercise:**

• Strategies implemented by the student during the activity:

  o *Cognitive* strategies: This activity focuses on matching and recalling vocabulary related to environmentalism, encouraging the student to discriminate between definitions and then translate them into Italian. This helps develop a deeper understanding of the terms.

  o *Linguistic* strategies: The task promotes comparison of definitions and requires the student to complete and transcribe his work, ensuring linguistic accuracy in both source and target languages.

This introductory exercise is followed by a brainstorming activity on the environmental theme. Brainstorming, as described by Balboni (2008), should be seen as a true "storm in the mind," where, without overthinking and by allowing associative thought to flow freely, students quickly jot down notes, fragments of ideas, and concepts. This

unstructured approach encourages creativity and spontaneity, making it a powerful tool for generating ideas (p. 133).

    B. Brainstorming Exercise:

Strategies implemented by the student during the activity:

- o *Cognitive* strategies: This encourages divergent thinking as the student generates a range of ideas about the environment. He is invited to express his own judgments and share his personal insights.
- o *Dynamic and socially mediated* strategies: The student reflects individually and with the teacher.
- o *Metacognitive* strategies: The student is asked to reflect on his beliefs about the environment and monitor his thinking during the activity.
- o *Holistic* strategies: This activity integrates various codes of thinking, merging personal experiences with new information about environmental themes.

Phase 2: Listening to the Storytelling

Following Phase 1, the lesson progresses with a structured listening activity of a YouTube video of *The Lorax*[2] storytelling, featuring illustrations that visually support the narrative. This video provides the student with a multi-sensory experience, combining audio and visual input to enhance comprehension and engagement. The listening activity is divided into five segments of approximately 3.5 minutes each. After each segment, the student is asked comprehension questions to assess his understanding of the story so far, and these questions are followed by a discussion. This approach allows the student to engage deeply with the material and reflect on his comprehension of each segment before moving on to the next.

It was deemed relevant to let the student listen to a story first before writing his own because listening to and understanding a story begins the process of figuring out what story to tell. As Schank & Abelson (2014) suggest, even when responding to new situations, people rely on the stories already stored in their memory, adapting them to fit

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[2] Here is the link to the video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EdWesdMfyd4

new circumstances. This process of recalling and reinterpreting familiar narratives helps make the seemingly complex task of understanding the world much simpler. By listening to a story, the student starts drawing from these existing memories, using them as a foundation for interpreting and crafting his own narrative. It is about finding a relevant story to shape the new one, ensuring that the creative process is grounded in an understanding of narrative structure and flow.

Furthermore, from the standpoint of language education, if the primary objective of this teaching unit is to develop oral skills, it is important to emphasize that speaking does not occur in complete isolation from listening. As Harmer (2001) points out, "conversation between two people is a blend of listening and speaking. Reception and production are so bound up together that we should not have students practice skills in isolation" (p. 251). Therefore, integrating listening activities alongside speaking practice is essential to ensure a holistic approach to developing communicative competence.

Finally, the story of *The Lorax* was selected for a specific reason: the student has already watched the film version and was somewhat familiar with the general plot. While there are key differences between the film adaptation and the original story, the familiarity with the characters and themes allows for a smoother transition into the narrative analysis phase. This choice was made for convenience, to save the time and effort needed to introduce an entirely new story from scratch, which would demand more attention during the pre-production phase. The intention, however, is to focus more on the production phase, which will begin in Lesson 4. Therefore, by using a familiar story, the student is able to dive directly into comprehension and narrative analysis without the need for extensive background explanation. Additionally, this strategic choice follows the advice of storytelling experts Jeff Gere et al. (2002), who recommend that to help students understand the concept of storyboard formation—particularly relevant in Lesson 2—it is effective to either "create a storyboard version of any story from a previous storytelling activity" or, as in the present case study where the student has no prior experience with Digital Storytelling, "select a story already familiar to the student" (*ivi*. p. 17).

Listening and Discussion exercise:

- Strategies implemented by the student during the activity:

o *Cognitive* strategies: The student is asked to recall details from each segment, engaging his memory and encouraging him to compare ideas and concepts. By answering questions about the story, he has to critically think about the plot and predict what might happen next, fostering hypothesis formulation.

o *Dynamic and socially mediated* strategies*:* The discussion segments encourages the student to reflect on his understanding and share his interpretations with the teacher.

o *Linguistic* strategies: Through questioning and discussion, the student practices articulating his thoughts and engaging in inner dialogue. This process helps him clarify and express his understanding of the story, reinforcing his language skills as he describes events and characters.

o *Metacognitive* strategies: The activity requires the student to monitor and assess his comprehension of the story throughout. After each segment, he reflects on his understanding and adjusts his interpretations during the discussion.

o *Facilitation* strategies**:** Dividing the video into smaller segments makes the content more accessible, allowing the student to process the information in stages. This approach helps manage the cognitive load. Additionally, the teacher occasionally speaks in L1 (the student's native language) to facilitate discussion and clarify key points.

o *Challenge* strategies: The student-teacher discussion creates communicative pressure, pushing the student to think critically and articulate his understanding in real-time. This challenge helps ensure active participation and promotes a deeper engagement with the narrative.

Phase 3: Comprehension Exercises

In Phase 3 of the lesson, the focus shifts to comprehension exercises aimed at reinforcing key concepts from the story while developing critical thinking and language skills.

A. **Character Matching Exercise:**

- Strategies implemented by the student during the activity:

- *Cognitive* strategies: The student compares characters and matches names with appropriate descriptions, engaging in critical thinking.
- *Verification* strategies: The teacher uses questioning to ensure comprehension and correct misunderstandings.

The second exercise challenges the student to recall and reorder events based on the narrative structure of *The Lorax*. The relevance of story sequencing in storytelling is fundamental to a clear and coherent narrative. Proper sequencing helps organize the flow of events, ensuring that the plot develops logically and is easy for the reader or listener to follow. In this context, the activity focuses on enhancing the student's understanding of narrative structure, allowing him to grasp the cause-and-effect relationships between events and characters' actions.

B. Arranging Sentences in Story Sequence:

- Strategies implemented by the student during the activity:
  - *Cognitive* strategies: This activity asks the student to identify occurrences and reorder events based on the narrative structure. The student needs to recall from memory details about the story's events.
  - *Metacognitive* strategies: The student is prompted to control and monitor his understanding of the plot sequence, developing his ability to review and adjust his comprehension.

Phase 4: Narrative Structure

Since "most well-crafted stories follow a structure", one objective of this lesson is to introduce such a framework to the student (Damodaran, 2017, p. 24). The history of story structuring is very ancient, dating back to Aristotle, who, in *Poetics*, "provided the first formal description of what a story requires", which includes "a beginning, a middle, and an end", in the course of which the protagonist "should see a change in fortune" (*ivi.*, p. 25). In the nineteenth century, German novelist Gustav Freytag developed his own narrative model, which includes five key elements. The first is the *exposition* or *inciting moment*, an event that initiates the story. Next is the *complication* or *rising action*, during which tension escalates through additional events. The *climax* or *turning point* follows, marking a shift in the story's direction—either "from good to bad in a tragedy" or "from

bad to good in a happy ending story". This is followed by the *reversal* or *falling action*, where the consequences of the previous change unfold. Finally, the *denouement* or *resolution* reveals whether the protagonist ultimately succeeds or fails (*ibidem*). These elements are often depicted as a triangle, the so-called Freytag's Pyramid, which will be illustrated in this lesson to help the student visualize and break down the storyline.

Freytag's Pyramid Analysis:

- Strategies implemented by the student during the activity:
  - *Cognitive* strategies: The student compares the events of *The Lorax* to the plot structure outlined in Freytag's Pyramid, helping him synthesize and visualize the storyline.
  - *Metacognitive* strategies: The exercise encourages the student to plan and reflect on his understanding of narrative sequencing.
  - *Holistic* strategies: By using Freytag's Pyramid, the activity interweaves codes, linking narrative theory to the practical understanding of a story's structure.
  - *Facilitation* strategies: The student is required to apply his knowledge to progressively deepen his understanding of how the story fits into the narrative model.
  - *Challenge* strategies: By giving authentic texts, the activity creates a communicative pressure where the student must apply his knowledge.

Phase 5: Reflective Discussion on the Story's Messages

Discussion:

- Strategies implemented by the student during the activity:
  - *Cognitive* strategies: These questions encourage the student to express judgments, formulate hypotheses, and critically analyze the story's themes and messages.
  - *Dynamic and socially mediated* strategies: The student collaborates with the teacher to explore ideas more deeply.
  - *Metacognitive* strategies: The student engages in reflective dialogue, sharing personal perspectives and evaluating the worth of his opinions.

- *Linguistic* strategies: The activity promotes questioning and inner dialogue, encouraging the student to articulate his thoughts clearly and to elicit questions.

- *Challenge* strategies: The discussion generates communicative pressure as the student debates and defends his viewpoints.

Phase 6: Homework

To reinforce the student's reflection on environmental themes discussed in class, the homework offers a chance to engage creatively with the topic. The student is tasked with designing an eco-friendly invention, providing an opportunity to apply the ideas explored in a more personal and imaginative way. Additionally, this exercise serves as a foundational step in preparing for the creation of his own digital story. The invention designed in this homework will later inspire the student's narrative, helping to build a meaningful and cohesive story around his invention.

Additionally, this activity was also specifically designed to incorporate the student's personal interest in car design, making the task more engaging and relevant to his passions. As research shows, incorporating students' personal interests into class activities can significantly enhance motivation and learning outcomes. As early as 1973, Rogers emphasized that effective learning should engage students' interests on multiple levels. He argued that students need to connect with their lessons not just intellectually, but also emotionally and affectively (Novello, 2014).

Moreover, as already mentioned in 3.2, according to Deci and Ryan (2000), intrinsic motivation—driven by the enjoyment of an activity itself—"results in high-quality learning and creativity" because it satisfies fundamental psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness (*ivi*. p. 56). Engaging students with tasks that resonate with their intrinsic interests fosters deeper involvement and "supports their natural readiness to learn and explore" (*ivi*. p. 57). This connection between personal interest and motivation aligns perfectly with the aim of promoting active and meaningful learning in this homework exercise.

Eco-friendly Invention Challenge:
- Strategies implemented by the student during the activity:

- *Cognitive* strategies: This task encourages the student to synthesize ideas about environmental issues, visualize solutions through his own inventions and practice divergent thinking.
- *Metacognitive* strategies: The student must plan and reflect on his invention's potential impact on the environment.
- *Holistic* strategies: By self-producing their invention ideas, the student interweaves creative thinking and real-world application.

3.3.1.2 Lesson 2: Exploring Emotions in Storytelling

In both storytelling and education, emotions are fundamental to fostering deeper engagement and understanding. In the educational context, emotions play a key role in shaping cognitive processes, enhancing student engagement, and influencing learning outcomes. As Sarıca (2023) notes, emotions "support the development of self-dynamics such as self-reflection and self-awareness of emotions" and facilitate emotional sharing and empathy, which are essential for a transformative learning experience (p. 1). When applied to DS, emotions provide a bridge between the storyteller, the teacher, and the audience if present, allowing to connect on a personal and meaningful level.

As Lambert & Hessler (2018) highlight, emotional awareness in storytelling is crucial:

> Thus, having an awareness of the contrasting and complex nature of a story's emotional content will not only help get us in touch with the core of the story's meaning, but also determine which emotions to include, and in what sequence to present them to help the audience understand the story (p. 58).

This reflection on emotions enables storytellers to unearth the deeper layers of meaning within a narrative, helping them shape the emotional journey they want their audience to experience.

The intertwining of emotion in both the educational and storytelling processes not only enhances comprehension but also fosters empathy and emotional intelligence. As Sarıca's systematic review (2023) demonstrates, DS provides a safe space for emotional exploration, enabling students to express and reflect on their feelings within a structured yet creative framework. By recognizing the emotional complexities of both the story and the storyteller, students can engage more deeply with the content, leading to more meaningful learning experiences and richer, more impactful storytelling.

On these premises, this lesson (see Appendix 4) focuses on identifying the emotions within *The Lorax* story and understanding how they align with the sequence of events. By exploring the emotional journey of the characters and the narrative, the student gains insight into how emotions evolve and impact the story's progression. This exercise not only enhances the student's ability to connect emotions with storytelling but also introduces new vocabulary related to the emotional spectrum. This will prove valuable in future tasks, particularly when the student creates his own story, where an understanding of how to structure and express emotions will be essential to crafting a meaningful and engaging narrative.

Below is the table containing the structure and linguistic objectives of this lesson.

Lesson objectives	*Skills*	*Competences*	*Lesson activities*	*Homework (if any)*
• Review the story structure of "The Lorax" • Introduce, understand and apply vocabulary related to emotions • Begin brainstorming for creating a storyboard for an original story	*Language-related:* Writing Speaking *IT-related:*	*Linguistic:* Vocabulary Grammar Orthography *Sociolinguistic:* Register *Pragmatic:* Flexibility Coherence and Cohesion	Vocabulary matching exercise Matching images with words Brainstorming Creative writing Oral production and expression of ideas	Storyboard of personal story

Table 7. Lesson 2: Adaptation of the table for the didactic design of linguistic activities by Alberta Novello (2022, p. 114)

Phase 1: Warm up activity

At the start of Lesson 2, the aim is to visually recall the key information presented in the previous lesson, ensuring that the students has retained the essential concepts. Given that the previous lesson was packed with information, including story structure and emotional vocabulary, this review serves as a crucial step to reinforce his understanding.

Reviewing the previous lesson

- Strategies implemented by the student during the activity:

- o *Cognitive* strategies: This activity prompts the student to recall the information given in the previous Lesson. It encourages him to identify occurrences related to the plot and characters' feelings.
- o *Metacognitive* strategies: The student is asked to reflect on the content from the previous lesson and review his own understanding of the story's emotional layers.
- Strategies implemented by the teacher during the activity:
  - o *Ostensive* strategies: The teacher presents and illustrates what has been explained in the previous lesson.
  - o *Verification* strategies*:* The teacher poses questions to the student to assess their comprehension of the material covered in the previous lesson.

Phase 2: Matching Emotions to Definitions

- Strategies implemented by the student during the activity**:**
  - o *Cognitive* strategies**:** This exercise requires the student to match each emotion with its correct definition, strengthening his ability to discriminate between different emotional states.
  - o *Holistic* strategies**:** By connecting emotions to definitions, students synthesize knowledge from both the story and vocabulary, deepening their emotional literacy.

Phase 3: Matching Emotions to Pictures from *The Lorax*

- Strategies implemented by the student during the activity:

  - o *Cognitive* strategies: The student is encouraged to *visualize* the emotions represented in the pictures and select the appropriate emotion for each character's situation. They also compare emotions across different images.
  - o *Metacognitive* strategies: The student needs to plan his responses by thinking critically about the connection between emotions and images, while monitoring their own understanding of character feelings.
  - o *Holistic* strategies**:** This activity interweaves codes by using visual and emotional cues, allowing the student to engage both cognitively and emotionally in understanding the story.

Phase 4: Brainstorming for a Personal Story

- Strategies implemented by the student during the activity:

    o *Cognitive* strategies: The brainstorming process encourages the student to practice divergent thinking by generating new ideas for his own story. He also synthesizes his ideas to create a coherent storyline.

    o *Metacognitive* strategies: The student plans his story concepts and reflects on how emotions play a role in their narrative, shaping the storyline with intentionality.

    o *Holistic* strategies: By self-producing their original story ideas, the student interweaves codes of emotion, creativity, and narrative structure, integrating all aspects into a cohesive project.

Phase 5: Homework

For the homework assignment, it was decided to have the student create a mood board, a choice driven by several factors. A mood board, which is a visual collage representing the story's tone, setting, and character elements, serves as a simplified alternative to a storyboard. Storyboards can be too complex for the student to handle independently, so the mood board provides a more manageable way to begin visualizing the narrative. Additionally, this task requires the student to use a browser to search for and select images, facilitating a transition into using digital tools. While the computer will play a more significant role in the production phase of the teaching unit, this assignment helps the student start becoming familiar with digital resources and prepares them for more detailed storyboarding in the next lesson.

Creating a Mood Board

- Strategies implemented by the student during the activity**:**

    o *Cognitive* strategies**:** The task of finding images that represent emotions allows the student to visualize and synthesize the mood of his story. He select*s* images that best fit the emotional tone.

    o *Metacognitive* strategies**:** The student plans how these images reflect the emotional journey of his story and reflects on the impact these emotions will have on the narrative.

o *Holistic* strategies: The mood board interweaves codes of visual representation and emotional storytelling, offering a creative method for the student to connect with his story.

3.3.1.3 Lesson 3: Crafting the Story

This lesson (see Appendix 5) aims to clarify the key roles—such as protagonist, antagonist, and supporting characters—and their functions within a narrative structure. Following this foundational exploration, we will engage in a discussion on how these roles can be applied to the story concept the student developed as homework in the previous lesson. By examining how each role integrates into the student's narrative, we will explore ways to enhance and refine the story, ensuring a cohesive and compelling structure as we move forward in the unit.

Lesson objectives	*Skills*	*Competences*	*Lesson activities*	*Homework (if any)*
• Review the storyboard created by the student. • Analyze and define the roles of characters in the student's story. • Answer questions related to the character roles in the story.	Speaking Writing	*Linguistic:* Vocabulary Semantics *Sociolinguistic:* Register *Pragmatic:* Theme development Coherence Type recognizing	Storyboard presentation Matching images with words Open-ended questions Oral discussion	

Table 8 Lesson 3: Adaptation of the table for the didactic design of linguistic activities by Alberta Novello (2022, p. 114)

Phase 1: Matching Character Roles in *The Lorax*

• Strategies implemented by the student during the activity**:**

o *Cognitive* strategies**:** The student compares and matches characters with their functions.

o *Facilitation* strategies*:* This exercise manages text accessibility by connecting character roles with easy-to-understand terms.

Phase 2: Creating a Personal Story and Defining Character Roles

- Strategies implemented by the student during the activity**:**

  o *Cognitive* strategies**:** The student is encouraged to hypothesize and define character traits and roles for his invented story by formulating hypotheses, synthesizing and expressing a judgment on the function of each character.

  o *Metacognitive* strategies: The student reflect on the characters' motivation and beliefs.

  o *Dynamic* strategy: The student creates his own story based on the eco-friendly invention, integrating personal input into the narrative.

  o *Linguistic* strategy*:* The questions guiding character creation help the student articulate character motivations, actions, and impact on the story.

3.3.2 Production Phase

The *production phase*, as described by Hung (2019), typically involves working on multimedia components like audio, images, animations, and video, and recording the learner's voice. For the purpose of this study, this phase was modified to focus on planning the scenes of the student's digital story in greater detail. During these lessons, the student was required to think more thoroughly about the structure of each scene, considering elements such as the characters, their roles, emotions, and actions. This level of planning ensured that the student could visualize how the animation would unfold and how each character would contribute to the narrative. Additionally, the student was tasked with writing short dialogues for each scene, carefully deciding what each character would say and the attitude or emotion behind their speech.

Once the sequence of scenes was identified, the focus of the lessons shifted to digitally implementing the story using the Scratch.com platform. The student proceeded scene by scene, using Scratch to create the animation, which involved selecting or designing appropriate backgrounds and characters for each scene. For each character, the corresponding dialogue was inserted in the coding line, ensuring that the speech aligned with the intended emotions and actions. This process allowed the student to begin integrating their story ideas with the digital medium, bringing the narrative to life through visual elements while reinforcing the planning and language skills developed earlier in the phase.

3.3.2.1 Lesson 4 : Structuring the Story and Getting Started with Scratch

In this lesson (see Appendix 6), the student is encouraged to start thinking critically about what has been learned during the first three lessons and apply this knowledge to the process of planning scenes for their story. The student will need to put into practice their understanding of narrative sequencing and emotional progression, while also beginning to rationalize the imaginative process. By writing down the setting, characters, actions, and additional notes such as sound effects and visuals, the student can begin organizing their creative ideas into a structured format that brings clarity to their storytelling.

In the following table outlining the lesson objectives, skills, and competencies, an IT-related section is included under skills. This addition is important because, starting from this lesson, the student will begin engaging with digital tools, particularly the Scratch platform. The table provides a detailed overview of the primary activities that the student will be involved in, such as navigating the platform, interacting with its basic functions, and creating a new project where to start experimentig.

Lesson objectives	*Skills*	*Competences*	*Lesson activities*	*Homework (if any)*
• Introduce the student to Scratch and its functions • Demonstrate how to navigate the platform and start a new project. • Show how to add sprites (characters) and backdrops (scenes) to a project • Editing sprites and backdrops	*Language-related:* Writing Speaking	*Linguistic:* Vocabulary Grammar Orthography	Scene planning Discussion Introduction to Scratch Responsible web browsing	
	IT-related: Navigation on the platform Creating a new project Setting up new backgrounds Customizing new sprites that are provided by the platform Digital literacy	*Sociolinguistic:* Register *Pragmatic:* Coherence Cohesion Theme development		

	(responsible web browsing)				

Table 9. Lesson 4: Adaptation of the table for the didactic design of linguistic activities by Alberta Novello (2022, p. 114)

Phase 1: Planning the Scenes of the Story

- Strategies implemented by the student during the activity:

    - *Cognitive* strategies: The student is prompted to recall narrative elements, synthesize visualized settings and actions, and formulate hypotheses about emotional progression while organizing these into the table.
    - *Metacognitive* strategies: The student reflects on the structure of the story, monitoring pacing, and ensuring coherence between scenes.
    - *Dynamic* strategies: The student actively visualizes and rationalizes their creative ideas, integrating previous knowledge into the story's scenes.
    - *Linguistic* strategies: The student articulates key aspects of each scene, such as settings, characters, and actions, while comparing and adjusting for narrative flow and consistency. This activity also encourages inner dialogue, as the student has to think about how the story should unfold.

- Strategies implemented by the teacher during the activity:

    - *Facilitation* strategies: The teacher occasionally uses with the student the L1 to facilitate discussion and clarify key points.

Phase 2: Exploring Key Features of Scratch

Before the end of the lesson, the student will be introduced to the fundamental features and functions of the Scratch platform. The essential components will be presented, including the concept of the stage where the action takes place, the 'Sprites' that represent characters and objects, and the block palette divided by function, which is used for scripting. Basic scripting techniques will be demonstrated, focusing on 'motion' blocks to move sprites and 'looks' blocks to change their appearance. The student will also try out the platform and its functions in his own computer. This foundational knowledge will prepare the student for more complex activities on the platform in the next lessons.

- Strategies implemented by the student during the activity:

- o *Cognitive* strategies*:* The teacher encourages the student to identify and match the different elements of Scratch, such as the stage, sprites, and block categories. The student is guided to compare different blocks and recall their functions when applying them in scripting.

- o *Metacognitive* strategies*:* The student is encouraged to monitor his understanding of the platform's basics and reflect on how each component interacts within the Scratch environment.

- o *Dynamic* strategies: The student actively engages by experimenting with the stage and sprites, moving and modifying them using the blocks demonstrated by the teacher.

- o *Linguistic* strategies: The student is asked to articulate their understanding of how to move sprites and change their appearance, reinforcing their grasp of the different block categories.

- o *Regulative* strategies*:* The teacher helps the student consolidate habits by encouraging repetition of basic actions, such as moving sprites and altering their looks, to build familiarity with Scratch's interface and functions.

- Strategies implemented by the teacher during the activity**:**

- o *Facilitation* strategies: The teacher occasionally uses with the student the L1 to facilitate discussion and clarify key points.

- o *Ostensive* strategies: The teacher presents and illustrates an overview of the platform's functions.

3.3.2.2 Lesson 5: Making the Story Come to Life through Digital Animation

In Lesson 5 (see Appendix 7), the student begins writing the dialogues for each scene that was defined in the previous lesson. After completing the dialogue for one scene, the student and teacher work together to transcribe it into an animated scene in Scratch. The teacher guides the student through the coding process for each scene, helping the student understand how the logic of Scratch works in practice. This step-by-step approach not only introduces the student to the technical aspects of animating dialogues but also serves as a review of the platform basics that were illustrated in the previous lesson, reinforcing the key concepts learned.

In the table below, the specific skills and competences developed during this lesson are outlined, covering both IT-related and language-related areas.

Lesson objectives	Skills	Competences	Lesson activities	Homework (if any)
• Planning the dialogues of the student's story. • Introducing the student to programming dialogues into animation using Scratch • Explaining and practicing the code blocks on Scratch	*Language-related:* Writing Speaking *IT-related:* Setting up scenes using backdrop blocks Setting up the sprites in the scene using coding blocks Making the sprites move in the scene Using coding blocks to make the sprites speak	*Linguistic:* Vocabulary Grammar Orthography *Sociolinguistic:* Register *Pragmatic:* Flexibility Coherence and Cohesion	Writing dialogues Discussion Familiarizing with code blocks Programming dialogues	Writing down the rest of the dialogues and start animate them on Scratch

Table 10. Lesson 5: Adaptation of the table for the didactic design of linguistic activities by Alberta Novello (2022, p. 114)

Phase 1: Planning Dialogues

- Strategies implemented by the student during the activity:

  o *Cognitive* strategies: The student integrates story elements by synthesizing dialogue and character interactions. He evaluates the appropriateness of dialogue based on character roles and story context and visualizes the scene and characters' emotions while writing the dialogue. Finally, the student hypothesizes how the dialogue will impact the story's emotional flow.

- o *Metacognitive* strategies: The student plans the flow of conversations, ensuring coherence and emotional progression throughout the scenes. He also reviews and adjusts the dialogues to ensure they align with the character's emotional state and the overall narrative.
- o *Linguistic* strategies: The student clearly articulates and makes explicit each character's dialogue and corresponding emotions. He compares different characters' dialogues to ensure consistency and effective interaction, while reflecting on the characters' motivations and emotions.
- o *Dynamic* strategies: The student reflects on the interaction between characters and how dialogue conveys emotions and moves the plot forward.

Phase 2: Transposing Dialogues into Scratch

- Strategies implemented by the student during the activity**:**

  - o *Cognitive* strategies: The student recalls platform basics (from the previous lesson) when transposing dialogue into Scratch. Additionally, he matches the written dialogue to the corresponding coding blocks in Scratch.

  - o *Linguistic* strategies*:* The student adjusts and manipulates dialogue blocks in Scratch to create smooth character interactions.

  - o *Metacognitive* strategies: The student monitors how well the dialogue translates into the animated scene, making adjustments as needed.

  - o *Regulative* strategies: The student strengthens his understanding of how coding and narrative work together by practicing the process of transposing dialogue into Scratch.

3.3.2.3 Lesson 6: Finalizing the Animation Project

Lesson 6 (see Appendix 8) serves as a continuation of Lesson 5, where the student continues writing the dialogues for the remaining scenes of the story. Building on the foundation from the previous lesson, the student applies the functions and coding techniques learned in Scratch to animate these dialogues and interactions among characters. With the assistance of the teacher, the student works towards completing the

entire story, focusing on refining both the narrative and technical aspects. This collaborative process helps reinforce the student's understanding of the platform while allowing them to bring his story to life through dialogue and animation.

The focus of this lesson is teaching the student how to transition smoothly from one scene to another, as well as addressing potential timing issues that may arise during the characters' dialogue exchanges. The goal is to ensure that each character's contribution is well-timed, allowing the viewer enough time to read the dialogues and enjoy a fluid animation. This lesson also provides a valuable opportunity to teach the student good habits, such as saving the project at the end of every scene completion, ensuring progress is not lost and promoting efficient workflow.

Lesson objectives	Skills	Competences	Lesson activities	Homework (if any)
• Teach the student how to transition between different backgrounds in the Scratch project • Guide the student on alternating dialogues between multiple sprites • Show the student how to program dialogues between more than two sprites	*Language-related:* Writing Speaking *IT-related:* Background transition using code blocks Using coding blocks to alternate dialogues between sprites Regularly saving the project	*Linguistic:* Vocabulary Grammar Orthography *Sociolinguistic:* Register *Pragmatic:* Flexibility Coherence and Cohesion Theme development	Writing dialogues Discussion Programming cohesive background transition	Continue the animation of the scenes on Scratch

Table 11. Lesson 6: Adaptation of the table for the didactic design of linguistic activities by Alberta Novello (2022, p. 114)

3.3.3 Post-Production Phase

In the *post-production phase*, learners traditionally edit and assemble their digital stories, adding multimedia components to align with the narrative structure (*ivi.*). In this case study, a dedicated lesson was added to focus solely on oral practice. The goal of this

lesson was to provide the student with an opportunity to rehearse their story in English, with particular attention to pronunciation, intonation, and oral fluency. This phase was designed to refine the student's oral skills in line with the broader objectives of the teaching unit, which aimed to develop both oral competence and storytelling abilities.

Finally, while Hung's framework includes the distribution phase, where learners share their stories with an online audience, this study did not emphasize this phase, instead focusing on the development of oral storytelling and multimedia skills.

3.3.3.1 Lesson 7: Expressive Storytelling

In Lesson 7 (see Appendix 9), the main dialogues created by the student in collaboration with the teacher during the production phase are transcribed onto a piece of paper. Next to each sentence, the student must choose from a list of eight emotions that best match the mood of the character while delivering the dialogue. This exercise serves two purposes: it helps the student practice pronunciation while also engaging them in expressively reading the dialogue to reflect the character's emotions.

As Norlie (1918) highlights, expressive reading allows learners to convey the author's message in both a natural and effective way, where "by natural is meant that the utterance shall be in the reader's conversational tone" and "by effective is meant that the utterance shall be given with an emphasis suited to bring out the message for the occasion" (p. 21, as cited in Cabral Pereira et al. 2019).

This activity allows the student to discover his own voice when conveying a message, integrating both emotional and physical elements in his delivery. Expressive reading is proved to activate a range of language skills, including comprehension, pronunciation, intonation, rhythm, and fluency (Cabral Pereira et al., 2019), which can gradually lead into more dynamic dramatization activities. It also generates emotional responses from the learner, making language acquisition more impactful and personal.

 In this context, the teacher's role is essential in guiding the learner, offering a model for expressive reading, and supporting students as they practice and self-assess their performance. While closely tied to reading, expressive reading also fosters general expressive language abilities (*ivi*.). It involves not only understanding content and emotions but also communicating them in a way that resonates with the listener, thereby making speech more impactful and engaging.

Lesson objectives	Skills	Competences	Lesson activities	Homework (if any)
• Practice pronunciation of dialogues • Practice correct intonation • Recite dialogues with intention and emotion	*Language-related:* Writing Speaking Listening	*Linguistic:* Vocabulary Phonology	Word matching exercise Pronunciation practice based on initial teacher's reciting Intonation practice	
	IT-related: Adding sound effects on the project	*Sociolinguistic:* Register		
		Pragmatic: Flexibility Turn-taking Type recognizing Fluency		

Table 12. Lesson 7: Adaptation of the table for the didactic design of linguistic activities by Alberta Novello (2022, p. 114)

Phase 1: Matching Emotions to Parts of the Dialogues

- Strategies implemented by the student during the activity**:**

  o *Cognitive* strategies: The student matches each sentence with the appropriate emotion from the provided table and, by using discrimination skills, he identifies subtle differences in emotions to accurately match them with sentences. He also uses prior knowledge of emotions and context to make accurate connections.

  o *Linguistic* strategies*:* The student explicitly connects the emotions with the content of each sentence. This activity also encourages questioning the suitability of each emotion for the sentences and reflecting on the possibility of a different emotion being more appropriate.

  o *Metacognitive* strategies*:* The student considers how his own understanding of emotions influences his choices in matching them to sentences.

  o *Regulative* strategies: The student develops a sensitivity to how different emotions are expressed in text and how they affect the interpretation.

Phase 2: Expressive Reading and Acting Out the Dialogue

- Strategies implemented by the student during the activity**:**

    o *Dynamic and Socially Mediated* strategies: The student uses physical gestures and expressions to act out the dialogue and also reflects on how his body language and voice contribute to conveying emotions effectively.

    o *Linguistic* strategies*:* The student adjusts his voice, tone, and pacing to express the emotions in the dialogue accurately.

    o *Regulative and emotionally impactful* strategies*:* The student practices relaxation techniques to perform confidently and authentically. He initially uses self-irony by playfully mocking each character and the teacher uses humor. This light-hearted approach helps him feel more comfortable and confident before easing his way into the exercise.

    o *Holistic strategies:* The student integrates verbal and non-verbal cues to effectively act out the dialogue.

Chapter 4. Evaluating the Impact of Digital Storytelling: Observational and Survey-Based Findings

In everyday teaching practice, classroom experiences are often interpreted through spontaneous impressions, which may lead to insights but lack the rigor necessary for reliable or valid conclusions (Normann, 2011). These impressions, while potentially influencing changes in teaching approaches, remain subjective reflections rather than concrete, evidence-based findings. To foster meaningful change and development, a core component of every educator's professional practice, it is essential to employ more systematic methods of data collection and analysis. As highlighted by Normann (*ivi.*), Postholm (2009) underscores the importance of teachers engaging in research with their own students by systematically collecting data and employing established research methods. Similarly, Jack Sanger (1996, as cited in Normann, 2011) highlights that teachers should possess the professional capacity to critically assess and analyze their practice to identify areas for growth and development. Reflective research plays a significant role in this process, merging self-study with external interactions to enhance professional growth.

Building on this, Fry (2017, as cited in Geng et al., 2019) underlines the importance of "knowing the self," suggesting that self-reflection and personal insight is foundational for teachers to enhance interpersonal behavior and working partnerships. As pointed out by Geng et al. (2019):

> With the understanding of "the importance of self" in mind, we can see there is at best a hairline distinction between reflective practice in teaching and its use in research, especially to the extent that the former is not reflection in the abstract, but based on observation and on discussion with students, teachers and/or parents. Action research is basically just a more systematic approach to virtually the same thing, typically involving cycles of questioning, gathering data, reflecting on the results and deciding on courses of action with the aim of improving one's practice (p. 6).

This discussion is particularly relevant to this thesis because, as noted in paragraph 1.4, the teacher and the researcher are the same person. This dual role highlights the importance of reflective practice and action research as a means of bridging the gap between teaching and research. The practice of reflective research, as Fry (2017, as cited in Geng et al., 2019) highlights, emphasizes not just self-awareness but also interaction with external actors such as students and colleagues, making it particularly suitable for a teacher-researcher context. In fact, the gathering of data in this case study also includes

perceptions of the student and his parents through questionnaires, other than teacher's personal reflections in observation diaries that, as researchers like Bailey and Ochsner (1983, as cited Geng et al., 2019) have demonstrated, can be legitimate tools when applied methodically.

This approach ties into the need for a clear distinction between *quantitative* and *qualitative* research to analyze teachers' classroom practices and student outcomes, as both methodologies serve different yet complementary purposes in educational research.

Quantitative research is grounded in the positivist philosophy, which originated during the Enlightenment and was formalized by figures like Condorcet in the 18th century (Cecília & Minayo, 2017). Positivism emphasizes objectivity and the use of mathematics and statistical tools to understand social phenomena, with the belief that social facts can be measured, categorized, and analyzed impartially (*ivi.*). Pioneers like Comte and Durkheim applied these principles to sociology, promoting the idea that research should be neutral, value-free, and focused on identifying patterns through measurable data (*ivi.*). Quantitative methods, therefore, rely on the analysis of large datasets and aim to produce generalizable results based on statistical regularities.

On the other hand, *qualitative* research approaches challenge this view, focusing on understanding the complexities of human behavior, values, and relationships that cannot be reduced to mere numbers (*ivi.*). Scholars like Weber introduced the concept of *comprehensive sociology*, which emphasizes the importance of understanding the subjective meanings behind social actions.

Weber (1949), along with other proponents of qualitative research, argued that human experiences, thoughts, and emotions play a crucial role in shaping behavior, and that these aspects cannot be fully captured through quantitative methods. Instead, qualitative approaches delve into the lived experiences, relationships, and social contexts of individuals, aiming to interpret the meaning behind actions rather than just measuring them.

By combining both approaches—reflective practice supported by qualitative methods and the objective rigor of quantitative analysis—the teacher-researcher can ensure that the findings are both contextually rich and empirically sound. This dual approach strengthens the *validity* of the research, allowing for a more holistic understanding of the teaching and

learning process. In fact, employing a variety of data collection methods enabled triangulation—a technique that, as Thagaard (2009, as cited in Normann, 2011) and Postholm (2010, as cited in Normann, 2011) point out, enhances *validity* of the research, as the strengths of one method can compensate for the weaknesses of another. However, different researchers, including Hoel T. L. (2000, as cited in Normann, 2011), note potential challenges, particularly when external data interpreters are involved, as different people may offer varying interpretations of the same data. This notion aligns with socio-constructivism, which holds that individuals construct their own reality based on their social contexts. In my study, I chose not to involve external interpreters but instead focused on ensuring transparency in data collection and analysis.

This chapter begins by illustrating the student's creative output, specifically the animated story he produced. It will then be divided into two main sections: the first will focus on the quantitative analysis of the observation grids completed by the teacher during class, while the second will explore the qualitative data from various sources, including the pre- and post-teaching unit questionnaires completed by the student and his parents, teacher observations, and the student's reflective logs. Finally, the chapter will address both the positive outcomes of the study as well as its challenges and limitations.

4.1 Analysis of the Student's Creative Output During the Teaching Unit

During the teaching unit, the student demonstrated notable creativity through the tasks assigned both in class and at home. Given his strong passion for designing cars, it was no surprise that he chose to create a car prototype as part of the homework assigned in Lesson 1. His enthusiasm for automotive design was evident in the construction of the prototype, reflecting both his personal interests and his ability to apply the concepts learned during the unit to a creative project. This car prototype not only showcased his design skills but also became a pivotal element in his digital storytelling project, where it served as the foundation for incorporating visual elements into the narrative. The prototype was later transformed into a digital sprite within his Scratch animation[3], allowing him to merge his passion for design with the storytelling process. Below is an image of the student's car prototype, which plays a significant role in his final animated story.

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[3] The complete animation created by the student can be viewed online at this link: https://scratch.mit.edu/projects/1028526010
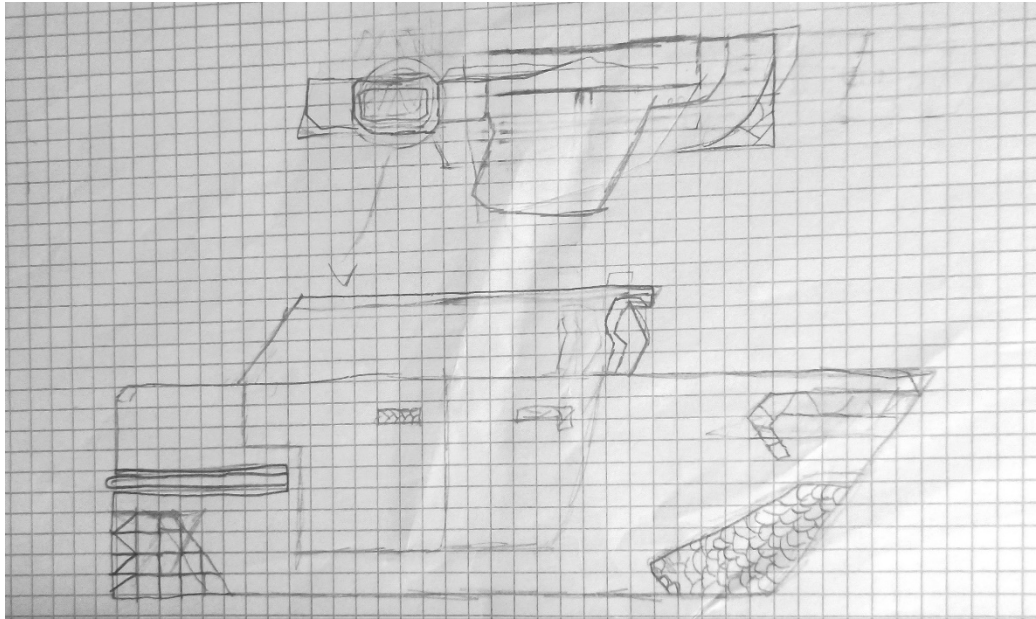
Figure 5. Car Prototype drawn by the Student

Following this, the student was tasked with gathering images to develop a mood board, which would later be integrated into his digital storytelling animation on Scratch. He selected three distinct and imaginative images: a bombarded city, a skyline featuring the presence of aliens, and the figure of an alien itself. These images not only set a dramatic and otherworldly tone for the story but were also used as key backgrounds and sprites in the animation. The bombarded city created a dystopian setting, while the alien-themed skyline and figure of the alien added a sense of adventure and suspense.

In the following lesson, the student created a dystopian story featuring two main characters named Shelley and Rambo. In this narrative, the protagonists are desperately trying to escape the aliens, who have invaded planet Earth as part of their larger mission to conquer the galaxy. The student's main storyline, as outlined in Exercise 2 of Appendix 5, revolves around the mission "to save the world and their friends from the aliens." Shelley and Rambo find themselves up against their main antagonist, "Boss Alien 2.0", who is leading the alien invasion. Boss Alien 2.0 is portrayed as a relentless force, attacking the galaxy and attempting to kill every human on Earth, including the protagonists, who are constantly being pursued.

Figure 6. Extract from the Student's Animated Story on Scratch

The story begins with Shelley and Rambo exploring a desolate, ghost city in an attempt to devise a plan for fighting Boss Alien 2.0. As they navigate the city, they stumble upon an old farm where they discover an abandoned car prototype, which ideally recalls the one designed by the student earlier in the project. However, the car is inoperative, and Shelley and Rambo realize they will need to find the right instruments to fix it. Their hope is to repair the prototype and use it as a weapon or means of escape in their battle against the alien invaders.

Figure 7. Extract from the Student's Animated Story on Scratch

Determined to make the car work, they set off to find the necessary tools. Along the way, they encounter three other survivors, named Gas, Gos and Bull, who are also struggling in the aftermath of the alien invasion. These survivors, eager to help, join Shelley and Rambo in their quest to find the materials needed to repair the car prototype. Together, they form a team, united in their mission to restore the vehicle and use it as their best chance for survival against the aliens.

Figure 8. Extract from the Student's Animated Story on Scratch

Together, the group manages to find the necessary instruments to repair the car, and in a bold move, they also decide to plant a bomb inside the vehicle, intending to use it as a weapon against Boss Alien 2.0. With their plan set, they return to the abandoned farm and work through the day to fix the car. Exhausted but hopeful, they finally restore the prototype, transforming it into both a means of transportation and a deadly trap for the aliens.

That night, as they rest, Gos has a vivid dream in which he sees Boss Alien 2.0 hiding near a dam. Intrigued by the possibility that this dream might hold valuable information, the group discusses it. Bull recalls the location of a nearby dam, and despite the risks, they decide to follow the vision, hoping that it might lead them to a final confrontation with the alien leader.

Figure 9. Extract from the Student's Animated Story on Scratch

The group makes their way to the dam, where they finally spot Boss Alien 2.0, who believes himself to be undefeatable. He stands inside the heavily fortified dam, surrounded and protected by his alien army.

Figure 10. Extract from the Student's Animated Story on Scratch

Despite the overwhelming odds, Shelley, Rambo, and the survivors manage to get close to the dam undetected, positioning their bomb-laden car for the decisive attack. In a daring move, they drop the bomb near the Boss Alien.

As the bomb explodes, Boss Alien 2.0 is destroyed. To their astonishment, all of the other aliens perish at the same moment, revealing that he had been controlling their very existence. With the alien threat eliminated, the group stands in awe of their victory, realizing that they have not only saved themselves but also the entire planet.
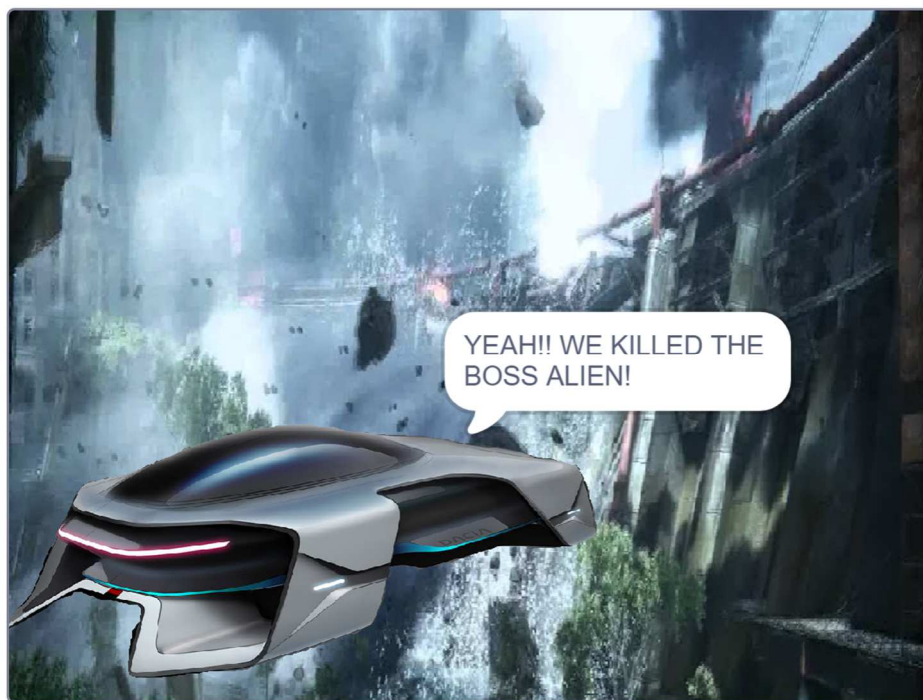
Figure 11. Extract from the Student's Animated Story on Scratch

The student's story concludes with Shelley, Rambo, and the survivors vowing to rebuild the world and the ruined city, hopeful for a brighter future free from the alien invasion. They now face a new challenge—reconstructing society and healing from the devastation the aliens left behind.

In the following paragraph, the data gathered through the teacher's observations during the teaching unit will be analyzed. This analysis will provide insights into the classroom dynamics, student engagement, and the effectiveness of the teaching strategies employed throughout the unit. By examining these observations, the aim is to further understand the impact of the DS project on the student's learning experience and overall development.

4.2 Quantitative Analysis

This section presents the quantitative analysis to assess the development of A2-level oral production skills and motivation in the EFL student. A comprehensive data collection system was implemented during the teaching unit to capture key metrics related to the student's progress. After each lesson, a series of grids (see Appendix 10) were completed by the teacher to document various aspects of the student's oral production performance, such as dialogue skills, fluency, and accuracy. The data from these grids, now being analyzed, offer a detailed view of how the student's language abilities evolved over the course of the unit. This analysis aims to quantify the effectiveness of the teaching intervention in fostering the student's oral proficiency and motivational engagement.

4.2.1 Class Observation Grids: Table A and B

The first two observation grids (see Appendix 10) link directly to the concept of communicative language competence discussed in Chapter 3, where it was emphasized that mastery of a language goes beyond mere linguistic competence. As pointed out by Novello (2022) and Piccardo et al. (2011), the CEFR stresses that effective communication requires the integration of linguistic abilities, socio-cultural awareness, and pragmatic skills. Table A and B are, in fact, adaptations of evaluation grids outlined by Alberta Novello in "La valutazione delle lingue straniere e seconde nella scuola. Dalla teoria alla pratica" (2014).

The two adapted grids mirror these multidimensional components, offering a structured way to assess the student's progress in oral production and communication skills. They evaluate essential areas such as the student's understanding of words and sentences, use of vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and interaction in exchanges. These elements reflect Dell Hymes' (1972) concept of *communicative competence*, which extends beyond the mere knowledge of grammatical rules to include the ability to use language appropriately in context. According to Hymes, effective communication involves knowing not only what is grammatically correct but also what is contextually appropriate, emphasizing the social and pragmatic aspects of language use. Hymes originally introduced the term "communicative competence" in response to Noam Chomsky's (1965) focus on *linguistic competence*, which centered primarily on the speaker's implicit knowledge of grammatical rules. While Chomsky's framework highlighted the ability to

produce grammatically correct sentences, Hymes argued that language competence also includes understanding the social rules governing language use (Hymes, 1972). The grids capture these elements by evaluating not just grammatical knowledge but also the student's ability to interact meaningfully and appropriately in different contexts.

The grids further assess fluency, creativity, and non-verbal communication, all of which are essential for achieving communicative competence. As Hymes (1972) pointed out, language learning is not only about producing grammatically correct sentences but also about knowing how to use language flexibly and in a socially appropriate manner. For example, the student's ability to convey meaning through tone, gesture, and facial expressions is as important as their grammatical knowledge. This reflects Hymes' idea that performance data or "actual utterances – that is, what people actually say and hear with all the errors, false starts, unfinished sentences" – is critical in understanding underlying competence (Lillis, 2006, p. 667).

Creativity in language use is also a focal point of this grid, particularly relevant in tasks such as storytelling, where learners must go beyond formulaic responses and produce extended discourse that is both grammatically sound and engaging. Creativity often emerges naturally in interaction, whether face-to-face or in online environments, as learners draw on language reflexively and adapt it to suit various communicative purposes (Maybin & Swann, 2007). These creative episodes are "constructed on the hoof," meaning they are often spontaneous and unplanned, yet they are crucial for developing deeper engagement with language (*ivi*. p. 511). Incorporating creative language use in the observation grids recognizes the importance of this element in helping learners move beyond formulaic speech to explore more complex, authentic communication. Much of the literature on creativity on applied linguistics refers to "poetic forms in everyday discourse", in line with Jakobson's (1960) "poetic function", meaning "the manipulation of linguistic form—rhyme, word play, metaphor, and other figures of speech—associated with the self-referential potential of language" (*ivi*. p. 498). However, creativity in language use should not be seen as merely "art for art's sake", but as an essential tool for achieving social, interactional, and communicative goals. In fact, Maybin & Swann (*ivi*.) suggest an analytical framework addressing textual, contextual, and critical dimensions of creativity.

The *textual* dimension focuses on how learners adopt, adapt, and play with "linguistic forms—such as wordplay, figures of speech, or transforming others' words"— or "with the affordances of particular genres, modes, etc." (*ivi*. p. 512). This is directly relevant to oral production as students often engage in these creative forms, whether through narrative construction or interactive exchanges.

The *contextualized* dimension of creativity, on the other hand, emphasizes how language is used by participants in specific interactions and how it is shaped by socio-cultural contexts. This focus is essential in language learning, where the ability to engage in contextually appropriate creative episodes—such as humor, irony, or metaphor—can significantly enhance communicative effectiveness. It also emphasizes the dialogical nature of communication, where participants jointly co-construct creative episodes, often designing their language with an audience in mind (*ivi*.). Furthermore, creativity is intertextually framed, meaning that speakers often recontextualize language or references from previous conversations or contexts, adding layers of meaning (*ivi*.).

The *critical analytical dimension* focuses on how creative language use inherently involves evaluation, as it reflects and constructs particular evaluative stances (*ivi*.). These creative episodes in communication are not only framed and highlighted within the context of the interaction, but they also have the potential to develop into more explicit forms of critique. For example, they may construct shared moral positions, as seen in the critique of authority or social norms. However, in this dimension, 'critical' does not always imply a direct challenge to power or established values; rather, creativity can serve multiple functions—reinforcing, subverting, or balancing authority depending on the context (*ivi*.).

Therefore, by including creativity in the observation grid, the teaching unit fosters a deeper, more multifaceted engagement with language, promoting both fluency and the ability to navigate complex communicative scenarios.

4.2.2. Class Observation Grids: Table C

Table C (see Appendix 10) addresses broader areas of learning, such as sequencing, vocabulary acquisition, motivation, critical thinking, creativity, and autonomy. As already discussed in Chapter 2, motivation and autonomy are strongly interlinked, especially with regard to intrinsic motivation. Deci and Ryan (1985) emphasize that

intrinsic motivation thrives when learners experience autonomy, making it essential to include both motivation and autonomy in the grid. Given that one of the main research objectives of this study is to assess the student's motivation, these components could not be omitted from the evaluation process.

Critical thinking is another key element of the Table C because it not only involves understanding content but also applying knowledge in new and meaningful ways. As discussed in the literature, while acquiring information is a significant outcome of education, it is not sufficient on its own (Bloom et al., 1956). Teachers aim for students to do more than merely retain knowledge—they need to be able to apply it to novel situations and challenges (*ivi.*). This capacity to apply information to new contexts is a hallmark of critical thinking. This approach encourages higher-order thinking, fostering cognitive development that goes beyond rote memorization. Therefore, in this context, critical thinking in the grid is designed to assess the student's ability to engage with the lesson's themes on a deeper level.

Finally, sequencing was included in the grid as it is fundamental to the ability to construct a cohesive narrative, as already discussed in Chapter 3. Building a well-structured story requires learners to organize their ideas in a logical sequence, which is a critical skill for both oral and written communication. Assessing sequencing skills in this study ensures that students develop the narrative competence necessary to effectively tell stories, a key component of the DS approach used in this teaching unit.

4.2.3 Class Observation Grids: Table D

The final observation grid (see Appendix 10) evaluates teacher-student collaboration, knowledge acquisition, student engagement, and the integration of technology. This grid, which is an adaptation of the timed observation form from Smeda's et al. study (2014), is divided into three 30-minute segments to allow for real-time monitoring of the student's engagement and interaction throughout the lesson. During short student-alone activities, the teacher fills out this table to assess how effectively the student is collaborating, how actively they are constructing knowledge, and the extent to which technology is integrated into the learning process. The division into 30-minute segments ensures that both formative and summative assessment can take place, allowing for ongoing adjustments in teaching.

The inclusion of technology as a category aligns with the Digital Storytelling framework of the teaching unit, reflecting the increasing emphasis on digital literacy and blended learning in modern education. The use of DS in this case study is directly tied to the integration of technology, and assessing its role ensures that it is effectively supporting the learning objectives.

4.2.4 Findings from Class Observation Grids

The data from the class observation grids provide valuable insights into the student's development in oral production skills and motivation throughout the seven-lesson digital storytelling unit. The average scores across the lessons indicate a notable improvement in many areas of language use and motivation, affirming the effectiveness of the teaching approach. Below are the tables detailing the points assigned for each lesson across various competencies, allowing for a clear visualization of the student's progress in specific language skills and motivational factors throughout the unit.

Skill	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5	Lesson 6	Lesson 7	Average Score
understands the meaning of words	2	2	3	2	3	3	4	2.71
understands the sentences in the discourse	2	3	2	3	4	3	3	2.86
possesses the necessary vocabulary to perform the task	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3.14
appropriately uses the range of known words	3	2	3	4	2	4	4	3.14
possesses the grammatical structures needed to perform the task	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	2.57
interacts in the exchange	3	3	3	4	5	4	5	3.86

produces extended discourse	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	1.43
attempts to use as much language as possible to communicate	2	2	2	2	3	4	3	2.57
uses learned expressions creatively	2	2	2	1	3	3	3	2.29
understands non-verbal language	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4.00
has a speaking rate that does not include too many pauses	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	2.00
has comprehensible pronunciation and intonation	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	2.43

Table 13. Analysis of the Data from Table A of the Class Observation Grids throughout the Unit

Lesson n.	Understanding	Production	Pragmatic Skills	Sociolinguistic Skills
Lesson 1	2	2	3	2
Lesson 2	2	2	3	3
Lesson 3	2	3	3	3
Lesson 4	3	2	4	2
Lesson 5	3	3	4	3
Lesson 6	4	3	4	3
Lesson 7	4	3	4	3
(Average Score) Overall Improvement	2.86	2.57	3.57	2.72

Table 14. Analysis of the Data from Table B of the Class Observation Grids throughout the Unit

Skill	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5	Lesson 6	Lesson 7	Average Score
Story sequencing	2	2	3	2	3	3	4	2.71
Vocabulary aquisition	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	2.43
(Motivation) listens actively	3	1	2	3	3	1	3	2.29
(Motivation) makes suggestions	3	2	4	3	3	3	4	3.14
(Motivation) flexibility towards new methods	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	3.71
(Motivation) stays focused	4	3	2	2	2	3	3	2.71
Critical thinking	3	4	4	3	3	3	4	3.43
(Autonomy) Finds solutions to challenges	2	2	2	3	4	3	3	2.71
(Autonomy) reflects on learning	2	2	3	4	4	3	4	3.14
(Autonomy) maximizes productivity	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2.14

Table 15. Analysis of the Data from Table C of the Class Observation Grids throughout the Unit

Lesson n.	Teacher-student collaboration	Knowledge gain	Student role	Teacher role	Student engagement	Technology Integration
Lesson 1	30 min: 2 60 min: 2 90 min: 2	30 min: 1 60 min: 2 90 min: 3	30 min: 2 60 min: 2 90 min: 2	30 min: 2 60 min: 2 90 min: 2	30 min: 3 60 min: 2 90 min: 2	30 min: 2 60 min: 2 90 min: 2
Lesson 2	30 min: 2 60 min: 2 90 min: -	30 min: 1 60 min: 3 90 min: -	30 min: 1 60 min: 2 90 min: -	30 min: 2 60 min: 2 90 min: -	30 min: 1 60 min: 2 90 min: -	30 min: 1 60 min: 1 90 min: -
Lesson 3	30 min: 2 60 min: 2	30 min: 1 60 min: 3	30 min: 2 60 min: 3	30 min: 2 60 min: 2	30 min: 2 60 min: 3	30 min: 1 60 min: 1

	90 min: 2	90 min: 3	90 min: 3	90 min: 2	90 min: 3	90 min: 4
Lesson 4	30 min: 2	30 min: 2	30 min: 1	30 min: 2	30 min: 2	30 min: 4
	60 min: 1	60 min: 2	60 min: 2	60 min: 1	60 min: 3	60 min: 4
	90 min: 2	90 min: 2	90 min: 3	90 min: 1	90 min: 2	90 min: 1
Lesson 5	30 min: 2	30 min: 2	30 min: 3	30 min: 2	30 min: 3	30 min: 4
	60 min: 1	60 min: 3	60 min: 2	60 min: 2	60 min: 3	60 min: 4
	90 min: 2	90 min: 3	90 min: 2	90 min: 1	90 min: 3	90 min: 4
Lesson 6	30 min: 2	30 min: 3	30 min: 2	30 min: 2	30 min: 2	30 min: 4
	60 min: 2	60 min: 3	60 min: 2	60 min: 1	60 min: 3	60 min: 4
	90 min: 1	90 min: 3	90 min: 2	90 min: 1	90 min: 3	90 min: 4
Lesson 7	30 min: 2	30 min: 1	30 min: 3	30 min: 2	30 min: 2	30 min: 1
	60 min: 3	60 min: 2	60 min: 2	60 min: 1	60 min: 2	60 min: 1
	90 min: 3	90 min: 2	90 min: 2	90 min: 1	90 min: 2	90 min: 1

Table 16. Analysis of the Data from Table D of the Class Observation Grids throughout the Unit

One of the most significant areas of growth is in interactive skills, where the student's average score of 3.86 demonstrates progress from basic conversational abilities (initial score of 3 in Lesson 1) to more confident and active participation in exchanges. This suggests that digital storytelling, which fosters interaction and dialogue, played a key role in creating authentic communication opportunities that boosted the student's confidence and competence in spontaneous spoken exchanges. Similarly, the improvement in "understanding the meaning of words" (average score of 2.71) and "producing extended discourse" (average score of 1.43) points to a good progress in both comprehension and the ability to produce more complex speech over time. These skills are fundamental to oral proficiency in EFL, and their advancement indicates that the digital storytelling framework facilitated a deeper engagement with language in a meaningful and contextualized way.

However, despite these overall gains, some areas saw more gradual improvement. For instance, while the student's ability to "possess the necessary vocabulary to perform the task" reached an average score of 3.14 by the end of the unit, this represents only a slight increase from the score of 3 in Lesson 1. This suggests that while the student became more adept at using familiar vocabulary, the acquisition of new lexical items may have been limited. Similarly, the improvement in "possessing the grammatical structures needed to perform the task" (average score of 2.57) indicates that the student became more comfortable with grammatical accuracy, yet continued to face challenges in

applying these structures consistently during real-time spoken interaction. These findings may reflect the inherent difficulty of integrating grammar into fluid, spontaneous speech, particularly in a communicative task like digital storytelling that requires both creativity and linguistic precision.

On the motivational side, the data present a more complex picture. While certain aspects of motivation, such as "makes suggestions" (average score of 3.14) and "reflects on learning" (average score of 3.14), showed steady improvement, other areas experienced fluctuations. For example, the student's ability to "stay focused" saw an average score of 2.71, with some variation throughout the lessons, starting from a score of 4 in Lesson 1. This decline in focus may suggest that while the digital storytelling unit encouraged creativity and autonomy, it also posed challenges in maintaining sustained attention, possibly due to the cognitive demands of producing extended oral discourse. Conversely, the high average score in "flexibility towards new methods" (3.71) suggests that the student was consistently open to the innovative approach and adaptable to the learning process, despite occasional challenges in maintaining concentration. The improvements in "critical thinking" (average score of 3.43) and "finds solutions to challenges" (2.71) further suggest that the student became more self-reliant and capable of navigating linguistic obstacles independently. These gains in critical thinking and problem-solving highlight the pedagogical strength of digital storytelling, which encourages learners to think creatively and apply their language skills in dynamic, real-world contexts.

If we look at the results of table D, the analysis of the teaching unit across the seven lessons reveals interesting patterns. Throughout the unit, the student's engagement varied, with higher levels of focus generally observed during the 60 to 90-minute segments of most lessons, except on lesson 1. During these sessions, the student demonstrated high engagement, being consistently focused on the tasks at hand. Only in lesson 4 the level went from high to moderate by the end of the lesson, showing a decrease in engagement, likely due to the mental fatigue associated with longer periods of concentration. In lessons 5 and 7, the level of engagement remained stable at moderate and high.

This pattern suggests that the student had an overall good level of engagement, but may benefit from occasional breaks to sustain attention during extended learning sessions.

The use of technology throughout the lessons was an essential factor in shaping the student's learning experience, though its role varied in intensity and depth. In certain lessons, like lessons 5 and 6, meaning the production phase, technology was fully integrated, and these opportunities to engage deeply with digital tools prove to be accompanied with high level of engagement, demonstrating that interactive learning experiences enhance engagement. In contrast, earlier in the teaching unit, technology was often only used as an add-on, particularly during lessons 2 and 4. In these lessons, the student's interaction with technology was limited, which might have contributed to the lower levels of active participation observed during these periods.

Regarding the student's role, the analysis reveals a clear evolution from passive to more active participation as the lessons progressed. As the lessons advanced, particularly in lessons 3, 5, and 6, the student increasingly took on an active role, providing input, engaging with open-ended questions, and participating in tasks that required higher-order thinking.

The teacher's role throughout the teaching unit was pivotal in shaping the student's engagement and learning outcomes. In most lessons, particularly lessons 1, 3, and 5, the teacher played a facilitative role, scaffolding the student's learning by providing guidance, feedback, and support. This scaffolding was crucial in helping the student transition from passive knowledge receipt to more active and engaged forms of learning. However, as the teaching unit progressed and the student started gaining the knowledge necessary to complete the tasks, the teacher took on a more observational role, managing the student's behavior or solving minor technical issues. Collaboration between the student and teacher was an integral part of the learning process throughout the unit, though its intensity varied. In most lessons, the student worked closely with the teacher on structured tasks that required direct input and collaboration. During these lessons, the teacher provided targeted feedback and facilitated role-playing or other interactive activities, allowing the student to actively engage with the content. This collaborative dynamic was particularly noticeable during the early stages of the lessons, where the student needed support to gradually adapt to the tasks.

4.3 Qualitative Analysis

For the qualitative analysis, questionnaires (see Appendices 11, 12, and 13) were administered to both the student and the student's parents before and after the teaching unit. These questionnaires offered valuable insights into their perceptions of the student's progress, enriching the data with a personal perspective and validating the teaching intervention's effectiveness from those directly involved.

Additionally, teacher observations and student reflective logs will be qualitatively analyzed to further deepen the understanding of the student's learning experience and the intervention's overall success.

Together, these methods provide a comprehensive, evidence-based evaluation of the teaching unit's impact.

4.3.1 Questionnaire Analysis

Questionnaires serve as a vital research tool in educational studies, particularly in language learning, as they allow for the systematic collection of data on attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions from a large number of respondents. As noted by Converse (1987), the process of crafting a standardized questionnaire requires careful attention to question design and structure, ensuring that the questions are clear, unbiased, and capable of eliciting reliable information. This precision is essential in educational research, where the insights gained from such tools inform the researcher about the learner's background, motivations, and external influences that may impact their learning process. Browner, Newman, and Hulley (2013) further emphasize that well-designed questionnaires are critical for establishing clear hypotheses and understanding the underlying variables that shape educational outcomes. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) research, such instruments are indispensable for pre-assessment, providing a baseline understanding of a learner's engagement and parental support, which can influence language acquisition outcomes (Dörnyei, 2007).

4.3.1.1 Pre-Teaching Unit Questionnaire for the Student's Parents

In this study, a tailored questionnaire (see Appendix 11) was developed for the parents of the 11-year-old EFL learner, prior to the implementation of a teaching unit centered on

DS for oral skill development and motivation improvement. The main goal of the questionnaire was to assess parents' perceptions of their child's interest and engagement with English outside of the formal classroom setting, thus providing key data to guide the intervention. The questionnaire is divided into six distinct sections.

Section 1 and 2 assesses the student's interest and involvement in English beyond the classroom**,** asking parents to rate their child's level of engagement in extracurricular activities related to English, including educational trips abroad. This section is designed to gather data on the student's exposure to the language outside of formal school settings, involving "any kind of learning that takes place outside the classroom and involves self-instruction, naturalistic learning, or self-directed naturalistic learning" (Benson, 2001, as cited in Al-Zoubi, 2018). Such exposure can come from listening to English-language media, watching films or television programs in English, traveling to English-speaking countries, and interacting with native speakers (Al-Zoubi, 2018). Research consistently shows that students who engage with the language outside the classroom tend to develop a more practical and deeper command of the language, as they are exposed to authentic language use, varying accents, and real-world communication scenarios (*ivi*.).

Section 3 explores the use of digital media for language learning, asking parents how often their child utilizes digital tools like apps, websites, or educational games to enhance his English skills. This section is particularly useful in determining whether the student is already familiar with using digital tools for language learning, which is key for integrating DS-based activities. The use of such tools is tied to the already explored concepts of digital literacy, meaning the ability to effectively navigate and use digital platforms for learning, and aligns with the concept of multiliteracies, which emphasizes interpreting and creating meaning across various digital formats.

Section 4 delves into Digital Storytelling, the central method of the forthcoming teaching unit, and asks parents whether they were familiar with this technique and its potential for improving oral skills.

Section 5 examines parental involvement in the child's language learning, probing how parents support their child's English learning at home. Research consistently highlights that active parental involvement is a key determinant in successful language acquisition (Balala et al., 2021; He et al., 2015; Otani, 2020, as cited in Al Murshidi, et al., 2023).

Castro et al. (2015, as cited in Al Murshidi, et al., 2023) found that parents who set high expectations for their children tend to have students who achieve academically strong results. Furthermore, Tan et al. (2020, as cited in Al Murshidi, et al., 2023) identified key forms of effective parental involvement, such as academic support, discussing school matters, and emphasizing education. Understanding the ways in which the parents of the student in this case study support his language learning provides insight into the broader support network that may influence his language development.

Section 6 explores the parents' opinions on what they believe could be useful or challenging for their child in the English learning process. It asks parents to identify potential obstacles that may hinder progress, as well as factors they think could support or enhance their child's language development. This section provides valuable insights into external influences, such as motivation, available resources, and support systems that parents believe will play a key role in their child's success or difficulties in learning English.

4.3.1.2 Post-Teaching Unit Questionnaire for the Student

In this study, a tailored questionnaire (see Appendix 12) was developed for the 11-year-old EFL student following the implementation of the teaching unit. The main goal of this questionnaire was to gather the student's feedback on his experience with the DS unit, assessing his perceptions on the impact on language skills, motivation, and digital literacy. The questionnaire is divided into five distinct sections.

Section 1 focuses on the student's oral skills in English, asking how confident he feels speaking English after the DS unit and whether he perceives improvements in listening comprehension, pronunciation, and overall ease of speaking. This section is designed to provide insight into how DS affected his communicative competence in English.

Section 2 evaluates the student's motivation for learning English, probing whether DS made the learning process more enjoyable and if it increased his interest in the language. It also compares DS with traditional teaching methods, asking how much the student believes he benefited from DS compared to standard approaches.

Section 3 explores the student's digital skills, particularly his comfort in using technology, especially the digital platform Scratch, during the DS activities. This section aims to

assess whether the unit enhanced the student's digital literacy, as well as his ability to create digital content, which aligns with the integration of multiliteracies in education.

Section 4 delves into the student's perception of storytelling**,** examining whether DS helped improve his critical thinking, creativity, and empathy. This section reflects on how storytelling through digital media influenced the student's ability to analyze and reflect on stories, in this case "The Lorax", and apply lessons from these stories to real-life contexts.

Finally, *Section 5* gathers general feedback through open-ended questions, asking the student to reflect on the aspects of DS he found most challenging or enjoyable, and what activities he would change or keep. This section allows the student to share any additional thoughts on his learning experience, offering insights that can be used to refine future units.

4.3.1.3 Post-Teaching Unit Questionnaire for the Student's Parents

The questionnaire created for the parents of the student (see Appendix 13) following the DS unit is divided into several sections, each aimed at gathering detailed feedback on various aspects of the student's engagement with the unit, as well as the development of linguistic, motivational, and digital skills. Each section is crafted to assess different dimensions of the student's response to the teaching unit, with the ultimate goal of understanding whether the DS approach positively impacted the student's overall motivation for language learning.

Section 1 is designed to gather insights into any noticeable improvements in the student's English-speaking abilities. Parents are asked to observe specific aspects of their child's linguistic progress, assuming they have the opportunity and the ability to do so. The questions focus on whether the student has gained more confidence in speaking English, improved their pronunciation and accent, expanded their vocabulary and phrases, and demonstrated greater clarity in self-expression.

The *second section* focuses on the student's interest and motivation to learn English, particularly through their involvement in the digital storytelling project. It aims to assess the frequency with which the student discussed the unit's activities at home, indicating engagement and enthusiasm. The parents are asked whether their child seemed excited to participate in the project and if they took more initiative in using English outside of

school, an important indicator of heightened motivation. Additionally, this section explores whether parents noticed an increase in their child's general interest in the English language and in attending English lessons after participating in the digital storytelling unit. The responses help to evaluate the motivational impact of the teaching unit, an essential component of this research. Furthermore, parents are invited to reflect on potential factors contributing to this motivation, such as the student's interest in storytelling, creativity, interaction with the teacher, or the use of digital tools, which can provide valuable insights for refining future lesson plans.

Section 3 seeks to gauge the student's self-esteem and independence when using English. Parents are asked whether they observed any increased confidence in their child's performance in English class and whether their child seemed proud of his progress. Confidence and pride are significant indicators of a student's perceived competence, which can influence their willingness to engage with the language. The section also questions whether the student displayed greater autonomy in completing English homework, suggesting that the digital storytelling project may have fostered not only language skills but also a sense of ownership and responsibility towards their learning process.

In the *fourth section*, the questionnaire shifts focus to the digital aspect of the unit, exploring whether the student showed increased interest in using digital tools such as computers or tablets during the project. Parents are asked if they noticed their child spending more time on these devices and how much time they dedicated to digital storytelling activities. This section is crucial in assessing whether the integration of digital tools in language learning had a motivational impact, as students who are more engaged with technology may find the learning experience more enjoyable and effective.

The *fifth section* addresses parents' perceptions of the overall impact of the DS unit on their child's cognitive abilities. It inquires whether the unit fostered critical thinking skills, creativity, and the ability to reflect on stories. It also explores whether the student exhibited increased confidence in presenting creative work, which could indicate a positive shift in their self-perception as a learner and speaker of English.

The final section provides an opportunity for parents to offer their overall impressions of the unit and to identify which aspects they found most beneficial for their child. This

could include improvements in language skills, digital literacy, motivation, autonomy, or self-esteem. Parents are encouraged to provide suggestions or additional comments about the digital storytelling project. This section plays a critical role in gathering qualitative feedback that may not be captured in the more structured sections of the questionnaire, allowing for a deeper understanding of the unit's impact from the parental perspective.

By collecting feedback from parents, the study aims to validate the outcomes of the teaching unit and identify areas for improvement, ensuring a more tailored and impactful learning experience for future students.

4.3.1.4 Questionnaires Replies Interpretation

The pre-unit and post-unit questionnaire results provide a comprehensive view of the student's relationship with English language learning and the impact of the digital storytelling unit, as perceived by his parents. Before the unit, the parents described their child as having a moderate interest in English, with his primary extracurricular connection to the language being through music in English, although he spent less than an hour a week on English-related activities outside of school. Over time, they noticed a gradual increase in his interest in the language, suggesting that this existing, albeit limited, interest could serve as a foundation for further engagement. They believed that his interest outside the classroom, particularly in music, positively impacted his motivation and school performance. However, they pointed out that his exposure to English outside the classroom was insufficient, and they saw potential for improvement through extracurricular activities such as social interactions with native speakers, educational trips, or time spent practicing English with family and friends. The parents were generally uninvolved in his English learning and noted that he had not used digital tools for language improvement. Despite not knowing much about digital storytelling, they expressed optimism, based on the pre-unit information they received (see Appendix 2), that it could enhance his English abilities, motivation, and creativity, and help him learn English "more quickly."

After the digital storytelling unit, however, the parents' feedback was more neutral. They were unsure if their child's language skills had improved and noted that he rarely talked about the digital storytelling project at home, showing neither enthusiasm nor disinterest. His motivation and initiative to use English outside the classroom remained unchanged,

and his overall interest in the language did not increase. Despite these neutral observations, the parents did notice some important positive developments. They reported that their child appeared more confident in his language abilities, displaying moderate pride in his progress and becoming moderately more autonomous in his learning. Furthermore, they observed a significant increase in his interest in using the computer during the unit, and noted that he spent more time engaging with digital tools, an important shift considering his previous lack of digital engagement for language learning. However, the parents remained uncertain about the specific effects of DS itself, as they could not provide a clear assessment of its impact.

In comparing the pre-unit and post-unit responses, it is clear that while the digital storytelling unit did not lead to a dramatic increase in the student's interest or motivation for learning English, it did foster subtle yet meaningful changes in his confidence, autonomy, and digital engagement. Before the unit, the parents believed that social and interactive elements, such as time spent with friends and family in English or participation in extracurricular activities, would be key to boosting their child's language skills. However, after the unit, the most noticeable shift was in his engagement with digital tools, suggesting that digital storytelling may have served as a stepping stone toward further autonomous learning and confidence-building in English, even if it did not immediately generate enthusiasm or increased language use outside of class.

The student's post-unit questionnaire responses reflect a generally positive experience with the DS unit, highlighting several key areas of development. He reported feeling more confident in speaking English compared to before the unit, noting specific improvements in his pronunciation and comprehension skills. This boost in confidence is a crucial outcome, as it aligns with the goal of the unit to enhance oral production in a supportive, creative environment. His sense of progress is further emphasized by his statement that he feels "very proud" of his English development, which indicates that the unit fostered not only language skills but also a sense of accomplishment and self-assurance in his abilities.

The student found the DS activities "fairly easy," suggesting that the tasks were appropriately challenging without being overwhelming. His enjoyment of creating stories through digital storytelling indicates that this method resonated with him as a fun and

engaging way to learn English. This is reinforced by his observation that DS helped him learn English as much as traditional methods, demonstrating that digital storytelling was an effective and complementary tool in his language learning experience. Additionally, the student reported feeling more interested in learning English after completing the unit, showing that the storytelling approach successfully increased his motivation and engagement with the language.

In terms of digital skills, the student expressed feeling more confident in using digital tools, particularly Scratch, which he found challenging but rewarding. He noted improvements in his ability to use Scratch to create and animate his story, even though he found it neither easy nor overly difficult, reflecting a sense of achievement in mastering a new digital skill. His experience with digital tools also likely contributed to his feeling far more creative, particularly in inventing stories, which he identified as the easiest and most enjoyable part of the unit. This increased creativity aligns with the goal of digital storytelling to foster imaginative thinking and self-expression.

Moreover, the student indicated growth in critical thinking and empathy, particularly after studying and analyzing the story of "The Lorax." He feels more empathic and aware of environmental issues, suggesting that the unit's integration of storytelling with meaningful themes such as environmental protection had a positive impact on his social and emotional development. This aspect of the unit reflects its broader educational goals, not only enhancing language skills but also promoting awareness of important global issues.

Overall, the student reported a positive experience with the unit, noting that the most difficult aspect was using Scratch, while the easiest was inventing the story. His favorite part of the unit was listening to "The Lorax", and he did not suggest any changes to the teaching unit, which reflects a high level of satisfaction. However, he did offer a valuable suggestion for improvement: incorporating multiple storytelling activities rather than just one, which could increase engagement and offer more opportunities for creative expression. These insights from the student provide strong evidence that the digital storytelling unit successfully enhanced both his language skills and digital literacy, while also fostering a greater sense of creativity, critical thinking, and personal growth.

In summary, the comparative analysis of the pre-unit and post-unit feedback from both the parents and the student reveals a nuanced impact of the DS teaching unit on the student's English language learning experience. Initially, the parents observed a moderate interest in English, with limited engagement outside the classroom, and expressed optimism about the potential benefits of Digital Storytelling. Post-unit feedback, however, showed a more reserved evaluation from the parents, who noted no significant changes in the student's overall interest or external motivation but acknowledged improvements in confidence and digital engagement.

Conversely, the student's feedback highlighted a more positive response to the DS unit. He reported increased confidence in his English skills, enjoyment of the digital storytelling activities, and a boost in motivation. The student found the DS tasks suitably challenging and appreciated the opportunity to use digital tools like Scratch, which enhanced both his language abilities and digital literacy. Additionally, he recognized growth in critical thinking and empathy, particularly through the thematic exploration of environmental issues.

In comparing these perspectives, it becomes evident that while the Digital Storytelling unit did not lead to dramatic shifts in the student's language use or motivation as perceived by the parents, it significantly impacted his confidence, autonomy, and engagement with digital tools.

4.3.2 Teacher Diary Observations

Using teacher observation is crucial in evaluating young learners' language acquisition because it provides a continuous insight into their learning process, which traditional summative assessments fail to capture. As Alberta Novello (2014) emphasizes, teacher observation allows educators to track how children engage with the language in natural, communicative settings, whereas summative evaluations, like end-of-year or mid-term exams, are not effective because they do not allow us to understand the evolution of learning during the educational process. Merely knowing if a student has passed a test gives no indication of what teaching strategies were effective or which aspects of learning require further attention (*ivi.*). On the other hand, frequent observation during classroom interactions, especially in social communicative tasks, enables teachers to gather ongoing data that reflects the child's real progress and struggles. "Monitoring the steps taken by

learners" Novello notes, "allows us to understand the evolution of the learning process and to identify where the method used has not been effective, with the resulting possibility of making adjustments along the way" (*ivi*. p. 38).

Moreover, teacher observation aligns with a more natural and learner-centered approach to language learning. Drawing from Vygotsky's theories, Novello reminds us that "there cannot be a true assessment of a child's abilities if we measure what they can do alone, without help" (*ivi*. p. 29). This is because such assessments fail to reflect how children learn in real contexts, where they often rely on social interactions and guidance. Instead, obs

In addition, his critical thinking skills showed remarkable development. Throughout the lessons, he consistently analyzed story elements in-depth, from criticizing the environmental decisions of the characters to proposing alternative endings. This analytical mindset continued to evolve, as seen in his later reflections on the Scratch project and the story sequences, where his attention to detail was both a strength and a source of distraction. Overall, the progression of skills was marked by increasing confidence, creativity, and independence across both language and task engagement.

4.3.2.1 Findings from Teacher Observations

At the beginning of the unit, the student primarily focused on listening and ensuring his understanding before expressing himself in English. Although he was eager to share his opinions, he often did so in L1, using English less frequently. However, as the unit progressed and he was consistently redirected to use English, he began to shift his approach. Gradually, he adopted several strategies to enhance his English expression. He started repeating new words and phrases in context to reinforce his comprehension, and he began trying to translate unfamiliar nouns he just listened with a focus on visual representations (related to the illustrations of "The Lorax") before asking for help. This proactive approach allowed him to build confidence and increase his use of English a bit more.

Even when he needed help, he would eagerly accept pronunciation corrections, repeating them multiple times to solidify his understanding. His tendency to translate everything aloud, even after comprehending the material, shows his desire to verbalize and reinforce his learning, though it sometimes led to over-explanation.

The student also demonstrated a deep enjoyment of engaging with audio-visual materials, especially related to the storytelling YouTube video of "The Lorax," where he could listen to the story, read the text on the screen, and observe the illustrations simultaneously. This multi-sensory approach reflected a growing interest with storytelling, as he often expressed a desire to continue engaging with the video even without checking for comprehension. His inclination to propose different story versions, with minimal teacher input, showed a natural shift toward brainstorming and creative thinking. Despite occasional frustration stemming from gaps in vocabulary, this enjoyment of diverse learning formats highlighted his active engagement.

The student's critical thinking and inclination to express his opinions freely and tell personal anecdotes had a notable impact on time management in class. His tendency to critique story elements or illustrations, while demonstrating deep engagement and analytical skills, often led to digressions that took time away from completing the tasks at hand. This was particularly evident in moments where he would delve into alternative endings or critique visual details in the story, such as comparing illustrations or making humorous connections. Being comfortable in the relationship with the teacher also played a role, as he felt at ease to share personal anecdotes and opinions, sometimes leading to lengthy discussions unrelated to the immediate lesson objectives. While this openness and willingness to engage critically are positive traits, it occasionally disrupted the flow of lessons, requiring the teacher to redirect his focus back to the task, which slowed down progress on planned activities. It was likely that this tendency to derail the lesson by sharing personal anecdotes and critiques was a way for the student to avoid the tasks at hand, especially when they seemed too challenging. This was particularly evident during the production phase, where he had to apply new coding skills in Scratch. The complexity of these tasks may have made him feel overwhelmed at times, and digressing into unrelated discussions could have served as a form of mental break before returning to the more demanding aspects of the lesson.

During the production phase, his enthusiasm for researching images for backgrounds and finding characters to turn into sprites, while showing creativity and initiative, took significantly longer than anticipated. This meticulous attention to detail and desire to explore all possible options, although beneficial for fostering creativity, often led to a delay in completing the animation tasks. Similar to his tendency to express opinions freely

during discussions, his inclination to spend extra time on perfecting the visual elements in Scratch slowed down his overall progress. The student's focus on finding the "perfect" background or character, combined with his comfort in taking initiative, often resulted in extended periods of exploration, taking away time from other important aspects of the project.

Here are some of the most significant observations from the teaching unit, organized by category: oral skills, motivation, and critical thinking skills.

CATEGORY	OBSERVATIONS
ORAL SKILLS	- Repeats words in context to ensure comprehension and retention in long-term memory. - Attempts translating unfamiliar nouns, focusing on visual representations; prefers to try before asking the teacher for the correct translation in L1. - Expresses his opinions confidently, even comparing with his own experiences (ex. "I would have charged more", referring to the Onceler requiring very little fee for revealing his secret, meaning the Truffula tress deforestation story). - Very little to no hesitation in speaking English and asks for help when needed. - Repeats corrected pronunciation multiple times until memorized. - Tends to translate everything out loud, even if it is something he already knows. - Enjoys reading in English and wants to continue even without a comprehension check. - Proposes different story versions, showing a natural transition to brainstorming. - Tends to mix L1 and English but shows improvement over time. - Occasionally frustrated due to a lack of vocabulary to express ideas. - Shows great creativity, draws inspiration from movies and video games. Shows little reliance on teacher input when brainstorming.
MOTIVATION	- Sometimes arrived 5/10 minutes late to class - Demonstrates curiosity by asking about unmentioned details in the story. - Focuses on illustrations but sometimes gets distracted, comparing them critically. - Shows frustration throughout the unit with repetitive tasks like the reflective log. - Shows enjoyment in exploring Scratch features beyond those already known (he actively asks multiple questions about them). - Takes initiative in coding and project creation on Scratch, showing autonomy but asks for assistance when needed. - Perseveres in finding creative solutions in coding, even when the platform does not support them. - More motivated after receiving guidance on challenging tasks (ex: he initially looked overwhelmed about the perspective of carrying out homework from Lesson 1, but then changed attitude once he received further explanation)

	- Shows curiosity about story details not explicitly mentioned, asking about minor aspects (like who is the protagonist's family). - Needs encouragement when needing to think of dialogues for the Scratch project but is enthusiastic once engaged. - Frequently initiates personal anecdotes during lessons, sometimes as distractions.
CRITICAL THINKING AND CREATIVITY	- Criticizes decisions of the Onceler and expresses knowledge of environmental issues and willingness to discuss critically about it. - Compares characters from different stories, such as Bar-ba-loots with Oompa Loompas from "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory." - Proposes alternative endings to The Lorax story, displaying creativity and analytical thinking. - Pays extreme attention to small visual details - Focuses on illustrations but sometimes gets distracted, comparing them critically. - Gives (negative) feedback on the aesthetics of characters and illustrations.

Table 17. Notes from Teacher's Class Observations

In conclusion, the student's oral skills, motivation, and critical thinking saw improvement throughout the teaching unit. His initial reliance on L1 to express himself gradually gave way to more frequent use of English, supported by various self-adopted strategies like repetition and translation attempts. His engagement with audio-visual materials, particularly the YouTube storytelling of "The Lorax," sparked both enjoyment and a deeper connection to the content. However, his critical thinking, while a strength, often caused time management issues in class, as he frequently digressed with personal anecdotes and extended discussions. This tendency carried over into the production phase, where his focus on perfecting visual details in digital tools slowed his progress. Despite these challenges, the student demonstrated a clear willingness to engage, explore, and push the boundaries of his learning, marking steady growth in his language skills and creative thinking throughout the unit.

4.3.3 Student Reflective Logs

Reflective logs are meant to foster deeper learning by encouraging students to engage in ongoing self-reflection. As Jennifer Moon (2006) defines them, learning journals are "an accumulation of material that is mainly based on the writer's processes of reflection. The accumulation is made over a period of time, not in 'one go'" (p. 3). These journals are designed to help students systematically reflect on their learning experiences, drawing connections between theoretical knowledge and practical application (Veine, et al., 2019). Reflection enables students to process complex or unclear situations, identify

assumptions, and improve their understanding of subject matter. By continuously writing about their experiences, thoughts, and insights, students are encouraged to revisit and reinterpret their learning, allowing them to construct new meaning from past experiences (*ivi.*).

Building on a constructivist approach to learning, the reflective log acts as a tool that helps students construct and co-construct knowledge by relating specific events or evaluations to broader conceptual ideas (Christie & de Graaff, 2017, in Veine, et al., 2019). Reflection encourages the learner to move beyond mere description and delve into the mental processing of their experiences, allowing them to identify implicit assumptions, evaluate their learning strategies, and adapt based on newly gained insights (Moon, 1999, as cited in Veine, et al., 2019). By inviting students to engage emotionally and cognitively, learning journals foster self-awareness and critical thinking, helping them make sense of complex situations where solutions are not immediately obvious (Veine, et al., 2019).

However, reflective writing can be challenging for students, especially those unfamiliar with the practice. As research highlights, students often tend to write superficially or descriptively, particularly in the early stages of reflective learning (*ivi.*).

4.3.3.1 Findings from the Student Reflective Logs

The analysis of the student's reflective logs (see Appendix 14) revealed a pattern of repetitive responses, indicating a lack of genuine engagement with the reflection process. For instance, when responding to the question, "What do you think you should improve in English?" the student consistently provided the same answer, focusing solely on grammar improvement. Only twice he provided a different reply, one related to improving his translation skills and the other his pronunciation of some words. This repetitive response suggest that the student may not have fully reflected on different areas of language development or considered alternative aspects that could be improved.

Additionally, in response to questions about moments of clarity during lessons, the student frequently attributed his understanding to the teacher's explanations and collaborative interactions with the teacher. While this highlights the importance of teacher support in the student's learning process, it also suggests an over-reliance on external guidance, rather than independent reflection on personal learning strategies.

Furthermore, when asked what new knowledge he had gained from each lesson, the student's reflections were often limited to the acquisition of new words or vocabulary. While vocabulary growth is an essential part of language learning, the narrow scope of these reflections indicated a missed opportunity to engage with other dimensions of the learning experience, such as the development of grammar, communication skills, or digital literacy.

He frequently exhibited mild frustration when tasked with completing the reflective log at the end of the lesson, indicating that he perceived it as an extra, rather than integral, activity. What would have been beneficial in this case is dedicating more time to raising the student's awareness about the value of self-reflective activities. Providing examples of both good and poor reflective practices could have helped ease the student into the process by offering clearer guidance on what effective reflection looks like. This approach might have allowed the student to better understand the purpose of reflective writing and how to engage with it more meaningfully. However, due to time constraints, there was not enough opportunity to provide the student with detailed instruction on that. As a result, despite the process being explained at the outset, the student did not fully grasp the purpose of maintaining a reflective log. This lack of understanding was further compounded by the fact that it became evident the student had never engaged in a similar metacognitive practice in his public school before. The student's replies suggested unfamiliarity with the concept of self-reflection as a tool for enhancing learning, which likely contributed to his inability to appreciate the potential benefits of the reflective log. Without prior exposure to metacognitive activities, such as evaluating one's learning strategies or critically examining personal progress, the student may have struggled to recognize reflection as an essential part of the learning process.

In addition to this, as noted by Jennifer Moon, "there are many reports that some students do not find it easy to write reflectively—perhaps either because they have the notion of academic writing so ingrained as a habit, or because they are simply not reflective". This observation resonates with the student in question, who appeared to approach the reflective log with a fixed academic mindset, potentially limiting their ability to engage in the more personal and introspective nature of reflective writing. Moreover, it seems likely that the student was not naturally inclined toward reflective thinking. This lack of reflection may stem from various factors, such as an educational background focused

more on performance and results than on self-awareness and critical thinking. In such environments, students may not be encouraged to engage in self-reflection, leading them to develop a more task-oriented rather than reflective approach to learning.

In this case, the student's repetitive responses and reliance on surface-level observations—such as focusing narrowly on grammar and vocabulary—suggest that they are not naturally predisposed to reflect on their learning experiences in a deeper, more meaningful way. This might be due to an ingrained focus on measurable outcomes, rather than the development of reflective or metacognitive habits. Consequently, the reflective log was perceived as an additional, and perhaps unnecessary, task rather than a valuable tool for self-assessment and deeper learning. This misunderstanding of the reflective log's purpose ultimately led to superficial engagement with the reflective process, preventing the student from fully benefiting from the opportunity for introspection, critical thinking, and personal growth.

4.4 Comprehensive Discussion: Synthesis of All Findings

The findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data suggest that the Digital Storytelling unit had a good impact on the student's progress in oral production skills and motivation, although nuanced. Quantitatively, there was a marked improvement in interactive skills, comprehension, and the ability to produce extended discourse, indicating that DS was effective in facilitating a deeper engagement with language. However, more gradual gains were observed in vocabulary acquisition and grammatical accuracy, which reflect the inherent challenges of spontaneous speech in real-time tasks. Qualitatively, classroom observations highlighted increased confidence, creativity, and critical thinking, particularly through discussions with the teacher and the integration of digital tools. The student's ability to actively participate in dialogue and engage with digital storytelling content points to the effectiveness of DS in fostering authentic communication and creative expression. Motivation, while generally positive, fluctuated throughout the unit, with higher engagement during creative and interactive activities and lower attention spans during extended periods of concentration. Importantly, qualitative reflections also revealed the student's enjoyment of digital tools, critical engagement with story elements, and gradual shift from passive to active learning.

On the other hand, the reflective logs showed a lack of deep engagement with reflective practices. Overall, while the DS approach did not dramatically transform the student's external motivation or enthusiasm for English, it fostered significant gains in confidence related to the language use, digital literacy, and creativity, making it a promising pedagogical tool for language learning.

4.4.1 Main Challenges and Limitations of the Teaching Unit

While the teaching unit led to numerous positive outcomes, several limitations and challenges became apparent during its implementation.

One possible limitation was the extensive integration of digital tools, which, while initially captivating for the student, in some cases became overwhelming. The ambitious goal of creating a lengthy animation within a limited period placed considerable pressure on the student, leading to cognitive overload. Allocating more time to the production phase would have undoubtedly alleviated this stress, allowing the student to engage more fully in the creative process without feeling rushed.

Additionally, focusing more time on the post-production phase would have provided an excellent opportunity to engage the student in dramatization, allowing for the development of key oral skills. By dramatizing the dialogues he had written, the student could have worked more deeply on expressiveness, pronunciation, and intonation, enhancing his overall fluency. This phase could have also helped the student improve pacing and the use of body language to complement speech, all of which are essential components of effective communication. Unfortunately, due to the time constraints, this aspect of the teaching unit was not fully explored, limiting the potential of the teaching unit.

One critical challenge stemmed from the student's analytical learning style, which clashed with the visually intensive nature of the DS approach. The emphasis on visual and audio-visual exercises frequently became a distraction for the student, who would often hyper-focus on minor visual details. For instance, during the YouTube video session of "The Lorax", the student would often pause to comment on details of the illustrations, and while using Scratch, he would spend excessive time perfecting backgrounds and character animations. This focus on visual elements detracted him from the primary linguistic objectives of the lesson. This fixation required frequent redirection from the

teacher to ensure that the linguistic objectives of the unit remained at the forefront. Although the use of visual elements is a strength of Digital Storytelling, learners with a detail-oriented learning style may have more difficulties from benefitting from a DS teaching unit. To better support these learners in such a visually intensive environment, specific strategies need to be implemented, such as balancing visual tasks with clear language-focused goals, reducing the emphasis on aesthetic perfection, and incorporating more structured guidance to keep the student on track. These strategies should be the subject of further research to better understand how to adapt DS methods to meet their learning objectives without compromising the unit's creative and interactive aspects.

Additionally, the reflective log, designed to enhance metacognitive awareness and encourage the student to engage in deeper self-assessment, was not fully embraced. The student's responses to the reflective log lacked depth, suggesting that he did not fully understand or appreciate the value of reflective practices. This superficial engagement hindered the development of critical thinking about his learning process. More time should have been dedicated to thoroughly explaining the importance of reflective practice to the student, guiding him and helping him understand how it could contribute to personal growth. Such an approach could have also provided important data to better comprehend the impact of the project.

Moreover, potential bias in the student's post-unit questionnaire responses posed another limitation. Given the one-on-one nature of the lessons, the absence of anonymity may have influenced the student to provide overly positive feedback, perhaps feeling obligated to meet the teacher's expectations. Ideally, a more objective evaluation could have been achieved by incorporating an external interviewer, allowing the student to express their opinions more freely without concern for how their feedback might be perceived. However, due to the lack of available professionals, this approach was not feasible for the project.

Conclusion

This thesis highlights the transformative potential of Digital Storytelling (DS) in the context of language learning, particularly in fostering oral skills and motivation among young learners. The case study, centered on an 11-year-old Italian student at the A1+ level of English proficiency, demonstrates how DS, when paired with constructivist methodologies, can create a dynamic, engaging learning environment, even in the context of one-on-one private lessons, where peer interaction is not possible.

The findings suggest that Digital Storytelling not only preserves the intrinsic power of storytelling, but also amplifies it by incorporating multimedia elements such as text, audio, and video, allowing learners to engage more deeply with the content and context of their narratives. This aligns with 21st-century educational demands, where competencies like digital literacy and multiliteracies are crucial. In this context, DS emerges as a potent vehicle for fostering these skills, blending traditional narrative structures with digital tools to support a more interactive and immersive learning experience.

One of the most significant outcomes of the study, which aligns with the research objectives, was the improvement observed in the student's oral communication skills. Across the seven-lesson DS unit, the student exhibited progression in his ability to engage in spontaneous conversation, reflecting an increase in both linguistic confidence and communicative competence. The case study shows that the DS framework, with its focus on personal expression and creativity, provided the student with authentic opportunities for verbal interaction. This is particularly evident in his enhanced interactive abilities, moving from basic exchanges at the start of the unit to more confident oral participation by the end. The student's growth in interactive skills and in producing slight more extended discourses, as highlighted by the class observation grids, suggest that DS offers a meaningful context in which learners can practice and refine their oral skills in a natural, supportive environment.

Furthermore, while improvements in vocabulary acquisition and grammatical structures were more modest, the study illustrates that the DS framework fosters deeper engagement with language through multimodal learning, as seen in the improvement in the student's comprehension skills, particularly in understanding meaning through a combination of

text and visuals. This engagement with diverse media allowed the student to connect linguistic elements to visual cues, enhancing his ability to grasp complex ideas and express them in English.

The motivational outcomes of the DS unit present a more nuanced picture. While the student's parents observed only modest changes in their child's overall interest in English, the student's own reflections suggest a more significant internal shift. He reported feeling increasingly confident in his speaking abilities, particularly in pronunciation and comprehension, and expressed pride in his progress. This heightened sense of self-efficacy is an essential outcome of the DS unit, as it indicates that the approach succeeded in creating a learning environment where the student felt supported and empowered to take risks with language. By giving learners the freedom to craft their own narratives, DS fosters a sense of ownership over the learning process, encouraging creativity and independence. In this sense, DS's integration with constructivist methodologies further amplified its educational impact. The student-centered approach ensured that learning was active, collaborative, and tailored to the student's specific abilities. Throughout the unit, the teacher's role shifted from direct instruction to facilitation, allowing the student to take increasing control over his learning as his confidence and competence grew.

One of the most striking aspects of the case study is the role that DS played in cultivating digital literacy. The process of creating and animating his own story, from conceptualizing characters to integrating dialogue, required the student to think critically about how to use digital tools to convey meaning. This aspect of the DS unit aligns with broader educational goals that emphasize the importance of teaching students to navigate and create meaning across multiple modes of communication.

While the DS unit fostered creativity, critical thinking, and enhanced language skills, the study also uncovered challenges, particularly in maintaining the student's focus and engagement during longer lessons. The class observation data indicated fluctuations in attention, with periods of high engagement followed by moments of cognitive fatigue, especially during the more demanding production phase. This suggests that while DS can stimulate motivation and interest, the cognitive load associated with combining language production and digital tasks may require careful pacing and the inclusion of breaks to sustain focus over time. Moreover, strong attention should be paid to the type of learning

style that the student undertaking a DS teaching unit has: in this case study, the student's analytical learning style presented a challenge, as it clashed with the visually intensive nature of Digital Storytelling. The student frequently became hyper-focused on minor visual details, such as pausing to comment on illustrations during the initial viewing of "The Lorax" storytelling video or spending excessive time perfecting animations in Scratch. This fixation on visual elements took away from the primary linguistic objectives, requiring frequent redirection from the teacher to maintain focus on language learning.

Additionally, the reflective logs revealed the student's struggle with metacognitive tasks, highlighting the need for more structured guidance in promoting self-reflection. The repetitive nature of the student's responses suggests that he did not fully grasp the purpose of reflective writing, a skill that could be further developed with more explicit instruction and practice.

In conclusion, this thesis demonstrates how DS offers a powerful platform for integrating creative expression with language development, enabling students to engage with learning materials in a way that is both personal and relevant to their lived experiences. Although challenges persisted in aspects such as grammar integration and metacognitive engagement, the overall success of the DS unit in improving oral communication, motivation, and digital skills highlights its potential as a valuable pedagogical tool in modern education. However, for one-on-one teacher-student lessons, it is crucial to adopt a constructivist approach, as it allows the students to unleash their creativity and build their own knowledge, fostering a deeper learning. A different approach most definitely will not achieve the same level of success and engagement.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

MODULO PER IL CONSENSO INFORMATO

TITOLO DEL PROGETTO DI RICERCA: "Digital Storytelling nell'insegnamento dell'inglese come lingua straniera: uno studio di caso sullo sviluppo delle competenze orali e della motivazione"

Relatrice: Prof.ssa Alberta Novello

Studentessa: Caterina Meggiolaro

Gentili genitori,

con il presente documento Vi chiediamo di fornire il Vostro consenso informato alla partecipazione di Vostro figlio al progetto di ricerca "Digital Storytelling nell'Apprendimento della Lingua Inglese: Sviluppo della Competenza Orale e della Motivazione", svolto dalla studentessa Caterina Meggiolaro e coordinato dalla Prof.ssa Alberta Novello per l'Università degli Studi di Padova.

Descrizione del Progetto:

Il progetto si svolgerà presso il centro educativo specializzato Instudio con sede a Trissino (VI) e si concentrerà su un percorso di circa 6 lezioni della durata di un'ora ciascuna, strutturato in tre fasi fondamentali per garantire un apprendimento coinvolgente delle competenze orali in lingua inglese attraverso il Digital Storytelling. Ai fini dello svolgimento della ricerca sarà necessario il possesso e l'utilizzo da parte di vostro figlio di un pc o di un tablet.

Durante la fase di pre-produzione, lo studente sarà guidato nella ricerca e selezione dell'argomento, nell'attività di scrittura e nella creazione di una storyboard dettagliata. Successivamente, nella fase di produzione, lo studente sarà impegnato nella ricerca e nell'integrazione di elementi multimediali per arricchire la sua storia. Infine, nella fase di post-produzione, lo studente sarà guidato nella revisione della struttura narrativa, nell'esposizione orale e registrazione della propria storia.

Le responsabili della ricerca si impegnano ad adempiere agli obblighi previsti dalla normativa vigente in termini di raccolta, trattamento e conservazione di dati sensibili. I dati ricavati dalla ricerca verranno, infatti, trattati anonimamente e saranno unicamente oggetto di comunicazioni scientifiche (scritte e/o orali).

Obiettivi di ricerca:

1. Valutare l'impatto del Digital Storytelling sull'acquisizione e lo sviluppo delle competenze linguistiche orali dello studente di lingua inglese come lingua straniera.

2. Esplorare il ruolo del Digital Storytelling nel migliorare l'apprendimento delle competenze linguistiche orali in lingua inglese.

3. Indagare l'effetto del Digital Storytelling sull'incremento della motivazione dello studente nell'apprendimento delle competenze linguistiche orali in lingua inglese.

In qualità di soggetto esercente la potestà genitoriale sul minore _____

_____,nato   a

_____il____/_____/_____,

Io sottoscritto/a

a)_____,nata   a

_____il____/_____/_____

b)_____,nato   a

_____il____/_____/_____

1. Dichiaro di aver ricevuto informazioni che mi hanno permesso di comprendere il progetto di ricerca e confermo di aver letto il foglio informativo.

2. Dichiaro di aver ricevuto sufficienti informazioni riguardo ai benefici implicati nello studio, secondo quanto riportato nel foglio informativo.

3. Dichiaro di aver compreso che solo le persone che conducono la ricerca potranno avere accesso ai risultati di Vostro figlio limitatamente ai fini della loro elaborazione e alla pubblicazione dei dati a fine scientifico.

4. Dichiaro di aver compreso che la partecipazione è libera e che è possibile ritirarsi dalla ricerca in qualsiasi momento.

PERTANTO, ALLA LUCE DELLE INFORMAZIONI CHE MI SONO STATE FORNITE:

☐ acconsento   ☐ non acconsento
alla partecipazione di mio figlio al progetto di ricerca e

☐ acconsento   ☐ non acconsento
all'anonimizzazione dei dati personali trattati nel progetto di ricerca

Luogo e data, _____

Firma dei genitori:

a)_____

b)_____

FOGLIO INFORMATIVO SUL PROGETTO DI TESI MAGISTRALE

TITOLO DEL PROGETTO DI RICERCA: "Digital Storytelling nell'insegnamento dell'inglese come lingua straniera: uno studio di caso sullo sviluppo delle competenze orali e della motivazione"

Relatrice: Prof.ssa Alberta Novello

Studentessa: Caterina Meggiolaro

Il progetto di tesi si focalizza sull'attuazione di un'unità didattica innovativa, composta da circa sei lezioni frontali. L'obiettivo primario è sviluppare la competenza orale in lingua inglese come lingua straniera (EFL) attraverso l'applicazione del Digital Storytelling. Tale approccio combina la narrazione tradizionale con l'utilizzo di strumenti digitali, permettendo allo studente di creare storie coinvolgenti mediante l'impiego di varie risorse multimediali. La metodologia si propone non solo di potenziare le abilità linguistiche, ma anche di aumentare la motivazione dello studente attraverso l'utilizzo di strumenti tecnologici, contribuendo così allo sviluppo di competenze digitali fondamentali per la sua partecipazione attiva nella società contemporanea.

I vantaggi derivanti dall'adozione del Digital Storytelling nell'ambito didattico sono molteplici. In primo luogo, questa metodologia favorisce l'apprendimento attivo, coinvolgendo lo studente come protagonista del processo educativo, stimolando la creatività e l'autonomia. Inoltre, essa promuove lo sviluppo della competenza orale attraverso l'esposizione verbale e l'ascolto attivo, incentivando una maggiore fluidità linguistica. La componente digitale del progetto contribuisce a migliorare le competenze tecnologiche dello studente, dotandolo di strumenti pratici e utili per la comunicazione nella società digitale. Infine, il Digital Storytelling offre un contesto autentico per l'apprendimento della lingua, coinvolgendo lo studente in attività che riflettono le situazioni della vita reale, rendendo l'esperienza educativa più significativa e motivante.

Il percorso sarà strutturato in tre fasi fondamentali per garantire un apprendimento completo e coinvolgente attraverso il Digital Storytelling. Nella fase di pre-produzione, lo studente sarà guidato nella ricerca e selezione dell'argomento, incoraggiato a svolgere attività di scrittura individuale e collaborativa, nonché a creare una storyboard dettagliata. Durante questa fase, si concentrerà anche sulla pratica orale, affinando le abilità linguistiche attraverso l'esposizione verbale della storia e la discussione.

Successivamente, nella fase di produzione, lo studente sarà impegnato nella ricerca e nell'integrazione di elementi audio, musica, immagini, animazioni, video e registrazioni vocali per arricchire la sua storia digitale. Questa tappa gli consentirà di sperimentare con la multimedialità, sviluppando competenze creative e tecniche.

Nella fase di post-produzione, oltre alla modifica dei contenuti creati, lo studente sarà anche guidato nell'esposizione orale della propria storia, che sarà parte integrante della presentazione finale della storia digitale. Questo processo consentirà agli studenti di affinare le loro abilità nell'uso delle competenze orali in lingua inglese, mentre rivedono e perfezionano la struttura narrativa del loro

racconto. Inoltre, durante questa fase, si incoraggerà il pensiero critico e la revisione attenta del materiale prodotto, al fine di garantire coerenza e fluidità nella presentazione finale.

Infine, nell'eventuale fase di distribuzione (opzionale), lo studente avrà l'opportunità di pubblicare il proprio progetto di Storytelling, ad esempio, su una piattaforma online dedicata. Ciò gli permetterà di condividere la sua creazione con un pubblico più ampio, valorizzando il proprio impegno e incoraggiandolo a esplorare l'impatto della sua storia nel contesto digitale.

THE LORAX

PREPARATORY EXERCISES

1) VOCABULARY on the themes of the story.

Match each word with its definition and then write the translation in Italian.

1. Environmentalism (in Italian: _____)
2. Conservation (in Italian: _____)
3. Responsibility (in Italian: _____)
4. Greed (in Italian: _____)
5. Sustainability (in Italian: _____)
6. Deforestation (in Italian: _____)

a. Concern (preoccuparsi per) for the protection and preservation of the natural environment.
b. The act of using resources responsibly and protecting them from destruction.
c. Being responsible for one's actions and their impact on the environment and future generations.
d. Excessive desire for possessions, often at the expense of others or the environment.
e. Maintaining ecological balance (equilibrio biologico) by utilizing resources in a way that meets present needs (bisogni).
f. The destruction of forests, often for agricultural or commercial purposes (obiettivi), causing loss environmental degradation (degrade ambientale).

2) Brainstorm anything that comes to mind when you think about the environment.
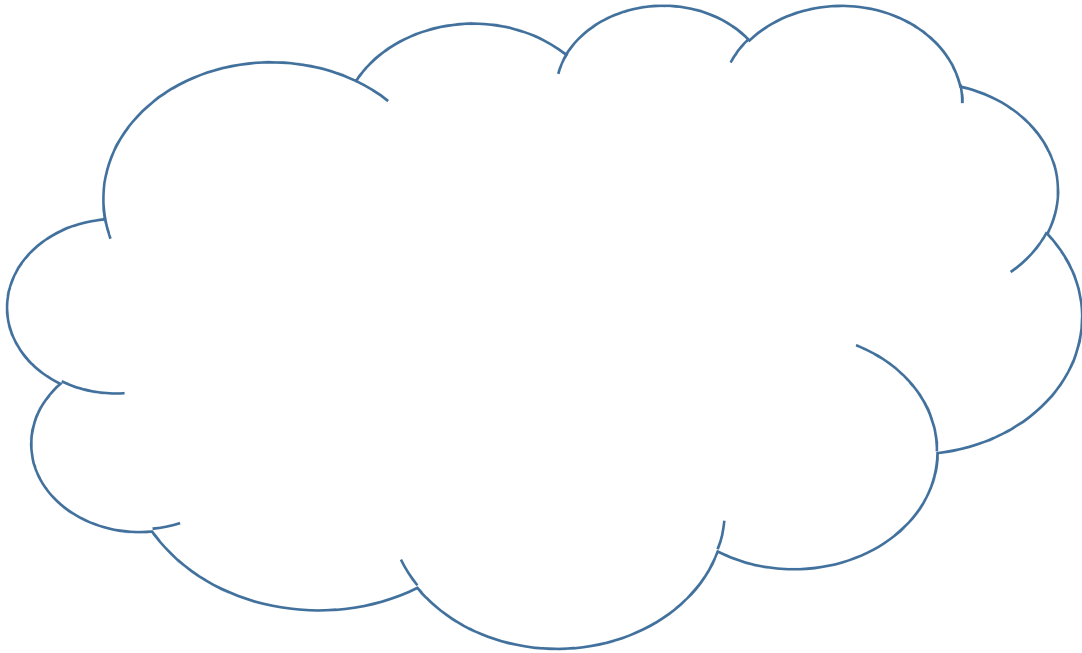

COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1) Match the names from the list with the right character:

Once-Ler   /   The reader /   The Lorax   /   Bar-Ba-Loot
Swomee-Swans /   Humming-Fish /   The   Truffula   Trees
   Thneed

_____   _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____
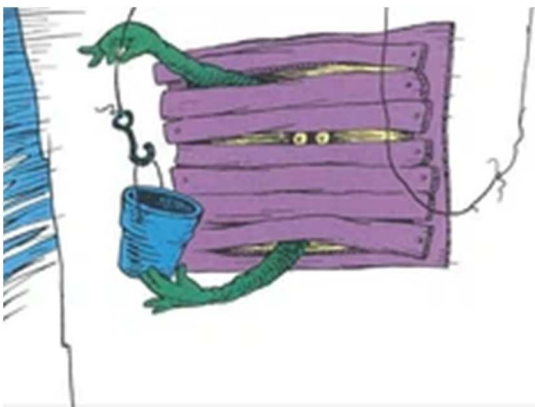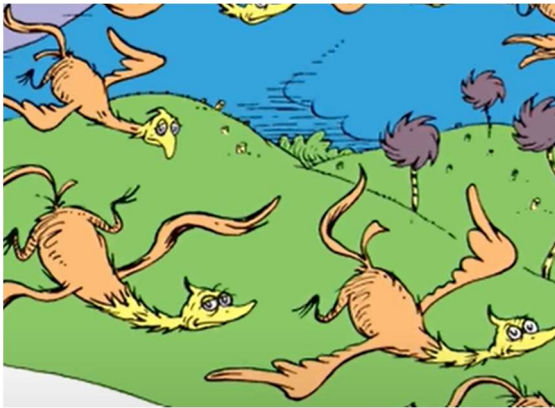
2) Read each sentence carefully and then arrange them in the order that they happened in the story 'The Lorax'.

☐ "The Once-ler tells the story of how the Lorax disappeared when the last Truffula Tree was cut down."

☐ "Once-ler arrives in the Truffula Tree forest."

☐ "The Once-ler begins chopping down trees to produce Thneeds."

☐ "The Once-ler regrets (si pente) his actions and shares the last Truffula seed with the boy."

☐ "The Lorax speaks for the trees and warns the Once-ler."

☐ "The Once-ler's factory pollutes the air and water, causing environmental destruction."

3) Based on the picture below of Freytag's Pyramid of an average plot structure, go back to the previous exercise and write near each box the letter:
   - "E" if the sentence belongs to the **exposition** (introduzione ai personaggi e all'ambientazione della storia),
   - "RA" if the sentence belongs to the **rising action** (complicazione della storia) of the story,
   - "C" if the sentence belongs to the **climax** (picco di tensione nella storia),
   - "FA" if the sentence belongs to the **falling action** (ribaltamento della situazione) of the story,
   - "RE" if the sentence belongs to the **resolution** (risoluzione) of the story.

Plot structure: Freytag's Pyramid
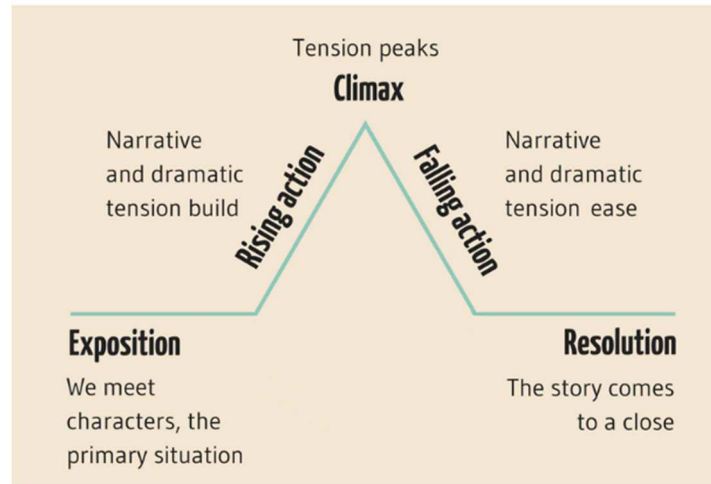
image taken from www.nownovel.com/blog/how-to-make-plot-captivate/

EXTRA: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A. What do you think the main message of "The Lorax" is?
B. Why do you think the Once-ler started chopping down the Truffula Trees?
C. Do you think the Lorax could have done anything differently to prevent the destruction of the forest?
D. What do you think the boy learned from listening to the Once-ler's story?
E. How can we take care of the environment in our own lives, like the Lorax wanted?
F. If you were the Lorax, what would you say to the Once-ler to try to stop him from cutting down the trees?

ECO FRIENDLY INVENTION CHALLENGE

Now **invent** something that will help **protect the environment**, conserve natural resources, or promote sustainability.

Think about the following questions and come up with your own idea:

- What environmental problems do you want to address?
- How does your invention work to solve the environmental problem you've identified?
- How can your invention make a positive impact on the environment?
- Are there any existing technologies or inventions that inspired your idea?

Once you have come up with your new invention, **draw it on paper**.

EXPLORYING EMOTIONS IN STORYTELLING

1) Warm-up: reviewing the previous lesson.

EXPOSITION	RISING	RISING	CLIMAX	RESOLUTION
1. Meeting the Once-ler	2. The deforestation starts	3. The deforestation gets worse	4. The last Truffoll tree	5. Hope for the future
The Once-ler tells us about his story and how he started making Thneeds. He meets the Lorax for the first time.	The Once-ler begins cutting down Truffula trees to make Thneeds. The Lorax tells the Once-ler he's worried about what he's doing to the environment.	The Once-ler's biggers his business and cuts down more trees. The Lorax tries to stop the Once-ler and sends away the animals.	The Once-ler cuts down the last Truffula tree and the Lorax leaves. The Once-ler feels bad about his actions.	The Once-ler gives the reader the last Truffula seed and hopes they'll take care of it. The story ends with the Once-ler saying things can get better if we take care of nature.

In stories, emotions are like colors that make characters come alive. Just as we feel happy, sad, or excited in real life, characters in stories also feel different emotions. These feelings help us understand why characters do what they do. The happiness of finding a treasure, the sadness of saying goodbye, or the anger of facing a problem are emotions that make stories interesting.

2) Match each emotion on the left with its definition on the right by drawing a line connecting them.

a. Excited

                          Feeling unhappy

b. Greedy

                          Feeling mad or upset

c. Remorseful

                          Feeling afraid

d. Concerned

                          Feeling worried

e. Sad

                          Feeling thrilled

f. Determined

                          Feeling regretful or sorry

g. Happy

                          Feeling very motivated

h. Fearful

                          Feeling glad or joyful

3) Now match each emotion of exercise number 2 with the right picture

that shows a character of "The Lorax" story feeling that emotion.

THE ONCE-LER
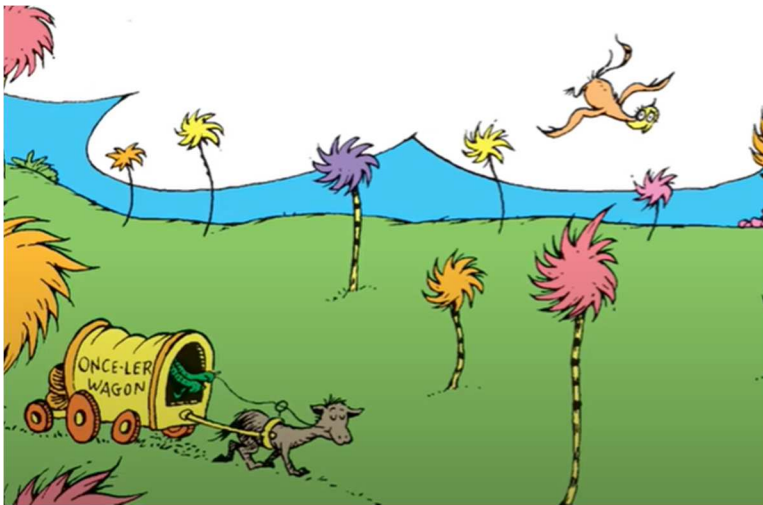
The Once-ler arrives at the Truffula forest. He feels _____.
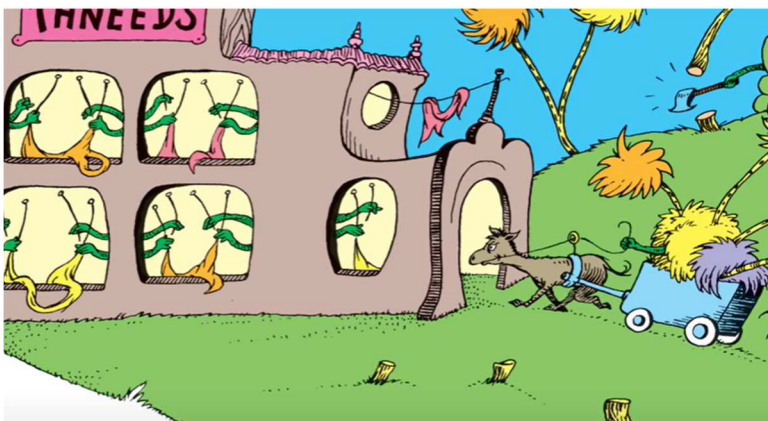
The Once-ler is interested in biggering and BIGGERING and BIGGERING his business. He feels _____.

The Once-ler realizes the consequences of his actions. He feels _____.

THE LORAX
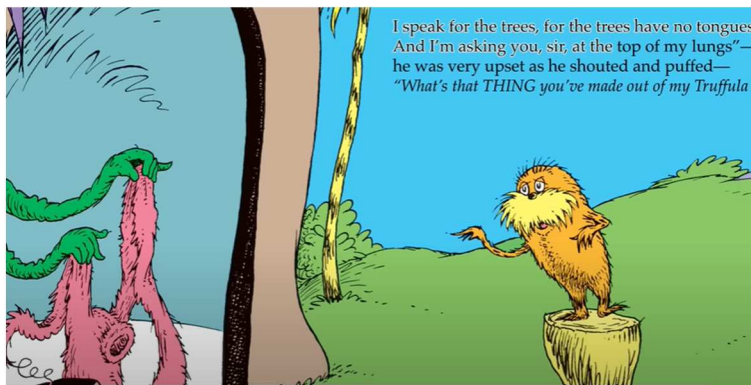
The Lorax worries about the impact of the Once-ler's actions on the environment. He feels _____.

The Lorax tries to stop the Once-ler. He is _____, he wants to protect his forest.

The Lorax sees the destruction of the Truffula trees and sees the animal leaving the forest. He feels _____.

THE ANIMALS

The Bar-ba-loots can eat their fruits and live peacefully in the forest. They feel _____.

The Humming-Fishes are in danger because of Once-ler's business activities. They feel _____.

EMOTION CAKE: SLICES OF FEELINGS IN "THE LORAX"

RESOLUTION — remorseful, hopeful

EXPOSITION — excited, happy

CLIMAX — angry, sad

RISING ACTION — concerned, determined
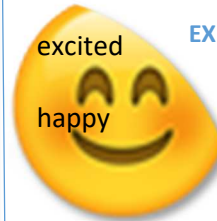
HOMEWORK

4) Remember the eco-friendly invention challenge? Use your invention idea to help you think of a story. Also, find at least 4 pictures online that show the feelings or mood of your story. These pictures will help you create a moodboard to show the atmosphere and emotions in your story.

LET'S CREATE YOUR STORY

1) Think about the characters' functions in "The Lorax" and link each character with the function you think they had in the story.

a. THE LORAX

1. THE ANTAGONIST: character who makes problems for the protagonist. They are usually the "bad guy" in the story.

b. THE ONCE-LER

2. THE PROTAGONIST: main character in a story. They are the one who the story is mostly about.

c. THE ANIMALS
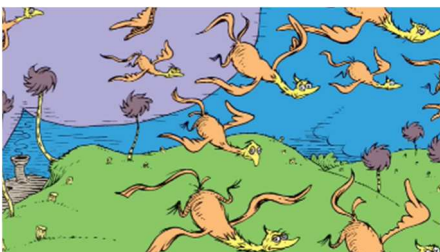
3. HELPER: character who helps the protagonist. They are usually the "good guys" who support the main character.

d. THE YOUNG BOY

4. VICTIM: character who gets hurt or has problems because of what the antagonist does. They are the ones who suffer in the story.

5. LISTENER/ LEANER: character who listens to the story or learns something important from it. They may represent the audience or readers.

2) Imagine you are writing a story based on the eco-friendly invention challenge and your invention. In this story, you need characters who will interact with your invention and play different roles in the narrative. Invent at least three characters and describe these characters.

a. **PROTAGONIST(S)**:

Who is he/she? What is his/ her name?
_____
_____
_____

What is his/her goal and mission?
_____
_____
_____

What motivates him/her to achieve the goal?

_____
_____
_____

b.   **ANTAGONIST(S)**:

Who is he/she? What is his/ her name?

_____
_____
_____

What does he/she do to hinder (ostacolare) the protagonist?

_____
_____
_____

How does the antagonist create problems for the protagonist?

_____
_____
_____

What are his/her feelings towards the protagonist?

_____
_____
_____

c.   **HELPER(S)**:

Who is he/she? What is his/ her name?

_____
_____
_____

How does he/she help the protagonist?

_____
_____
_____

What special skills or knowledge does the helper have?

_____
_____
_____

d.   **THE VICTIM(S)**:

Who is he/she or who are they?

_____
_____
_____

How do they interact with the characters in the story?

_____
_____
_____

Appendix 6

PLANNING THE SCENES OF THE STORY

1) Plan the scenes of the story. Divide your storyline into scenes.
Fill out the table with details for each scene.

SCENE N°	SCENE TITLE	SETTING	CHARACTERS	ACTIONS	NOTES sound effects, visuals etc.)

PLANNING THE DIALOGUES OF THE STORY

1)Write dialogues for each character in the scene. Don't forget to describe the emotions and any special notes for each dialogue.

SCENE N°	CHARACTER(S)	DIALOGUE	EMOTIONS/ NOTES

	159	

PLANNING THE DIALOGUES OF THE STORY

1)Write dialogues for each character in the scene. Don't forget to describe the emotions and any special notes for each dialogue.

SCENE N°	CHARACTER(S)	DIALOGUE	EMOTIONS/ NOTES

	161	

EXPRESSIVE STORYTELLING: MATCHING EMOTIONS TO DIALOGUE

1) Read each line of dialogue below. Decide which emotion in the box below best fits the message being conveyed and act it out with that emotion.

Happy	/	scared	/	surprised	/	nervous	/
Curious	/	determined	/	hopeful	/	excited	/

S: Hi Rambo! ☐

R: Hello Shelly! ☐

S: We need to escape from the aliens! ☐

R: HMMM… Let's explore the ghost city! ☐

S: You're right! Let's go! ☐

S: Look Rambo! There's a car in the old farm! ☐

R: Maybe we can use it to fight the aliens! Let's fix it! ☐

S: We need parts to fix the car! ☐

R: You're right! Let's go find some! ☐

S: Look Rambo! Some people! ☐

R: Who are you? ☐

G: We are survivors! Who are you? ☐

S: We are Shelly and Rambo. We need tools to fix a car. Can you help us? ☐

B: Sure, I know a place! ☐

R: Look guys! I can't believe it! There they are!

GAS: We can fix the car now! We can also create a bomb and put it in the car!

R: We finished! Now we can rest.

GOS: In my dream, the aliens are in a dam!

B: I know where the dam is. Let's go wake up Shelly and Rambo!

We need to find the Boss Alien together!

CAR: Let's go to the dam and drop the bomb!

CAR: Look! I see the dam and the BOOS ALIEN. We are ready to drop the bomb!

BOSS ALIEN: You can't defeat me!

CAR: YEAH!! WE KILLED THE BOSS ALIEN!

Now the aliens are all dead too.

WE SAVED THE EARTH!!

CAR: Now it's time to reconstruct the city. Together we can do it!

Appendix 10

Teacher's Log to fill out after each lesson

SKILLS OBSERVATION GRID	SCORE
understands the meaning of words	1 2 3 4 5
understands the sentences in the discourse	1 2 3 4 5
possesses the necessary vocabulary to perform the task	1 2 3 4 5
appropriately uses the range of known words	1 2 3 4 5
possesses the grammatical structures needed to perform the task	1 2 3 4 5
interacts in the exchange	1 2 3 4 5
produces extended discourse	1 2 3 4 5
attempts to use as much language as possible to communicate	1 2 3 4 5
uses learned expressions creatively	1 2 3 4 5
understands non-verbal language	1 2 3 4 5
has a speaking rate that does not include too many pauses	1 2 3 4 5
has comprehensible pronunciation and intonation	1 2 3 4 5

Table A. adaptation of evaluation grid from "La valutazione delle lingue straniere e seconde nella scuola. Dalla teoria alla pratica" by Alberta Novello (2014, p. 70)

LEARNING AREAS RELATED TO DIALOGUE SKILLS	SCORE	NOTES
Understanding	1 2 3 4 5	Speed: Pronunciation: Vocabulary: Structures:
Production	1 2 3 4 5	Vocabulary: Grammar: Pronunciation: Strategies:

						Speed:
Pragmatic skills	1	2	3	4	5	Coherence: Irony:
Sociolinguistic skills	1	2	3	4	5	Turn-taking: Non-verbal language:
Final observations	1	2	3	4	5	

Table B. adaptation of evaluation grid from "La valutazione delle lingue straniere e seconde nella scuola. Dalla teoria alla pratica" by Alberta Novello (2014, p. 53)

CRITERIA	1	2	3	4	5
Sequencing • understands, recognizes and uses time sequences of a story					
Vocabulary Acquisition • recognizes and uses vocabulary related to the main theme of the lesson					
Motivation • listens actively, asks and answers simple questions • makes suggestions and observations with enthusiasm • shows flexibility towards new learning methods and experiences • has completed and brought to class at-home assignments stays focused throughout the lesson, avoiding distractions					
Critical thinking • is able to think critically about the main themes of the lesson and make connections to real-life issues					

Creativity • Demonstrates creativity and imagination in responses and invention	
Autonomy • finds solutions to overcome challenges related to language	
• reflects on his own learning progress, identifying areas of improvement • uses time effectively to maximize productivity during the lesson	

Table C. based on the research objectives

Further observations:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

	MINUTES →	30	60	90
Teacher-student collaboration	1. Student is working alone 2. Student collaborates with teacher on tasks 3. Student is involved in teacher-facilitated role-playing	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
Knowledge gain	1. Receipt of knowledge 2. Applied procedural knowledge (includes skill building and performance) 3. Knowledge construction (comprehension building, knowledge generation, inventing, pre-writing activities, clarifying questions, collaborative activities, problem solving, co-construction of meaning, organizing, revising) 4. Other (specify)	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
Student role	1. Passive/ little response (student mainly receives knowledge) 2. Active response (students provide input to open-ended questions) 3. Co-construct meaning	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
Teacher role	1. Observes student (teacher manages behaviour, provides materials, or solves computer problems) 2. Facilitates/Scaffolds learning	1 2	1 2	1 2
Student Engagement	1. Low engagement (student is not focused on the task) 2. Moderate engagement (student gets distracted sometimes) 3. High engagement (student is focused)	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3

Technology Integration	1. Not used 2. Add-on (limited use of computer) 3. Partially integrated 4. Fully integrated	1	1	1
		2	2	2
		3	3	3
		4	4	4

Table D. adaptation of timed observation form from Smeda's, Dakich's and Sharda's study (2014)

TITOLO DEL PROGETTO DI RICERCA: "Digital Storytelling nell'insegnamento dell'inglese come lingua straniera: uno studio di caso sullo sviluppo delle competenze orali e della motivazione"

Relatrice: Prof.ssa Alberta Novello

Studentessa: Caterina Meggiolaro

Gentili genitori,

Il presente questionario fa parte di uno studio di ricerca condotto nell'ambito di un lavoro di tesi incentrato sull'uso del Digital Storytelling per lo sviluppo delle abilità orali in lingua inglese. Il vostro contributo è di fondamentale importanza poiché fornisce preziose informazioni sulla prospettiva genitoriale riguardo a tematiche chiave riguardanti l'interesse di vostro figlio per la lingua inglese. Queste informazioni saranno utilizzate per analizzare l'efficacia del Digital Storytelling nell'ambito dell'insegnamento dell'inglese come lingua straniera e per formulare raccomandazioni pratiche per migliorare le esperienze di apprendimento di vostro figlio. Il vostro contributo ci permetterà di ottenere una visione completa e approfondita delle dinamiche coinvolte nel processo di apprendimento linguistico, aiutandoci così a promuovere un'educazione linguistica di qualità.

Vi chiediamo di condividere le vostre riflessioni su alcune aree chiave:

Sezione 1: Interesse e Coinvolgimento dello Studente per la Lingua Inglese al di Fuori della Classe

1. In che misura vostro figlio sembra interessato alla lingua inglese al di fuori della classe?

o Molto interessato
o Moderatamente interessato
o Leggermente interessato
o Scarso interesse
o Nessun interesse particolare
o Non siamo sicuri / Non monitoriamo

2. Vostro figlio partecipa ad attività extracurricolari legate all'inglese? In caso affermativo, cosa fa?

o Sì,_____
_____
_____
_____
o No
o Non siamo sicuri / Non monitoriamo

3. Quanto tempo trascorre vostro figlio ogni settimana dedicandosi attivamente all'apprendimento dell'inglese al di fuori degli obblighi scolastici?

o Meno di 1 ora
o Da 1 a 3 ore
o Da 3 a 5 ore
o Più di 5 ore
o Non siamo sicuri / Non monitoriamo

4. Quali sono le attività che vostro figlio svolge di solito per migliorare le sue abilità in inglese al di fuori della classe?

o Lettura di libri in inglese
o Guardare film o serie TV in lingua originale
o Ascoltare musica in inglese
o Utilizzo di app per l'apprendimento linguistico
o Partecipazione a eventi culturali in lingua inglese
o Altro:_____
   _____
   _____
o Non siamo sicuri / Non monitoriamo

5. Quali sono i suoi interessi principali in relazione all'inglese al di fuori dell'ambiente scolastico?

o Lettura
o Cinema e intrattenimento
o Musica
o Tecnologia e apprendimento online
o Attività culturali e viaggi
o Altro:_____
   _____
   _____
o Non siamo sicuri / Non monitoriamo

6. Avete notato cambiamenti nell'interesse di vostro figlio per l'inglese nel corso del tempo? Se sì, quali?

o Aumento dell'interesse
o Diminuzione dell'interesse
o Nessun cambiamento significativo
o Non siamo sicuri / Non monitoriamo

7. Ritenete che l'interesse di vostro figlio per l'inglese al di fuori della classe abbia un impatto positivo sulla sua motivazione e rendimento scolastico?

o Sì, ha un impatto positivo
o No, non ha un impatto significativo
o Non siamo sicuri / Non monitoriamo

8. Cosa potrebbe stimolare maggiormente l'interesse di vostro figlio per l'inglese al di fuori della classe?

o Più varietà di materiali didattici
o Maggiore utilizzo degli strumenti digitali
o Coinvolgimento in attività extracurriculari legate all'inglese
o Incentivi o premi per il progresso nell'apprendimento linguistico
o Tempo libero dedicato all'inglese con amici o familiari
o Altro:_____
   _____
   _____

o Non siamo sicuri / Non monitoriamo

Sezione 2: Viaggi Educativi

9. Vostro figlio ha avuto l'opportunità di partecipare a viaggi educativi all'estero?

o Sì
o No
o Non siamo sicuri

10. In che modo pensate che un viaggio educativo all'estero abbia influenzato le abilità linguistiche e culturali di vostro figlio?

o Ha migliorato le abilità linguistiche in modo significativo
o Ha aumentato la consapevolezza culturale e la comprensione interculturale
o Ha avuto un impatto positivo su entrambi gli aspetti
o Non ha avuto un impatto significativo
o Altro:_____
   _____
   _____

o Non siamo sicuri / Non monitoriamo

11. Quali sono gli aspetti più preziosi che vostro figlio ha appreso da esperienze educative all'estero?

o Miglioramento delle abilità linguistiche
o Espansione della conoscenza culturale e delle prospettive globali
o Sviluppo dell'indipendenza e della fiducia in sé stessi

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- o Acquisizione di nuove competenze pratiche (ad esempio, orientarsi in un ambiente straniero, gestire il denaro, interagire con persone di culture diverse, ecc.)
- o Crescita personale e maturazione attraverso l'esposizione a nuove sfide e esperienze di vita
- o Apprezzamento della diversità e della multiculturalità
- o Stimolo alla curiosità e alla ricerca di conoscenza
- o Scoperta di nuove passioni e interessi
- o Altro:_____
  _____
  _____
- o Non siamo sicuri / Non monitoriamo

12. Durante il viaggio educativo di vostro figlio, gli strumenti digitali sono stati utilizzati per arricchire l'esperienza?

- o Sì, sono stati utilizzati attivamente durante il viaggio
- o No, non sono stati utilizzati durante il viaggio
- o Non siamo sicuri / Non monitoriamo

13. In che modo gli strumenti digitali, se impiegati durante il viaggio educativo di vostro figlio, hanno facilitato la preparazione o l'esperienza stessa?

- o Hanno fornito accesso a risorse linguistiche e culturali utili per prepararsi al viaggio (ad esempio, app per apprendere la lingua locale)
- o Durante il viaggio, hanno consentito a nostro figlio di documentare e condividere in tempo reale le sue esperienze attraverso foto, video o post sui social media
- o Hanno facilitato la comunicazione e la connessione con gli altri partecipanti al viaggio o con i residenti locali attraverso strumenti di messaggistica o traduzione
- o Hanno permesso di esplorare virtualmente luoghi e attrazioni prima o durante il viaggio, arricchendo così la comprensione e preparazione di nostro figlio
- o Altro:_____
  _____
  _____
- o Non sono stati utilizzati durante il viaggio
- o Non siamo sicuri / Non monitoriamo

14. Credete che l'uso degli strumenti digitali durante il viaggio, se impiegati, abbia ampliato o arricchito l'esperienza culturale e linguistica di vostro figlio?

- o Sì, hanno fornito un nuovo livello di interazione e immersione culturale
- o No, riteniamo che abbiano distolto l'attenzione dalla vera esperienza e interazione con il luogo e la cultura
- o Non sono stati utilizzati durante il viaggio
- o Non siamo sicuri / Non monitoriamo

15. Ritenete che l'integrazione degli strumenti digitali, se utilizzati durante il viaggio, abbia favorito lo sviluppo di abilità linguistiche e comunicative più sofisticate?

o Sì, hanno offerto opportunità per l'apprendimento attivo e contestuale della lingua attraverso l'uso pratico e l'interazione online
o No, crediamo che le abilità linguistiche si sviluppino principalmente attraverso l'interazione diretta e l'immersione culturale
o Non sono stati utilizzati durante il viaggio
o Non siamo sicuri / Non monitoriamo

Sezione 3: Media digitali nell'Apprendimento della Lingua

16. Quanto spesso vostro figlio utilizza media digitali (come app, siti web, giochi educativi, ecc.) per migliorare le sue abilità linguistiche in inglese?

o Ogni giorno
o Più volte alla settimana
o Raramente
o Mai
o Non siamo sicuri / Non monitoriamo

17. Quali tipi di media digitali vostro figlio trova più utili o coinvolgenti per l'apprendimento della lingua inglese?

o App per l'apprendimento linguistico (ad esempio Duolingo, Babbel)
o Siti web interattivi o piattaforme di e-learning (ad esempio Khan Academy, BBC Learning English)
o Giochi educativi o quiz online
o Video didattici o tutorial su piattaforme come YouTube
o Podcast o audiolibri in lingua inglese
o Social media o comunità online di apprendimento linguistico
o Altro:_____
    _____
    _____
o Non siamo sicuri / Non monitoriamo

18. Ritenete che l'uso di media digitali abbia avuto un impatto positivo sull'apprendimento della lingua inglese di vostro figlio?

o Sì, ha migliorato significativamente le sue abilità linguistiche
o Sì, ha avuto un impatto positivo, ma limitato
o No, non ha avuto un impatto significativo
o Non siamo sicuri

19. Credete che l'interesse di vostro figlio per l'apprendimento della lingua inglese sia stato influenzato dall'uso dei media digitali?

o Ha un forte impatto positivo sull'interesse
o Ha un moderato impatto positivo sull'interesse
o Ha un lieve impatto positivo sull'interesse
o Non ha alcun impatto sull'interesse
o Ha un lieve impatto negativo sull'interesse
o Ha un moderato impatto negativo sull'interesse
o Ha un forte impatto negativo sull'interesse
o Non siamo sicuri

Sezione 4: Esperienze e Percezioni sul Digital Storytelling

20. Eravate a conoscenza del termine "Digital Storytelling" prima di far partecipare vostro figlio a questo progetto?

o Sì, eravamo già a conoscenza del termine
o Eravamo a conoscenza del termine ma non della sua applicazione pratica
o No, non eravamo a conoscenza del termine
o Non siamo sicuri

21. Cosa pensate del potenziale impatto del Digital Storytelling sull'apprendimento della lingua inglese per vostro figlio?

o Credo che possa essere un modo efficace per coinvolgere mio figlio e migliorare le sue abilità linguistiche
o Siamo scettici sull'efficacia del Digital Storytelling come strumento di apprendimento linguistico
o Pensiamo che dipenda dall'attuazione e dall'integrazione del Digital Storytelling nel percorso di apprendimento di nostro figlio
o Non abbiamo ancora formato un'opinione definitiva
o Altro:_____
_____
_____

22. Ritiene che il Digital Storytelling possa essere un valido strumento per promuovere la creatività e l'espressione individuale degli studenti nell'apprendimento della lingua inglese?

o Sì, crediamo che possa incoraggiare la creatività e l'individualità di nostro figlio
o No, pensiamo che possa limitare la padronanza delle abilità linguistiche essenziali
o Dipende dal modo in cui viene implementato e guidato dall'insegnante
o Non abbiamo ancora abbastanza informazioni per rispondere
o Altro:_____
_____
_____

23. Siete a conoscenza di progetti di Digital Storytelling nel percorso di apprendimento di vostro figlio?

o Sì
o No
o Non siamo sicuri

24. Come pensate che il Digital Storytelling possa contribuire allo sviluppo delle abilità orali in inglese di vostro figlio?

o Positivamente
o Neutro
o Negativamente
o Non siamo sicuri

25. Pensate che il Digital Storytelling possa essere per vostro figlio principalmente:

o Vantaggioso, perché
_____
_____
_____

o Sfidante, perché
_____
_____
_____

o Non siamo sicuri

26. Cosa ritenete che vostro figlio possa ottenere dalla partecipazione a queste attività?

o Benefici
o Nessun impatto
o Non siamo sicuri

Sezione 5: Coinvolgimento Genitoriale

27. In che modo partecipate attivamente nel supporto all'apprendimento della lingua inglese di vostro figlio?

o Attività di supporto regolari
o Partecipazione ad attività occasionali
o Partecipazione minima
o Non siamo coinvolti

28. Cosa fate di solito per sostenere l'apprendimento della lingua inglese di vostro figlio a casa?

o Facciamo conversazione in inglese con lui
o Leggiamo libri o guardiamo programmi televisivi/film in inglese insieme
o Utilizziamo app o risorse online per l'apprendimento linguistico
o Organizziamo attività o giochi in inglese
o Altro:_____
_____
_____
o Non siamo coinvolti

29. Esistono sfide che riscontrate nel partecipare all'apprendimento della lingua inglese di vostro figlio a casa?

o Sì, più nello specifico
_____
_____
_____
o No
o Non siamo sicuri

30. Avete notato dei cambiamenti nell'interesse o nel rendimento di vostro figlio in inglese in relazione al vostro coinvolgimento?

o Sì, c'è stata un'ottimizzazione nell'interesse e/o nel rendimento
o No, non abbiamo notato cambiamenti significativi
o Non siamo sicuri

Sezione 6: Prospettive Generali sull'Apprendimento delle Lingue

31. Quali sfide pensate che vostro figlio incontri nell'apprendere l'inglese come lingua straniera?

o Difficoltà di comprensione
o Mancanza di motivazione
o Timidezza nell'esprimersi verbalmente
o Problemi di pronuncia
o Bassa fiducia nelle proprie capacità linguistiche
o Difficoltà nella comprensione della grammatica inglese
o Pressione nel performare bene durante le valutazioni in classe
o Distrazioni o interferenze da parte di altri compiti o attività
o Poca esposizione alla lingua inglese al di fuori della classe

o   Altro:_____
_____
_____

o   Non siamo sicuri

32. Cosa ritenete che contribuisca al successo di vostro figlio nell'apprendimento della lingua inglese?

o   Impegno e dedizione personale
o   Qualità dell'insegnamento e supporto degli insegnanti
o   Coinvolgimento in attività extracurriculari legate all'inglese
o   Utilizzo di risorse didattiche digitali aggiuntive
o   Interazione con madrelingua o persone fluenti in inglese
o   Partecipazione a viaggi educativi o programmi di scambio linguistico
o   Creazione di un ambiente domestico in cui si parla spesso in inglese
o   Ricevere incoraggiamento e feedback positivo dagli altri
o   Altro:_____
_____
_____

o   Non siamo sicuri

33. Avete suggerimenti per migliorare l'esperienza di apprendimento della lingua inglese per vostro figlio?

o   Sì,_____
_____
_____

o   No
o   Non siamo sicuri

Ringraziamo vivamente per il tempo dedicato a compilare questo questionario. Le vostre risposte saranno preziose per la ricerca.

Data:_____   Luogo: _____

Firma dei genitori:

a)_____

b) _____

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Questionario di Feedback per lo studente sull'esperienza di Digital Storytelling

TITOLO DEL PROGETTO DI RICERCA: "Digital Storytelling nell'insegnamento dell'inglese come lingua straniera: uno studio di caso sullo sviluppo delle competenze orali e della motivazione"

Relatrice: Prof.ssa Alberta Novello

Studentessa: Caterina Meggiolaro

Ciao! Questo questionario è stato preparato per raccogliere le tue opinioni e sensazioni riguardo alle lezioni di Digital Storytelling che abbiamo svolto insieme. Le tue risposte ci aiuteranno a capire meglio quanto hai migliorato le tue capacità orali in inglese, quanto ti sei divertito e quanto ti sei sentito motivato durante queste lezioni.

Non ci sono risposte giuste o sbagliate, vogliamo solo sapere cosa pensi e come ti senti. Le tue risposte saranno molto importanti per la mia tesi e mi aiuteranno a migliorare le lezioni future.

Per favore, rispondi a tutte le domande in modo onesto e il più accuratamente possibile. Grazie per la tua collaborazione!

Sezione 1: Capacità Orali in EFL

➢ Quanto ti senti sicuro nel parlare in inglese rispetto a prima dell'unità didattica di Digital Storytelling?

o Molto più sicuro
o Più sicuro
o Uguale
o Meno sicuro
o Molto meno sicuro

➢ Ti sembra di capire meglio quando ascolti una persona che parla in inglese rispetto a prima?

o Sì, molto meglio
o Sì, meglio
o Non è cambiato
o No, peggio
o No, molto peggio

➢ Quanto ritieni di essere migliorato nella pronuncia della lingua inglese?

o   Molto migliorato
o   Migliorato
o   Non è cambiato
o   Peggiorato
o   Molto peggiorato

➢ Durante le attività di Digital Storytelling, hai trovato più facile parlare in inglese?

o   Sì, molto facile
o   Sì, abbastanza facile
o   Non è cambiato
o   No, difficile
o   No, molto difficile

➢ Quanto ti senti orgoglioso dei progressi che hai fatto in inglese grazie al Digital Storytelling?

o   Molto orgoglioso
o   Orgoglioso
o   Né orgoglioso né non orgoglioso
o   Poco orgoglioso
o   Per niente orgoglioso

Sezione 2: Motivazione per l'Apprendimento della Lingua Inglese

➢ Quanto ti è piaciuto usare il Digital Storytelling per imparare l'inglese?

o   Mi è piaciuto moltissimo
o   Mi è piaciuto
o   Non mi è piaciuto né dispiaciuto
o   Non mi è piaciuto

➢ Sei più interessato a imparare l'inglese ora rispetto a prima dell'unità didattica di Digital Storytelling?

o   Sì, molto più interessato
o   Sì, più interessato
o   Non è cambiato
o   No, meno interessato
o   No, molto meno interessato

➢ Quanto ti è sembrato divertente creare storie digitali in inglese?

o Molto divertente
o Divertente
o Né divertente né noioso
o Noioso
o Molto noioso

➢ Quanto pensi che il Digital Storytelling ti abbia aiutato a imparare l'inglese rispetto ai metodi tradizionali (es. lezioni frontali, esercizi su libro)?

o Molto di più
o Di più
o Uguale
o Di meno
o Molto di meno

Sezione 3: Competenze Digitali

➢ Quanto ti senti sicuro nell'uso del computer rispetto a prima dell'unità didattica di Digital Storytelling?

o Molto più sicuro
o Più sicuro
o Uguale
o Meno sicuro
o Molto meno sicuro

➢ Quanto pensi di essere migliorato nell'uso della piattaforma Scratch durante il Digital Storytelling?

o Molto migliorato
o Migliorato
o Non è cambiato
o Peggiorato
o Molto peggiorato

➢ Ti senti più a tuo agio nel creare contenuti digitali rispetto a prima?

o Sì, molto più a mio agio
o Sì, più a mio agio
o Non è cambiato
o No, meno a mio agio
o No, molto meno a mio agio

➤ Quanto è stato facile utilizzare le tecnologie digitali per creare le tue storie?

o Molto facile
o Facile
o Né facile né difficile
o Difficile
o Molto difficile

Sezione 4: Percezioni sullo Storytelling

➤ Ti senti più bravo a pensare in modo critico (cioè, a riflettere e analizzare meglio) dopo aver fatto l'unità didattica sul Digital Storytelling?

o Sì, molto più bravo
o Sì, un po' più bravo
o Non molto più bravo
o Non sono più bravo
o Non saprei

➤ Ti senti più creativo nell'inventare storie o trovare soluzioni ai problemi?

o Sì, molto più creativo
o Sì, un po' più creativo
o Non molto più creativo
o Non sono più creativo
o Non saprei

➤ Dopo aver analizzato la storia di "The Lorax", ti senti più empatico verso gli altri (cioè, capisci meglio i sentimenti degli altri)?

o Sì, molto più empatico
o Sì, un po' più empatico
o Non molto più empatico
o Non sono più empatico
o Non saprei

➤ Dopo aver analizzato la storia di "The Lorax", ti senti più sensibile alle conseguenze delle tue azioni sugli altri e sull'ambiente?

o Sì, molto più sensibile
o Sì, un po' più sensibile
o Non molto più sensibile
o Non sono più sensibile
o Non saprei

➤ Dopo aver ascoltato e analizzato "The Lorax", ti senti più consapevole dell'importanza di proteggere l'ambiente?

o Sì, molto più consapevole
o Sì, un po' più consapevole
o Non molto più consapevole
o Non sono più consapevole
o Non saprei

Sezione 5: Feedback generale

➤ Quali tra le seguenti attività hai trovato più difficili?

o Comprendere la storia di "The Lorax"
o Inventare una storia
o Creare dei dialoghi in inglese per animare la storia
o Usare nuove parole in inglese
o Usare Scratch per animare la storia
o Altro:_____

_____

_____

➤ Quali tra le seguenti attività hai trovato più facili?

o Comprendere la storia di "The Lorax"
o Inventare una storia
o Creare dei dialoghi in inglese per animare la storia
o Usare nuove parole in inglese
o Usare Scratch per animare la storia
o Altro:_____

_____

_____

➤ Qual è stata la parte migliore del Digital Storytelling per te?

o Ascoltare la storia di "The Lorax"
o Imparare come si crea una storia
o Inventare la tua storia
o Animare su Scratch la tua storia
o Lavorare in collaborazione con la docente

o   Imparare nuove parole in inglese
o   Altro:_____

_____

_____

➢   C'è qualcosa che non ti è piaciuto o che cambieresti?

_____

_____

_____

_____

➢   Hai altri commenti o suggerimenti su come migliorare queste lezioni?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Grazie mille per aver dedicato il tuo tempo a compilare questo questionario. Le tue risposte sono molto importanti e mi aiuteranno a capire meglio quanto è stato efficace il nostro lavoro insieme. Il tuo feedback sarà prezioso per migliorare le future unità didattiche e aiutare altri studenti a imparare l'inglese in modo divertente e coinvolgente.

Grazie ancora per il tuo impegno e la tua partecipazione!

Firma dello studente

_____

Firma del genitore

_____

Questionario di Feedback per i Genitori sull'esperienza di Digital Storytelling

TITOLO DEL PROGETTO DI RICERCA: "Digital Storytelling nell'insegnamento dell'inglese come lingua straniera: uno studio di caso sullo sviluppo delle competenze orali e della motivazione"

Relatrice: Prof.ssa Alberta Novello

Studentessa: Caterina Meggiolaro

Gentili Genitori,

Questo questionario è stato preparato per raccogliere le vostre opinioni e osservazioni riguardo all'esperienza di vostro figlio in seguito allo svolgimento dell'unità didattica di Digital Storytelling. Le vostre risposte saranno molto importanti per valutare l'efficacia del progetto e migliorare le future unità didattiche.

Vi preghiamo di rispondere a tutte le domande in modo onesto e il più accuratamente possibile. Grazie per la vostra collaborazione!

Sezione 1: Miglioramenti Linguistici

➢ Quali miglioramenti linguistici avete notato in vostro figlio rispetto alla sua capacità di esprimersi in lingua inglese?

o Maggiore sicurezza nella sua capacità di parlare in inglese
o Miglioramento della pronuncia e dell'accento
o Maggiore varietà di vocabolario e frasi
o Maggiore capacità di esprimere sé stesso con chiarezza
o Non siamo sicuri
o Altro:_____

_____

_____

Sezione 2: Interesse e Motivazione per la Lingua Inglese

➤ Quanto spesso vostro figlio ha parlato a casa delle attività di Digital Storytelling?

o Molto spesso
o Spesso
o Qualche volta
o Raramente
o Mai
o Non siamo sicuri

➤ Quanto entusiasta sembrava vostro figlio di partecipare al progetto di Digital Storytelling?

o Molto entusiasta
o Entusiasta
o Né entusiasta né disinteressato
o Poco entusiasta
o Per niente entusiasta
o Non siamo sicuri

➤ Vostro figlio prende più iniziativa nell'uso dell'inglese al di fuori dalle lezioni scolastiche ora?

o Molta più iniziativa
o Un po' più iniziativa
o Nessuna in più rispetto al solito
o Non siamo sicuri

➤ Avete notato un aumento dell'interesse di vostro figlio per la lingua inglese durante il periodo di svolgimento del progetto di Digital Storytelling?

o Sì, molto
o Sì, ma moderato
o Non è cambiato
o No
o Non siamo sicuri

➤ Avete notato un aumento della motivazione di vostro figlio nel partecipare alle lezioni di inglese dopo aver iniziato il progetto di Digital Storytelling?

o Sì, è molto più motivato
o Sì, ha mostrato un leggero aumento della motivazione
o No, la motivazione è rimasta la stessa
o Non siamo sicuri

➢ In caso affermativo, quali fattori pensate abbiano contribuito all'aumento di interesse e motivazione?

o L'interesse per lo Storytelling e la creatività
o La possibilità di esprimere sé stesso e i propri interessi
o La maggiore interazione con la docente
o La percezione di migliorare le proprie abilità linguistiche
o La scoperta di nuovi strumenti e tecnologie per creare storie
o La possibilità di dare e ricevere feedback sul proprio progresso
o Non siamo sicuri
o Altro:_____

_____

_____

➢ Quali commenti o feedback avete ricevuto da vostro figlio che suggeriscono un aumento del suo interesse e/o motivazione?

o Non siamo sicuri
o _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Sezione 3: Autostima e Autonomia rispetto alla Lingua Inglese

➢ Vostro figlio vi ha dato modo di pensare sia più sicuro di sé nelle sue prestazioni linguistiche in inglese in classe?

o Sì, molto di più
o Sì, moderatamente di più
o Un po'
o No
o Non siamo sicuri

➢ Vostro figlio vi sembra orgoglioso dei suoi progressi in lingua inglese?

o Molto orgoglioso
o Moderatamente orgoglioso

- Poco orgoglioso
- Non si mostra orgoglioso
- Non siamo sicuri

➢ Vostro figlio mostra maggiore autonomia nello svolgere i compiti di inglese?

- Molto più autonomo
- Moderatamente più autonomo
- Poco più autonomo
- Non più autonomo
- Non siamo sicuri

Sezione 4: Competenze digitali

➢ Avete notato che vostro figlio si sia mostrato più interessato a utilizzare il computer o tablet nel corso dell'unità didattica sul Digital Storytelling?

- Sì
- Forse
- No
- Non siamo sicuri

➢ Avete notato che vostro figlio spende più tempo nell'uso del computer o tablet da quando ha iniziato l'unità didattica?

- Sì
- Forse
- No
- Non siamo sicuri

➢ Quante ore in media vostro figlio ha usato il computer o tablet per le attività di Digital Storytelling?

- Meno di 30 minuti
- Dai 30 ai 60 minuti
- 1-2 ore
- Più di 2 ore
- Non siamo sicuri

➢ Credete che l'uso del computer abbia aumentato la motivazione di vostro figlio a imparare la lingua inglese durante lo svolgimento dell'unità didattica?

- Sì, ha avuto un impatto molto positivo
- Sì, ha avuto un impatto moderatamente positivo

o No, non ha avuto un impatto positivo
o Non siamo sicuri

Sezione 5: Percezioni sul Digital Storytelling

➤ Ritenete che l'unità didattica improntata sulla creazione di una storia attraverso l'uso di strumenti digitali abbia avuto un impatto positivo sullo sviluppo delle abilità orali di vostro figlio in lingua inglese?

o Sì, ha avuto un impatto molto positivo
o Sì, ha avuto un impatto moderatamente positivo
o No, non ha avuto un impatto positivo
o Non siamo sicuri

➤ Ritenete che vostro figlio abbia sviluppato una maggiore capacità di pensiero critico grazie all'unità sul Digital Storytelling?

o Molto migliorata
o Moderatamente migliorata
o Poco migliorata
o Non migliorata
o Non siamo sicuri

➤ Ritenete vostro figlio mostri maggiore creatività nell'inventare storie e soluzioni ai problemi?

o Sì, è molto più creativo
o Sì, è moderatamente più creativo
o È poco più creativo
o Non, non è più creativo
o Non siamo sicuri

➤ Vostro figlio mostra una maggiore capacità di riflessione e analisi delle storie ascoltate o lette?

o Sì, è molto migliorata
o Sì, è moderatamente migliorata
o No, non è migliorata
o Non siamo sicuri

➤ In che modo lo Storytelling ha influenzato la fiducia e la sicurezza di vostro figlio nel presentare i propri lavori creativi?

o C'è stato un miglioramento notevole della sua fiducia e sicurezza
o C'è stato un modesto miglioramento della sua fiducia e sicurezza
o Non c'è stato nessun cambiamento nella sua fiducia e sicurezza

o Non siamo sicuri

➢ Vostro figlio ha mostrato un maggiore desiderio di esprimere sé stesso attraverso delle storie?

o Sì, ha dimostrato un maggiore desiderio
o No, non ha mostrato alcun desiderio
o Non siamo sicuri

Sezione 6: Feedback Generale

➢ Quali aspetti dell'unità didattica avete trovato più efficaci per vostro figlio?

o Sviluppo delle competenze linguistiche orali
o Sviluppo delle competenze digitali
o Aumento della motivazione
o Maggiore autonomia
o Miglioramento dell'autostima
o Altro:_____

_____

_____

➢ Avete commenti o suggerimenti riguardanti l'unità didattica sul Digital Storytelling?

o No
o Sì,_____

_____

_____

Vi ringraziamo molto per la vostra disponibilità a compilare questo questionario. Le vostre risposte saranno estremamente utili per aiutarci a comprendere meglio come l'unità didattica abbia influenzato lo sviluppo delle competenze linguistiche e digitali di vostro figlio, e sui possibili miglioramenti da apportare per costruire un percorso didattico su misura ai suoi bisogni.

Firma dei genitori:
a)_____

b) _____

Appendix 14

LEZIONE X

Ti è piaciuta la lezione di oggi?	SI [ ] UN PO' [ ] NO [ ]
La lezione è stata:	FACILE [ ] MEDIA [ ] DIFFICILE [ ]
Cosa hai imparato bene?	_____ _____ _____ _____
Cosa ti sembra di dover migliorare?	_____ _____ _____ _____
Cosa ti è piaciuto di più?	_____ _____ _____ _____
Cosa ti è piaciuto di meno?	_____ _____ _____ _____
Cosa vorresti fare di più durante la prossima lezione?	_____ _____ _____
Hai capito di più quando:	(Esempio: la prof. spiegava, ho fatto gli esercizi, ho lavorato da solo, ho lavorato con la prof, ho visto il video, ho ascoltato il video ecc.) _____ _____ _____ _____

Riassunto

In ogni angolo del mondo e in ogni epoca, l'essere umano ha sempre raccontato storie. Esse prendono forme e generi straordinariamente vari, diffondendosi attraverso una moltitudine di mezzi: il linguaggio, sia orale che scritto, l'immagine, sia fissa che in movimento, il gesto, o una combinazione ordinata di tutti questi elementi (Barthes, 1996). Le storie vivono nei miti, nelle leggende, nelle favole, nei racconti, nelle cronache, nel cinema, nei fumetti, nei drammi e in molte altre forme espressive. Ogni società, ogni cultura ha le sue narrazioni, e non esiste un popolo senza storie (*ivi.*). Il racconto è quindi universale, attraversa epoche e culture diverse, accomunando persone di background differenti. In questo modo, il racconto diventa parte integrante della vita stessa, una testimonianza della sua importanza nella condizione umana (*ivi.*).

L'ubiquità delle storie, la loro capacità di trascendere popoli, culture e tempo, ha fatto in modo cavalcassero anche l'era digitale e i suoi progressi tecnologici. Costituendo un potentissimo veicolo per l'educazione, grazie alla loro abilità di costruire ponti attraverso l'empatia, oggi le possiamo ritrovare con un nuovo volto multimediale, sotto il nome di Digital Storytelling.

Nell'era digitale, l'antica arte del raccontare storie si è infatti trasformata. Anziché diminuirne il potere intrinseco, le moderne tecnologie non hanno fatto altro che ampliarne la portata e il potenziale. Il Digital Storytelling combina tecniche narrative tradizionali con elementi multimediali come testi, immagini, suoni e video, creando una piattaforma dal notevole potenziale comunicativo ed educativo. Questo processo consente di creare narrazioni personali, spesso riuscendo a stringere connessioni emotive ancor più profonde con il pubblico.

Il valore educativo del Digital Storytelling risiede nella sua capacità di allinearsi con le competenze richieste nel XXI secolo, in particolare l'alfabetizzazione digitale e le multiliteracies. Nel mondo digitale odierno, gli studenti devono saper comunicare, collaborare, raccogliere e manipolare informazioni, oltre a interpretare gli ambienti online. La narrazione digitale favorisce queste abilità, permettendo agli studenti di diventare creatori delle proprie storie attraverso l'uso di strumenti digitali e l'integrazione di audio, video e animazioni, migliorando la loro alfabetizzazione digitale e favorendo un maggiore coinvolgimento nel raggiungere gli obiettivi educativi.

L'efficacia del Digital Storytelling è ulteriormente amplificata se adottato con un'ottica costruttivista. Il costruttivismo enfatizza l'apprendimento attivo, in cui gli studenti costruiscono la propria comprensione del mondo attraverso esperienze e riflessioni. Nel contesto del DS, gli studenti si impegnano in un processo di scoperta del sé, applicando nuove conoscenze in un contesto significativo per loro. Teorie come quella dello sviluppo cognitivo di Piaget, a supporto di un apprendimento attivo e studente-centrico, sono utili per comprendere il potenziale del DS in ambito educativo. Inoltre, il concetto di Zona di Sviluppo Prossimale (ZPD) di Vygotskij supporta l'idea che la crescita cognitiva degli studenti avvenga attraverso l'interazione e la collaborazione in un ambiente di supporto e facilitazione da parte dell'insegnante, e il DS, in quanto processo sociale e interattivo, facilita questo tipo di sviluppo.

Al centro di questa tesi si trova uno studio di caso che vede protagonista un giovane studente italiano di 11 anni con un livello di competenza in inglese A1+. L'obiettivo principale è esplorare strategie efficaci per migliorare le sue competenze orali e aumentare la motivazione nell'apprendimento dell'inglese come lingua straniera (EFL) attraverso un'unità didattica basata su lezioni individuali con l'insegnante. La tesi ripercorre il processo di ideazione dell'unità didattica più adatta utilizzando il DS, supportato da un framework pedagogico, oltre che costruttivista, anche post-metodo, volto perciò a sfumare il rapporto tra teoria e pratica, assegnando all'insegnante il compito di prendere decisioni sulla base della "ricognizione del contesto", quindi del proprio "senso di plausibilità" e "intelligenza pratica" (Torresan, 2022, p. 17).

Il primo capitolo introduce il quadro teorico della narrazione, analizzando come gli strumenti digitali abbiano trasformato il tradizionale storytelling in un'esperienza multimodale. Viene, quindi, analizzato come il DS possa essere integrato nell'apprendimento linguistico per sviluppare l'alfabetizzazione digitale. Al termine del capitolo si introduce il caso studio, descrivendo le caratteristiche del partecipante e dell'ambiente di apprendimento, la piattaforma digitale utilizzata e le domande di ricerca.

Il secondo capitolo approfondisce il quadro costruttivista utilizzato nell'unità didattica, analizzando i contributi della teoria cognitiva di Piaget e la teoria socioculturale di Vygotskij. Si definisce anche il concetto di post-metodo, chiarendo che l'approccio didattico nel caso studio si basa sulla fusione di flessibilità metodologica e principi costruttivisti, ispirandosi al concetto di insegnante strategico di Paolo Torresan (*ivi*.).

Il terzo capitolo segna il passaggio dalla teoria alla pratica, con una revisione della letteratura sullo sviluppo delle abilità orali nell'EFL. Vengono descritti gli obiettivi di apprendimento previsti per un livello A2, secondo il Quadro di Riferimento Europeo per le Lingue (QCER), specificando che l'insegnamento ha mirato in un'ottica di scaffolding ad accompagnare lo studente verso competenze A2, partendo da un livello A1+. L'unità didattica è strutturata in tre fasi: pre-produzione, produzione e post-produzione. Nella prima fase, lo studente è stato esposto all'ascolto di una storia, così da analizzare un esempio concreto di narrazione efficace, basata su specifici elementi narrativi, un percorso emozionale, e una cadenza narrativa, che assieme contribuiscono a creare una storia coinvolgente. Inoltre, lo studente ha potuto intraprendere in questa fase il percorso verso la concettualizzazione della propria storia. Successivamente, il focus si è spostato sulla pianificazione delle scene e dei dialoghi, considerando elementi come i personaggi, i loro ruoli, emozioni e azioni, per poi passare alla più concreta animazione della storia sulla piattaforma digitale Scratch. Infine, la fase di post-produzione è stata dedicata alla pratica orale, con l'obiettivo di consentire allo studente di esercitarsi nel raccontare la propria storia in inglese, prestando particolare attenzione a pronuncia, intonazione e fluidità, e più in generale all'espressività. Nel capitolo, l'analisi di ogni lezione è accompagnata da tabelle che approfondiscono le strategie implementate, basate sul compendio di Paolo Torresan (2022), e sulle competenze sviluppate secondo il quadro di Alberta Novello (2022) per la progettazione didattica.

Il capitolo finale si concentra sui risultati dell'unità didattica, presentando la storia animata creata dallo studente e analizzando i dati raccolti, sia quantitativi che qualitativi. Si esaminano le griglie di osservazione completate dall'insegnante, i questionari compilati dai genitori e dallo studente prima e dopo lo svolgimento dell'unità, e le schede metacognitive dello studente. Si conclude che l'unità didattica basata sul Digital Storytelling ha prodotto risultati complessivamente positivi, evidenziando sia aspetti favorevoli che alcune criticità. Tra i principali vantaggi, spicca il miglioramento delle competenze comunicative dello studente, che ha mostrato un progresso significativo riguardo alla presa di iniziativa nel partecipare a conversazioni spontanee in inglese. Le griglie di osservazione confermano un aumento nella fiducia comunicativa, dimostrando come il Digital Storytelling, attraverso la combinazione di espressione personale e creatività, possa offrire un contesto autentico e coinvolgente per la pratica orale. Il format

narrativo digitale ha permesso allo studente di esercitarsi in modo motivante, spingendolo a esprimersi con maggiore disinvoltura e sicurezza rispetto all'inizio dell'unità.

Un altro importante aspetto positivo riguarda lo sviluppo delle competenze digitali. Attraverso l'utilizzo di strumenti multimediali come Scratch, lo studente è stato in grado di integrare elementi visivi e testuali per creare un racconto animato, dimostrando una crescente familiarità con le tecnologie digitali. Questo tipo di approccio offre quindi una piattaforma ideale per sviluppare abilità trasversali fondamentali per l'epoca digitale.

Sul piano motivazionale, i risultati sono più altalenanti. Da un lato, il coinvolgimento dello studente nel progetto è aumentato, con un miglioramento nella percezione di sé stesso come parlante inglese e una notevole soddisfazione personale per i progressi compiuti, come indica il questionario compilato dallo studente. Tuttavia, i genitori non hanno riportato un radicale cambiamento nell'interesse generale verso la lingua inglese da parte del figlio. Inoltre, una delle sfide più significative durante l'implementazione dell'unità è stata il mantenimento della concentrazione dello studente, soprattutto durante le fasi più lunghe e complesse del processo. Le osservazioni effettuate dall'insegnante durante le lezioni indicano che lo studente tendeva a mostrare segni di fatica cognitiva, con momenti di calo dell'attenzione alternati a fasi di alto coinvolgimento. Questa difficoltà è risultata particolarmente evidente durante le attività di creazione digitale, dove lo studente si è spesso concentrato su dettagli visivi, come le animazioni o le illustrazioni, a scapito degli obiettivi linguistici principali. L'attenzione eccessiva ai particolari visivi ha portato a distrazioni e rallentamenti nel processo, richiedendo frequenti interventi dell'insegnante per riportare l'attenzione sullo sviluppo delle competenze linguistiche.

Inoltre, un'altra area problematica è emersa nella dimensione metacognitiva. Nonostante l'inserimento di schede di meta-riflessione per stimolare una maggiore consapevolezza sul proprio apprendimento, lo studente ha faticato a comprendere il valore e lo scopo di queste attività. Le risposte nelle schede metacognitive tendevano a essere descrittive e superficiali, suggerendo la necessità di un'ulteriore guida strutturata per aiutare lo studente a sviluppare una riflessione più profonda e consapevole sul proprio percorso di apprendimento. Dedicare maggior tempo e supporto durante l'unità didattica, possibilmente dedicando almeno parte di una lezione o una lezione intera allo sviluppo di maggiore sensibilità sulle abilità metacognitive, potrebbe sicuramente contribuire a migliorare questo aspetto in futuro.

Perciò, pur rivelandosi uno strumento efficace per sviluppare competenze linguistiche e digitali, l'efficacia del DS dipende dal tipo di stile di apprendimento dello studente. In questo caso, la natura multimodale e audio-visiva del Digital Storytelling si è scontrata con lo stile di apprendimento più analitico dello studente, che tendeva a soffermarsi su dettagli non rilevanti per il progresso linguistico.

In conclusione, l'unità didattica ha dimostrato il potenziale del Digital Storytelling nel promuovere competenze orali, motivazione e competenze digitali in contesti di apprendimento individuali, anche se sono necessarie ulteriori riflessioni per affrontare le sfide legate alla gestione dell'attenzione, allo sviluppo metacognitivo e alla personalizzazione dell'approccio in base allo stile di apprendimento dello studente.