THE ROLE OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

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Abstract: *This research paper delves into the transformative intersection of literature and technology, focusing on the emergence of digital narratives. In an age dominated by technological advancements, literature has undergone a paradigm shift, moving beyond traditional forms to embrace digital storytelling. The paper aims to analyze the impact of technology on narrative structures, reader engagement, and the overall landscape of literary expression. Through a comprehensive examination of digital narratives, the study seeks to uncover how technology has redefined storytelling and the implications of this evolution on the future of literature.*

Keywords*: Digital narratives, literature, technology, storytelling, characteristics, technological tools, impact, reader experiences.*

The historical relationship between literature and technology is a dynamic interplay that has evolved over centuries. From the advent of the printing press, which revolutionized the dissemination of written works, to the industrial revolution enabling mass production of books, technology has consistently shaped the way literature is produced, distributed, and consumed. The invention of the typewriter, followed by the computer, further transformed the writing process, influencing both the form and content of literary works. In recent decades, the digital revolution has introduced new dimensions to this relationship, giving rise to the concept of digital narratives.Digital narratives represent a paradigm shift in storytelling, leveraging the capabilities of digital technologies to create immersive and interactive literary experiences. These narratives extend beyond traditional printed texts, incorporating multimedia elements such as audio, video, and interactive interfaces. The significance of digital narratives in contemporary literary discourse lies in their ability to engage readers in novel ways, breaking the confines of linear storytelling and allowing for dynamic, user-driven experiences. As technology continues to advance, the fusion of literature and digital media opens up exciting possibilities for innovation and exploration within the realm of storytelling. This research paper aims to delve into the nuances of this evolving relationship, exploring the impact of technology on literary expression and the broader implications for the future of storytelling.Telling stories seems to be one of the most intrinsic and significant characteristics of human beings (Dehghan, 2020; Mallawaarachchi, 2020) which has assisted them in learning new skills and understanding the universe.

One of the important areas in which storytelling has proved to be very vital and beneficial is second language learning domain (Wu & Chen, 2020). Storytelling has captured

a great deal of attention among the academia in this field as it is supposed to stimulate creativity, develop critical thinking, promote imagination, and encourage moral reasoning (Abdel -Hack & Helwa, 2014; Mallawaarachchi, 2020; Psomos & Kordaki, 2012). Of course, with the advent of diverse robust multimedia technologies and cutting-edge devices, like internet and personal computers, this trend has changed drastically "from merely oral to digitally enhanced ones with new patterns, styles, and formats" (Mallawaarachchi, 2020, p. 223). This was how the concept of digital storytelling (DST) emerged and turned into one of the practical instruments in the education domain (Churchill, 2020; Yang et al., 2020). Of note, technology-enhanced education is rapidly infiltrating into second language pedagogy and every day more and more teachers around the world are increasingly being convinced of the pivotal and distinctive role of welding technology to language education (Shen et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2020).

One of the language skills in which DST has been gaining ground and making a drastic change is writing, which as experience shows is one of the difficult skills for second language learners. Moreover, as the 21st century students are born and raised with technology, they are most inclined to use it to enhance their knowledge, being reluctant to the traditional forms of education. Writing is the most struggling skill due to its complexity, particularly for young EFL learners, and it has been proposed that the conventional approaches of teaching and practicing writing skill in the books must be changed in order to increase learners' creativity (Deligianni-Georgaka & Pouroutidi, 2016). In this regard, DST enables the students to make novel and meaningful stories through using advanced technologies and benefit from deepened knowledge achieved through combining traditional storytelling and digital media (Tanrıkulu, 2020).

According to Tetik and Ozer (2022), learners' knowledge of writing, including types of texts and spelling rules improved through the use of DST. Furthermore, DST has been considered as a productive tool to aid language teachers. The use of pictures, audio, and colours in DST arouses learners' curiosity and aids them to have a better understanding of the texts. In addition, DST helps the teachers to create a more engaging environment (Syam, 2022). Against this backdrop, the current study aims at focusing on the role of collaborative DST on young Iranian English language learners' writing skill. In addition, with an eye to the importance of affective factors in foreign language learning, the current study was conducted to provide a better understanding of the impact of DST on young EFL learners' motivation and interest to write in English.

Digital narratives leverage a combination of text, images, audio, and video to create a rich and immersive storytelling experience. Unlike traditional literature, which primarily relies on textual elements, digital narratives embrace a multimodal approach, engaging the audience through multiple senses.One of the distinguishing features of digital narratives is their interactive nature. Readers are no longer passive observers; instead, they become active participants in the storytelling process. Through branching narratives and decision points, users shape the direction of the story, creating a personalized and dynamic experience.Digital narratives often discard the linear storytelling structure in favor of nonlinear arrangements. This departure from traditional chronological order allows users to explore the story in

various ways, encouraging a sense of exploration and discovery.The incorporation of hypermedia elements, such as hyperlinks and multimedia content, distinguishes digital narratives. Readers can navigate through additional content, explore subplots, or delve deeper into specific aspects of the story, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the narrative world.

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