

The Impact of Digital Storytelling on EFL Writing Production and Affective States

El impacto de la narración digital en la producción escrita en EFL y los estados afectivos

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Abstract

In the field of second language acquisition, the correlation between cognitive skills and the affective domain impacts language learning success. In this context, writing performance is frequently hindered by high levels of anxiety and low motivation. Based on Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, this semi-systematic literature review explored whether Digital Storytelling (DST) could serve as a digital scaffold to mitigate mental barriers more effectively than grammar-focused instruction, while examining EFL learners' writing production and perceptions. Following the PRISMA method, twenty-three studies from 2020 to 2025 were collected, analyzed and categorized in geographic region, educational levels, digital storytelling platforms, student perceptions, writing performance effects, and affective outcomes. The findings indicated that while digital storytelling enhanced writing production and minimized anxiety levels, its success depended on prior digital competence and digital resources availability. Age-specific challenges emerged: young learners were often distracted by visuals when writing, whereas teenagers benefited from the multimedia tools to edit; however, the prospect of an audience affected their anxiety. Another finding pointed out that students faced an attention split between text composition and digital design. The implications suggest that teachers must apply scaffolding technical skills, manage cognitive load, and structure audience exposure when implementing DST to boost its effectiveness.

Keywords: Digital storytelling; Writing production; Affective filter; English as a Foreign Language (EFL); PRISMA.

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Resumen

En el ámbito de la adquisición de una segunda lengua, la correlación entre las habilidades cognitivas y el ámbito afectivo influye en el éxito del aprendizaje de idiomas. En este contexto, el desempeño en la escritura suele verse obstaculizado por altos niveles de ansiedad y baja motivación. Basándose en la hipótesis del filtro afectivo de Krashen, esta revisión bibliográfica semisistemática exploró si la narración digital (DST) podría servir como un andamio digital para mitigar las barreras mentales de manera más efectiva que la enseñanza centrada en la gramática, al tiempo que examinaba la producción escrita y las percepciones de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL). Siguiendo el método PRISMA, se recopilieron veintitrés estudios realizados entre 2020 y 2025, los cuales se analizaron y clasificaron por región geográfica, niveles educativos, plataformas de narración digital, percepciones de los estudiantes, efectos en el desempeño en la escritura y resultados afectivos. Los hallazgos indicaron que, si bien la narración digital mejoró la producción escrita y minimizó los niveles de ansiedad, su éxito dependía de la competencia digital previa y de la disponibilidad de recursos digitales. Surgieron desafíos específicos según la edad: los estudiantes más jóvenes a menudo se distraían con los elementos visuales al escribir, mientras que los adolescentes se beneficiaban de las herramientas multimedia para editar; sin embargo, la perspectiva de tener una audiencia afectaba su ansiedad. Otro hallazgo señaló que los estudiantes enfrentaban una división de la atención entre la composición del texto y el diseño digital. Las implicaciones sugieren que los maestros deben aplicar estrategias de andamiaje de habilidades técnicas, gestionar la carga cognitiva y estructurar la exposición ante la audiencia al implementar la narración digital para potenciar su efectividad.

Palabras clave: Narrativa digital; Producción escrita; Filtro afectivo; inglés como Lengua Extranjera (EFL); PRISMA.

Introduction

In recent years, the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has emphasized communicative competence, yet this focus has not resolved the challenges in developing writing proficiency. Traditional product-oriented methodologies increase Foreign Language Anxiety by treating writing as a final graded assignment rather than a developmental process. Moreover, rigid structural formulas and mechanical error-correction implant a fear of negative evaluation in students (Horwitz et al., 1986). In this sense, EFL learners encounter writing apprehension triggered by a high affective filter. This emotional barrier prevents linguistic input from being processed and inhibits writing production in second-language acquisition (Krashen, 1981).

Current pedagogical approaches have encouraged the use of multimodal tools as a way to alleviate psychological constraints. From this perspective, digital storytelling (DST) stimulates student engagement by combining linguistic input with audio and imagery. This tool allows learners to act as authors of their own personal narratives, thus, changing writing from a stressful activity to a creative and dynamic process (Hafner, 2014). Therefore, when students are motivated intrinsically in their narratives, their writing output improves in lexical density and communicative fluency (Gregerson & MacIntyre, 2014). The former measures the informational content a text possesses; motivated learners willingly take linguistic risks and incorporate a richer lexicon. While the latter refers to the ease with which pupils transfer their ideas to paper. In light of this,

engaged students enter a flow state by prioritizing meaning over grammatical perfection (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012).

Although DST is a familiar pedagogical concept, a holistic understanding of its application in EFL writing contexts continues to be overlooked. While a great deal of existing literature is centered on the technical integration of digital tools in writing activities (Robin, 2016; Sadik, 2008), there is a lack of synthesized evidence that examines how multimodal resources interrelate with the emotional regulation in EFL learners and their perceptions of the tools. Current studies have focused on either cognitive writing outcomes (Abdel-Hack & Helwa, 2004; Ajabshir, 2024), affective factors (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Khoo et al., 2024), or learners' perceptions (Alemi et al., 2022; Tanrikulu, 2022; Zarei & Navidinia, 2024), treating each theme as a separate element. As a result, there is a need for a semi-systematic review of how these components are interweaved in the writing process.

The objective of this literature review was to interpret findings from 2020 to 2025 to examine how digital storytelling acts as a pedagogical scaffold for promoting writing production while lowering the affective filter. The research questions were as follows:

- General Question: What is the impact of Digital Storytelling on the writing production and affective experiences of EFL students?
- Specific Questions
- How does Digital Storytelling affect the linguistic accuracy and complexity of EFL students' writing production?
- How does Digital Storytelling influence the affective states of EFL learners during the writing process?
- What are the perceptions of EFL students regarding Digital Storytelling within their writing process?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this review is grounded in Stephen Krashen's (1981) Second Language Acquisition Theory, which views language as a process acquired naturally through immersion. This theory consists of five hypotheses: Acquisition-Learning, Monitor, Natural Order, Input, and Affective Filter. The latter argues that language learning depends heavily on students' emotional state. According to Krashen, psychological factors such as anxiety, confidence, and motivation act as a mental barrier during language acquisition. Therefore, when the affective filter is high, it blocks language output, while a low affective filter facilitates language production. Alter-

native views of this theory include viewpoints from Du (2009), who states that language learning does not occur when the student's emotional state is triggered by fear of evaluation, regardless of how effective the pedagogical approach may be. In this regard, Du (2009) suggests that digital storytelling (DST) may act as a scaffolding tool (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). By combining multimodal instruments, the cognitive and emotional load is minimized, which can potentially lower the affective filter and facilitate writing production.

This framework is relevant to the area of EFL writing production, which is affected by anxiety and the writing block phenomenon. In this sense, digital storytelling is seen as a multimodal medium that can reduce anxiety during writing processes as it fosters a creative environment. The use of voice-overs, images and audio acts as a learning aid that reduces the pressure of language accuracy and allows students to actively be part of their narratives as they apply transduction in the form of inserting their cognitive and personal strengths into a project (Oozeerally et al., 2020).

These frameworks support the use of digital storytelling as a way to incorporate learners' emotions into the process of writing to promote meaningful communication. It emphasizes the importance of creating supportive spaces to help EFL students express their linguistic knowledge on paper by lowering their stress and anxiety. Facing this, authors like Gregg (1984) argue there is a lack of empirical information on how to measure students' affective filters as their internal processes are unobservable. In response, Cheng (2004) reconceptualizes the issue by replacing an abstract filter with a quantifiable and multidimensional construct which is Second Language Writing Anxiety (SLWA) that specifically measures writing anxiety. This psychological phenomenon is broken down into cognitive anxiety, somatic stress, and avoidant behaviors which collectively interfere in the writing process. Therefore, when learners are overwhelmed with anxiety, the needed cognitive processes for text structure, lexicon selection, and planning are disrupted, resulting in writing apprehension. Ultimately, while the affective filter remains difficult to measure as Gregg critiques, it has quantifiable effects on linguistic complexity and overall writing performance.

Literature Review

Digital Storytelling (DST)

DST is a process that interweaves telling stories with multimedia tools such as images, audio, and video (Robin, 2008). Bateman and Wildfeuer (2014), stated that, in contrast to traditional writing tasks, multimodal instruments provide semiotic resources that construct meaning by blending texts, images, and sounds. Furthermore, digital storytelling encourages students to transfer meaning across different modes, which helps them better understand the target language (Nelson, 2006). Consequently, the incorporation of multimodal elements in writing activities helps EFL

students to overcome linguistic difficulties, minimize the affective filter, and promote writing confidence.

DST and Writing Production

A great deal of existing literature on digital storytelling in language learning has primarily examined its effects on writing production and learners' written performance. Moreover, research has shown that students who take part in DST activities have written compositions with greater lexical variety, mirrored in the range of vocabulary, and narrative development with sequences and detailed descriptions (Shin & Cimasko, 2008; Yang & Wu, 2012; Yoon, 2013). These findings were established using experimental and qualitative research methods. In a one-year long comparative study, Yang and Wu (2012), found that students who used DST had visible improvements in vocabulary and writing performance than those tasked with conventional writing activities. Similarly, a qualitative case study model conducted by Shin and Cimasko (2008), revealed that students focused on semantic depth and detailed descriptions when manipulating text and audio-visual resources. Finally, a process analysis of the recursive stages of writing applied by Yoon (2013) showed that cyclic drafting and editing processes naturally motivated students to expand their vocabulary richness and narrative depth.

DST and the Affective Filter

In alignment with Krashen's Affective Filter (1981), existing research suggests that digital storytelling can act as a tool for minimizing anxiety during the writing process. To validate these factors, recent studies have relied on structural methods. In a study that used Cheng's Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) in pre and post-tests, Sari and Nugraha (2024), found DST reduced test anxiety by promoting creativity and emphasizing meaning. These findings are supported by Du (2009), who uncovered that digital storytelling helped students internalize language through the engagement of comprehensible input and the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) during the recursive sequences of writing and editing scripts.

Research carried out by Castillo-Cuesta et al. (2021), observed that multimodal resources lowered the affective filter by nurturing student engagement and narrative depth. These findings were obtained through a quasi-experimental and mixed-methods model in which anxiety and student engagement were tested through pre- and post-intervention perception questionnaires alongside writing rubrics that evaluated writing production on the Storybird platform. Other authors such as Guaña-Moya et al. (2024) argue that poor digital competence and accessibility limitations can lead to technical frustration, creating a stressful environment that hinders language learning. To arrive at these conclusions, a mixed-methods design was implemented using quanti-

tative perception surveys and qualitative needs analysis. In the end, the benefits of digital storytelling outweighed the technological challenges when scaffolded methodologically.

Methodology

This literature review adopted a semi-systematic methodology, adhering to the guidelines of Snyder (2019) to provide a holistic analysis of empirical evidence and qualitative data on digital storytelling in EFL classrooms. To ensure a transparent article selection process, this study followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) method (Page et al., 2021). The search was conducted across academic databases, including SCOPUS, ERIC, and Scholar Google. Furthermore, the keywords used for the article search were the following: “digital storytelling”, “DST”, “writing production”, “writing anxiety”, “affective filter”, and “EFL learners”, among other similar terms.

Regarding the criteria used for this review, the studies were selected according to specific parameters (see Table 1).

Table 1. Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

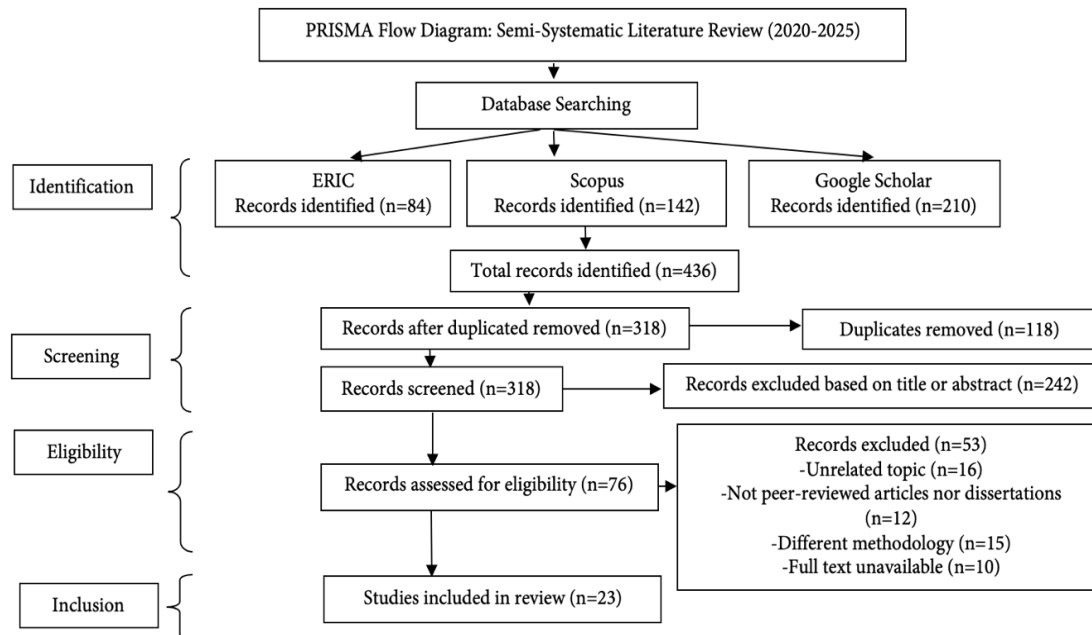
Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Focus of the article	-Articles focused on the role of DST on EFL students' writing production and affective states	-Articles that do not investigate the role of DST on EFL students' writing production and affective states
Language	-English	-Other languages will not be taken into consideration
Methodological scope	-Mixed-methods research and semi-systematic literature reviews	Theoretical papers, systematic, and integrative literature reviews
Publication date	-2020-2025	Articles published before 2020 or after 2025
Publication type	-Peer-reviewed academic articles and dissertations	-Book chapters, theses, conference papers, and discussion papers

Source: own elaboration.

Development

The initial literature search yielded 76 papers. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, twenty-two peer-reviewed articles and one dissertation were selected for the final analysis. Figure 1 displays the filtering process based on the Prisma framework.

Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram



Source: own elaboration.

This section presents an analysis of the twenty-two peer-reviewed articles and one dissertation that met the selection criteria. The selected studies were published in English within the years 2020 and 2025 and were selected after an initial screening of titles and abstracts followed by a complete review to ensure relevance to the topic. To address the research questions of this study, the findings were organized and categorized in five tables. Table 2 illustrates the geographical distribution of the selected studies while Table 3 presents the educational levels of the participants, ranging from elementary to higher education. Then, Table 4 depicts the DST platforms used in the studies while Table 5 and 6 display the effects of digital storytelling on EFL writing production and writing apprehension. Lastly, Table 7 shows students' perceptions of this multimodal tool in EFL learning.

Distribution of Studies by Geographic Region

Most of the articles reviewed show Digital Storytelling is being used across several places, specifically in Asian (Taiwan and Indonesia) and Middle Eastern countries (Turkey and Iran) (see Table 2). According to Singh (2021), the rapid growth towards a digital classroom in these areas is due to a global shift of student-centered instruction in universities.

In Latin America, the articles showed research primarily conducted in Ecuador and Colombia which showed that digital resources were used to help mitigate writing anxiety while supporting students to reach international goals set by CEFR (Castillo-Cuesta et al., 2021). Moreover, the literature highlighted a transition from grammar drills to innovative digital environments focused on lowering the affective filter to foster writing output.

Table 2. Articles by geographic location

Country	Number of articles
Indonesia	5
Turkey	5
Iran	3
Ecuador	2
Taiwan	2
Colombia	1
United States	1
Vietnam	1
Thailand	1
Greece	1
Argentina	1
Total	23

Source: own elaboration.

Distribution of Studies by Educational Level

In terms of the academic context of the participants, the data identified three educational levels: Primary, Secondary, and Higher Education. As seen in Table 3, most studies were conducted in high school and university settings, followed by elementary schools which were solely represented in three cases. These studies included EFL students ranging from young learners to adult students showcasing the application of DST in various stages of education (see Table 3).

Table 3. Articles by Participants' Educational Level

Educational Level	Number of Studies
Higher Education	9
Secondary Education	9
Primary Education	5
Total	23

Source: own elaboration.

Digital Storytelling Platforms

Table 4 shows a listing of the digital storytelling platforms employed in the analyzed studies and highlights their multimedia features. Most articles used various free online multimedia platforms in which Storybird was the most prevalent despite its lack of auditory features.

Table 4. Digital Storytelling Platforms Impact on EFL Students' Writing Production and Writing Anxiety

Platform Type	No. of studies	Author/Year	Features
Storybird	3	-Kazazoglu and Bilir (2021) -Castillo-Cuesta et al (2021) -Chiang (2020)	-Visual: Ready-made graphics and themed design templates - Auditory: None -Multimedia: Customizable and page-by-page digital layouts
Story-Jumper	1	-Güvey (2020)	-Visual: Page-by-page layouts -Auditory: Page-specific voiceover -Multimedia: Narration backed E-book
Edmodo	1	-Şenel (2025)	-Visual: Feed streams and text boxes -Auditory: External files attachments -Multimedia: Text portfolios and feed-back loops
Cartoon Story Maker	1	-Alemi et al (2022)	-Visual: 2D comic panels and bubbles -Auditory: Short audio clips per frame -Multimedia: Clickable or static comic strip
Toontastic 3D	1	-Galván (2020)	-Visual: Interactive 3D puppets and sets -Auditory: Voice recordings and mood tracks -Multimedia: Animated cartoon video
CapCut	1	-Sari (2024)	-Visual: Video transitions, visual effects, personalized visual aids. -Auditory: Microphone voiceover recording, background music, and sound effects. -Multimedia: Audio-captioning tools and Script-to-Video smart automation
Web Multimedia and Interactive Software (PowerPoint, Google Docs, Youtube, and Blogs)	15	-Phan et al (2024); Sudarmaji (2020); Gonzales (2022); Chen Hsieh (2024); Zarei and Navidinia (2024); Fitri et al. (2021); Ölmez and Aran (2025); Adara (2020); Tyrou (2022); Maghsoudi (2021); González Mesa (2020); Eroğlu (2020); Thanakornroongrueng and Wangphasit (2025); Munajah et al. (2023); Guña-Moya et al. (2024);	-Visual: Multi-layer canvas and timelines -Auditory: Multi-track audio, sounds, and background music -Multimedia: Exported videos, slides, or blogs

Source: own elaboration.

Effects of DST on EFL Writing Production

The influence of DST can be classified into five variables: linguistic accuracy, vocabulary acquisition, narrative cohesion, multimodal literacy, and the drafting process. As shown in Table 5, narrative cohesion is the most widely reported area of improvement.

Table 5. The Effects of Digital Storytelling on EFL Writing Production

Skills	Effects	Impact	No. of studies	Author/Year	Country
Writing	Linguistic accuracy	Improvements in grammatical precision and syntactic complexity	5	Castillo-Cuesta (2021); Zarei (2024); Ölmez (2025); Şenel (2025); Maghsoudi (2021)	Ecuador, Iran, Turkey
	Vocabulary acquisition	Expanded vocabulary usage and contextual word choice	3	Alemi (2022); Phan et al (2024); Sari (2024)	Iran, Indonesia, Vietnam
	Narrative cohesion	Development of logical sequencing, use of transitions, and plot progression	6	Fitri (2021); Thanakornroongrueng (2025); Munajah (2023); González Mesa (2020); Güvey (2020); Kazazoglu (2021)	Indonesia, Thailand, Colombia, Turkey
	Multimodal Literacy	Ability to combine visual and auditory elements with the written text to convey meaning.	4	Sudarmaji (2020); Chen Hsieh (2024); Galván (2020); Chiang (2020)	Indonesia, Argentina, Taiwan
	Drafting and Revision	Reinforcement of the recursive writing process	2	Eroğlu (2020); Thanakornroongrueng (2025)	Turkey, Thailand

Source: own elaboration.

Effects of DST on the Affective Domain

In this section, Table 6 provides an analysis of the effects of Digital Storytelling on learners' emotional states based on the selected studies. The categories that emerged include anxiety reduction, student engagement, self-efficacy, academic persistence, and creative confidence. Based on the data, student engagement and self-efficacy are the most recurrent among the others.

Table 6. The Effects of Digital Storytelling on the Affective Domain

Domain	Effects	Impact	No. of studies	Author/Year	Country
Affective	Anxiety decrease	Significant decrease in Foreign Language Writing Anxiety and apprehension	4	Ölmez (2025); Şenel (2025); González Mesa (2020); Kazazoglu (2021)	Turkey, Colombia
	Student Engagement	Increased intrinsic motivation and active participation in class	5	Alemi (2022); Guaña-Moya (2024); Adara (2020); Eroğlu (2020); Castillo-Cuesta (2021)	Iran, Ecuador, Indonesia
	Self-efficacy	Enhanced belief in one's ability to perform and write in the target language	5	Gonzales (2022); Maghsoudi (2021); Chiang (2020); Tyrou (2022); Galván (2020)	United States, Iran, Taiwan, Greece, Argentina
	Academic persistence	Learner resilience when facing complex language tasks	2	Chen Hsieh (2024); Phan et al (2024)	Taiwan, Vietnam

Domain	Effects	Impact	No. of studies	Author/Year	Country
Affective	Creative confidence	Development of creative appropriation	3	Güvey (2020); Munajah (2023); Galván (2020)	Turkey, Indonesia, Ecuador

Source: own elaboration.

Students' Perceptions of Digital Storytelling

Table 7 presents the students' perceptions of the use of DST in the EFL classroom, including challenges and benefits. While the data reflect a positive pattern of digital storytelling specifically in improving students' writing skills, certain difficulties involving limited digital competence still linger in this area.

Table 7. Students' Perceptions of Digital Storytelling in EFL Classrooms

Students' perceptions		Nº. of studies	Author/Year
Positive Aspects	Writing and Literacy Development	10	Castillo-Cuesta et al. (2021); Zarei and Navidinia (2024); González Mesa (2020); Fitri et al. (2021); Kazazoglu and Bilir (2021); Sudarmaji et al. (2020); Munajah et al. (2023); Thanakornroongrueng and Wangphasit (2025); Maghsoudi et al. (2021); Alemi et al. (2022)
	Reduction of the "Affective Filter"	4	Ölmez and Aran (2025); Şenel (2025); Alemi et al. (2022); Eroğlu and Okur (2020)
	Writing Perseverance and Commitment	2	Chen Hsieh (2024); Maghsoudi et al. (2021)
	Authenticity and Voice	3	Phan et al. (2024); Tyrou (2022); Galván (2020)
Negative Aspects	Technical Overload	3	Kazazoglu and Bilir (2021); Güvey (2020); Phan et al. (2024)
	Cognitive Ambivalence	2	Tyrou (2022); Chen Hsieh (2024)
	Accessibility Issues	2	Guaña-Moya et al. (2024); Phan et al. (2024)

Source: own elaboration.

Discussion

This literature review analyzed the impact of digital storytelling in the EFL classroom. The research focused on three research questions: first, how DST affects the linguistic accuracy and complexity of EFL students' written output; second, how DST influences the affective domain of

EFL learners during the writing process; lastly, students' perceptions of this multimodal tool when writing.

Digital Storytelling and EFL Writing Production

In response to the first question, digital storytelling is seen as a tool that transforms the writing process into a creative multimodal project. In this regard, Castillo-Cuesta et. al (2021) and Zarei and Navidinia (2024), reported the potential it had over improving EFL student writing skills through a recursive process in which learners take part in constant cycles of brainstorming, scriptwriting, and revising. This circuit promoted deeper linguistic engagement, which is beneficial for language learning (Tyrou, 2022).

Nevertheless, the implementation of DST presents certain challenges. As shown by Guvey (2020) and González Mesa (2020), beginners and younger learners prioritized imagery over language accuracy due to mechanical mistakes in spelling, punctuation, and language transfer. However, the visual scaffolding found in StoryJumper or Storybird helped students order their ideas, leading to a structural path to the final product (Kazazoglu & Bilir, 2021). The process of connecting multimodal elements to the written text to present a story requires metacognition; thereby making students active authors of their own work alongside improving their writing skills (Munajah et al., 2023; Sudarmaji et al., 2020; Fitri et al., 2021).

Digital Storytelling and the Affective Filter

Regarding the second research question, the findings indicate that DST is linked to students' emotional states and may mitigate foreign language anxiety. Through semi-structured interviews, open-ended reflection forms, and surveys, Ölmez and Aran (2025), and Şenel (2025), uncovered that digital storytelling helped students overcome their fear of making mistakes when it acted as a dynamic outlet. By providing a sense of psychological safety with editing and deleting options, DST reduces writing apprehension linked to the pressure of grammatical accuracy and motivates learners to play with the language (Galván, 2020). This multimodal instrument granted students creative freedom to share personal stories and ideas, nurturing intrinsic motivation than standardized writing activities (Adara & Haqiyyah, 2020; Nikbakht & Neysani, 2023).

It is worth mentioning that the decrease in language learning anxiety was not universal. Güvey (2020) and Chen Hsieh (2024) found that the prospect of an audience seeing learners' final products increased their performance anxiety, particularly when pre-existing concerns of peer judgment or linguistic inaccuracy emerged beforehand. Another factor is the lack of instruction in digital literacy. This may lead to technological frustration and heightening of the affective fil-

ter (Kazazoglu & Bilir, 2021; Phan et al., 2024). Overall, the effectiveness of implementing digital storytelling relies on teachers or instructors balancing digital guidance and creative spaces to engage students.

Learner Perceptions on Digital Storytelling

With regards to the third research question, the data suggest that students see DST as an instrument that restructures the writing process. The most significant advantage of this tool is that it provides multimodal scaffolding. In this sense, images and audio are perceived as retrieval clues that helped recall lexicon and organize narrative sequences more effectively than form-focused instruction (Castillo-Cuesta et al., 2021; Sudarmaji et al., 2020). The incorporation of semiotic resources compensates L2 linguistic constraints by creativity and self-expression.

In addition, a common topic in learners' perspectives towards this multimodal tool is the decrease of the affective filter. While many authors assert this is an intangible concept, others argue that it manifests itself through behavioral and observable indicators that can be measured. The analyzed studies applied multidimensional anxiety frameworks including the SLWAI which showed that the affected filter was lowered through DST. It was reported that digital platforms acted as a psychological shield so that students felt safe enough to write, prioritizing meaningful expression over grammatical accuracy (Ölmez & Aran, 2025, Senel, 2025). In turn, learners appeared more perseverant and committed to the recursive nature of the writing process as they saw their stories as personally relevant projects and not temporary assignments (Chen Hsieh, 2024; Maghsoudi et al., 2021). By assuming the role of authors, students take personal ownership over their narratives and consequently their language development (Phan et al., 2024; Tyrou, 2022).

On the other hand, insights from learners on DST also revealed challenges. First, some students reported having experienced a split attention phenomenon (Sweller, 1988) in which the cognitive overload of handling software and L2 production led to mental fatigue (Tyrou, 2022). This may also result in a task distraction as learners spend more time on aesthetic elements which can eclipse their focus on the actual writing production (Kazazoglu & Bilir, 2021; Guvey, 2020). Another negative perception stemmed from external factors including instable internet access or financial accessibility troubles that restricted creative autonomy (Guaña Moya et al., 2024). In summary, while the majority of learners' perspectives indicated benefits of using DST, it is important to focus on technological innovation and the practical challenges of the classroom to prove its efficiency.

Conclusion

This article is subject to certain limitations regarding scope and methodology. First, the article search was limited to peer-reviewed articles and dissertations in English within certain databases. Therefore, other relevant studies published in other languages and databases might have been missed. Second, most research was conducted in the Middle East and Asia; meaning that there is a lack of data from Latin America. Third, the educational level of the participants in the studies was dispersed, meaning that there were fewer studies on young learners compared to the others. Lastly, the analyzed studies used very different methods and tools from book-creating platforms to various multimedia tools to measure the impact of DST in writing output. In similar lines, EFL anxiety was measured through different instruments, including interviews and psychological surveys, and many researchers relied on student-completed surveys rather than objective psychological testing. Lastly, the articles reviewed represent a small sample size of the literature available; therefore, any attempt at generalizing the findings of this study would be biased.

This literature review aimed to examine the impact of digital storytelling on EFL writing production and writing anxiety. Twenty-three studies were analyzed, and the findings were categorized to answer the three research questions. Drawing from the results, digital storytelling can offer numerous benefits when implemented correctly as it can help students with their narrative structure and vocabulary, and it can reduce their anxiety levels. However, it is worth mentioning that the success of DST depends on students' prior digital competence, age-specific mental workload, and audience presentation contexts. In light of these findings, future research should be focused on addressing the geographic and demographic gaps identified in this review by analyzing the effects of digital storytelling within South American educational contexts and among elementary school students. Additionally, future studies would benefit from instruments that gather empirical data on the affective filter beyond self-reported responses. As a final remark, future research on writing anxiety and apprehension in young children would do well to use specialized approaches including baseline measurements before the intervention and combine self-reports with objective observations, parental feedback, and child-friendly psychometric tools.

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