Chapter 6
Digital Storytelling in an EFL Class: A Digital Immigrant’s Reflection and Digital Natives’ Perceptions

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ABSTRACT
This study aims at investigating the perceptions and attitudes of a digital storytelling EFL teacher (as a digital immigrant) who was responsible for creating digital stories for her students (as digital natives) for one semester. The teacher was asked to complete a journal to reflect on the way she prepared and used the stories in her class for 6 months. Students’ perceptions about using DST in their listening class were also recorded by focused group interview. Interesting ideas emerged when the two perspectives were compared.

INTRODUCTION
Storytelling is a valuable teaching technique. The educational value of storytelling has been recognized by didactic literature from the ancient time. Research shows that listening to stories and telling stories both have a far reaching effect on students’ creativity, motivation, cognitive skills, and understanding difficult concepts.

In recent years, modern versions of stories or digital stories have been used for both teaching and learning purposes as a result of the advancements of technology and overspread use of technological devices by students and teachers. Unlike the traditional stories, digital stories have multimedia format and are made with different types of technological tools. Digital stories are widely used in first language (L1) community for teaching students literacy and communication skills.

In spite of the proven values of storytelling in education, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers are still hesitant to use them in their classes due to an overload curriculum; and lack of prior knowledge and cultural and language abilities to handle storytelling sessions (Tsou, Wang, & Tzeng, 2006). This situation is worsened when teachers are expected to use digital stories, as integrating this type of technique in language
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classes needs certain conditions to be met such as the availability of technology infrastructure in schools and teachers’ positive attitudes and computer literacy.

Embracing new technologies by teachers and using them in their teaching is not an abrupt process and needs lots of preparatory steps to first convince teachers of the educational values of those technologies and then encourage them to use the technologies accurately in the process of teaching. When teachers are a part of educational reforms, and the change is not imposed from outer sources, they are more eager and willing to accept the change.

This study has primarily been done in order to scrutinize an EFL teacher’s reflections on making and using digital stories in listening instruction of an EFL course. The teacher had no prior experience of implementing technology in her classes, and was very skeptical of the success of technology-based language learning environments prior to the study. Additionally, the study examined EFL learners’ perceptions of the experience of learning English with Digital storytelling (DST), particularly their opinions of the educational values of DST, the way they were integrated into the listening instruction, and their emotions while using DSTs for their listening classes.

The novelty of the study lies in the fact that the ideas of two different groups of DST users with different individual characteristics are compared. The first user was the EFL teacher who was 33 years old as a digital immigrant with her all attitudes, reservations, and doubts towards the effectiveness of technology in educational. The second users included students who aged 13 to 20, considered as digital natives, who were quite interested in using technology for different purposes especially entertainment and were not aware of the educational values of DST.

The findings of the study will shed light on the challenges digital immigrants have with teaching with technology in the class of 21st century while the students are digital natives. Therefore, the study mainly tries to find the answers to the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes of the EFL teacher in the process of making and using DST in teaching listening?
2. What are the perceptions of EFL learners of the educational values of DSTs their teachers made and used in teaching listening?
3. What are the differences between the teachers’ attitudes towards DST and the students’ perceptions of them at the end of the experiment?

BACKGROUND

Storytelling is an old-fashioned human experience (McDrury & Alterio, 2003) to share and interpret different views and perspectives (Jones, 2006). Based on one definition storytelling is “the art of using language, vocalization, and/or physical movement and gesture to reveal the elements and images of a story to a specific, live audience” (NSA, 1997, Cited in Tingoy, Gunser, Ongun, Demirag, & Koroglu, 2010, p. 1). Telling or listening to stories is one way to share literature and history with children and help them develop their listening and comprehension skills (Farmer, 2004). Stories enable people to exchange their everyday experiences in idiosyncratic ways (Alameen, 2011), develop their critical thinking (Spiro, 2006), connect past, present, and future generations to form standards and ideas (Chung, 2007), and convey knowledge and the way people think (Suwardy, Gary Pan, & Seow, 2012).

Stories can be used for different purposes such as entertainment, training, and teaching (Handler Miller, 2004). It is believed that storytelling has been the original form of teaching throughout the