

Digital Storytelling as a Pedagogical Tool within a Didactic Sequence in Foreign Language Teaching

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Abstract

Digital storytelling constitutes a pedagogical tool for teachers to work on different linguistic skills while generating students' interest and attention. This study analyses the usefulness of including digital storytelling within a didactic sequence in order to work on linguistic routines such as greetings and leave-takings in English as a foreign language. To this aim, we have worked with first year students in the Faculty of Education at the Universitat de València to improve their ability to adapt their language skills to specific situations within common daily interaction. We have designed a didactic sequence consisting of different workshops that have been put into practice in class. The sequence ends with a final project in which students are expected to produce their own digital stories, showing thus what they have learnt. This final production has highlighted a clear improvement in the use of linguistic routines, as well as in the use of more complex structures and of varied expressions used to open and close a conversation.

Keywords: Didactic sequence; Linguistic routines; Digital storytelling; Teaching

El relato digital como herramienta pedagógica en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras a través del uso de la secuencia didáctica

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Resumen

El relato digital representa una herramienta pedagógica que permite al profesor trabajar distintas competencias lingüísticas al mismo tiempo que suscita interés y atención en el alumno. Este estudio analiza la utilidad de incluir el relato digital dentro de una secuencia didáctica con el fin de trabajar expresiones y rutinas lingüísticas en inglés tales como los saludos y las formas de despedirse. Con este objetivo hemos trabajado con estudiantes de primer año de la Facultad de Educación de la Universitat de València para mejorar su capacidad de adaptar sus habilidades lingüísticas a situaciones específicas en la interacción diaria. Hemos elaborado una secuencia didáctica, con distintos talleres, que se han puesto en práctica en el aula. Dicha secuencia termina con un proyecto final en el que los estudiantes deben producir sus propios relatos digitales que muestran lo que han aprendido. Esta producción final ha puesto en evidencia una clara mejoría en el uso de las rutinas lingüísticas, así como en el uso de estructuras más complejas y de expresiones más variadas para comenzar y concluir una conversación.

Palabras clave

Secuencia didáctica; Competencias lingüísticas; Relato digital; Didáctica

I. Introduction

This paper presents the use of digital storytelling as a part of a didactic sequence to practice linguistic routines in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. The aim is twofold: to design a didactic sequence that includes digital storytelling as a pedagogical tool, and to help students learn and practice linguistic elements such as greetings and leave-takings in daily interaction. This proposal emerges in the context of a research project funded by the University of Valencia.¹

A didactic sequence is a group of activities designed and organized by a teacher in order to reach a learning objective. The particular order of these activities and the rhythm in which they are presented is crucial for the learning process, since the final outcome does not depend on the content of each task, but on how all of them are arranged within the lesson (Dolz and Schneuwly, 2006; Vilà-Santasusana, 2002). Students are asked to create a dialogue between two or three people in a specific communicative context. The goal is to assess their language skills in order to detect their previous knowledge, and their mistakes. This information enables the instructor to adapt and tailor the didactic sequence to the students' needs and ability throughout the following lessons. According to Dolz and Schneuwly (2006), the didactic sequence must begin by explaining to the students the goals of the activity on which they are going to work. The reason behind this is to motivate them, and engage them in their own learning process. Once they have done the initial production, they are given a model of what they are expected to create. In this case, they are shown a digital story that contains different situations in which daily interaction in English occurs. Finally, after working on the targets set, students are expected to produce their own digital stories showing that improvement has been accomplished.

II. Digital Storytelling and Foreign Language Teaching: Linguistic Routines

Many scholars have long highlighted the importance of the use of digital storytelling in language teaching and learning (Gregori-Signes, 2008; Robin, 2006; Rodríguez Illera & Londoño, 2009) as well as the need for more research on the learning outcomes of its usage in educational settings (cf. Barrett, 2005; Yuksel, Robin, McNeil, 2010). On the one hand, digital storytelling not only offers language teachers the opportunity of working with all four language skills from the very beginning, but also brings together the idea of combining the art of telling stories with a variety of digital multimedia such as images, recorded audio narration, video and music (Robin, 2006). This enables instructors to teach any topic in a way that can generate interest and attention. In this particular study, digital storytelling is used to work on linguistic routines in daily interaction in English as a foreign language. Although traditionally digital stories mainly consist of a narration, we have also integrated a series of dialogues to provide an example of different communicative exchanges in which a variety of language chunks are used.

On the other hand, the positive effects of digital storytelling in the foreign language classroom are many. Hibbing and Rankin-Erikson (2003) and Boster, Meyer, Roberto and Inge (2002) have shown that multimedia in teaching facilitates students' learning and retaining new information. Moreover, digital storytelling draws the interest of students with diverse learning styles and can also promote group work and increase their sense of achievement. Ultimately, it also constitutes a useful way of working on how to arrange information. As Robin (2006) points out, "students who participate in the creation of digital stories may develop enhanced communication skills by learning to organize their ideas, ask questions, express opinions and construct narratives" (p. 712).

The digital story presented here is aimed at 1st year undergraduate students within the subject "English as a Foreign Language for Primary Education Teachers". It is based on different sections that can either be used individually or as a whole to cover different learning points of the didactic sequence in which it is embedded, one of them being linguistic routines. We have conceived linguistic routines in this study as ritualised linguistic behaviour which consists of expressions (words, phrases) usually occurring in a particular communicative situation or context that is

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recurrent (Coulmas, 1981). Consequently, they are expressions that are highly predictable in form, meaning and function. Linguistic routines or formulas have been acknowledged to highly contribute to language learning in the literature (cf. Bardovi-Harlig, 2006; Gregori-Signes & Alcantud-Díaz, 2011; 2012.). These linguistic elements are essential in everyday interaction, and, most importantly, they entail socio-cultural knowledge that members of a determinate speech community share (García-Pastor, 2009; Wildner-Basset, 1984). Therefore, they are expected to be formulated and interpreted differently in different languages.

In this paper, we have focused on a specific kind of linguistic routines, namely, greetings and leave-takings, which perform the discursive functions of opening and ending any interaction respectively. At a social level, greetings enable the speaker to start and/or retake and negotiate his/her social relationship with the hearer at the same time that both convey the conceptualization they have of the relationship, for example, in terms of social distance, power, etc. (cf. Laver, 1981; House, 1996). Leave-taking formulae are linguistic resources participants use to negotiate and temporarily finish their social relation, and, like greetings, they show the conceptualization speaker and hearer have about their social bond. Thus, greetings and leave-takings in the discourse practices of opening and closing a conversation have significant social implications. Fostering an adequate understanding and use of these linguistic devices among language learners is important to help them in their learning of functional or sociocultural aspects of the target language.

Finally, the digital story created for this project follows the approach of scholars such as Burmark (2004) and Robin (2006), who establish that these stories can be deployed by teachers as anticipatory sets at the beginning of a lesson to introduce and develop a particular topic. In our case, we use digital storytelling as a pedagogical tool to design, start and finish a didactic sequence that revolves around linguistic elements and communicative acts used in daily interaction in English such as language chunks or routines.

The concept of didactic sequence is not new, as it is a by-product of educational practice (cf. Crookes, 2003; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Zabala, 1997). In daily classroom practice, teachers always have certain activities in mind that they wish to implement or actually conduct in an ordered, structured and articulated manner to reach certain educational objectives. These activities and the way they are implemented in the classroom setting are in accordance with the instructional method the teacher follows. Thus, for example, for a traditional teaching method, which involves a teacher-fronted model of the classroom and the deployment of the lecture as the form of the lesson, the type of didactic sequence that one should expect would encompass the following phases: a) explanation or delivery of the lesson; b) students' individual study using the textbook; c) repetition of the content that has been learnt; d) teacher's assessment of students' knowledge (Zabala, 1997).

However, for a communicative-oriented teaching method that fosters student participation in the classroom and the use of more interactive lesson forms, the kind of didactic sequence that the teacher may employ is likely to be more complex with a focus on learner needs, interests and motivation, among other things (ibid.). The didactic sequence developed for this study has been conceived within a communicative approach to language teaching with the teacher as its deviser, that is, the organiser of the group of activities proposed, their arrangement and their implementation in the classroom, and the students as its receivers. As stated by Richards and Rodgers (2001), the teacher has therefore the central role of "selecting, adapting, and/or creating the tasks themselves and then forming these into an instructional sequence in keeping with learner needs, interests, and language skill level" (p. 236). These characteristics of the didactic sequence are part of the mainstream definition of this concept, which stands in stark contrasts with more discursive definitions, whereby a didactic sequence is seen to emerge from the interaction between teacher, students and the pedagogical situation that ensues in the classroom (see Aldemar, 2007).

Following the features of a didactic sequence as generally understood, the didactic sequence outlined in this paper also reflects a continuous interaction between oral and written production modes, and listening and reading skills (cf. Camps, 1994). Additionally, such interaction needs to emerge in the context of a discourse genre, and all these elements need to be embedded within an in-class project (Camps, 1994; 2003; Dolz & Schneuwly, 2006). In our didactic sequence the interaction between the five skills (reading, speaking, listening, writing, and spoken interaction) in the activities proposed surfaces in the context of ordinary conversation and storytelling in English

as a foreign language. The project that shapes all these elements consists of the use of digital storytelling to practice linguistic routines in the target language.

Lastly, the didactic sequence presented in this study also follows the general structure established for this didactic device in the literature: an initial or preparatory stage, which usually contains production on the part of the students, a longer production phase, and the evaluation of learning outcomes at the end and throughout the sequence (Camps, 1994; 2003; Dolz & Schneuwly, 2006; Zabala, 1997). Nevertheless, we have adopted Dolz and Schneuwly's (2006) model of didactic sequences in this research, since, *inter alia*, it places emphasis on communication. An explanation of the didactic sequence designed for this study according to this model is provided in the following paragraphs.

III. The Didactic Sequence

a. Participants and General Description

As already mentioned, the participants in this study are first-year students of the Faculty of Education at the University of Valencia enrolled in the course "English as a Foreign Language for Primary Education Teachers". These students need to take this course to fulfill the requirement of the four-year degree established by the Spanish Ministry of Education in order to become primary school teachers. We have worked with two different classes (Group A and Group B) of thirty students each (and within each class we arranged students in 10 groups of three). Group A was a rather homogeneous group of 19 female and 11 male learners, aged 18-22. With the exception of five students, all of them had just finished high school and were supposed to have an intermediate level of English, i.e., a B1 level in the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2001). Group B, by contrast, was more heterogeneous, since it was composed of 21 female and 9 male students, and the age difference among the students was more pronounced. There were 10 older students, aged 35-44, and 20 students, aged 18-25.

In both groups, students' level of English varied significantly. While 70% had a solid intermediate level as far as reading and understanding written English are concerned, their writing, listening and speaking abilities in this language corresponded to a beginner level. In the case of the older students, although they had not taken English lessons for many years, it was remarkable that their motivation was higher, and so they put more effort and dedication than the younger lot. Consequently, their work was among the best.

As a first step, we evaluated students' command of English regarding the use of greetings and leave-takings as expressions to start and close a conversation. Students were asked to make a list of all the different ways they knew to say *hello* and *good-bye* in English. As already mentioned, these expressions are part of the linguistic routines native speakers use on a daily basis. Being acquainted with these linguistic resources reflects a basic level of English, since these linguistic elements are necessary to initiate or establish any interaction. This activity allowed the instructor to be aware of the repertoire learners already had in the foreign language. Moreover, we also asked students to write a short dialogue for two different situations in order to assess their ability to use the target language in context.

Situation A: You are having a coffee with your sister in Starbucks and then you see a friend. You introduce your sister to your friend.

Situation B: You are at home and your mobile phone rings. It's your friend. He or she wants to ask you for another friend's mobile phone number.

Table 1. Situations provided to the students for their dialogues

This assignment was meant to function as a linguistic needs analysis (Richards, 1990), helping both teachers and students to detect the aspects of the foreign language on which they need to work. Most importantly, it allowed us to adapt subsequent activities according to the students' mistakes throughout the didactic sequence. In this particular study, we observed that the majority

of the learners showed difficulties using basic linguistic routines in a simple conversation. Some of their most common mistakes are listed in table 2.

<p>Functional mistakes on greetings:</p> <p>Example 1: -"Hi, who is?"</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">-"I am Peter."</p> <p>Example 2: -"Hello, I'm nice to meet you"</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">-"And you."</p> <p>Example 3: -"I nice to meet you"</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">-"Enchanted" or "I too"</p> <p>Functional mistakes in introducing someone:</p> <p>Example 1: -"Do you meet my sister?"</p> <p>Example 2: -"I'm go to introduce you"</p> <p>Example 3: -"Do you meet she?"</p> <p>Grammar and sentence structure mistakes:</p> <p>Example 1: -"Do you have the Peter's mobile phone number?"</p> <p>Example 2: -"I'm seeing TV."</p> <p>Example 3: -"I don't see you for a long time"</p> <p>L1 interfering effects:</p> <p>Example 1: -"Hello, Maria. Say me."</p> <p>Example 2: -"No, I haven't the Pablo telephone number."</p> <p>Example 3: -"What's happens?"</p>

Table 2 Common mistakes made by the students

As we can see in Table 2, students' initial production highlighted not only the problems they had when dealing with linguistic routines, but also how they often used literal translation in order to convey their attempts to greet someone and to communicate in different situations. Thus, this first production enabled the teacher to circumscribe students' capacities and their main difficulties, and to adjust the following workshops to the student's needs. It constituted an invaluable way of pointing out both to the teacher and the students the path they needed to follow in order to achieve the teaching-learning objectives.

Students' awareness of the learning process is essential in a didactic sequence (Dolz and Schneuwly, 2006). This is why, after the dialogues had been written, students were asked to discuss the difficulties they had found when writing them and the mechanisms they had used in order to overcome these difficulties. The discussion lead to the establishment of different learning objectives to work on during the following workshops. Therefore, students were completely involved in the development of the didactic sequence, and contributed to set the linguistic objectives and the contents of the activities. This provided them with a sense of responsibility for their learning and academic awareness, which has been strongly encouraged recently in the European context (Council of Europe, 2001; 2003).

At this stage, students were also told the aims of the project, i.e. the final task they would have to carry out in groups at the end of the sequence. They had to create and display a digital story

consisting of an introduction, a conflict and a resolution, and containing both a narrative and a dialogue in which they used daily linguistic routines. The explanation of this objective gave a purpose to the whole set of workshops planned.

Certainly, it is important to introduce a context which allows students to use the language for a real purpose and, as they are more likely to be engaged in this kind of task, it may motivate them further in their language learning process. The different activities planned for the workshops are therefore no longer viewed as mere linguistic tasks; but they acquire a larger and more significant purpose in relation to the final project that the students need to create. This final production allows them to put into practice and to integrate what they have learnt throughout the sequence. It creates a space where they can use both the linguistic elements they already knew, and the ones they have learnt. By comparing their initial productions with the final outcome, students and teacher can also gain awareness of the learning that has taken place and whether the workshops have been efficient. Moreover, working in groups on a digital story can develop students' collaborative skills, as they have to plan, negotiate and make decisions.

In order to help them visualize better the project they were expected to carry out, we made them watch three episodes of the digital story we had created. Thus, our digital story was used both as a model for the students of what they had to produce, and as a tool within the workshops in order to study and practice linguistic routines and other aspects of the target language. Our digital story consists of different episodes displaying everyday situations such as introducing oneself and others, talking to someone at a party, going out for dinner, talking on the phone, chatting on the internet, saying good-bye at the airport, asking for directions, etc. Each episode takes approximately two minutes and allows the teacher to focus on different aspects of the language. The episodes can be used independently or as a part of a whole story, depending on the aims of the instructor and the students' needs. The main protagonists of our digital story are a Spanish young man, called Nacho, and an English speaking woman called Sarah. The story shows how these two young characters meet, fall in love and are separated when Sarah has to go back to London. The digital story makes use of communicative situations that students are likely to encounter in real life and that may be appealing to them. By presenting two characters of different nationalities it also attempts to foster intercultural awareness and it highlights the importance of the English language as a significant communicative medium across cultures (Crystal, 2003).

The digital story has been specifically designed for the students, which means that the language used has been selected and graded. It is thus adapted to their level of competence. As Dolz and Schneuwly (2006) indicate, the model used in a didactic sequence does not need to be based on 'authentic' language samples, as its main purpose is to function as an example of what the students themselves have to produce. The document must therefore be exemplary, accessible and adequate in length. Moreover, by combining sound and vision, digital storytelling provides a full and stimulating context from which the meaning can be inferred. It thus fulfils a psychological, linguistic, cognitive, socio-cultural, and pedagogical function.

b. The workshops

Once students had become familiar with the kind of work they were expected to produce at the end of the sequence, the set of workshops intended to guide them towards this goal began. In these workshops, students were able to work on the general and specific problems that had appeared in their initial production and the instructor provided them with the tools they needed to learn from their mistakes and overcome their initial difficulties.

i. Workshop 1

In workshop 1 students watched episodes 2 and 3 of the digital story. Before, we had asked them to pay special attention to linguistic routines. The first activity was to identify the greetings used by the two speakers who take part in the conversation in episode 2: Sarah and Nacho. Since the situation is similar to the one in the task given to students for their initial production (Table 1), they were already familiar with it. Kimberley lives in Valencia and her sister Sarah just came to visit her from London. It is Kimberley's birthday party and she has invited all her friends over. At some point, Kimberley introduces Sarah to her friend Nacho.

We had students listen to it twice and then they were provided with the following listening comprehension questions:

<p><i>Questions on episode two</i></p> <p>1-What does Sarah say to Nacho when they meet?</p> <p>2-How does Nacho reply?</p> <p>3-Why does Sarah think that Nacho is “quick”?</p> <p>4-What is a pickup line? Can you think of an example?</p>

Table 3. Listening comprehension exercise on episode 2

Once students had discussed the answers in pairs, they watched the episode again to check if their responses were adequate.

Episode 3 presents two telephone conversations: the first conversation takes place between Nacho and Kimberley and the second one between Nacho and Sarah. Unlike the first activity, students were only familiar with the first situation (Table 1) at this point. In the first telephone exchange, Nacho asks Kimberley for her sister’s number. In the second one, he calls Sarah to invite her out to dinner. Students watched the episode twice and had to pay attention to linguistic routines. Then, they worked on the following listening comprehension questions:

<p><i>Questions on episode three – Part I</i></p> <p>1-What does Kimberley say to answer the phone call?</p> <p>2-Why is Nacho calling?</p> <p>3-What expressions do they use to end the conversation?</p> <p><i>Questions on episode three – Part II</i></p> <p>4-What does Sarah say to answer the phone call?</p> <p>5-What does she ask to know who is calling? How does Nacho reply?</p> <p>6-What does Nacho ask Sarah?</p> <p>7-Where do they agree to meet?</p> <p>8-What expressions do they use to end the conversation?</p>
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Table 4. Listening comprehension exercise on episode 3

As in previous activities students worked in pairs to discuss the answers. Once they had finished, they watched both episodes one more time to analyze greetings and leave-takings.

ii. Workshop 2

This session was used to work on the mistakes students made in their initial production. They received this production with the parts that needed to be corrected highlighted. In order to have students reflect on them, we only indicated “w.g” for *wrong greeting*, “rg/ss” for *revise grammar or sentence structure*, and “l.t” for *literal translation*. Instructors made clear that mistakes are a crucial source of information in order to learn and so they had to be seen as something positive (Ellis, 1994; James, 1998).

Next, we distributed to students a sheet in which we had included their most common mistakes. They recognized some of the sentences as their own, which increased their interest in correcting them. Once again the aim was to have them learn from their own mistakes. Most importantly, by

sharing them with their classmates, we were emphasizing the idea of learning together and minimizing the relevance of who made the error.

Students were given some time to work in pairs on the mistakes and then the teacher checked their answers and showed to the whole class the different options. Students then received a handout with phrases in English that are commonly used to say hello, goodbye and to introduce to strangers. They were required to incorporate such phrases into the dialogues written during their initial production. Then, they did a role play with these dialogues.

iii. Workshop 3

In the third workshop, students watched the episode 4 of our digital story, which presents the two protagonists going out for dinner. However, this time the digital story was displayed without sound, so that the students could only watch the images and had to guess what was happening in the story and what the characters were saying. They had to use their imagination and create a dialogue using the linguistic routines they had learnt in the previous lessons. After that, the students read out loud their written assignments, which had to match the pictures of the video. At the end of the workshop, the digital story was presented with sound and the students could then compare it with their own dialogues. This workshop was intended as a practice for their final project. It fostered students' creativity and allowed both students and teacher to check the progress of the former regarding the use of linguistic routines in specific contexts. It also enabled the instructor to see the difficulties that were still remaining and to further adjust the following sessions to the students' needs. One of the main areas to work on were students' oral skills. Due to their lack of confidence, they were very shy to speak English in front of their classmates. Likewise, they had a habit to translate expressions literally from Spanish into English and to mix up the use of the pronouns "his" and "her". Some of these problems could be dealt with in the next workshop, which focused on a series of activities that covered different aspects of the foreign language.

iv. Workshop 4

In this session students were provided with several handouts containing different tasks that allowed them to practice some grammatical and lexical elements. As these were based on their difficulties and their mistakes in the previous sessions, the points to work were no longer seen as mere grammatical exercises. On the contrary, they were perceived as meaningful tools that enabled them to write their final production. The activities to carry out depend on the difficulties detected and therefore they may vary from one session to another. In this case, we devoted this lesson to work particularly on linguistic devices such as verb tenses, prepositions and pronouns, key in narratives. Students were given several activities that included a bank of words, so they had to fill the gaps by using a verb in the correct tense, a preposition or a pronoun. They also had to correct a small text containing different mistakes related to these categories. It was gratifying to see that they understood for example the difference between the present simple and the present continuous, and how to apply it in a regular conversation. i.e. Pam: Hello, Toni. Where are you going? (instead of "where do you go" as they used to say because of their attempt to translate directly from Spanish to English)

The second part of the workshop was centred on lexical and idiomatic aspects of the foreign language. Since in their final story students would have to combine narrative and dialogue, this workshop was also used to work on the structure of a narrative, hence sentence connectors. Students had to identify the meaning of some connectors and use them by integrating them in a given text. These exercises were meant to prepare them for the following workshop, in which they would have to start writing the final written production. Therefore, throughout the sequence, contents appear in a cyclical way: new contents are progressively incorporated to those which have been previously learnt. This is likely to enrich students' knowledge and allows them to carry out more complex activities in the foreign language.

v. Workshop 5

The aim of this workshop was to have students start writing the story that they would later use in their final project: a digital story. In the guidelines, we reminded them about the importance of using linguistic routines, but also we gave them a list of common pickup lines. They were required to include at least one in their story.

<p><i>Pickup lines</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hey, I'm new in town. Can I get directions to your house? • Hey, am I dreaming? You cannot be real • Did you just fall from heaven? You are an angel! • Call me anytime day or night if you need someone to talk to • Here is my cell number, work number and home number; I want to make sure I do not miss your call. • What is a fine woman like you doing shopping by yourself? • Girl, the way you look in those jeans makes me want to cry

Table 5 Pickup lines provided to the students for their stories

The goal of this assignment was to motivate students into writing the story. They normally find using pickup lines amusing and creating a situation in which there is interaction between young people like them that meet for the first time in a party or a disco. This was clearly demonstrated in their final work as it will be shown later.

On the other hand, we also gave them instructions for the structure of the story. The story had to be well organized and include the following pattern:

<p><i>Structure of the story</i></p> <p>1-Setting: It introduces the main characters and the initial situation of the story.</p> <p>2-Conflict: It presents some kind of problem or goal to reach and the tension around it.</p> <p>3-Resolution: It is the end of the story and presents a solution to the conflict.</p>

Table 6 Instructions for the structure of the story

They also had to include interaction and dialogue between the characters. On the whole, the story had to be approximately two pages long.

vi. Workshop 6

Peer correction encourages students to work together and learn from each other. As Asifa Sultana (2009) has argued and our students' final comments and reflections later confirmed, "peer correction is implemented in classrooms to enhance learner autonomy, cooperation, interaction and involvement" (p. 12). In this workshop, students had to exchange their written productions and try to correct each other's mistakes. This session was designed in order to make students realize the importance of revising their texts during the writing process. Anne Raimés (1983) has pointed out that checklists are useful in order to make students focus on specific characteristics of the written text during peer feedback activity. In order to help students with the feedback session, we created the following checklist.

Does the story have a clear introduction?
Do the characters use linguistic routines such as greetings and leave takings?
Can you understand the development of the plot? Does it create interest?

Does the story have a clear ending?
Is each sentence in the story clear and complete?
Can any long sentences be improved by breaking them down into shorter units and recombining them?
Does each verb agree with its subject ?
Are all verb forms correct and consistent?
Do pronouns refer clearly to the appropriate nouns ?
Is each word spelled correctly?
Is the punctuation correct?
Do you have any suggestions to improve the story?

Table 7. Checklist

Students had to write down their observations and comments regarding these aspects. Besides correcting the mistakes they found in their classmates’ production, they could also make suggestions related to the plot and the language used in the text. The objective was to provide students with another opinion on their work and to give them the opportunity to revise it according to the feedback they had received. After correcting it, the students were expected to discuss with each other the strengths and weaknesses problems and the good points observed in their writing. The authors of the text could then react to their partner’s comments and exchange opinions. However, at the end of the discussion they had to make decisions and modify their texts accordingly. Thus, this activity promotes cooperative learning. As De Almeida (2007) has stated, “the use of *peer feedback* aims at helping learners become more critical of their own texts. As they listen to their peers’ views on what they have written and have the opportunity to reshape their writing, they are exercising the ability to detach themselves from their texts and read it with the target reader’s eyes” (p. 5). Through this activity, and as their final production reveal, students are made to revise their productions in depth, to reflect on their own performance and to find ways of improving their work.

vii. Workshop 7

When reaching this stage, the written text is ready and the students are prepared to turn it into a digital story. In this workshop they learnt how to use the digital story software “Microsoft Photo Story 3”. Students chose pictures related to their story and arranged them in the proper order to match its development. Then, they read the text out loud and recorded the voices that were to accompany the images of the story. They had to bear in mind the intonation, the pauses and the mood of the characters in order to make the story convincing. As a final step, they added the music and generated the video.

viii. Final production

Ultimately, to complete the didactic sequence students had to present their final production, that is, their digital stories to the rest of the class. They had to do this along with an introduction in which they explained the rationale behind the pickup line selected and the story developed around it.

After watching each video there was time for discussing its content. First of all, we invited each group of students to comment on their experience putting the story together: the challenges, the progress they think they had made and how the overall process had helped them to improve their linguistic skills. Second, the rest of the class had to identify the use of linguistic routines and to make remarks on the originality of the story. This discussion served as a final reflection on the educational benefits of digital storytelling and how it had contributed to their learning of English.

IV. Results

The students were aware of the assessment criteria, as they were given a handout containing the different aspects that were going to be considered in the evaluation. This information was also used by them as a checklist, before handing in their work:

Assessment criteria
PART 1 – STORY
-Use of greetings
-Use of leave-takings
-Use of pickup lines
-General use of dialogues and interaction
-Use of vocabulary
-Grammar: use of verbs, past tenses, connectors, etc.
PART 2 – PLOT
-Introduction
-Conflict
-Resolution
-Intercultural aspects
-Coherence of the story
PART 3 – DIGITAL STORYTELLING
-Oral English: pronunciation
-Use of photos that match the story and the dialogues
-Overall final product and use of Photo Story 3
PART 4 – STUDENTS’ REFLECTIONS
-Comment on your group the advantages of the use of digital storytelling to improve your English.
-In your opinion, what is the skill that you practiced the most?
-Write down an insightful reflection on what you have learned.

Table 8. Assessment information provided to the students

The final productions showed a clear improvement regarding the use of linguistic routines. Compared to the initial texts which were written before the didactic sequence, the final outcome contained more complex structures and a varied range of expressions used to start and to end a conversation. The students were able to construct coherent stories that included both a narrative and a dialogue. Greetings and leave-takings were thus used in context, within a communicative situation, and embedded within the dialogues created. Most of the students also included one or several pick-up lines in very real situations. In addition, before creating the videos, the students were asked to turn in their scripts which provided us with the opportunity to check their progress as far as their use of grammar.

Although the level of English and the number of mistakes made varied from one text to the other, we observed a general attempt at using linguistic routines in a correct way and in the appropriate contexts. The students had been able to distinguish between the standard written language used by the narrator, and the oral language used in the interactions. The distinction appears clearly in the texts not only by the use of linguistic routines, but also by the use of exclamations, adjacency pairs, or pause and hesitation fillers in the dialogues: "Mmm...I think so, but I'm not sure, maybe! Why?"; "P- Hello, Sussie, it's been a long time! You look great! / S- Oh my god! It's you! It's a pleasure to see you again".

Some of the grammatical and lexical mistakes made in the initial productions did not appear in the final texts anymore. For example, in the initial productions we could find sentences such as: "-Hello Maria. How are you? / - Hi Pilar, I'm fun, thanks. What's happen?". In the final outcome, students were able to write these structures correctly: "-Hello Tom, how are you? / - I'm fine, thank you! I've already finished reading the book. Would you like to meet up with me?"; "- Hello John! / - Hi, Maria! What's up?"

In the narrative part, the sentences used are more complex and they follow the rules of standard written language: "One day, while Sophie is at school with her colleagues, during the break, a handsome man enters the room. He's the new intern, John".

The most common mistakes found in the texts concern the use of prepositions, verbal tenses, and possessive pronouns. The linguistic routines seen throughout the didactic sequence were used adequately. However, there was still a structure that most of the students failed to employ correctly: "- nice to meet you. / - Me too".

We could still find grammar and sentence structure mistakes such as "one photo's mum" or "they are meeting in a Jenny's cafeteria". In spite of this, most of the functional mistakes described in Table 2 had been overcome at this stage. On a different note, due to the importance given to interactive speech throughout the sequence, in the case of some students, this resulted in some orthographical errors induced by a focus on correct pronunciation: "or my gad!" (used for "Oh my God!").

Of the twenty groups (3 students per group) that created the digital storytelling, nineteen presented well-constructed stories. Seven groups had outstanding marks due to the originality and coherence of the plot, the adequacy of the images selected, the use of the English language and the good pronunciation and intonation of the students. There were nine groups that had more problems with the correct use of the language and four groups had difficulties regarding the creation of the video (blurred or pixelated images, sound problems, video motion, image-voice adequacy). However, and despite their difficulties, all the students made a clear effort to pronounce correctly.

	Improvement in the use of linguistic routines	Correct use of pick-up line	Improvement in the use of oral English: pronunciation	Final work still includes grammar mistakes	Outstanding final work with the DST. Grade: A	Above-average final work with DST. Grade: B	Acceptable final work with DST, Grade: C	Students' satisfaction and positive reflection
Number of groups (20)	20	17	17	13	7	9	4	20

Table 9. Final results overview

All the groups were also required to hand in a reflection on their experience and the advantages that they found in the use of digital storytelling in learning and using EFL. It is significant that all of them highlighted the amusing and creative dimensions of DST, and its potential to motivate learners of English. They all agreed that it had helped them to improve their written and oral skills, but particularly their pronunciation and intonation:

Speaking is especially difficult for adults because we feel ashamed and ridiculous [even if] we have the knowledge to write the script with an acceptable level of grammar and vocabulary, We think that *speaking* is the skill that we practiced the most and we did it, in a certain way, avoiding the traditional fear of oral exercises. Furthermore, recording our voices allowed us to listen to ourselves and to discover our major pronunciation problems (Student's reflection).

After making the digital story, we have developed different skills like writing, because when we created the story, we reviewed the writing, taking into account the use of pickup line, expressions and advanced vocabulary. Other aspect to consider was the pronunciation, because when we listened to ourselves, we were conscious of our mistakes and corrected them. This has been the skill we have practiced more, because the digital story is based mainly on an oral expression. This work was a new and useful experience about our teaching-learning process. (Student's reflection)

Students were aware that in order to create the video they had to revise their written production thoroughly, correct the mistakes, look for new vocabulary, check the good pronunciation of the words (some of them admitted having checked the pronunciation of some words online). Finally, many of the groups also highlighted the importance of teamwork in the creation of the video and how this assignment gave them the opportunity to get to know their classmates better, negotiate their ideas and make decisions.

V. Conclusions

The use of digital storytelling in the class of second language acquisition constitutes a pedagogical tool that can be included within the frame of a didactic sequence. Following the methodology established by Dolz and Schneuwly, this paper has shown how it is possible to develop a series of workshops that revolve around a digital story in order to work with students on linguistic elements and communicative acts used in daily interaction. The technological devices involved throughout the process are expected to generate interest, attention and motivation for the current "digital generation" students that we find in our classrooms. Furthermore, it is intended to foster cooperative learning through which students work independently following the guidelines given.

Throughout the didactic sequence the teacher plays an important role at the beginning when according to his initial observations, he can elaborate and adapt the different workshops to the students' needs and abilities. Some of the questions he should face beforehand are: what are the

objectives of the didactic sequence? How do the workshops constitute a progression of interrelated activities which reinforce and consolidate each other in establishing the final outcome? In this way, the teacher has the opportunity to individualize the work students do and monitor their progress. At this stage, his role as a teacher is more of a guide leading students through their learning and letting them use the language creatively to write their stories.

Lastly, the educational value of this project is ultimately intended to serve as an example on how digital storytelling can be incorporated in the teaching of English as a foreign language. We expect to encourage other scholars to generate new didactic sequences using our model as a source for their professional development.

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Appendix

	Objectives	Activities	Material	Procedure	Time
Initial Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Test students' initial knowledge and ability of linguistic routines -Adaptation of language in different contexts. Adequacy of register. -Development of language skills: writing, reading, speaking and listening 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1-In pairs, students make a list of all the different ways that they know to say hello and good-bye 2-Students write a dialogue in a given context. They will be given two different situations, so they will have to adapt the dialogue to each of them. 3-Reflection on the difficulties and establishment of targets to work on. 4- Presentation of the aims of the project: create their own digital story 5- Display of three episodes of our digital story. (Episodes 1, 2, 3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Hand-out with the instructions -One photocopy per group 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1-Students in pairs. 2-Students in groups 3-Teacher and students 4-Teacher to the whole class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -5 min -20 min -15 min -10 min
Workshop 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Introduce the relevance of linguistic routines in daily interaction -Identify greetings and leave-takings. -Development of language skills: listening, reading, speaking 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Listening. Display of the digital story (Episodes 2, 3).related to linguistic routines. 2-Listening comprehension exercises. 3-Analysis of the different parts of the conversation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Greeting -Intention -Leave-taking 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1-Computer, head-projector, screen. 2-Audio 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1-Students individually 2-Students in pairs. 3-Teacher and students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -10 min -20 min -20 min
Workshop 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Make students aware of their mistakes. -Learn a list of common expressions to say hello, to introduce someone and to say good-bye. -Development of language skills 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1-Show students a list of the most common mistakes they have made in their original production. Correct them together 2-Return to students their original work in which now we have highlighted the relevant mistakes and those parts that need to be corrected. 3-Incorporate the given expression into the dialogues written during the initial production. 4-Role play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Hand-out with students' mistakes -Hand-out with the expressions -Students' notebooks 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1-Students in groups 2-Students in groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -25 min -10 min -15 min -10 min
Workshop 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Practice of the linguistic routines. -Development of language skills 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1-Students watch episode 4 of the digital story but only the images without sound. 2-They imagine what is happening and create a dialogue using the linguistic routines. 3- Students read the dialogue to the rest of the class 4-Display of the digital story with sound. Students compare it to their story. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1-Computer, head-projector, screen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Students in pairs. - Students to the whole class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -5 min -25 min -10 min -10 min
Workshop 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Review and work on the grammar mistakes detected throughout the first lessons. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1-Language exercises based on the difficulties detected. Special focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Grammar: verbs, prepositions, pronouns. -Vocabulary and idioms. -Use of English in context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Hand-out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Teacher to the whole class -Students in pairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -50 min
Workshop 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Learn pickup lines and how to use them in context. -Learn how to organize a story: narrative vs dialogue 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1-Students create a story in which they can use a pickup line. This is a written task. 2-Make sure the story has an introduction, a conflict and a resolution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Hand-out with the expressions -Students' notebooks 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1-Students in groups 2-Students in groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -30 min
Workshop 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Identify linguistic routines -Identify the different parts of the story -Read, identify mistakes and improve a written text. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1-Peer-editing. Students exchange their work, correct the mistakes and make suggestions related to the plot. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Errors checklist 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1-Students in groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -25 min
Workshop 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Create a digital story -Development of the language skills 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1-Choose pictures in relation with your story and arrange them in the proper order. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Computer, digital story software, 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1-Students in groups 2-Students in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 120 min

		2-Add the voice bearing in mind the intonation, pauses and mood of the characters. 3-Add the music	headphones and mics.	groups 3-Students in gr	
Final production	-Presentation of the digital stories -Discuss and assess the students' work -Reflect on the improvements accomplished that took place during the learning process	1-Introduction and display of the digital story. Rationale behind the pickup line selected and the story developed around it 2-Discussion and assessment of each of the digital stories. 3-Reflection on how the use of digital storytelling has contributed to the learning of linguistic routines and other language skills	1-Computer, head-projector, screen. 2-Audio 3-Evaluation questionnaire	1-Students to the whole class 2-Teacher and students 3-Students individually	90 min

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