



**Universidad de Concepción  
Dirección de Postgrado  
Facultad de Educación –  
Programa de Magíster en Innovación en la Enseñanza, Aprendizaje y Evaluación  
del Inglés**

# **THE CONTRIBUTION OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING TO FOSTER 8TH GRADERS' SKILL TO EXPRESS OPINIONS IN L2**

**Tesis para optar al grado de Magíster en Innovación en la Enseñanza,  
Aprendizaje y Evaluación del Inglés**

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**Concepción, Chile**

**2024**

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## Acknowledgements

*I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my beloved Vanessa, whose unconditional support and understanding have been the cornerstone of this journey. Your love, patience, and specially your quiet confidence gave me the strength to keep moving forward even during the most challenging times. Your belief in my potential has compelled me to persevere, and I am forever thankful for your presence in my life.*

*To my incredible group, I extend my heartfelt appreciation for the insights and shared moments that made these two years unforgettable. Your authenticity, support during difficulties, and kindness have enriched my learning and helped me grow both academically and personally. The memories we created and the lessons we learned together will remain with me as I continue this journey.*

*Finally, I am profoundly grateful to the professors and advisors who guided me throughout this program. Your dedication, expertise, and mentorship have been invaluable, particularly during the most challenging phases of this project. A special thanks to my advisors, whose thoughtful feedback and encouragement pushed me to reach higher and achieve more than I thought possible.*

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## Abstract

This study explores the contribution of digital storytelling to foster 8th graders' skill to express opinions in English as a second language. Based in 21st-century learning frameworks, it employs an action research methodology to integrate DST into English language instruction at an elementary school from a rural area of Ñuble region. Through pre- and post-intervention assessments, focus group, and teacher-researcher reflections, the study demonstrates significant improvements in students' ability to articulate and express opinions in L2, by using Canva to blend multimedia elements available with narrative elements to enhance their message while implementing a DST project, developing linguistic proficiency along the process. Furthermore, the intervention not only enhanced language skills in L2 but also promoted other 21st century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and digital literacy. Findings emphasize DST's potential as an innovative pedagogical tool, though further research is recommended to examine its long-term impact on critical thinking and broader educational contexts.

**Key words:** Digital Storytelling, Expressing Opinion, 21st century skills, Critical thinking, Canva

## Resumen

Este estudio explora la contribución del relato digital (Digital Storytelling, DST) para fomentar la habilidad de los estudiantes de octavo grado de expresar opiniones en inglés como segunda lengua. Basado en marcos de aprendizaje del siglo XXI, emplea una metodología de investigación-acción para integrar el DST en la enseñanza del inglés en una escuela primaria de una zona rural de la región de Ñuble. A través de evaluaciones antes y después de la intervención, grupos focales y reflexiones del docente-investigador, el estudio demuestra mejoras significativas en la capacidad de los estudiantes para articular y expresar opiniones en la L2. Esto se logró utilizando Canva para combinar elementos multimedia con elementos narrativos, mejorando su mensaje mientras se implementaba un proyecto de DST y desarrollando la competencia lingüística durante el proceso. Además, la intervención no solo fortaleció las habilidades lingüísticas en la L2, sino que también promovió otras habilidades del siglo XXI como el pensamiento crítico, la creatividad y la alfabetización digital. Los hallazgos destacan el potencial del DST como una herramienta pedagógica innovadora, aunque se recomienda realizar investigaciones adicionales para examinar su impacto a largo plazo en el pensamiento crítico y en contextos educativos más amplios.

**Palabras clave:** Narración digital, expresar opinión, habilidades para el siglo XXI, pensamiento crítico, Canva

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Problem statement

Adolescence is defined as the age frame between 10 and 19 years (WHO, 2014), a period in which adolescents are transitioning into a phase that influences both their physical growth and cognitive development. During this stage, they begin to grasp abstract concepts and make significant strides in their language skills, which, as Chaku and Kanaya (2024) highlight, helps them communicate more effectively, develop their own perspectives on the world, and feel a strong need to express these views. Within this age frame, we can find Chilean EFL 8th graders, who should reach an A2 level of English (CEFR standards) by the end of this grade according to the National Curriculum Guidelines and Curricular Prioritization (Mineduc, 2023) for English in elementary education. Furthermore, 8th grade learners should be able to engage in basic interactions, including expressing personal opinions (Mineduc, 2023). To support these learning outcomes, the 8th-grade EFL national curriculum is designed not only to build competence, but also to cultivate critical and creative thinking skills. Students are given the opportunity to engage in authentic, meaningful tasks and projects to express their individual perspectives, thereby promoting language development in a constructive and meaningful way. To support these goals, the 8th-grade EFL national curriculum aims not only to enhance students' language proficiency, but also to foster their critical and creative thinking skills (Ministry of Education, 2023).

Nevertheless, the current state of English proficiency in Chile evidences a gap between the expectations set by the National Curriculum and the actual outcomes. According to the Education First English Proficiency Index (EF EPI, 2023), Chilean students rank relatively low in English proficiency compared to other Latin American countries. Many 8th graders, while eager to express themselves, often lack the necessary tools or opportunities to share their opinions and struggling to achieve the expected A2 level. This issue has also been pointed out by the State authorities, who have concluded that, due to the disruption of in-person classes during the pandemic in 2020, and a focus on superficial learning, many of Chilean students have not been able to develop higher thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis across all the different subjects in the national curriculum including EFL class (Mineduc, 2024). There is an emphasis on rote memorization that often leads to a lack of motivation and engagement, as a result, students do not feel respected as mature individuals capable of critical thinking as explained by Villarroel et al. (2018), who mentions that these gaps hinder students' ability to navigate complex academic and real-world scenarios, which can have lasting consequences for their academic trajectories, career prospects, and their ability to contribute meaningfully to society. This discrepancy stresses the need for pedagogical strategies that not only foster linguistic competence but also create a conducive environment for students to develop the skills necessary to develop higher order thinking skills.

Encouraging students to express their opinions fosters active learning, where they become engaged participants in their learning process, increasing motivation (Villarroel et al., 2018). This often leads to better retention of information and development of critical skills. Articulating and defending their viewpoints also helps students build argumentation and reasoning skills, as noted by Villarroel and Bruna (2019). Furthermore, Research by Thomas (2000) supports the idea that allowing students to express their opinions increases their motivation, and they develop a deeper connection to the material, enhancing their overall learning experience, being able to engage in basic interactions, including expressing personal opinions (Goldstein et al., 2015). Darling-Hammond and Wentworth (2010) emphasize that the focus on 21st-century skills, such as analytical, synthetic, and interpretative abilities, is crucial for fostering effective problem-solving and self-reflection among students.

The practice of expressing opinions creates a classroom atmosphere that values dialogue and discussion, where students exchange ideas and challenge each other's perspectives, thereby enriching their learning and critical development. To address these challenges in the teacher-researcher's context, an innovative strategy considered is the implementation of a digital storytelling project. This approach developed by Lambert (2003), leverages technology to create a dynamic and engaging learning environment. Students will use digital tools to express their opinions on various topics. The process begins with students selecting a subject, conducting research, and creatively presenting their perspectives through a digital narrative. The benefits of this approach extend to the development of not only linguistic proficiency but also creativity, digital literacy, and the 4 C's of 21st-century skills (UNESCO, 2024), enhancing both communication and critical thinking skills among students.

## **1.2. General objective:**

The objective of this action research project is to explore the contribution of implementing a digital storytelling project to foster 8th graders' skill to express opinions in L2.

In addition, three specific objectives were included:

- To assess student's performance before and after implementing a digital storytelling project to foster their skill to express opinions.
- To analyze students' perceptions on digital storytelling to promote their skill to express opinions.
- To analyze teacher-researcher's reflections upon the contribution of digital storytelling project to foster 8th graders' skill to express opinions.

## CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study aims to comprehensively explore the pedagogical contribution of using Canva as a multimedia tool to implement a digital storytelling project with the purpose of fostering 8th graders' ability to use English to express their opinions, particularly regarding the cultural influences from foreign cultural elements embedded in their everyday lives, such as anime, K-pop, gaming culture, or Latin urban music. This approach supports the development of 21st-century competencies, with a strong emphasis on enhancing critical thinking skills and promoting the effective use of digital tools. By integrating digital storytelling into the curriculum, the study seeks to create a classroom environment that encourages students to critically examine and interpret cultural elements using English language as L2 to express their personal ideas in the form of opinions.

### 2.1 Expressing Opinions as a 21st-Century Skill

To express an opinion refers to the act of stating personal views about a particular subject. It involves sharing one's perspective, which can be influenced by personal experiences, knowledge, or emotions. (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, p. 45). According to the University of Wollongong (2019), expressing opinions is a fundamental aspect of critical thinking, as it involves articulating personal judgments and engaging in reflective analysis. The Oxford English Dictionary (2024) defines "opinion" as "a view held about a particular issue; a judgment formed, a belief; a religious or political conviction." Expressing opinions requires using language to convey nuance and depth, articulating agreements and disagreements, and defending a stance (Armstrong et al., 2012). Furthermore, it encourages diverse perspectives and fosters a culture that values critical thinking and constructive debate (Garcia & Rodriguez, 2018).

In educational, professional, and civic settings, expressing opinions enhances critical thinking, engagement, and problem-solving skills (Farra & Somasundaran, 2015). Additionally, it emphasizes persuasive writing and argumentation, which are crucial for evaluating and constructing effective arguments.

Despite its importance, Brookfield (2012) identifies challenges such as fear of judgment and lack of confidence that hinder individuals from expressing their opinions. He proposes several strategies to address these barriers, including:

1. **Building Confidence:** Provide opportunities to practice in low-pressure settings.
2. **Challenging the Fear of Being Wrong:** Reinforce that critical thinking is a process of learning and exploration.
3. **Validating Contributions:** Recognize the value of diverse perspectives in discussions.

As a component of 21st-century skills, the ability to express opinions intersects with several key competencies. It aligns with communication, by enabling individuals to articulate ideas effectively, exchange knowledge or opinions, and actively listen; critical thinking, by fostering the ability to differentiate facts from opinions and discover necessary information independently (iCEV, 2023); creativity, by encouraging individuals to embrace inner strengths and explore multiple perspectives (iCEV, 2023); and collaboration, by emphasizing teamwork, valuing diverse viewpoints, and contributing to shared goals (Southwest Charlotte STEM Academy, n.d.).

Fostering environments where individuals can develop and articulate their opinions equips them to navigate and contribute to an increasingly complex global society (SC STEM Academy, 2024).

## **2.2. Digital storytelling**

Digital storytelling is a technology application that involves “various types of multimedia, including computer-based graphics, recorded audio, computer-generated text, video clips, and music (or sound effects) so that it can be played on a computer” (Robin, 2008, P.4) to create and share short narratives. It originated in 1994 at the Center for Digital Storytelling in Berkeley, California (Lambert, 2013). Digital storytelling revolves around the concept of sharing stories and emotions (Brenner, 2014). It enables computer users to become creative storytellers by selecting a topic, conducting research, writing a script, and developing a story. Ohler (2008) points out that these stories typically express a specific viewpoint on a particular topic and incorporate text, graphics, photos, videos, music, and audio narration. It blends the art of storytelling with a combination of digital elements.

The process of creating digital narratives involves conducting research, asking questions, organizing ideas, expressing opinions, and constructing meaningful narratives (Robin, 2008). The narrative is predominantly visual in nature. The scripts for digital storytelling are first-person narratives, presented in the voice and style of the corresponding creator. Consequently, each story focuses on a specific theme, featuring a singular viewpoint typically conveyed within a brief duration of 2 to 3 minutes (Lambert, 2013).

According to Gangan (2014), digital storytelling integrates creativity and multimedia to enrich educational experiences, including schools and higher education institutions, serving to cultivate both technological competencies and personal development (Lambert, 2013). Fostering technological skills while supporting personal development (Kaptan 2024). Students of various age groups can cultivate their unique voices through the creation of digital stories, which may serve as a platform for students to reflect on and analyze their life experiences, connecting them to broader societal and cultural contexts (Khan, 2015).

One of the greatest classroom benefits of digital storytelling is when students create their own digital stories, either individually or in small groups, it becomes a powerful

learning experience that aligns with the skills society expects students to master in the 21st century, in fact, Ranganathan and Kasinathan (2017) argue that digital storytelling nurtures digital literacy by enabling students to explore societal topics through ICT tools and multimedia. At the same time, they enhance their communicative skills by allowing students asking questions, express opinions, create narratives, and write for an audience (Kent 2010). Furthermore, creating a narrative story through digital storytelling cultivates creativity and critical thinking skills in students of all ages. This process involves organizing ideas, conducting research, evaluating information sources, and synthesizing materials into a coherent narrative. (Khan, 2015).

## **2.2.2 Types of digital stories**

The University of Houston has created the Educational Uses of Digital Storytelling website to showcase how digital storytelling is used in K-12 and higher education classrooms (Robin, 2008). The website “educational uses of digital storytelling”, provides information and examples of digital stories. These examples are categorized into three major types, each serving distinct educational purposes: personal or narrative stories, stories that inform or instruct, and stories that retell historical events. This categorization has since become a cornerstone for understanding the educational applications of digital storytelling.

### **2.2.2.1. Personal Narratives**

Personal narrative is the most popular type of digital story, characterized by the author sharing deeply personal experiences. These narratives often highlight significant life events, making them emotionally impactful for both the creator and the audience. According to Lambert (2002) and others, personal digital stories can be further categorized into subtypes that honor the memory of specific people or places, as well as those that delve into life’s adventures, achievements, challenges, and journeys of recovery. This type of storytelling creates a powerful connection between the storyteller and the audience by evoking shared emotions and reflections, Moreover, Brailas (2020), explored the use of digital storytelling as a tool for personal expression and group dynamics. He investigated how creating digital narratives allows individuals to articulate personal experiences while also fostering deeper connections within groups, such as classrooms or therapy settings.

### **2.2.2.2. Stories That Inform or Instruct**

Informative or instructional digital stories are used to convey educational content across various subjects. Teachers employ these stories to present material in areas such as math, science, art, technology, and medical education. Examples include demonstrating how to construct and use a camera, explaining ways to improve health during the aging process, and helping students understand geometry principles through everyday objects. While personal narratives often incorporate historical information, digital stories can blend these methods, such as autobiographical stories using historical material as a backdrop (Robin, 2016). He also highlights the student-centered approach of digital storytelling, where students can create their own instructional stories, fostering deeper learning and skill development. This aligns with 21st-century educational goals, promoting critical thinking, creativity, and digital literacy.

### **2.2.2.3. Stories That Examine Historical Events**

Digital stories can be created to recount historical events using digital media. In classrooms, students might use historical photographs, newspaper headlines, speeches, and other materials to create stories that add depth to past events. Several authors in the past decade have highlighted the value of digital storytelling for examining historical events, for example, Peñalba et al. (2020) explored how digital storytelling can promote historical understanding among students. By engaging in digital storytelling projects, students demonstrated enhanced historical imagination, significance, and perspective-taking, leading to a deeper comprehension of historical events.

### **2.2.3 Digital storytelling components**

Robin (2008), Lambert (2013), and Ohler (2008), agree in identifying seven key elements, linking them to the integration of digital tools in education to form an effective digital story encompass, these are: point of view, dramatic question, emotional content, economy, pacing, voice, and an accompanying soundtrack, emphasizing their role in creating compelling and impactful narratives for educational use (See Table 1):

**Table 1**

*Digital storytelling components*

Point of View	This element focuses on the writer's perspective and the power of expression, highlighting the potency of expression drawn from students' own experiences and understanding.
Dramatic question	The dramatic question holds the audience's attention, generating suspense that requires resolution by the end of the story.
Emotional content	The story's emotional content should evoke a response from the audience, such as laughter, tears, enjoyment, or surprise.
Economy	Digital stories are typically short, around 2-3 minutes, which helps focus the story and makes it manageable for school settings.
Pacing	Pauses and variations in rhythm avert monotony and maintain audience engagement.
Use of their own voice	Digital storytelling offers the opportunity for self-expression as students record themselves narrating their own scripts, fostering active participation.
Soundtrack	Enriches and accentuates the narrative, introducing complexity and depth to the experience.

Source: adapted from Robin (2008)

The research aspect enhances information literacy skills as students evaluate materials for use. Additionally, the narrative nature of digital storytelling necessitates scriptwriting, fostering writing skills. The production phase further cultivates skills such as finding visuals, sounds, and words to effectively convey the story. Students may even acquire skills in producing original visuals, videos, or graphics to communicate messages visually. The incorporation of music or sound effects serves to evoke emotion and engage the audience, while the narration process hones performance abilities (Khan, 2015).

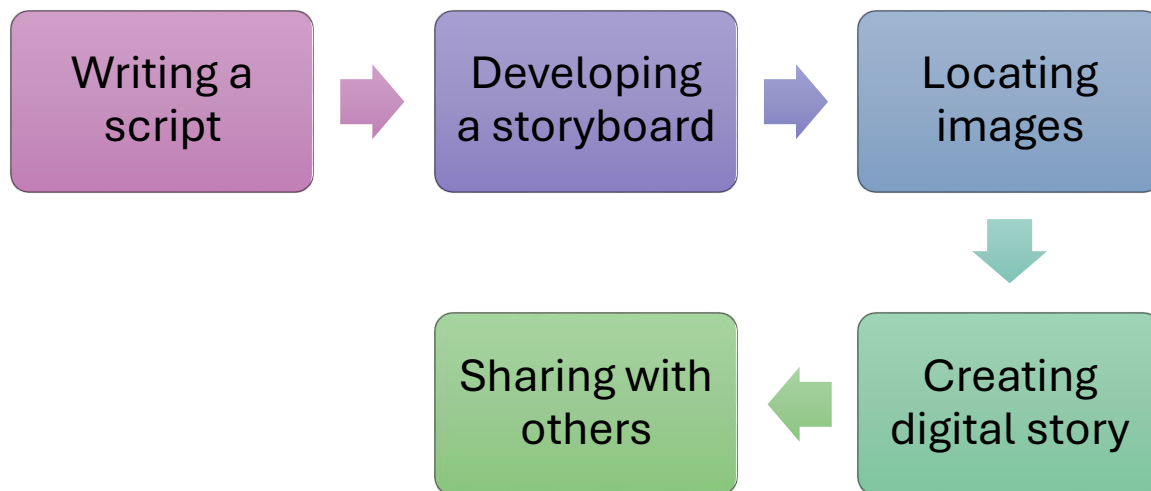
## 2.2.4 Digital story telling process

Engaging in digital storytelling fosters the development of multiple language skills. Barua (2023) highlights that it supports the development of core literacy skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students enhance their reading and writing abilities while storyboarding and refine their speaking and listening skills through collaboration and narration. Ohler (2016) emphasizes that storyboarding in digital storytelling enhances students' reading and writing skills, while collaboration and narration refine their speaking and listening abilities. Furthermore, the process contributes to expanding vocabulary, according to Sadik (2008), digital storytelling facilitates vocabulary expansion as students collaborate to select visuals, share ideas, and engage in authentic experiences, deepening their understanding of text and images.

Moreover, Özüdođru and Cakir (2020), based on the work by Cennamo et al. (2010) propose a structured approach to guide students through the digital storytelling process in the classroom context which illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Steps of digital storytelling*



Source: Özüdođru & Cakir (2020).

### **2.2.2.5 Canva as a multimedia tool for digital story projects**

A central component of a digital storytelling project is the integration of multimedia elements, such as images, videos, and sound. Selecting a user-friendly and easily monitored tool is crucial for ensuring successful implementation. In this study, Canva was chosen for its ability to “democratize design by providing an easy-to-use interface that allows even those without prior design experience to produce professional-quality visuals” (McCarthy, 2020, p. 15).

Research underscores Canva's effectiveness in educational settings. Yundayani et al. (2019) highlight its potential to improve students' writing skills, particularly through digital storytelling projects. Similarly, Salsabila et al. (2023) note that “the Canva platform” enables students to express themselves creatively and personalize their learning experience by creating content that corresponds to their particular style and preferences” (p. 9). Additionally, Rajendran and Din (2023) critically evaluate Canva's potential as a visual media platform, emphasizing its capacity to enhance English language learning through digital storytelling.

## **2.3 Academic skills for the 21st century**

Amid rapid technological advancements and globalization, Chilean educational policies and practices are increasingly prioritizing the integration of new skills into curricula to better equip students for the demands of modern society. Lapek (2018) highlights that 21st-century skills empower students to adapt and respond effectively to the dynamic challenges of an ever-changing world. This perspective has driven advocacy among organizations for a comprehensive re-evaluation of curricula to embed these essential competencies.

The Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21), established in 2008, emphasizes the need to integrate core academic knowledge with critical thinking and social skills, ensuring that students are prepared for the complexities of contemporary life (Salamanca & Quintana, 2020). P21 promotes moving beyond traditional academic content by adopting a broader skill set designed to address current and future challenges. These skills are categorized into three interconnected domains: learning and innovation skills, digital literacy skills, and life skills (P21, 2016), as illustrated in Diagram 1.

Kirschner and Stoyanov (2018) further explain that these competencies not only support academic success but also enhance problem-solving abilities, teamwork, and the capacity to critically evaluate and navigate information—key factors in forming well-rounded opinions. By fostering a discerning and analytical mindset, these skills prepare individuals to thrive in the complexities of the 21st century.

**Figure 2**

*Framework for 21st Century Learning*



Source: taken from Raymundo (2020)

To achieve a truly future-proof education system, it is necessary to integrate these skills into the curriculum effectively. This involves not only teaching these skills but also providing opportunities for students to practice and apply them in authentic, real-world situations

### **2.3.2 Learning and innovation skills (4 C's)**

The first dimension considered by the framework encapsulates the core learning and innovation skills identified by P21 to equip students beyond academic realms (Simon et al, 2022). Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, and Creativity (Marwa et al., 2023). Skills essential for preparing students for the future labor market, also known as the "4 C's".

Modern communication needs accessing, evaluating, and proficiently sharing information across various media formats, including digital platforms (Simon et al., 2022). Effective communication involves more than just language skills; it requires critical

information evaluation to avoid misinformation as students are frequently exposed to a vast array of information sources, they must develop the ability to critically assess the credibility and relevance of the information they encounter.

Collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity are interconnected skills vital for modern learning and problem-solving. According to Kolk (2022), collaboration involves working towards shared goals through group engagement, fostering diverse perspectives and constructive feedback. Active participation in dialogue and mutual listening teaches students the value of teamwork. Critical thinking, as Kirschner and Stoyanov (2018) describe, empowers individuals to make evidence-based decisions through the analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information. Activities such as classification, prediction, justification, and evaluation stimulate this skill. Complementing these, creativity involves generating innovative and valuable ideas, often by challenging norms. Encouraging risk-taking plays a critical role in fostering creativity among learners. Together, these skills create a foundation for dynamic, adaptive, and meaningful learning experiences.

### **2.3.3 Digital literacy skills**

Digital literacy skills involve the ability to solve real-world problems using technology tools while discerning between credible and misleading information (P21, 2016). This skill set equips students to navigate and excel in a technology-driven world, promoting digital citizenship and enhancing problem-solving and critical thinking abilities (Shively, 2017). Njenga (2017), in their work on ICT in education, highlights the need for a comprehensive understanding of digital literacy, viewing it as a holistic process crucial for driving social, economic, and political transformation in specific contexts, while Belshaw (2012) advocates for a holistic approach to digital literacy, empowering individuals to navigate digital society responsibly.

Fu (2013) emphasizes that 21st-century educators and students must possess advanced ICT skills to effectively leverage digital tools for teaching and learning. Similarly, Brown et al. (2015) advocate for a holistic approach to digital education leadership, grounded in digital literacy practices that enable individuals to live, learn, and work effectively in an increasingly digital society. These perspectives reinforce that digital literacy is essential for thriving in a technology-driven environment, promoting the development of digital citizenship alongside enhanced problem-solving and critical thinking skills (Shively, 2017).

Being a critical component of the 21st-century skills framework, digital literacy extends beyond basic digital abilities, requiring comprehensive competencies that foster academic and professional success (Borodkina & Borodkin, 2018). In this context, digital storytelling emerges as a practical pathway for developing digital literacy. Through the use of user-friendly online tools, students transition from technology consumers to creators. Research shows that creating digital stories hones essential 21st-century skills, including critical thinking, effective communication, teamwork, and digital literacy

(Maravelaki, 2023). Digital storytelling emerges as a practical avenue for developing digital literacy.

## **2.4. Project-Based Learning (PBL)**

Zhang (2023) states that Project-Based Learning (PBL) offers a platform for the development of higher-order thinking skills, where students collaboratively work on a project over an extended period, addressing real-world challenges and questions. Teachers facilitate this process, considering several principles: respecting students' interests by allowing them to choose projects, involving knowledge and skills from various disciplines, ensuring projects are valuable to the community, sharing the end products globally, and dedicating time and energy to support students throughout the project.

In addition, Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (2014) argue that collaborative learning experiences contribute to develop positive social interdependence. PBL encourages collaboration as students work together to solve problems, fostering not only language development but also interpersonal skills.

Unlike PBL, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has been popular in language classrooms, focusing on developing communicative competencies. However, TBLT is more language-focused, making it less effective in teaching 21st-century skills. PBL, in contrast, has emerged as a promising approach for developing the 4 C's (Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, and Creativity) in language classrooms (Simon, Lavicza & Dana-Picard, 2022).

Studies, such as those by Guo et al. (2020) and Badr (2021), have shown positive outcomes for PBL in developing the 4 C's. However, these studies leave questions about its effectiveness in regular classrooms. Research by Karyawati and Ashadi (2018) and Puspitasari (2020) demonstrated how PBL can effectively develop the 4 C's, even with varied implementations based on available resources.

### **2.4.2. Project-Based Learning in Language Education**

Project-Based Learning (PBL) has become a transformative instructional approach that promotes active learning through the investigation of real-world challenges and problems (Kokotsaki et al., 2016). In the context of English language teaching (ELT), PBL shifts the focus from traditional teacher-centered practices to student-centered learning, encouraging learners to engage in meaningful communication while developing critical thinking and collaborative skills (Beckett & Slater, 2020).

In PBL, language is not merely a subject of study but a tool for accomplishing tasks and solving problems. This aligns with the communicative language teaching (CLT)

approach, which emphasizes interaction and the practical use of language (Barrot, 2021). By working on projects that mimic real-life contexts, students are exposed to authentic language use and are encouraged to develop both fluency and accuracy.

### **2.4.3. Digital Storytelling in PBL for English Language Learning**

Digital storytelling (DST) is a compelling pedagogical tool within the PBL framework (Robin, 2016). In the context of ELT, digital storytelling facilitates meaningful language use, fosters creativity, and allows learners to express personal experiences and perspectives (Gregori-Signes, 2017).

Combining PBL with digital storytelling in English language education offers multiple benefits. Firstly, it provides learners with opportunities to engage in authentic and meaningful language tasks, which are essential for building confidence and proficiency (Yundayani et al., 2019). Secondly, it fosters a deeper understanding of language and culture by encouraging students to explore topics relevant to their lives and interests. Lastly, DST projects promote a sense of accomplishment and pride in learners, as they create tangible products that can be shared with broader audiences (Borodkina & Borodkin, 2018).

### **2.4.4. The Role of Technology in Digital Storytelling Projects**

The rapid evolution of technology has significantly transformed educational practices, particularly within the framework of Project-Based Learning (PBL). Digital storytelling (DST) has emerged as a highly effective approach, benefiting greatly from advancements in digital tools that make its implementation more accessible and engaging. Tools such as Canva and Adobe Spark offer intuitive and user-friendly interfaces, enabling students to design visually compelling stories without requiring advanced technical expertise (Salsabila et al., 2023). These platforms have democratized content creation, allowing learners to personalize their storytelling projects in ways that foster engagement and motivation.

Rajendran and Din (2023) emphasize that technology in DST enhances English language learning by creating authentic contexts for language use, which are essential for meaningful learning experiences. Through the integration of multimedia elements, such as videos, images, and sound, DST projects enable students to practice and refine their English skills in real-world contexts. This process is particularly valuable in helping learners bridge the gap between theoretical language knowledge and practical communication.

Furthermore, the reflective component of DST is another significant benefit of using technology in this pedagogical approach. Maravelaki (2023) highlights that digital storytelling promotes reflective learning, as students critically evaluate their language use, narrative structure, and the coherence of their ideas throughout the creative process. This

iterative reflection encourages students to analyze their linguistic choices and refine their work, resulting in improved communication skills and higher-quality outputs.

The flexibility of technology in DST also allows for the integration of students' cultural and personal narratives into their learning. By enabling learners to share perspectives and experiences, DST fosters a deeper connection to the language and enhances their motivation (Dogar et al., 2020). Rajendran and Din (2023) argue that this personalization enhances engagement and also facilitates cross-cultural understanding, a crucial aspect of language education in a globalized world.

## **2.5. 21st century skills in the Chilean curriculum**

Salamanca and Quintana (2020) mention that in the Chilean context, efforts are just beginning in this direction, making it imperative to define and systematize a new framework for educational innovation. Therefore, over the past decade, national curricula have undergone modifications to align with the demands of the 21st century. Aiming that students develop thinking skills that enable them to manage the vast amounts of information available and to engage in reflective practices regarding their own learning and thinking (MINEDUC, 2023). This necessity is evident in the National Curriculum for EFL stated by the MINEDUC for the 8th grade, which demonstrates a concerted effort to address the challenges posed by the rapid advancement of technology and the widespread access to media.

Communication is integrated, focusing on meaningful and real-world applications. Speaking activities encourage self-expression, and develop oral fluency through contextualized communicative tasks, while written tasks guide students from structured writing to more creative outputs, fostering clarity and expression. The curriculum promotes collaborative learning by encouraging students to interact and resolve pedagogical tasks in meaningful, real-life contexts that require shared responsibility.

Digital tools are integrated into the learning process to develop skills such as information evaluation, responsible technology use, and creativity. Tasks are designed to connect English learning with other subjects, broadening the applicability and relevance of these skills.

Additionally, there are several learning objectives in the study program for 8<sup>th</sup> grade (Ministerio de Educación, 2023) designed to emphasize the development of critical thinking, communication, and collaborative skills, some of those are:

1. OA 7 (Objective 7): This objective focuses on reacting to texts read or heard through oral presentations, group discussions, and conversations. It encourages students to “make connections with other subjects, their mother tongue and culture, daily life, personal experiences, and other cultures”, “express opinions, make comparisons, and justify them” or “Summarize and synthesize information using simple sentences and brief descriptions (MINEDUC, 2023, P. 17).

2. OA 8 (Objective 8): This objective aims at demonstrating knowledge and use of language in conversations, discussions, and presentations through various functions such as “expressing preferences, and comparisons”, “soliciting and giving information”, “Identifying and describing objects, places, and people”, “sing common words, synonyms, and compound words clearly” and “connecting ideas effectively” (MINEDUC, 2023, P. 18).

3. OA16: This objective focuses on written expression of opinions and making reference to others’ opinions using phrases like: "In my opinion...", "According to...", "I believe that..." (MINEDUC, 2023, p. 20).

4. OA7 for Oral Reaction emphasizes making connections with personal experiences or other cultures, expressing comparisons and opinions with justifications such as "I agree/disagree because..." or “This is more important than...” (MINEDUC, 2023, P. 17).

The outlined objectives place significant emphasis on communication skills, highlighting the importance of using language in authentic, real-life contexts rather than solely analyzing its components or repetitively practicing structures.

These objectives prioritize the development of effective interaction skills, enabling students to present ideas clearly and employ speaking strategies to enhance communication. Literacy skills are fostered through meaningful and contextualized language use, encouraging students to organize information coherently and improve comprehension. By incorporating varied vocabulary and structures in a logical sequence, students strengthen their ability to convey and interpret messages effectively.

Moreover, the development of critical and creative thinking skills is inherently tied to communicative language teaching. This approach equips students to make inferences, ask insightful questions, explore alternatives, and solve problems, drawing on their prior experiences and knowledge of the world. Together, these skills prepare students to engage more effectively in dynamic and interactive learning environments.

## CHAPTER III: METHOD

### 3.1. Type of research

The current study adopts an action research methodology within a real-world classroom setting, aiming to address a specific challenge in English language instruction: enhancing students' skills in expressing opinions. This process involves identifying and systematically addressing a learning gap by engaging both students and the teacher in reflective, collaborative problem-solving, with the goal of deepening the teacher's understanding of students' needs and improving their professional practice (Burns, 2010). Conducted in an authentic educational context, the study adheres to a structured cycle—planning, action, observation, and reflection—to implement pedagogical modifications aimed at improving students' language proficiency, engagement, and overall learning outcomes (Banegas & Consoli, 2020).

In this case, the teacher-researcher took an active role by regularly observing students' interactions, language use, and engagement levels, allowing the teacher-researcher to monitor students' abilities to express opinions in the target language. Several key issues impacting student engagement and learning outcomes were observed. First, students appeared to struggle with maintaining consistent focus during lessons, leading to a lack of deep understanding of the material. Second, there was a noticeable gap in critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which hindered their ability to apply knowledge when expressing opinions. This systematic approach ensured that the progression directly addressed the identified problem—students lacked sufficient opportunities and skills to articulate their perspectives in English—by continuously assessing and adjusting instructional strategies based on observed needs and responses. This study also considered the design of instruments to gather data and reflection, through the recording of audio logs, to keep a record of significant insights during the process.

### 3.2. Participants

This action research was conducted at Escuela Capilla Cox, a State-subsidized rural school located near Chillán in the Ñuble region (Chile). The sample comprised a cohort of 8 primary students from 8th grade — four females and four males — aged between 12 and 13, with English proficiency at a beginner level (A1–A2) according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2020). The proficiency level was determined using the Online English Level Test provided by the British Council (n.d.)<sup>1</sup>. In alignment with the school curriculum, these students received three hours of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction weekly, with sessions scheduled consecutively in one day. This selection constitutes a convenience sample, as

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/english-levels/online-english-level-test>

these students were an accessible research population (Rahi, 2017) within the school setting.

Although the class is made of 10 students, only 8 students were considered for the study. The decision to exclude the remaining students (2) was based on their recent enrolment in 2024, during which they demonstrated significantly lower proficiency in the target language (L2) and limited familiarity with digital tools. These factors rendered their participation both challenging and less engaging, potentially compromising the validity and consistency of the study's outcomes.

The participants of this study were all enrolled in the 8th grade in a rural area characterized by a 100% level of vulnerability, according to the SINAIE (Sistema Nacional de Asignación con Equidad para Becas) system. Noticeably, the parents exhibited low to medium levels of formal education attainment, with the majority having completed secondary education; however, a subset did not finish high school. Despite this, there was a strong emphasis on the value of education within their family environments, with parents actively supporting their children's educational endeavors to foster learning.

### **3.3. Research question**

- How does the use of digital storytelling foster 8th graders' ability to give opinions about a topic in English?

### **3.4. Stages of the Action Research study**

The present research project consisted of seven sessions including a pre and post intervention session aimed to examine the contributions of implementing digital storytelling to foster 8th graders' discussion skills, in a rural context, using a digital design tool. The subsequent sessions involved reading for general and specific information texts about foreign cultural elements that are relevant in their lives, (anime, k-pop, etc.), using thematic vocabulary to share their opinion about the topic. For this purpose, they used the digital storytelling technique through the Canva platform to creatively present their products using the elements of digital storytelling.

The intervention culminated with a post-intervention session where students reflected on their Canva projects, providing insights into their learning process and the challenges they encountered. To achieve this, the model presented by Nassim (2018), was adapted and contextualized to align with the specific needs of the students, as outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2***Nassim's Plan*

<b>Week</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Resources</b>
1	Story selection and summary writing	Students choose a story and summarize it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discussion of project</li> <li>- Selection of stories</li> <li>- Write a story summary draft</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Library/online story resources</li> <li>- Paper and writing tools</li> </ul>
2	Story draft revision and storyboarding	Revise the summary and create a storyboard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Feedback on summaries.</li> <li>- Introduce storyboarding.</li> <li>- Creation of visual storyboard.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Storyboarding templates.</li> <li>- Examples of storyboards.</li> </ul>
3	Script finalization and media gathering	Finalize scripts and collect digital media.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Completion of script.</li> <li>- Assign roles for media collection.</li> <li>- Choosing media.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Internet access.</li> <li>- Devices for media collection. for storage.</li> </ul>
4	Digital story creation	Combine narrative, visuals, and audio to create a digital story.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Guide students in using digital tools (e.g., Microsoft Photo Story).</li> <li>- Add narration, visuals, and background music.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Computer lab.</li> <li>- Editing software (e.g., Microsoft Photo Story).</li> <li>- Headphones.</li> </ul>
5	Presentation and feedback	Present stories, reflect, and provide feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presentation of digital stories.</li> <li>- Peer and teacher feedback sessions.</li> <li>- Reflect on the process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Projector or screen.</li> <li>- Feedback forms or rubrics.</li> </ul>

Source: adapted from Nassim (2018)

The information from Table 2 directly informed the design of the action plan to follow during the intervention sessions, basing the workflow in the ideas presented, which is detailed in Table 3, ensuring a structured and tailored approach to the digital storytelling project.

**Table 3**

*Stages of the Action Research plan*

<b>Session</b>	<b>Learning objective</b>	<b>Description of activities</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Data tool</b>
S1 Pre	Students will complete a presentation about a self-selected topic, expressing their opinions through written, oral, and non-verbal communication	- Introduction to Canva and digital storytelling. Students brainstorm of personal interests - Outline of ideas. Scaffolded instruction on combining text, visuals, and narration.	Digital presentation expressing opinions about a free choosing topic.	Analytic rubric assessing initial proficiency.	Pre-intervention analytic rubric.
S2	Identify a topic of personal interest, expressing their initial opinions, and summarizing information in L2.	Online research: Identify and document relevant vocabulary and concepts. Write their initial opinions about the topic in simple sentences. Summarize information by writing key phrases. Collaborative sharing: Compare and refine ideas with peers. Write a 100-word draft focusing on storytelling coherence.	100-word written draft.	Peer feedback and teacher evaluation.	Audio diaries documenting reflections on vocabulary acquisition and narrative planning.

S3	Revise their story summaries for clarity, organize their opinions and supporting details in a storyboard, and use sentence starters to express opinions effectively	Research and compile opinion sentence starters. Develop initial drafts of narration scripts, integrating opinions. Create a storyboard to organize ideas visually.	Completed storyboard and refined narration draft.	Peer feedback using a structured rubric.	Audio diaries reflecting on scriptwriting progress.
S4	Finalize a detailed narration script incorporating appropriate vocabulary and collect multimedia elements to complement their story.	Research transition words and practice incorporating them into opinion sentences. Expand narration scripts to include supporting reasons and facts. Begin designing a digital story using Canva (5-slide presentation as visual support).	Visual storyboard integrated with transitions and supporting detail	Presentation and peer evaluation guided by a rubric.	Audio diaries documenting feedback and revisions.
S5	Integrate their script with multimedia elements to create a cohesive digital story.	Research transitions for providing examples and details. Finalize narration scripts with media resources (images, sounds, etc.). Rehearse and refine narration delivery. Follow storyboards to creatstories.	Finalized digital story incorporating examples and media elements.	Peer and teacher feedback based on a presentation rubric.	Audio diaries capturing reflections on the integration of media and examples.

S6	Present their digital stories to peers and teachers, respond to feedback, and reflect on their learning process and story development.	Research transitions for concluding and justifying opinions. Finalize digital stories, including titles and voice recordings. Present completed digital storytelling projects to the class.	Final digital story presented to peers.	Post-intervention analytic rubric evaluating opinion skills and project quality.	Audio diaries and final project evaluations.
S7 Post	- Evaluate the impact of digital storytelling on opinion expression skills and overall language development.	Focus group sessions to gather qualitative data on students' experiences. Reflections on perceived language improvements, mutual understanding, and personal expression. Source: self-elaboration	Student reflections and focus group insights.	Post-intervention analytic rubric and qualitative analysis of focus group data.	<b>Focus group responses and post-intervention reflections.</b>

### 3.6. Data collection techniques

For this study, four instruments were used to generate both qualitative and quantitative data. Regarding the latter, an oral task and pre and post intervention analytic rubric. The purpose of these was to analyze students' opinion skills when using digital storytelling. According to Brookhart (2013), analytic rubrics break down the characteristics of an assignment into parts and provide descriptions of what constitutes each part at varying levels of quality. The use of analytic rubrics as a formative assessment promotes clear communication of expectations and enables students to understand what aspects of their work need special attention. In the case of this study, one analytic rubric is applied before (See appendix A) in a pre-intervention session, and after (See appendix B) the intervention, at the end of session 5, to analyze students' opinion skills when using digital storytelling. The task, in both cases, includes creating a digital narrative to share their personal opinions about a given topic.

In the pre-intervention session, students were required to create a digital presentation to express their personal opinions on a given topic. This presentation

process followed the steps of digital storytelling, selecting a topic that is relevant to the assignment, gather information and evidence to support their opinion on the chosen topic, writing a first-person narrative script that clearly articulates their viewpoint, and selecting and incorporating various multimedia elements such as text, graphics, photos, videos, music, and audio narration to enhance the message and share their opinion. The rubric for the task considers three dimensions:

- 1 General engagement.
- 2 Opinion consistency.
- 3 Use of topical elements.

Each dimension is subdivided into two categories. The time assigned for completing the task was set at 90 minutes, and the activity was conducted in the computer lab.

After the intervention sessions concluded, the same analytic rubric was used to assess the projects created during the intervention. Students followed the digital storytelling process to develop personal projects, incorporating digital storytelling elements to express their opinions on an assigned topic. The assessment focused on measuring improvements in the same three dimensions: clarity of opinion, engagement of the audience, and integration of multimedia elements. This comparative analysis aimed to evaluate any changes in the students' skills in expressing opinions, highlighting their research, creativity, and digital literacy skills.

About the qualitative data, a focus group was carried out to identify students' perceptions about the effectiveness of using digital storytelling technique to enhance their ability to communicate their opinions after the intervention. This technique creates a dynamic environment where participants can build upon each other's ideas, share diverse perspectives, and engage in meaningful discussions (Krueger & Casey, 2009). In the focus group of this study (See Appendix C), questions were asked in L1, so participants could feel at ease when expressing their thoughts, which could facilitate the communication of ideas regarding their perceptions of the use of digital storytelling to improve their expressing opinion skills.

The instrument utilizes three dimensions, which individually comprised 2 open-ended questions aiming to understand how digital storytelling whether contributed to enhancing giving opinion skills.

1. Students' perceived improvement on language attainment through digital storytelling.
2. How digital storytelling helps create mutual understanding.
3. Reflections on using the target language to communicate in their own voice and style.

Furthermore, audio diaries were incorporated as a reflective tool for the teacher researcher to document and analyse his own experiences, thoughts, and insights

throughout the research process (See Appendix D). As noted by Williamson et al. (2015), audio-diaries are a flexible and useful tool for qualitative research, especially within critical realist and phenomenological paradigms. Moreover, they enable researchers to track changes, fluctuations, and deeper insights that may emerge through ongoing reflection and engagement. This method of self-reflection aims to identify teacher-researcher's perceptions of the contribution of implementing digital storytelling in students expressing opinion skills, to critically examine the experiences within the research context. For this tool, one dimension was considered: teacher researcher's perception of implementing digital storytelling on students' ability to express their opinions.

To guarantee the reliability and validity of the instruments employed, expert validation was asked from three experts—two specialists in assessment: the academic coordinator of the school where the study was implemented, and an Education Ph.D from Universidad Bernardo O'higgins, and one in-service EFL teacher—reviewed the instruments to ensure their alignment with the study objectives and their capacity to accurately measure the targeted dimensions, including digital storytelling elements and the enhancement of expressing opinion skills. The feedback provided was instrumental in refining and improving the instruments for the study's specific context.

### **3.7. Data analysis techniques**

To analyze and compare the results obtained from the pre- and post-intervention rubrics, measures of central tendency, such as mean scores and standard deviation for each dimension (linguistic attainment, digital storytelling elements, expressing opinion skills enhancement) were calculated before and after the intervention, and a Wilcoxon signed-rank test to compare the mean scores before and after the intervention were used, assessing if there was a statistically significant improvement

The Wilcoxon test is a non-parametric method, making it "appropriate for paired data when the assumption of normality cannot be satisfied" (Field, 2018, p. 223). It ranks the differences between paired observations, assessing whether the median change is significant. This test is particularly robust for small sample sizes or data with outliers, as it does not rely on distributional assumptions (Pallant, 2020). The null hypothesis posits no difference in scores before and after the intervention, while the alternative hypothesis suggests a meaningful improvement. A p-value below 0.05 leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis, confirming the intervention's impact.

Moreover, thematic analysis was used, where themes or issues within the text are identified and analysed for their impact (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2009). In this context, this technique allowed to categorize students' perceptions of the use of digital storytelling to promote their expressing opinion skills that emerged from the focus group responses. These were later coded based on the three dimensions to gain insights into students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of digital storytelling in enhancing their discussion skills.

For the teacher-researcher's reflections in audio diaries, entries were transcribed and analysed using the same technique. The focus was on the perceived contribution of

implementing digital storytelling in students' giving opinion skills based on the single dimension mentioned, considering insights, changes, and reflections regarding the effectiveness of digital storytelling in enhancing students' discussion skills.

## **CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS**

In the present chapter, the results from the data collection instruments described in the previous chapter, were analyzed separately considering the aim of the study and specific objectives.

### **4.1. SO1 To assess student's performance before and after using the digital storytelling technique to foster their skill to give opinions in English**

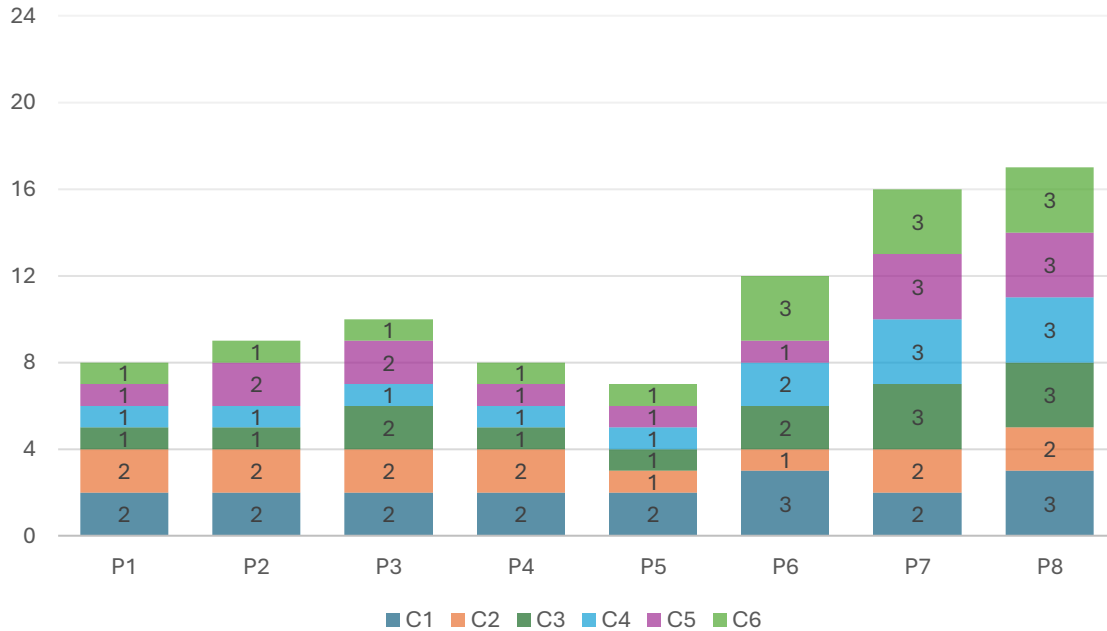
To analyze how digital storytelling technique can foster students' ability to express opinions in L2, changes in their performance before and after the intervention were compared using measures of central tendency that emerged from the scores from the analytic rubrics, which comprised six criteria: engagement of the audience, learner involvement, clarity of the stance, organization and fluency, quantity of topical elements and relevance of the topical elements. Figures 1 and 2 show the scores obtained by the participants in both pre- and post-intervention tests.

#### **4.1.1. Pre- and post-intervention rubric results**

In the pre-intervention rubric, participants' giving opinion skills were generally at a low level, with scores falling short of meeting half the required criteria. For a more detailed view of participants' score per criterion in the analytic rubric, each will be analysed and displayed next. Figure 3 shows participants' individual scores per criterion.

**Figure 3**

*Participants' scores per criterion in the pre-intervention test*



Source: self-elaboration

*Note.* C refers to Criterion. The rubric scale considers 6 criteria as described in Chapter III.

As seen in Figure 3, few participants (P6, P7 and P8) managed to score 3 points in some criteria. Most participants had an initial score of 1 to 2 points per criterion. This illustrates uniformly low scores across all criteria, with slight variability in certain areas, pointing to the need for targeted strategies to improve student performance. Table 4 provides the Arithmetic Mean (AM) and Standard Deviation (SD) per criterion.

**Table 4***Measures of central tendency per criterion in the pre-intervention test*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>AM</b>	<b>SD</b>
Engagement of the audience	2.5	0.46
Learner involvement	2.0	0.46
Clarity of the stance	2.0	0.88
Organization and fluency	2.0	0.91
Quantity of topical elements	2.0	0.88
Relevance of topical elements	2.0	0.91

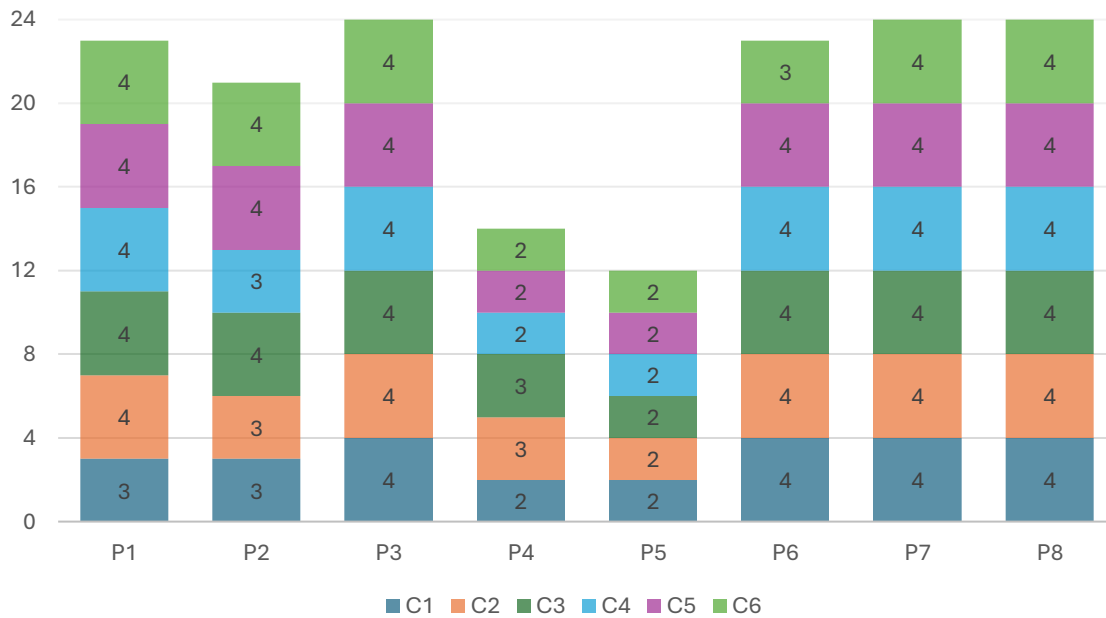
Source: self-elaboration

As shown in the previous table, the first criterion got the highest score, while the rest had no variability at all with an AM of 2.0. Moreover, the standard deviation had a slight variability among all criteria, which illustrates how homogenous results were in each prior to the intervention. Thus, it could be said that most learners (62.5%) struggled considerably when expressing their opinions before being exposed to digital storytelling.

On the contrary, participants did succeed in scoring higher results after the intervention. These can be observed in Figure 4, which displays the scores obtained in each criterion in the post-intervention test.

**Figure 4**

*Participants' scores per criterion in the post-intervention test*



Source: self-elaboration

*Note.* C refers to Criterion. The rubric scale considers 6 criteria as described in Chapter III.

As observed in Figure 4, scores for all criteria increased significantly compared to the pre-intervention results. Likewise, Table 5 provides a more detailed account of both Arithmetic Mean (AM) and Standard Deviation (SD) per criterion.

**Table 5**

*Measures of central tendency per criterion in the post-intervention test*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>AM</b>	<b>SD</b>
Engagement of the audience	3.5	0.88
Learner involvement	4.0	0.75
Clarity of the stance	4.0	0.74
Organization and fluency	4.0	0.91
Quantity of topical elements	4.0	0.92
Relevance of topical elements	4.0	0.91

Source: self-elaboration

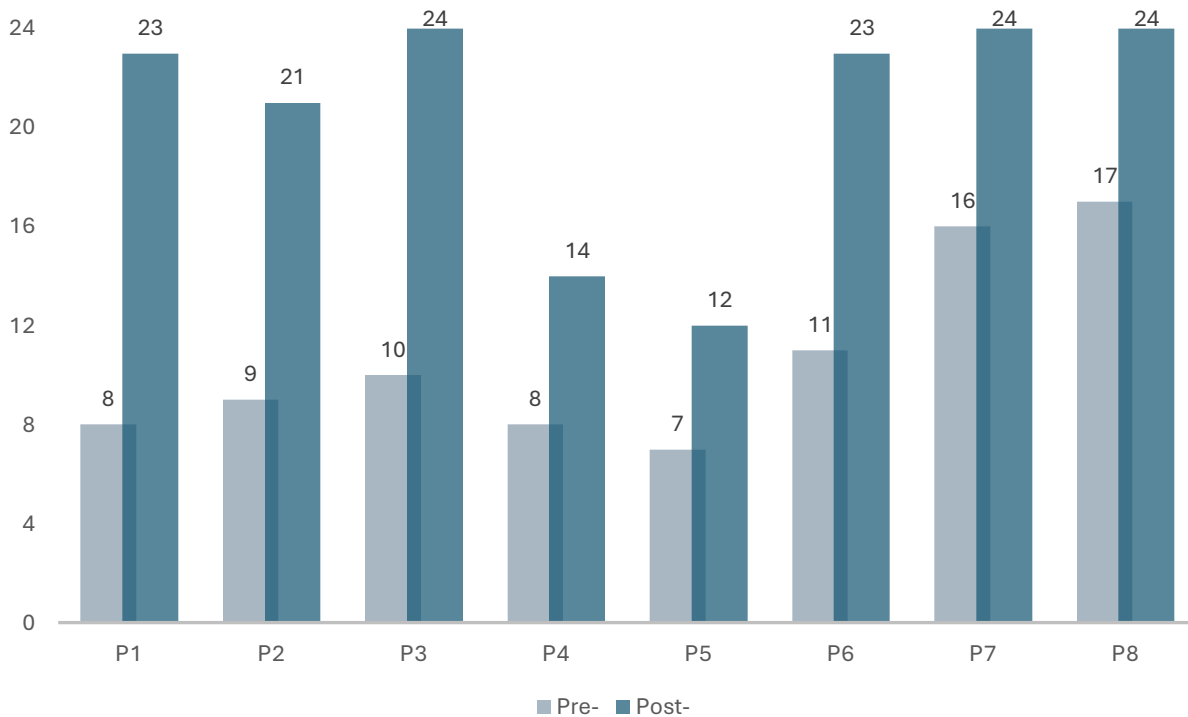
The criterion Engagement of the audience achieved the highest average score (AM = 4.0), with minimal variability suggesting that most participants met or exceeded expectations (SD = 0.50), indicating that the scores for this criterion were relatively consistent across participants. Most students performed similarly well on this criterion, suggesting that the intervention had a uniform effect on their ability to engage the audience. Other criteria, such as Learner involvement and Relevance of topical elements, also demonstrated substantial improvements, reflecting the effectiveness of the digital storytelling intervention in enhancing students' ability to express opinions.

Furthermore, the increase in standard deviation for some criteria suggests a broader range of performance, indicating varying levels of improvement among participants. Overall, most learners (75%) successfully achieved higher performance levels after exposure to the digital storytelling intervention, showcasing its positive influence on fostering their opinion-giving skills in L2.

To have a general overview and comparison of the overall scores per participant, Figure 5 shows results from both pre- and post-intervention tests.

**Figure 5**

*Participants' scores in pre- and post-intervention test*



Source: self-elaboration

The pre-intervention scores reflect students' skills across the six criteria. The scores for most of the students in the pre-intervention rubric were relatively low, indicating challenges in various aspects of communication, organization, and engagement. These results are in line with typical early-stage performances in educational settings, where students may still be refining key academic skills (Schunk, 2012). Post-intervention scores, however, show a marked improvement for most students, with many achieving higher ratings. The intervention appears to have had a positive effect on these aspects, suggesting that the strategies implemented were effective.

Furthermore, measures of central tendency are aligned with the scores from both pre- and post-intervention tests. These show an increase in the AM, as well as a difference in the SD, which can be seen in Table 6 below.

**Table 6**

*Measures of central tendency from pre- and post-intervention tests*

<b>Source</b>	<b>Arithmetic Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Pre-intervention test	10.75	3.77
Post-intervention test	20.62	4.83

Source: self-elaboration

After the intervention, participants' mean score showed an increase of 9.87 points. This result leads to interpreting the possible effectiveness the use of digital storytelling might have had on students' expressing opinion skills. Nonetheless, the SD does shed light on the heterogeneity of the individuals' overall scores, which are more dispersed when compared to the results obtained in the pre-intervention tests.

The comparative analysis of pre- and post-intervention scores reveals significant advancements across all assessed dimensions, underscoring the efficacy of the digital storytelling intervention in augmenting students' competencies in expressing opinions in the L2. Namely, the substantial increase in both mean and median scores after the intervention denotes an enhancement in overall student performance.

Specifically, the mean engagement score demonstrates a notable elevation from the pre-intervention phase to the post-intervention phase, signifying a significant improvement in students' active involvement and efficacy in sustaining audience interest and engagement. This enhancement is corroborated by the median score, which suggests that a predominant portion of the student cohort achieved elevated engagement levels post-intervention. The observed reduction in the standard deviation further indicates a diminution in the variability of engagement levels among students, reflecting a more uniform enhancement across the student population.

Similarly, the substantial improvement in the mean scores for opinion consistency post-intervention illustrates a notable advancement in students' proficiency in articulating their opinions with coherence and consistency. The decrease in score variability implies that most students effectively applied the acquired skills; however, residual variability suggests that a subset of students encountered persistent challenges.

The improvement in the integration of topic-based elements, as evidenced by the elevated mean and median scores, highlights the effectiveness of the digital storytelling approach in enhancing students' capacity to incorporate relevant examples and maintain coherence between their message and audiovisual components. Nonetheless, the moderate level of score variability in the post-intervention phase indicates that while there was a general improvement, certain students continued to exhibit difficulties, thereby necessitating additional support or targeted instructional interventions.

After describing the overall mean scores, the non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was run to state whether there was a statistically significant difference between the pre-intervention scale and the post-intervention scale. Field (2013) describes this test as a robust alternative to the paired t-test when normality cannot be assumed. Results from the analysis with this non-parametric test are shared in Table 7.

**Table 7**

*Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results*

Statistics
W-value: 0
Mean difference: 11.62
Sum of Positive Ranks: 36
Sum of Negative Ranks: 0
Z-value: -2.5205
Sample Size (N): 8

Source: self-elaboration

Results of intervention indicate a statistically significant improvement in scores between the paired samples, with a mean difference of 11.62. The Z-value of -2.5205 (p-value: 0.05 > Z-value) strongly rejects the null hypothesis, demonstrating that the intervention led to a meaningful and significant increase in the measured variable across all participants.

The same non-parametric test was conducted on each criterion to assess whether the differences between the pre- and post-intervention scores were statistically significant, comparing students' prior and posterior performance. Table 8 shows the p-values:

**Table 8**

*Z-values per criterion from Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>p-values</b>
Engagement of the audience:	p = 0.00724699
Learner involvement consistently actively	p = 0.000211555
Clarity of the stance	p = 0.000383431
Organization and fluency	p = 0.000829681
Quantity of topical elements	p = 0.000829681
Relevance of topical elements	p = 0.002007834

Source: self-elaboration

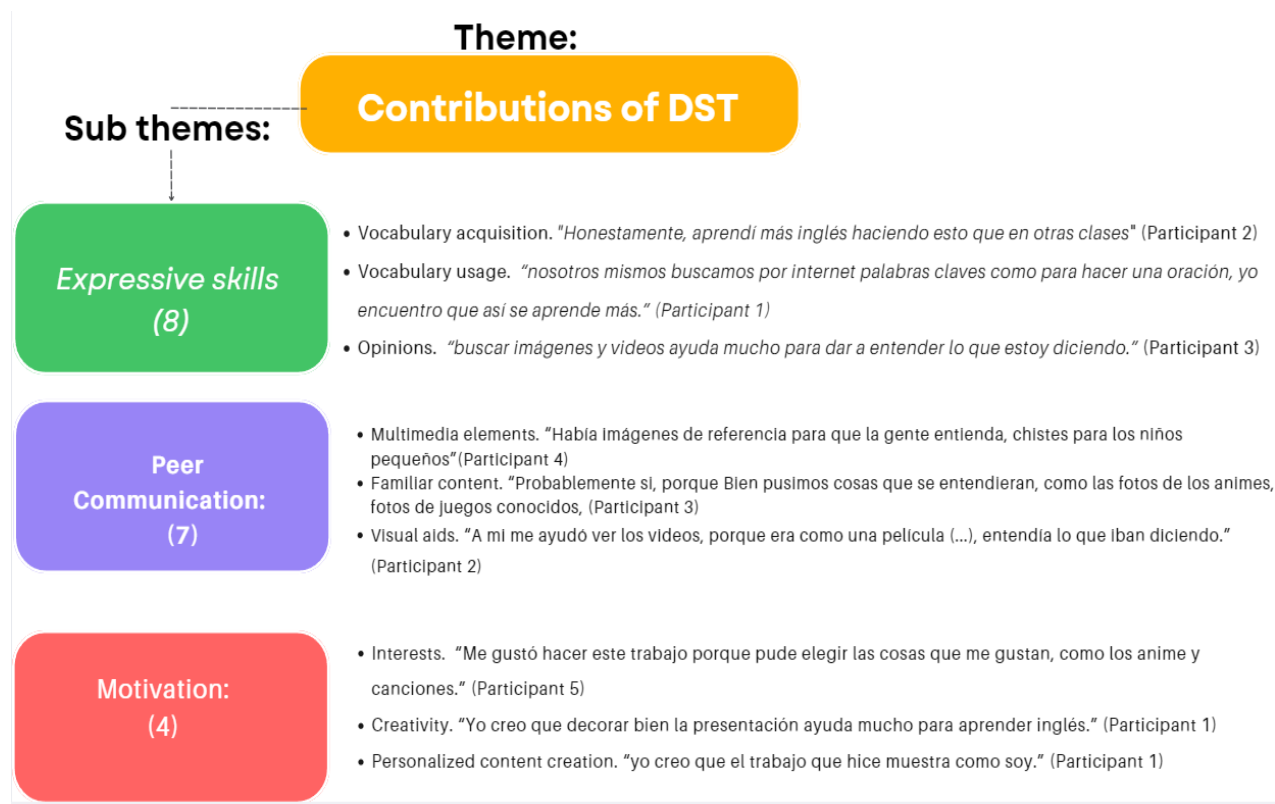
Since all the Z-values are less than 0.05 (set p-value), the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) for each criterion is rejected. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-intervention scores, confirming that the intervention had a measurable impact on student performance.

#### **4.2. SO2: To analyse students' perceptions of the contribution of digital storytelling to foster their skill to express their opinion in English.**

In order to analyze students' perceptions of the contribution of digital storytelling to foster their skill to express their opinion in English, across the intervention, a focus group with 6 questions which covered three dimensions was conducted at the end of the intervention. The data provided in the focus group allowed the teacher-researcher to identify, analyze, and interpret the patterns and themes that emerged by means of a thematic analysis. Figure 6 displays the theme and sub-themes that emerged from the participants' responses.

**Figure 6**

*Themes and sub-themes*



Source: self-elaboration

This analysis examines students' perceived contribution to their giving opinion skills through digital storytelling (DST). Participants reported enhanced comprehension and language usage, attributing their progress to self-directed internet research and the incorporation of tools like Canva and ChatGPT. The engagement with multimedia elements, such as images and videos, was particularly beneficial for mutual understanding among peers, facilitating communication through familiar and visually appealing content. The findings indicate that DST enables students to reflect their personal interests and identities in their projects. However, challenges were noted in areas such as research, vocabulary for critical expression, and justifying opinions in the target language. Overall, the integration of DST is perceived to be effective in enhancing giving opinion skills and promoting a deeper, more personalized engagement with the language.

### 4.2.1. Expressive Skills

This sub-theme focuses on students' perceptions of their ability to express opinions and apply language knowledge in practical contexts. For instance, Participant 4 illustrates this progression through the following comment:

- Participant 4: "Puse mucha más atención cuando estaba ordenando las cosas para mi trabajo."

This observation suggests that the student gained confidence in articulating thoughts in English, particularly through the process of researching online to construct narratives. This engagement also appears to have expanded their lexical repertoire,

- Participant 1: "...porque nosotros mismos buscamos por internet y uno va intentando de traducir, pero no todo, sino buscando palabras claves como para hacer una oración que sirva para el trabajo, y yo encuentro que así se aprende."

From these responses, it can be seen that DST fostered active participation and self-directed learning. The method allowed students to internalize vocabulary through contextualized practice, improving their ability to construct meaningful sentences and expand their vocabulary, as evidenced by Participant 3's remark:

- Participant 3: "...juntar y entender información de internet me sirvió para armar mis oraciones después".

Ultimately, DST provided students with tools to articulate and express their own opinions, apply language knowledge in practical contexts, and apply language knowledge in practical contexts by participating in the process of creating a digital story, following the steps needed.

### 4.2.2. Peer Communication

The integration of visual elements, such as images and videos, emerged as an effective tool for enhancing comprehension and peer communication. These multimodal aids compensated for potential vocabulary limitations, supporting meaning-making and improving the clarity of messages. Participant 3 underscores this benefit:

- Participant 3: "yo creo que otras personas no lo entenderían mucho si no supieran inglés, pero, con las imágenes se pueden ir guiando."

Additionally, the use of culturally familiar content, including references to video games and anime, made the material more engaging and relatable. This relevance facilitated mutual understanding, particularly during skimming and scanning tasks. As Participant 1 notes:

- Participant 1: “me gustó usar imágenes y videos de juegos conocidos, creo que eso ayuda mucho para entender mejor lo que están diciendo.”

These insights suggest that multimedia components in DST, including visual aids and culturally relevant content, considerably enhanced peer communication. By using these tools, students could better comprehend their peers' work and convey their own messages effectively, fostering a collaborative learning environment.

#### **4.2.3. Personal Expression and Motivation**

This sub-theme explores students' reflections on their ability to express themselves authentically in English through DST. Participant 4 highlights the value of this approach:

- Participant 4: "...porque una tiene que buscar sus propias... ¿preguntas y respuestas? para hablar de su propio tema."

These reflections reveal that students appreciated the opportunity to connect language learning with their personal identities or preferences. DST enabled them to infuse their narratives with elements of their interests and personalities, which heightened their motivation and engagement.

- Participant 3 “...lo más difícil fue expresarme a mi manera en inglés y justificar mi opinión, pero creo que lo que hice muestra mi forma de pensar, además hay imágenes de referencia, música...”

By allowing students to personalize their work, this method creates an engaging and motivating environment that enhances their ability to articulate thoughts in English. Participant 1 further supports this claim:

- Participant 1: "es más divertido, porque no es como las clases de siempre con guías, me gustó explicar el porqué de mi opinión, pero me costó, tuve que hacerlo varias veces."

This response conveys that with proper guidance and training, DST can serve as a transformative tool for fostering personal expression skills in the language-learning process, connecting language learning with their personal identities.

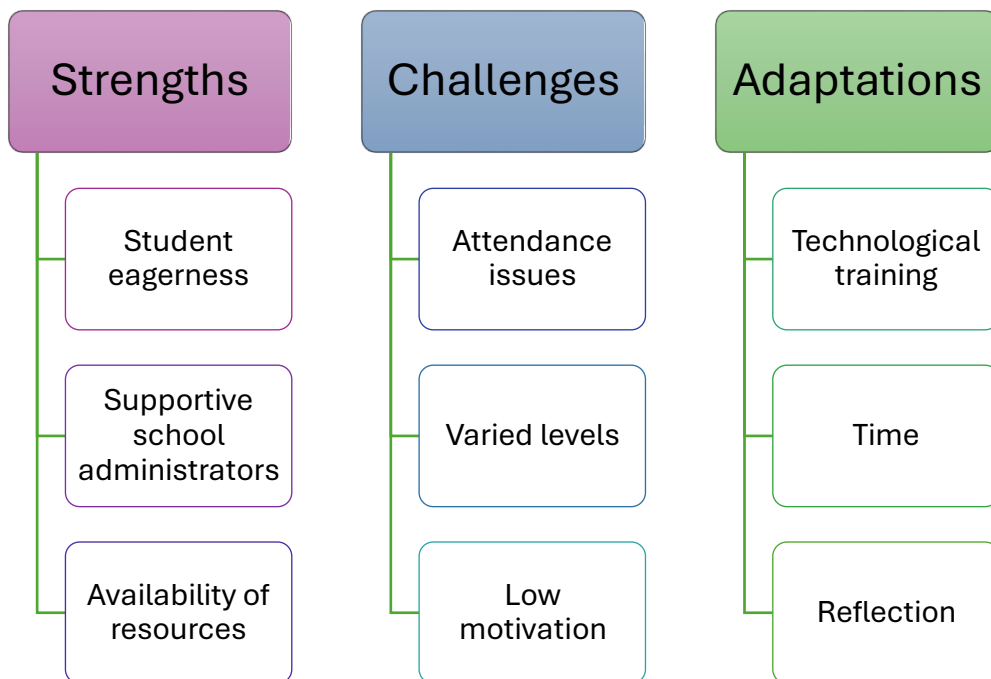
#### **4.3. SO3 To analyse teacher-researcher's reflection upon the contribution of implementing digital storytelling to foster 8th graders' giving opinion skills**

For this action research study, audio diaries were incorporated as a reflective tool for the teacher researcher to document and analyse the teacher researcher's experiences, thoughts, and insights throughout the research process. This method of self-reflection aims to identify teacher-researcher's perceptions of the contribution of implementing digital storytelling to help students' express opinion skills, to critically

examine the experiences within the research context. For this tool, one dimension was considered: *teacher-researcher's perception of implementing digital storytelling regarding students' ability to express their opinions*. Figure 7 shows the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the thematic analysis, while Table 9 displays samples from the transcriptions.

**Figure 7**

*Dimension : teacher-researcher's perception of implementing digital storytelling regarding students' ability to express their opinions - Themes and sub-themes*



Source: self-elaboration

**Table 9**

*Samples from the sub-themes*

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Adaptations</b>
<b>Student eagerness:</b> <i>"Students were eager to participate. They generally find EFL lessons interesting and innovative, so they showed a keen attitude towards the project I explained."</i>	<b>Attendance issues:</b> <i>"Since students' houses are located along rural roads, poor conditions sometimes prevented them from attending classes."</i>	<b>Technological training:</b> <i>"Students needed training in internet basics, researching, exploring web pages, and finding information."</i>
<b>Supportive administrators:</b> <i>"One of the strong points of the intervention was the good disposition of the administrators and students."</i>	<b>Varied levels:</b> <i>"Some students had difficulty articulating sentences and lacked the vocabulary to express themselves appropriately."</i>	<b>Time:</b> <i>"The real challenge was not digital literacy or linguistic competence, but the time required to perform."</i>
<b>Availability of resources:</b> <i>"The availability of necessary implements such as computers, tablets, and Wi-Fi."</i>	<b>Low motivation:</b> <i>"Some students lacked motivation due to low self-esteem, significantly hindering their skill development."</i>	<b>Reflection</b> <i>"Using audiologs has proven to be a powerful tool to stimulate internal debate and self-feedback."</i>

Source: self-elaboration

For this specific objective, three questions were stated for guiding the reflection:

- What are your observations regarding students' overall performance during digital storytelling activities?
- In what ways has digital storytelling enhanced students' vocabulary and grammar?
- Have you noticed any changes in students' level of engagement as a result of incorporating digital storytelling?

The outcomes of the audio diaries were analyzed through a thematic analysis, on teacher-researcher's reflection upon the contribution of implementing digital storytelling to foster 8th graders' giving opinion skills, the analysis aimed to identify and examine key themes, subthemes, within the collected data.

### 4.3.1. Strengths

This sub theme focuses on the strengths detected by the teacher researcher along the process, one of those is the students' eagerness to EFL class, which contributed to the success of the project. The quotes show how an innovative approach, like DST was well received and encouraged participation.

- TR<sup>2</sup>: “their engagement demonstrated a willingness to try new methods, even when unfamiliar.”

This eagerness fostered a collaborative environment where students were more than participants, but co-creators in the DST process.

Another important point that helped along the process was the supportive role of the directives, who showed special interest in involvement of critical thinking in the classroom, as mentioned in one of the first entries of the logs.

- TR: “one of the strong points of the intervention is the good disposition of the directives and students.”

Being the project well received, the directives ensured that both teacher and students could engage meaningfully with the intervention as mentioned on log 3:

- TR: “their support created an environment where I could focus on the project, knowing that necessary resources were available.”

The importance of institutional backing in educational projects, particularly in rural or resource-constrained contexts, is a determining element when implementing a project. Having all the support needed was fundamental to ensure the correct development of the intervention.

### 4.3.2. Challenges

The main challenges detected during the process were environmental factors that menaced the attendance and continuity.

- TR: “Since students' houses are located along rural roads, poor conditions sometimes prevent them from attending classes.”

This quote illustrates the difficulties faced by students in rural areas, where infrastructure issues such as poor roads and unreliable electricity hinder consistent participation, which force the teacher researcher to adapt to these challenges, so the project could be carried out uninterruptedly.

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<sup>2</sup> TR: Teacher-researcher.

Another challenge to face was the different levels of English proficiency required, which was tackled by differentiating instruction to ensure all students could participate meaningfully.

- TR: “some students had difficulty articulating sentences and lacked the vocabulary to express themselves appropriately.”

The quote reveals that while some students could use online tools for vocabulary acquisition, others struggled with articulation. To bridge their gap, the use of ChatGPT was included, where students were instructed to type a prompt to change the level of authentic texts online to their CEFR level, so they could not only comprehend the information, but use phrases from the net, so they could write their own.

This strategy helped to tackle another important challenge that emerged during the sessions, which was the low academic motivation stemming from self-esteem issues that hindered engagement and task completion.

- TR: “students often hesitated to attempt tasks, fearing failure or judgment.”

Having this AI tool helped them to accept the challenge and work with more confidence, producing better texts, more coherent and fill cohesion gaps found along the way.

### **4.3.3. Adaptations**

There were three important adaptations that the teacher researcher had to implement during the project to tackle the different challenges and all of this was possible due to the directive support provided, the first adaptation had to do with the use of web pages as ChatGPT or Canva among others:

- TR: “students needed training in internet basics, researching, exploring web pages, and finding information”.

Help from the IT teacher was offered to tackle this situation, given the time needed for the intervention. Having their support was key for achieving the objective.

In addition, time constraints emerged as a major challenge in achieving learning objectives. The flexibility in extending session lengths allowed students to engage deeply with tasks and ensure quality outcomes.

- TR: “the real challenge was not digital literacy or linguistic competence, but the time required to perform.”

Extra sessions were needed to ensure the correct implementation of the project, so students had enough time to reflect and truly show their creativity and express themselves correctly.

- TR: "I decided to extend the length of the sessions so they could work on their projects without pressure."

Removing the pressure turned out to be the right decision, so students got to work freely and to process the feedback received in a better way.

Finally, implementing audiologs served as an effective tool for both reflection and self-assessment. By encouraging teacher-researcher to verbalize their thoughts, audiologs facilitated deeper analysis, reflection and prompt feedback of the process.

## CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the findings of the study in relation to the pedagogical intervention conducted. The purpose of this research was to explore how digital storytelling can foster 8th graders' ability to express opinions on a given topic in English as an L2, following the digital storytelling process outlined by Lambert (2003). The findings indicate a statistically significant improvement in students' ability to express opinions after engaging in the DST process, which involved producing organized narratives enriched with multimedia elements. This technique demonstrated its potential as an innovative and accessible tool, fostering higher-order thinking skills (Robin, 2016), particularly in a region where these competencies are often underdeveloped (MINEDUC, 2023).

**General objective: To examine the contribution of digital storytelling to foster 8th graders' skill to express opinions in English about a topic**

Based on the main findings of this study, it can be said that all participants enhanced their communication and digital literacy skills as they used English language at different levels. They showed little confidence in their use of L2 at the beginning, hence, the role of the teacher-researcher in this stage of the process was to provide a trusting environment, encouraging students to articulate sentences of their own, autonomously using different online models as real material. For instance, adapting texts to their CEFR level, or providing tailored support, such as adapting texts to student proficiency levels with AI tools, as suggested by Maravelaki (2023), for better understanding of information, so they could progressively show more confidence in engaging in the process of drafting storyboards and practice orally to record their own voices with accuracy, aligning with several studies on the contribution of DST (Özüdoğru and Çakır, 2020; Robin, 2008; Sadik, 2008).

Furthermore, this study also aligns with the work of Maravelaki (2023) where DST is linked with the development of critical thinking skills, specifically in enhancing students' ability to express opinions while constructing meaningful narratives. For instance, in this study, participant 8 shared a digital story on Anime, including a reflection on how anime creators inspire their generation and taught them to give their best when facing life challenges, demonstrating analysis of their personal context and connect it to broader societal challenges, hence showing reflective and analytical thinking described by Yang and Wu (2012). Results show that most of the group exhibited development of critical thinking when expressing their opinions through their digital stories, showing signs of reflection and analysis on the topics presented. However, given the short timeframe of this study, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which opinion expression contributed to critical thinking. Over a more extended period, as demonstrated in Sadik's (2008) work, such interventions can solidify the expression of personal ideas and foster critical analysis.

Data shows that most of the group exhibited development of critical thinking when expressing their opinions through their digital stories. For example, a student narrated a digital story about the impacts of social media on mental health. They included research-based statistics and personal anecdotes, demonstrating both reflection and analysis on the topic. Another student crafted a narrative on local cultural traditions, comparing these to global practices, highlighting their ability to evaluate and synthesize information.

However, given the short timeframe of this study, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which opinion expression contributed to critical thinking. Over a more extended period, as demonstrated in Sadik's (2008) work, such interventions can solidify the expression of personal ideas and foster critical analysis. For example, Sadik (2008) documented how students involved in a year-long DST project on social justice gradually transitioned from recounting events to critically evaluating systemic inequalities and proposing solutions. Similarly, extending this study's duration might allow students to develop more complex and in-depth critical perspectives, moving beyond surface-level reflections to more profound analytical insights.

### **SO1 To assess student's performance before and after using digital storytelling technique to foster their skill to express opinions in L2**

To achieve this objective, students were tasked with preparing a presentation on a foreign cultural element relevant to their lives, such as anime, K-pop, video games, among others. At the start of the intervention, topics were randomly assigned, and students were allowed to choose a traditional presentation method. Four students opted to read directly from their notebooks, while the other four used flipcharts for their presentations. At the end of the intervention, students revisited their assigned topics, this time presenting them using DST as an innovative technique designed to make their presentations more dynamic and engaging. Pre- and post-intervention rubrics were employed to analyse students' performance. These rubrics assessed key elements such as overall engagement, consistency in expressing opinions, and the integration of topical elements.

As mentioned previously, post-intervention rubric scores demonstrated a deeper commitment and more organized expression compared to the pre-intervention scores. During the sessions, students learned step by step how to produce a digital story and, as noted earlier, were able to elaborate scripts using AI to level the texts they used as support for their narratives. Notably, five participants demonstrated marked improvement in overall engagement, scoring an average of 2.5 out of 4 points in engagement of the audience, and 2 out of 4 in learner involvement in the pre intervention rubric and marking a 3.5 in engagement of the audience, and 4 in learner involvement in the post intervention rubric. An important element of success in this area is the incorporation of Canva, which suit perfectly as a digital storytelling project tool that transforms static presentations into dynamic narratives, enhancing audience engagement by creating a visually and emotionally rich experience (Robin, 2016). Incorporating the use of multimedia elements (e.g. images, videos, soundtracks) that Canva offers captures the audience's attention and maintains their interest throughout the presentation (Robin, 2008), though some

students were unfamiliar with systematically using digital tools such as Canva to incorporate multimedia elements like images and videos as substitutes for textual content. This unfamiliarity could stem from limited prior training in presenting ideas visually or moving beyond reading from notes.

Moreover, the writing of the script process was carried out following the plan presented by Nassim (2018), where students had to summarize information to draft their texts articulating a well-defined viewpoint that is coherent and supported by relevant information (Robin 2008). Yang and Wu (2012) emphasize that opinion expression is central to critical thinking and communication. Moreover, Armstrong et al. (2012) also stress that expressing opinions requires the use of language to convey nuance, agreements, disagreements, and justifications. To tackle this need, students were taught how to use opinion sentences starters and articulators, and the use of AI to bring authentic texts to their level.

This element was an emergent idea that was not initially contemplated but it came to be an excellent addition considering that helped the participants break a communicational barrier. This not only helped them understand contextualized, real-life information, but also extract some key sentences that helped them in the creation of their draft and posterior storyboard. Consequently, participants' mean score went from 2 to 4 in the post-intervention scale after receiving feedback according to the clarity of the stances, and the organization of their digital stories.

One key area of improvement observed in this study was the integration of topical elements, which refers to the inclusion of relevant examples, ideas, or supporting details in students' presentations. A higher quantity of topical elements reflects the ability to thoroughly explore a topic, gather information, and provide sufficient evidence to support an opinion. During the pre-intervention session, students' presentations included fewer relevant elements, likely due to a lack of structured guidance or familiarity with the task.

Post-intervention, the use of DST appeared to significantly enhance the quantity and relevance of topical elements. By encouraging students to conduct thorough research, organize their ideas effectively, and integrate multimedia elements, DST helped them present well-supported opinions. As a result, the average score for the integration of topical elements increased from 2 to 4, mirroring the improvement seen in the organization criterion.

## **SO2 To analyse students' perceptions of the use of digital storytelling to promote their giving opinion skills**

Students' perceptions confirmed the effectiveness of digital storytelling (DST) in fostering opinion expression in L2, as demonstrated in the focus group responses. These highlighted students' enthusiasm for DST as a motivating and creative tool, aligning with Sadik's (2008) observation that DST promotes student-centred engagement through personalized narratives. Participants reported a noticeable improvement in their performance, which they attributed to their active engagement with the storytelling

process. They expressed that their commitment to crafting their narratives deepened their language-learning experience and enhanced their self-awareness as L2 users. This positive engagement was further supported by post-intervention rubric scores, which showed an increase in the average score for engagement of the audience from 2.5 to 4.0 (AM). This improvement reflects the students' enhanced ability to capture and sustain audience interest, as discussed by Robin (2008) and Yang & Wu (2012).

Despite overall improvements, challenges in research and vocabulary use for critical opinions were evident during the intervention. Participant 3 shared: "...juntar y entender información de internet me sirvió para armar mis oraciones después," reflecting initial struggles with synthesizing information effectively. Additionally, one student required extra supervision to maintain continuity and focus on the assignment, underscoring the importance of teacher support and differentiated instruction. With adequate guidance, however, both students successfully completed the task, demonstrating that digital storytelling can be an effective tool for fostering skills, regardless of students' English proficiency or prior engagement with the subject. These findings align with Brookfield's (2012) assertion that scaffolding is essential to build confidence in opinion expression. Furthermore, providing students with tools like ChatGPT to simplify authentic materials addressed these barriers, as evidenced by the consistent post-intervention rubric improvements.

Moreover, students expressed interest in undertaking similar projects in the future, now that they are familiar with the process. As a researcher and educator, this demonstrates the importance of tailoring interventions to accommodate varying comprehension levels and learning paces. Ensuring equitable participation can encourage all students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. This perspective aligns with Lambert (2003), who highlights how DST allows learners to infuse personal identity into their narratives, fostering deeper engagement and skill application. Motivation and personal connection were reflected in the rubric's learner involvement scores, which increased from an average of 2.0 pre-intervention to 4.0 post-intervention.

### **SO3 To analyse teacher-researcher's reflection upon the contribution of implementing digital storytelling to foster 8th graders' giving opinion skills**

The reflections of the teacher-researcher offer a critical insight through which the implementation and outcomes of the digital storytelling (DST) project can be evaluated. These reflections are particularly valuable for identifying the strengths of the intervention and the challenges that emerged during its application, as well as the adaptive strategies employed to address these obstacles. The use of audio diaries as a reflective tool provided rich insights into the iterative process of integrating DST into the classroom.

A key strength of the project was the alignment of DST with the development of essential 21st-century skills, particularly critical thinking, creativity, and digital literacy. The teacher-researcher noted that students demonstrated growing confidence and autonomy throughout the intervention. For instance, students were actively engaged in

the process of scriptwriting, multimedia integration, and narrative construction. The use of tools like Canva enabled them to create visually compelling presentations. Moreover, the institutional support provided by the school's directives played a vital role in the successful implementation of the project, even though several adaptations were made during the intervention to address the identified challenges. One significant adjustment involved incorporating training sessions on digital tools and internet research.

One major issue was the environmental and infrastructural limitations inherent in a rural context. Adverse weather conditions and unreliable electricity occasionally disrupted attendance and continuity. These external factors necessitated flexibility in the scheduling of sessions and additional support for affected students.

Another significant challenge was the varying levels of English proficiency among students. While some participants excelled in utilizing digital tools and expressing their opinions, others struggled with vocabulary acquisition and sentence construction. The teacher-researcher observed that these students required more individualized attention and support to fully engage in the tasks. To address this issue, tools like ChatGPT were introduced to help students adapt authentic texts to their proficiency level, enabling them to extract useful phrases and enhance their drafts.

Additionally, the teacher-researcher identified time management as a persistent challenge. The complexity of the tasks required students to spend more time on research, scriptwriting, and multimedia integration than initially anticipated. Reflecting on this, the teacher-researcher extended the length of the sessions to allow students to complete their projects without feeling rushed. This adaptation proved effective, as evidenced by the improved quality of student outputs.

### **Links with the Theoretical Framework.**

Reflecting on the findings of this study, I observed both alignment and divergence between the theoretical framework and the results of the intervention. The principles of digital storytelling and the development of 21st-century skills provided a solid foundation for the intervention. Robin (2008) argues that DST encourages students to integrate diverse sources and ideas, enhancing their ability to think critically and communicate effectively. Similarly, Sadik (2008) highlights that DST enables students to foster more comprehensive and meaningful presentations. However, the application of these principles revealed nuances.

The theoretical framework emphasized the potential of digital storytelling to foster the 4 C's—Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity—and digital literacy skills as reflected in the focus group discussions. The intervention largely supported this assertion, particularly in the areas of creativity and communication. Participants noted that the process of crafting digital stories allowed them to collaborate effectively and express their ideas more creatively by using multimedia tools, moreover, they demonstrated remarkable creativity in crafting their digital stories, integrating multimedia elements such as images and audio to enhance their narratives, a point

namely, validated by focus group feedback. Participants emphasized that multimedia tools not only improved the aesthetic quality of their stories but also allowed for deeper engagement with the content, as stated in the findings chapter. This was also highlighted in the focus group, where participants emphasized how the use of multimedia allowed them to better express their ideas and engage with the storytelling process, as stated previously by Robin (2008), who argued that digital storytelling allows learners to combine traditional storytelling techniques with innovative technological tools.

Nevertheless, the development of critical thinking was less pronounced than anticipated. While students improved in expressing opinions and organizing their thoughts, the process did not consistently challenge them to synthesize information critically. This outcome diverges from the theoretical expectation that digital storytelling inherently fosters higher-order thinking skills (Wallace-Spurgin, 2019). I believe this may be due to the relatively short duration of the intervention, which limited opportunities for deeper critical engagement.

In the other hand, digital storytelling was highlighted as a tool to increase student engagement by fostering personal connections and active participation. This was strongly reflected in the intervention results. Students showed notable enthusiasm when creating their stories, particularly when given the freedom to choose culturally relevant topics such as anime and K-pop. This illustrates Lambert's (2013) claim that personal narratives enhance motivation by allowing students to express their unique perspectives. This intervention and the use of DST might have allowed participants to express themselves in ways that are not typically promoted in the classroom. Nonetheless, a discrepancy in the level of engagement among students was observed; While most students fully embraced the project, two participants required additional supervision to remain focused and complete their tasks, additional scaffolding may be needed for those who struggle with autonomy or digital tools. Moreover, Lambert (2013) emphasizes that personal narratives boost motivation by allowing students to express their unique perspective, considering that, additional freedom for personalization were adopted, in this case, students were allowed the freedom to select topics that resonate with their interests.

Furthermore, the structured digital storytelling process described by Kent (2012), including scriptwriting, storyboarding, and integrating multimedia elements was pivotal in guiding students through the creation of their digital narratives. The teacher-researcher's observations confirmed that students benefited from this structured approach, as it helped them organize their ideas and express opinions more coherently, for example, Participant 4 mentioned, "*puse mucha más atención cuando estaba ordenando las cosas para mi trabajo*", which evidence how the process of organizing their narratives helped them focus and articulate their thoughts more effectively, in addition, participant 1 stated, "*...nosotros mismos buscamos por internet y uno va intentando de traducir, pero no todo, sino buscando palabras claves como para hacer una oración que sirva para el trabajo, y yo encuentro que así se aprende.*" This reflects how students used tools like ChatGPT to simplify authentic texts, enabling them to organize ideas and construct meaningful sentences.

Nonetheless, not all components of the process were equally effective. For example, while most students excelled at integrating multimedia, the use of "dramatic

questions" or "emotional content" --as described by Robin (2008) - was less evident. Many students focused on factual expressions rather than evoking emotional responses, which limited the depth of their narratives. This may be due to insufficient emphasis on these elements during the instructional phase, another factor may be the students' limited vocabulary and grammar knowledge at the A1-A2 CEFR level. The challenge of expressing personal thoughts in a language they are still learning likely hindered their ability to create thought-provoking questions as expected. Instead, students appeared more comfortable with factual, straightforward communication, avoiding the exploration of personal or emotional topics, which might have felt beyond their reach. Additionally, the time allocated to emphasize and practice these storytelling elements proved insufficient. As a result, students may have prioritized other components, such as factual accuracy or multimedia integration, over crafting emotional or dramatic content.

## CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

This study explored the contribution of Digital Storytelling (DST) in fostering 8th graders' ability to express opinions in English as a second language, considering it one of the first steps to develop critical thinking in a context where these abilities are underdeveloped. Grounded in the theoretical framework of 21st-century skills, as highlighted by Kokotsaki et al. (2016) and Beckett & Slater (2020), the research aimed to assess students' performance before and after the intervention, analyze their perceptions, and reflect on the teacher-researcher's experiences. The findings indicated significant improvements in students' engagement, clarity in expressing opinions, and integration of multimedia elements, aligning with Robin's (2016) assertion that DST enhances communication and creativity.

### 6.1. Summary of main findings

The results of assessing students' performance before and after implementing a digital storytelling (DST) project, demonstrated that this type of project significantly fosters learners' ability to express their opinions on topics that are relevant in their daily lives, in this case, foreign culture elements (such as anime, K-pop, etc.). After online research, as Rajendran and Din (2023) emphasize, providing authentic contexts that enable learners to connect personal experiences with language learning. Before the intervention, students struggled to articulate their opinions, with pre-intervention rubric scores showing low performance across all criteria (e.g. *Engagement of the Audience* had an average score of 2.5/4). After the intervention, post-intervention scores for *Engagement of the Audience* increased to 4/4 on average, reflecting greater confidence and communicative ability, as supported by Maravelaki's (2023) findings on DST's role in reflective learning.

To achieve this goal, the Canva platform was strategically used, not only as an engaging tool for creation of their projects but also as a resource to incorporate multimedia elements such as images, short videos, sounds, music, and slide transitions, in line with Sukseemuang et al.'s (2021) research. The use of these multimedia elements in many cases helped compensate for learners' communication gaps strengthening the message they wanted to give, as their English proficiency typically ranged between A1 and A2 levels, according to the CEFR.

Collaboration was an essential part of the task, as students had to support one another in articulating opinions and using sentence starters, evidence, and concluding statements effectively, reflecting Barrot's (2021) view that PBL promotes collaboration and critical thinking by engaging students in purposeful tasks. To express their opinions effectively, they were required to delve deeper into using opinion sentence starters, articulators for examples and evidence, and concluding statements. This process encouraged them to research and learn how to express opinions based on evidence. Initially, they found the task challenging and beyond their perceived level, but by

respecting the process and following the step-by-step guidance, they gradually built confidence in creating their own responses to the topics.

The integration of ChatGPT to adapt authentic texts to students' CEFR A1-A2 levels, though not initially planned, proved to be a pivotal addition, echoing Robin's (2016) emphasis on leveraging technology to simplify complex tasks. It helped students better comprehend online information by utilizing scanning and skimming strategies, providing key phrases to use in scripts. This enabled them to create narratives that were coherent and included appropriate justifications for their opinions, improving scores in *Clarity of Stance* from 2/4 to 4/4. This support enhanced their ability to articulate their ideas and improved their overall writing skills. Although the use of AI-based tools requires close monitoring to prevent potential misuse or overreliance, this risk is significantly minimized by requiring personal reflections as part of the task. These reflections are inherently unique and engaging, as they allow students to express their authentic voices and perspectives, making imitation unlikely and fostering a sense of ownership over their work.

In terms of students' perceptions of digital storytelling to promote their skill to express opinions, after implementing a digital storytelling project, the findings suggest that students perceived digital storytelling (DST) as a meaningful tool to enhance their language skills, particularly in expressing their own points of view freely in a way that is authentic and meaningful. In the focus group students reported enjoying the creative aspect of DST, stating it allowed them to reflect their personalities in their projects. Yundayani et al. (2019) highlight that DST promotes personalized and authentic learning experiences, which was reflected in this enjoyment of the creative process. The structured process of creating digital stories allowed them to use the target language in a personalized and reflective manner. Students highlighted that DST helped them understand their peers better, with a participant remarking, "*con las imágenes se pueden ir guiando*," indicating that the multimedia elements bridged gaps in communication during presentations and peer discussions, promoted mutual understanding, and facilitated self-expression, agreeing with Rajendran and Din's (2023) view that DST fosters mutual understanding and creativity through multimedia integration. The integration of multimedia elements, such as images and audio, was noted as a significant factor in engaging students and enabling them to articulate their thoughts creatively and authentically.

Lastly, when analyzing the teacher-researcher's reflections on the contribution of implementing digital storytelling (DST) to foster 8th graders' skills in expressing opinions, it was observed that DST facilitated students' engagement and improved their language skills, including vocabulary and grammar. The reflections noted an increase in students' confidence and their ability to participate in discussions. Challenges such as varying proficiency levels and technical literacy were mitigated through differentiated instruction and the use of AI tools like ChatGPT, which helped simplify authentic texts. This adaptation supported students in articulating opinions and bridging gaps in their expression skills, as stated by Borodkina & Borodkin (2018), who emphasize the role of digital literacy in fostering communication and creativity.

## 6.2. Personal reflection

As the researcher of this study, I must highlight that implementing a Digital Storytelling (DST) project in my context was both challenging and rewarding. This experience allowed me to learn from my students' journeys as they discovered skills they didn't know they possessed. Echoing the sentiments of Robin (2016), DST emerged as an innovative tool that bridges theoretical knowledge and real-life application, making learning more relevant and aligned with students' needs. From my professional perspective, and considering the future of education, I firmly believe that DST is one of the most effective tools for addressing the concept of innovation. There are many ways to implement DST projects, all of which are valuable in fostering innovation—not only in English language learning, but across various subjects.

This type of task incorporates real-life elements that make learning more relevant and aligned with the needs of our students, especially when we consider that the world in which they will navigate their adult lives will be vastly different from ours, there is where platforms like Canva and AI tools such as ChatGPT play pivotal roles in fostering self-directed learning and creativity, confirming Maravelaki's (2023) argument that technology facilitates reflective and autonomous learning. Moreover, the integration of real-time feedback and multimedia resources made the projects dynamic and engaging, aligning with Sukseemuang et al.'s (2021) findings on the collaborative benefits of DST.

This research reinforces the importance of innovation in education, particularly through personalized, technology-driven tasks. As students engaged in meaningful projects, they developed essential 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity. These findings echo Kokotsaki et al.'s (2016) assertion that PBL fosters higher-order thinking skills, preparing students for the complexities of modern life, so, as education continues to evolve, embracing innovative strategies like DST will be essential in preparing students for the complexities of a new world where the aims of education assume a shape we are yet to discover. It is hoped that this study inspires further exploration into the integration of technology and creativity in language education, paving the way for more dynamic and inclusive classrooms.

In conclusion, when students are engaged in activities that are innovative, meaningful, and resonate with their interests, using appealing tools in a climate of respect and understanding, they can develop essential 21st-century skills. These skills are critical and must be nurtured in today's classrooms to prepare students for the challenges of tomorrow.

## 6.3. Recommendations

Based on the research findings, Digital Storytelling (DST) emerges as a highly effective and innovative teaching approach that can be applied across disciplines and seamlessly integrated within Project-Based Learning (PBL) initiatives. By leveraging

multimedia and digital tools, educators can create engaging, authentic, and meaningful tasks that enhance language learning while simultaneously fostering essential 21st-century skills, including collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and communication. This is supported by Yundayani et al. (2019), who emphasize the role of DST in promoting personalized and impactful learning experiences; Kokotsaki et al. (2016), who highlight the value of PBL in cultivating higher-order thinking and engagement; and Robin (2016), who underscores the transformative potential of DST in enhancing creativity and communication.

All in all, there are several recommendations for further research that can be proposed in the light of this action research:

- Leverage DST as part of interdisciplinary PBL activities, allowing students to connect learning across different areas and make tasks more relevant and comprehensive.
- Ensure that students are supported in mastering both the technical and critical aspects of DST. Scaffolding strategies should include clear, step-by-step guidance to support students in mastering both the technical and critical aspects of DST (Barrot, 2021).
- Build on students' existing digital competencies to facilitate their creation of digital stories. Encourage students to incorporate their voices and identities into digital stories, fostering engagement and motivation (Rajendran & Din, 2023).
- Use DST as a means to empower students to express their thoughts and identities creatively. This personalization fosters deeper engagement, motivation, and a stronger connection to both the language and the learning process.
- Recognize and address the diverse needs of learners by providing tailored support with differentiated instruction and adaptable tools (Maravelaki, 2023). for those who require additional assistance in utilizing digital tools.
- Where feasible, Allocate more time for DST projects to promote deeper reflection and critical thinking (Sukseemuang et al., 2021).

#### **6.4. Limitations of the study**

Considering reflections captured in audiologs and a thorough analysis of the project, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study involved a small number of participants, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader educational contexts or larger populations. Additionally, the research was conducted within a specific school environment and cultural setting. Factors such as students' proficiency levels, access to technology, and familiarity with multimedia tools may vary across contexts, potentially influencing the outcomes.

The short duration of the intervention posed another limitation, as it constrained the development of long-term skills, such as critical thinking and advanced opinion expression. A longer implementation period could potentially yield more significant improvements and allow for deeper reflection on the learning process.

The use of AI-based tools like ChatGPT to adapt authentic texts was beneficial in supporting students' comprehension and scriptwriting. However, it required careful monitoring to prevent over-reliance or academic dishonesty. This dependence also raises questions about how students might perform without access to such tools, which could be an area for future exploration.

Although rubrics were employed to evaluate students' progress, assessing creative outputs such as digital stories involves an inherent degree of subjectivity, which might affect the reliability of the evaluation results. Additionally, the dual role of the researcher as both teacher and evaluator introduces the potential for bias in interpreting findings or influencing students' perceptions, despite efforts to maintain objectivity.

While the study effectively explored the enhancement of opinion expression skills, it did not extensively address other critical aspects of language learning, such as listening, pronunciation, or grammar. A more comprehensive examination of these areas could provide a holistic understanding of the intervention's impact.

Addressing these limitations in future studies could enhance the reliability, applicability, and scope of findings related to Digital Storytelling projects in language education.

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## Appendixes

### Appendix A

#### Analytic rubric: Pre-intervention

**S.O.1:** To assess student's performance before and after using digital storytelling techniques to foster their giving opinion skills.

Students develop a digital presentation wherein they articulate their perspectives on a subject of personal interest, utilizing conventional presentation tools with which they are familiar.

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Level 4 (advanced)</i>	<i>Level 3 (Proficient)</i>	<i>Level 2 (Developing)</i>	<i>Level 1 (Beginning)</i>
<i>Dimension 1: Overall engagement.</i>	<b>Engagement of the audience</b>	The presentation engages the audience, eliciting strong responses.	The presentation engages the audience well.	The presentation somewhat engages the audience, but could be more effective.	The presentation fails to significantly engage the audience.
	<b>Learner involvement</b>	Consistently actively involved in all phases of digital storytelling process.	Generally active in most phases, occasionally needing reminders to stay engaged	Participates in some phases, but requires frequent reminders and assistance.	Rarely participates in phases, showing minimal effort and engagement.
<i>Dimension 2: Individual opinion consistency.</i>	<b>Clarity of the Stance</b>	The audience can easily identify the author's opinion.	The reader can identify the author's opinion.	The reader has to make effort to identify the author's opinion.	The reader cannot identify the author's opinion.
	<b>Organization and fluency</b>	Ideas well-organized with smooth transitions contribute to the consistency of the opinion.	Ideas generally well-organized with transitions contribute to the consistency of the opinion.	The organization of ideas is inconsistent and may hinder the clarity of the stance.	The organization of ideas is poor, significantly affecting the consistency of the opinion.
<i>Dimension 3: Use of topical elements.</i>	<b>Quantity of Topical Elements</b>	The extensive number of topical elements demonstrates deep understanding of the topic.	An adequate number of topical elements shows a solid understanding of the topic.	A moderate number of topical elements shows a basic understanding of the topic.	A limited number of topical elements shows minimal understanding of the topic.
	<b>Relevance of Topical Elements</b>	All topical elements are highly relevant and directly related to the subject matter.	Most topical elements are relevant and appropriately related to the subject matter.	Some topical elements are relevant, but may include a few less appropriate.	Few topical elements are relevant.

## Appendix B

### Analytic rubric: Post-intervention test

**S.O.1:** To assess student's performance before and after using digital storytelling techniques to foster their giving opinion skills.

Students develop a digital presentation wherein they articulate their perspectives on a subject of personal interest, utilizing digital storytelling approach.

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Level 4 (advanced)</i>	<i>Level 3 (Proficient)</i>	<i>Level 2 (Developing)</i>	<i>Level 1 (Beginning)</i>
<i>Dimension 1: Overall engagement.</i>	<b>Engagement of the audience</b>	The presentation engages the audience, eliciting strong responses.	The presentation engages the audience well.	The presentation somewhat engages the audience, but could be more effective.	The presentation fails to significantly engage the audience.
	<b>Learner involvement</b>	Consistently actively involved in all phases of digital storytelling process.	Generally active in most phases, occasionally needing reminders to stay engaged	Participates in some phases, but requires frequent reminders and assistance.	Rarely participates in phases, showing minimal effort and engagement.
<i>Dimension 2: Individual opinion consistency.</i>	<b>Clarity of the Stance</b>	The audience can easily identify the author's opinion.	The reader can identify the author's opinion.	The reader has to make effort to identify the author's opinion.	The reader cannot identify the author's opinion.
	<b>Organization and fluency</b>	Ideas well-organized with smooth transitions contribute to the consistency of the opinion.	Ideas generally well-organized with transitions contribute to the consistency of the opinion.	The organization of ideas is inconsistent and may hinder the clarity of the stance.	The organization of ideas is poor, significantly affecting the consistency of the opinion.
<i>Dimension 3: Use of topical elements.</i>	<b>Quantity of Topical Elements</b>	The extensive number of topical elements demonstrates deep understanding of the topic.	An adequate number of topical elements shows a solid understanding of the topic.	A moderate number of topical elements shows a basic understanding of the topic.	A limited number of topical elements shows minimal understanding of the topic.
	<b>Relevance of Topical Elements</b>	All topical elements are highly relevant and directly related to the subject matter.	Most topical elements are relevant and appropriately related to the subject matter.	Some topical elements are relevant, but may include a few less appropriate.	Few topical elements are relevant.

## Appendix C:

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**Focus group** Participants: 4 8th-graders who have participated in the intervention.

**SO2** To analyze students' perceptions of the contribution of digital storytelling to foster their skill to express their opinion in English.

**Dimension 1: Students' perceived enhance on language attainment during the process of creating digital stories.**

- ¿Hacer historias digitales te ayudó a mejorar tu entendimiento y uso del inglés?
- ¿Qué partes de la narración digital encuentras más útiles para mejorar tus habilidades?

**Dimension 2: Perceived contribution of DST to establish mutual understanding**

- ¿Las historias digitales ha facilitado que entiendas a tus compañeros?
- ¿Crees que la narración digital es buena para asegurarse de que todos se entiendan mejor?

**Dimension 3: Students reflection on using target language to communicate in their own voice and style.**

- Despues del trabajo ¿sientes que muestras tu propia personalidad?
- ¿La narración digital te sirve para hablar a tu manera y expresarte en inglés?

## **Appendix D: Audio Logs**

**SO3** To analyze teacher-researcher's reflection upon the contribution of implementing digital storytelling to foster 8<sup>th</sup> graders' giving opinion skills.

**Dimension:** Perceived contribution of implementing digital storytelling in students' discussion skills.

### **Guiding Questions:**

- What are your observations regarding students' overall performance during digital storytelling activities?
- In what ways has digital storytelling enhanced students' vocabulary and grammar?
- Have you noticed any changes in students' engagement as a result of incorporating digital storytelling?

### **Reflection Prompts:**

Describe a specific instance where DST positively influenced participation.

Reflect on any challenges faced when implementing DST and its impact on students' discussion skills.