



Using Digital Storytelling to Develop Foreign Language Writing Skills

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Abstract

Digital storytelling has emerged as a promising pedagogical approach for combining language learning, creativity, and digital literacy while providing learners with meaningful contexts for communication. In foreign language education, it can offer learners opportunities to develop written production by combining textual expression with visual and other multimodal resources. This study explores the potential of digital storytelling for developing foreign language writing skills, with particular attention to the linguistic and textual dimensions of learners' productions as well as the integration of digital resources. The study was conducted with 15 students from the Department of French Language and Literature at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, who participated in a digital storytelling activity in French. The research corpus consisted of 15 digital storytelling productions, which were analyzed according to four criteria: a) the use of an authentic context and its alignment with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), b) language proficiency, with particular attention to orthography and morphosyntactic accuracy, c) coherence and cohesion, and d) multimodal and digital integration. The analysis focused on the extent to which learners were able to construct meaningful written narratives while mobilizing appropriate linguistic resources and integrating digital elements into their productions. The findings provide insights into the strengths and difficulties encountered by learners in digital narrative writing and highlight the relationship between written language development and the multimodal nature of digital storytelling. The study suggests that digital storytelling can create meaningful and engaging opportunities for foreign language writing by encouraging learners to produce contextualized texts, organize their ideas coherently, and combine linguistic and digital resources in the construction of meaning. The findings also underline the importance of providing appropriate pedagogical guidance so that digital tools serve not merely as technical support, but as resources contributing to the development of learners' communicative and writing competence.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the integration of digital technologies into language education has opened new possibilities for developing learners' communicative skills. Digital environments offer learners access to a wide range of resources and allow them to combine different modes of communication, including written text, images, sound, and visual elements. In foreign language education, this multimodal dimension can provide meaningful opportunities for learners to use the target language in ways that extend beyond traditional classroom activities. Among the approaches that have emerged in this context, digital storytelling offers particular potential for connecting language learning with creativity, personal expression, and digital literacy.

Writing in a foreign language remains one of the most demanding language skills for learners. Producing a written text requires more than knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical structures: learners must organize ideas, establish relationships between them, construct coherent discourse, and adapt their language to a particular context and communicative purpose. For this reason, writing instruction needs to provide learners with situations in which writing has a meaningful purpose and is connected to activities that encourage them to communicate rather than simply reproducing isolated linguistic forms. Digital storytelling can provide such a context by placing written production within the construction of a narrative that may combine language with images, sound, and other digital resources (Mitsikopoulou, 2022; Kahtali & Gençer, 2021).

The narrative dimension is particularly relevant to the development of writing because it provides learners with a recognizable framework for organizing and expressing meaning. When creating a story, learners need to establish a context, introduce events or experiences, develop a sequence, and guide the reader or viewer through the narrative. This process naturally requires attention to textual organization, coherence, cohesion, vocabulary, and grammatical accuracy. At the same time, the possibility of drawing on personal experiences, familiar situations, or imaginary events can give learners greater freedom to express their ideas and make the writing task more meaningful.

Digital storytelling also introduces an important multimodal dimension to written communication. Learners are not limited to producing a written text in isolation; they can combine their linguistic production with images, visual elements, audio, and digital design in order to construct meaning (Soubrié, 2021). However, the integration of these resources should not be understood simply as an attractive technological addition to a writing activity. The pedagogical value of digital storytelling depends on the extent to which digital and multimodal resources contribute to the communicative purpose of the narrative and support learners in expressing and organizing their ideas. In this sense, digital storytelling can provide an opportunity to rethink foreign language writing as a form of multimodal communication.

From the actional perspective of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR, 2021), foreign language writing is also closely connected to learners' ability to perform meaningful communicative activities appropriate to their level. The use of contextualized and purposeful writing tasks can therefore help teachers design activities that correspond to learners' actual communicative abilities while providing opportunities for progressive development. In a digital storytelling activity, learners can be encouraged to produce narratives that are appropriate to their level while simultaneously developing their ability to use language in an authentic or meaningful context.

The relationship between writing and digital storytelling is particularly relevant in higher education, where students learning a foreign language are expected to develop not only linguistic accuracy but also increasingly elaborated written and communicative competence. For students of French as a foreign language, creating a digital story can provide an opportunity to mobilize linguistic knowledge in an integrated task requiring planning, textual production, revision, and multimodal composition. Such an approach may also encourage learners to become more active participants in the construction of their own texts and to reflect on the relationship between linguistic choices and the overall communicative effect of their productions.

Against this background, the present study investigates the use of digital storytelling to develop foreign language writing skills among students of French as a foreign language. The study focuses on a corpus of fifteen digital storytelling productions created by fifteen students from the Department of French Language and Literature at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The productions are examined according to four dimensions: a) the use of an authentic context and its alignment with the CEFR (2021), b) the language proficiency with particular attention to orthography and morphosyntactic accuracy, c) the coherence and cohesion, and d) the integration of multimodal and digital resources. Through this analysis, the

study seeks to explore how digital storytelling can support the development of written production while also highlighting the linguistic and pedagogical challenges that may emerge when learners construct narratives in a digital environment. To achieve the objectives of the study and examine the contribution of digital storytelling to the development of writing skills in French as a foreign language, the following research questions were formulated:

To what extent do students' digital storytelling productions reflect authentic contexts and align with the written production descriptors of the CEFR (2021)?

What linguistic characteristics, particularly in terms of orthographic and morphosyntactic accuracy, as well as coherence and cohesion, are evident in students' digital storytelling productions?

How do students integrate multimodal and digital resources into their digital storytelling productions, and what linguistic and pedagogical challenges emerge from this process?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Digital Storytelling: Definition and Pedagogical Value

Digital storytelling can be understood as the construction and presentation of a narrative through the combination of different modes of communication, particularly written language and digital resources such as images, sound, visual elements, and multimedia content (Mitsikopoulou, 2022; Kahtali & Gençer, 2021). Unlike traditional storytelling, digital storytelling places the narrative within a multimodal environment in which meaning is constructed through the interaction of linguistic and non-linguistic resources. In foreign language education, this approach offers learners opportunities to use the target language in meaningful and contextualized situations while developing their ability to construct and communicate a narrative (Kahtali & Gençer 2021). Its pedagogical value lies first in its capacity to give learners a clear communicative purpose: rather than producing isolated sentences, learners use language to tell a story, describe events, express experiences, or develop imaginary situations. Digital storytelling can also support the development of writing skills by requiring learners to plan, organize, draft, revise, and present their texts. At the same time, the integration of visual and digital resources can facilitate comprehension and provide additional support for learners when linguistic resources are still developing (Noble et al. 2022). Another important dimension concerns learner engagement and creativity. By allowing learners to make choices concerning the content, structure, visual presentation, and digital resources used in their stories, digital storytelling can promote greater learner autonomy and active participation (Tejasvee et al. 2020; Vuorikari, et al. 2022). The collaborative dimension of many digital storytelling activities can further encourage interaction, peer support, and negotiation of meaning. However, the pedagogical value of digital storytelling does not derive simply from the presence of technology. Digital tools become pedagogically meaningful when they contribute to the construction of the narrative and provide learners with opportunities to communicate, create, and develop linguistic and digital competences. Thus, digital storytelling can be viewed not merely as a technological alternative to traditional storytelling, but as a multimodal pedagogical approach that brings together language, narrative, creativity, communication, and digital literacy.

Ohler (2006) conceptualizes digital storytelling as the creation of a short narrative, typically presented in the first person, that combines written language with digital images, sound, and other multimedia elements to produce a brief audiovisual narrative. According to Ohler (2006), digital storytelling extends the pedagogical potential of traditional storytelling by enabling learners to develop a range of technical and communicative skills while increasing engagement and providing opportunities for their stories to reach wider audiences. It can also contribute to the development of critical thinking, expository writing, and media literacy. Importantly, Ohler (2006) emphasizes that effective digital storytelling should prioritize the development of the story itself over the technological aspects of its production. In this regard, he advocates guiding

learners through the processes of planning, drafting, and orally narrating their stories before they move on to the digital production stage. While Ohler (2006) focuses primarily on the process of creating digital stories and the skills that learners can develop through this practice, Robin (2008) emphasizes the broader pedagogical potential of digital storytelling and the importance of grounding its use in an appropriate theoretical framework. Robin (2008) highlights digital storytelling as an increasingly valuable pedagogical approach that can engage both teachers and learners in the educational process. He also points out that, despite the growing use of digital storytelling in education, its integration into classroom practice has not always been supported by a clearly articulated theoretical framework. Such a framework is important for ensuring that technology is not used merely as an additional instructional tool but is purposefully integrated into teaching and learning in ways that enhance its pedagogical effectiveness.

2.2 Digital Storytelling and the Development of Foreign Language Writing Skills

Digital storytelling can be particularly relevant to foreign language writing because it places written production within a meaningful narrative and communicative framework. Rather than asking learners to produce isolated sentences or texts without a clear purpose, digital storytelling encourages them to write in order to construct and communicate a story. This process requires learners to select and organize ideas, develop events, establish relationships between them, and adapt their language to a particular context and audience. The narrative structure can therefore provide learners with a concrete framework for organizing their written discourse and developing greater control over textual organization. Lambert (2002) presents digital storytelling as a creative practice that brings together a range of skills and personal resources, including creative writing, autobiographical experiences, family photographs, and digital video production. In his work *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community*, he provides both a general overview of the digital storytelling process and practical guidance for its development and production. Lambert (2002) also highlights the personal and communal dimensions of digital storytelling, emphasizing its potential to give meaningful expression to individual experiences while fostering connections and a sense of community. Through essays and interviews, he further illustrates the diverse contexts and applications in which digital storytelling can be employed. Digital storytelling can also support the development of coherence and cohesion, as learners need to connect events and ideas through appropriate discourse markers, temporal expressions, and cohesive elements. At the linguistic level, the construction of a narrative creates opportunities for learners to mobilize vocabulary, grammatical structures, and appropriate verb forms in context (Shasqia, 2020). The process of planning, drafting, revising, and finalizing a digital story can further encourage learners to reflect on their linguistic choices and improve their texts progressively. In addition, the integration of images, audio, and other visual resources can support the construction of meaning and help learners communicate ideas that may be difficult to express through language alone (Yuniarti & Yulian, 2022). This multimodal dimension can be particularly valuable for foreign language learners, as it provides contextual and visual support while maintaining written language as an important component of the communicative product. Digital storytelling can also transform writing into a more collaborative and engaging activity, particularly when learners discuss ideas, provide peer feedback, and make decisions concerning the presentation of their stories. In this sense, writing becomes not only an individual linguistic activity but also a process of communication, creativity, and meaning making (Valkanova & Watts, 2007). The use of digital storytelling may therefore contribute to the development of foreign language writing by bringing together linguistic accuracy, textual organization, communicative purpose, creativity, and multimodal expression (Ollivier, 2018; Soubri , 2021).

3. METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a qualitative and practice-based approach to examine the potential of digital storytelling for developing foreign language writing skills. The study was conducted with 15 students from the Department of French Language and Literature at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, who participated in a pedagogical activity focusing on the production of digital stories in French. The students participating in the study had an estimated proficiency level ranging from B2 to C1, while the expected target level for the learning activity was C2. This difference is important when interpreting the results, particularly with regard to linguistic accuracy, the use of sophisticated cohesive elements, and the overall complexity of the written productions. Some of the difficulties identified in orthography, morphosyntax, and the use of discourse connectors may therefore be understood in relation to the gap between the learners' initial level and the expected C2 level. At the same time, the digital storytelling activity provided learners with an opportunity to progressively develop the linguistic and textual resources required to move towards a higher level of proficiency. The activity was designed to provide learners with an opportunity to use French in a meaningful and contextualized communicative situation while developing their ability to construct written narratives and integrate linguistic and digital resources.

The pedagogical activity was designed in accordance with an action-oriented perspective, in which learners are viewed as active participants in meaningful communicative situations. Rather than approaching writing as an isolated exercise focused primarily on grammatical accuracy, the activity placed learners in a situation in which they had to construct a narrative for a communicative purpose. The students were encouraged to develop a story based on a contextualized situation and to consider the intended audience, the content of the narrative, and the resources required to communicate their ideas effectively. The activity was also designed with reference to the learners' level of French and to relevant CEFR (2021) descriptors, particularly with regard to their ability to produce understandable and coherent written texts appropriate to their level.

The digital storytelling task combined narrative writing with multimodal composition. Students were required not only to produce a written narrative but also to integrate digital elements into their stories. Depending on the nature of their productions, these elements could include images, visual materials, audio components, or other forms of digital presentation. The digital dimension was therefore incorporated into the construction of meaning rather than being treated solely as an additional technological component. Students had to make decisions concerning the relationship between the written text and the other elements of their digital stories, considering how these resources could contribute to the communication of the narrative.

The writing process was organized progressively. Students first developed the main ideas of their stories and considered the context, characters, events, and overall organization of the narrative. They then proceeded to draft their written texts and revise them before integrating the final version into their digital story. This process encouraged learners to reconsider both the linguistic form and the organization of their narratives. Particular attention was given to the development of the story as a coherent whole, rather than to the production of isolated sentences. The digital format also required students to reflect on how written language could interact with visual and other multimodal resources in order to communicate their intended meaning.

The production of the digital stories consequently involved the mobilization of several types of resources. At the linguistic level, students needed to select appropriate vocabulary and grammatical structures in order to express their ideas accurately. At the textual level, they needed to organize events and establish meaningful relationships between the different parts of the narrative. At the digital level, they had to select and integrate appropriate resources in order to support the presentation of their stories. This combination of linguistic, textual, and digital resources made the activity particularly suitable for examining writing as a form of multimodal communication.

The study corpus consists of 15 digital storytelling productions, one produced by each participating student. The productions were analyzed qualitatively in order to identify their main strengths and difficulties and to examine the extent to which the students were able to mobilize written and digital resources effectively. The analysis did not focus exclusively on linguistic correctness but considered the written production as part of a broader communicative and multimodal product.

The analysis of the 15 productions therefore sought to examine digital storytelling from both a linguistic and a pedagogical perspective. Particular attention was given to the relationship between the written component and the digital elements of each story. The purpose was not simply to determine whether students were able to use digital tools, but to explore whether digital storytelling provided them with meaningful opportunities to develop their written competence while constructing a multimodal communicative product.

Through this methodological design, the study aims to explore the potential of digital storytelling as a pedagogical approach to foreign language writing and to identify both the opportunities and the challenges associated with combining narrative writing, language development, and digital composition in the context of university-level French as a foreign language.

3.1. Criteria

The analysis of the digital storytelling productions was based on four (4) complementary criteria, selected to capture both the linguistic and the pedagogical dimensions of learners' written productions. The first criterion concerned the use of an authentic context and alignment with the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR, 2021), examining the extent to which the stories were situated in meaningful communicative contexts and corresponded to the learners' expected level. The second criterion focused on language proficiency, particularly orthography and morphosyntactic accuracy. The third addressed coherence and cohesion, with attention to the organization and logical articulation of ideas, the sequencing of events, and the use of cohesive devices. Finally, the fourth criterion concerned multimodal and digital integration, examining how effectively digital elements were combined with the written narrative and whether they contributed meaningfully to the construction and communication of meaning.

3.1.1 Criteria for Evaluating Learners' Narrative Writing

The 15 digital storytelling productions were evaluated according to four complementary criteria, designed to capture both the linguistic quality of the written narratives and their communicative and digital dimensions.

Authentic Context and CEFR Alignment

This criterion examines the extent to which the digital story is situated in a meaningful and authentic communicative context and corresponds to the learners' expected level of proficiency according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR). Particular attention is given to the relevance of the topic, the communicative purpose of the story, and the appropriateness of the linguistic demands in relation to the learners' level.

Language Proficiency

This criterion focuses on the learners' control of the target language in their written productions. It includes, in particular, orthography and morphosyntactic accuracy, as well as the appropriate use of grammatical structures required to express the intended meaning clearly.

Coherence and Cohesion

This criterion assesses the organization and development of the narrative. It considers the logical sequencing of ideas and events, the connections established between different parts of the text, and the appropriate use of connectors, temporal markers, and other cohesive devices that contribute to the overall readability and unity of the story.

Multimodal and Digital Integration

This criterion examines the way in which digital and multimodal elements are integrated into the written narrative. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between text and other resources, such as images, audio, visual elements, or other digital components, and to the extent to which these elements contribute meaningfully to the communication and construction of the story rather than serving merely a decorative or technical function.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Results presentation

4.1.1. Authentic Context and CEFR Alignment

The analysis of the 15 digital storytelling productions showed that, in general, the students succeeded in situating their narratives within meaningful and authentic contexts. The stories were not limited to decontextualized language exercises but were built around situations that could be related to real-life experiences and communicative purposes. The productions included, for example, narratives about a journey or a trip, the presentation of a cultural event, and the description of everyday situations and experiences. These contexts provided learners with a clear purpose for using the target language and encouraged them to construct narratives that were connected to recognizable situations. Overall, the topics selected by the students were appropriate for narrative writing and offered opportunities to describe events, experiences, people, and situations in a meaningful way. The productions also generally reflected an attempt to adapt the linguistic demands of the task to the learners' level of proficiency, in accordance with the CEFR (2021). Thus, the use of authentic or familiar contexts appeared to facilitate the construction of the narratives by providing learners with content that they could relate to and develop through written language.

These results suggest that authenticity constituted one of the strengths of the digital storytelling productions, as the students were able to move beyond purely formal language practice and use French to communicate about situations with a recognizable meaning and purpose.

4.1.2. Language Proficiency

The analysis of the digital storytelling productions revealed several difficulties in learners' language proficiency, particularly in orthography, syntax, and morphosyntax. Orthographic errors were observed in a number of productions, while some students experienced difficulties with sentence construction and the appropriate use of pronouns (syntax). Morphosyntactic difficulties were also noticeable, particularly in the use of past-tense forms, which are essential for the development of narrative discourse. These errors suggest that, despite their ability to communicate their intended meaning, learners had not yet achieved full control of the linguistic resources required for accurate written production. However, the linguistic weaknesses identified in the written texts did not systematically prevent the narratives from being understood. The authenticity of the contexts selected by the students, together with the integration of digital and multimodal elements, contributed significantly to the overall comprehensibility of the productions. Images, visual elements, and other digital resources provided contextual clues that supported the interpretation of the written text and helped compensate, to some extent, for linguistic inaccuracies. In this sense, meaning was not constructed through written language alone, but through the interaction between the linguistic and digital components of the stories.

This finding is particularly relevant to the use of digital storytelling in foreign language education. Although digital storytelling does not eliminate learners' linguistic difficulties, it creates a multimodal communicative environment in which meaning can be supported by several semiotic resources. The combination of authentic contexts, written language, and digital elements therefore appeared to facilitate comprehension even when the students' productions contained orthographic, syntactic, or morphosyntactic errors. The results

consequently suggest that digital storytelling can provide learners with a supportive context for communication while simultaneously making visible the linguistic areas that require further development.

4.1.3. Coherence and Cohesion

The analysis of the 15 digital storytelling productions showed that, in the majority of cases, the narratives were coherent and generally easy to follow. The learners were able to organize their ideas and events in a logical sequence, allowing the main message of their stories to be understood. The overall structure of the productions therefore appeared to be satisfactory, particularly in relation to the development of the narrative and the connections established between its different parts.

However, some limitations were observed in the use of cohesive elements and discourse connectors. Although the students were generally able to link their ideas, the range of connectors used did not always correspond to the level of proficiency expected at C1-C2. The productions frequently relied on relatively common and repetitive connectors, resulting in limited lexical and discursive variety. In some cases, the same linking expressions were used repeatedly throughout the narrative, rather than employing a wider range of connectors to express temporal, causal, logical, or contrastive relationships.

Thus, while the overall coherence of the narratives was generally achieved, the analysis revealed a need for further development of the more elaborate cohesive resources expected at advanced levels. The students appeared to have acquired the ability to construct an understandable and logically organized narrative, but their use of discourse markers remained, in several cases, relatively basic and repetitive. This distinction between global coherence and the sophistication of cohesive elements is particularly relevant when evaluating advanced-level writing, as a text may be coherent and communicatively effective while still displaying limitations in the richness and variety of its cohesive resources. The findings also suggest that the development of writing was closely related to the process-oriented nature of the production. The successive stages of planning, drafting, interaction, feedback, revision, and final production created repeated opportunities for learners to reconsider both the content and the linguistic form of their texts. This is consistent with the observations reported in the original study, where comparisons between earlier and final productions revealed longer and more coherent texts, improved control of narrative structures, richer vocabulary, and greater use of temporal markers and connectors.

4.1.4. Multimodal and Digital Integration

The analysis of the 15 digital storytelling productions revealed that the integration of digital and multimodal elements represented one of the main challenges encountered by the students. Although the learners were able to produce their written narratives, the process of transforming these texts into digital stories required additional time and support. The students initially needed to become familiar with the technical aspects of the digital environment, particularly with the functionalities of the tools used to create and present their stories. In this process, collaboration between students played an important role. Learners supported one another in discovering the different functions of the digital tools, solving technical difficulties, and learning how to organize their productions within the digital environment. This collaborative dimension was particularly important during the initial stages, as students first had to develop a certain level of technical competence and confidence in using the tool before being able to focus fully on its pedagogical and communicative potential. Among the digital tools used, *Canva* was the most frequently employed for the creation and presentation of the digital stories. Its use allowed students to combine their written narratives with visual elements and to give their productions a multimodal form. However, the analysis also suggests that mastering the technical possibilities of the tool constituted an initial challenge. Students needed to understand not only *how* to use the tool, but also *why* and *when* particular digital elements could add value to their narratives. This distinction between technical use and meaningful digital integration is

particularly important. The students gradually moved from learning to operate the digital environment towards reflecting on how visual and other multimodal resources could support, complement, or enrich the written narrative. The additional time required for this process indicates that digital storytelling involves more than transferring a written text into a digital format: it requires learners to coordinate linguistic, narrative, visual, and technological resources in the construction of meaning.

Overall, the findings suggest that digital storytelling provided valuable opportunities for collaborative learning and the development of digital competence, while also revealing the need for sufficient time and pedagogical support. The experience showed that learners first needed to gain control of the technical aspects of the tool before they could fully exploit its communicative and creative potential. This progression from “*how to use the tool*” to “*how to use the tool meaningfully*” represents an important dimension of digital storytelling and should be taken into consideration when integrating such activities into foreign language writing instruction.

Conclusions

This study explored the potential of digital storytelling for developing foreign language writing skills among students of French as a foreign language. The analysis of 15 digital storytelling productions, created by students from the Department of French Language and Literature at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, highlighted both the potential of this approach and the challenges involved in combining written production with digital and multimodal composition.

One of the main strengths identified in the productions was the use of meaningful and authentic contexts. The students generally choose situations such as travelling, cultural events, everyday experiences, and other familiar contexts that provide a clear communicative purpose for writing. The alignment of these contexts with the learners’ proficiency level, considered through the CEFR (2021), also contributed to making the writing tasks meaningful and accessible. The findings therefore suggest that narrative contexts can provide learners with a concrete framework within which they can use the foreign language to communicate experiences, events, and ideas.

The analysis of language proficiency, however, revealed persistent linguistic difficulties. Orthography, syntax, particularly the use of pronouns, and morphosyntactic accuracy, especially the use of past tenses, remaining areas requiring further development. Nevertheless, these linguistic limitations did not systematically prevent the students’ narratives from being understood. The authentic contexts and the integration of visual and digital elements provided additional contextual support and contributed to the overall comprehensibility of the productions. This finding highlights an important characteristic of digital storytelling: meaning is constructed through the interaction of linguistic and multimodal resources rather than through written language alone.

Regarding coherence and cohesion, the majority of the productions presented a generally coherent organization, and the narratives were, overall, easy to follow. Nevertheless, the analysis revealed limitations in the range and sophistication of discourse connectors. Although the students were able to establish logical relationships between ideas and events, they tended to rely on common and frequently repeated connectors. This was particularly noticeable given the C1-C2 level expected in the study. The findings therefore suggest that the learners had developed the ability to construct coherent narratives, while still needing to enrich their repertoire of cohesive devices and develop greater flexibility in the organization of advanced written discourse.

The fourth dimension, multimodal and digital integration, revealed a more complex picture. The students experienced difficulties in integrating digital elements into their narratives and required additional time to become familiar with the technical aspects of the digital tools.

Collaboration between learners proved particularly useful during this stage, as students supported one another in learning how to operate the tools and solve technical problems. *Canva* was the tool most frequently used in the productions. However, the experience showed that mastering the technical functioning of the tool was only a first step. Students also needed to understand *how* digital and visual resources could contribute meaningfully to the narrative rather than simply accompany the written text.

Overall, the findings suggest that digital storytelling can provide a meaningful and supportive environment for foreign language writing, particularly by connecting written production with authentic contexts, creativity, and multimodal communication. At the same time, the study demonstrates that the introduction of digital tools does not automatically result in more elaborate writing or more effective digital communication. Learners need sufficient time, guidance, and opportunities for collaboration to move from technical mastery of a tool towards its meaningful pedagogical and communicative use.

The results therefore point to the importance of adopting a balanced approach to digital storytelling, in which linguistic development and digital competence are developed together. Teachers should provide appropriate scaffolding not only for the linguistic challenges associated with writing but also for the technical and communicative decisions involved in creating a digital story. In particular, learners should be encouraged to reflect on the relationship between text and other digital resources and to consider how each element contributes to the construction of meaning.

The findings of our implementation suggest that digital storytelling can be particularly beneficial in the foreign language classroom when activities are carefully scaffolded. Teachers should guide learners through clearly sequenced stages, beginning with the selection of an authentic topic and the planning and drafting of the narrative, followed by linguistic revision focusing on vocabulary, orthography, and morphosyntactic accuracy. Before the digital production stage, learners can receive models, vocabulary support, sentence starters, and peer or teacher feedback to strengthen coherence and cohesion. Teachers should then support students in selecting and integrating images, sound, and other digital resources so that these elements complement rather than replace the written and oral language. Such structured scaffolding can help learners manage both the linguistic and technological demands of digital storytelling while promoting greater autonomy, creativity, and meaningful foreign language use.

In conclusion, digital storytelling appears to offer a promising context for foreign language writing by bringing together authentic communication, narrative construction, linguistic development, collaboration, and digital expression. Its value lies not simply in the use of digital tools, but in the possibility of creating meaningful communicative situations in which learners are encouraged to write, revise, organize their ideas, and construct multimodal narratives. Further research with larger corpora and learners at different proficiency levels would be useful to examine more systematically the impact of digital storytelling on the development of foreign language writing competence.

Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of the present study. First, the sample was relatively small, comprising fifteen students, which limits the generalizability of the findings to broader populations of learners of French as a foreign language. Second, the study was conducted within a single institutional context, the Department of French Language and Literature at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Consequently, the findings may reflect specific characteristics of the participants, curriculum and educational context and may not be directly transferable to other foreign language learning environments. Third, the analysis was conducted by a single researcher, and no inter-rater reliability procedure was employed. Although the analytical framework was based on clearly

defined dimensions, the absence of independent coding by a second researcher may have increased the possibility of subjective interpretation. Furthermore, the study did not include a pre- and post-test comparison. Therefore, it cannot establish with certainty the extent to which participation in digital storytelling activities resulted in measurable improvement in learners' writing skills. Finally, the sole-analyst approach, together with the absence of longitudinal data, limits the possibility of determining whether the observed linguistic and multimodal characteristics represent sustained development over time. These limitations point to the need for future research involving larger and more diverse samples, multiple educational contexts, independent raters, and pre-/post-intervention measures in order to provide stronger evidence regarding the effectiveness of digital storytelling for foreign language writing development.

Future Research

Future research could build on the findings of the present study by adopting more systematic and comparative research designs. First, comparative studies across different educational contexts and institutions could examine whether the pedagogical benefits and challenges of digital storytelling vary according to curricular, technological, or cultural factors. Second, longitudinal studies would be valuable for investigating the development of foreign language writing skills over an extended period and for determining whether improvements observed through digital storytelling are sustained over time. Future research should also include learners at different proficiency levels, in order to explore whether digital storytelling is equally effective for beginners, intermediate, and advanced learners and whether the type of scaffolding required varies according to proficiency. Finally, the integration of quantitative measures, such as pre- and post-tests, frequency counts of linguistic errors, measures of lexical and syntactic complexity, and standardized writing assessment scales, alongside qualitative analysis would provide more robust evidence of learners' linguistic development. Such approaches could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the role of digital storytelling in foreign language writing instruction.

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Digital Storytelling and Foreign Language Writing Skills

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