INVESTIGATION OF DIGITAL STORY ACTIVITY FOR BILINGUAL PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' BASIC LANGAGUE SKILLS

Tayfun OKUR
Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, Türkiye
t.okur91@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
In this research, activity of digital story were investigated by examining for the basic Turkish language skills of bilingual third grade primary school students. Volunteer teachers and their students were included in the study from the urban and rural schools of Şanlıurfa in the southeastern region of Türkiye. Two primary teachers from urban schools and four primary teachers from rural schools in Şanlıurfa and their third grade students were included in the study. During the study, 20 digital stories created and shared by teachers and students together. At the end of the digital story activities for basic language skills, interviews were conducted with teachers and students. Data was analysed from one-to-one interviews with teachers, focus group interviews with students and digital story documents. On the basis of data, it was concluded that making digital stories in class is a practice that increases the participation of bilingual third grade primary school students in the lesson by using their basic language skills effectively. It can be suggested that the activity of digital stories should be used for a longer period of time in all lessons in primary school and should be used to develop basic language skills in younger age groups such as kindergarten, first and second grade.

INTRODUCTION

The sociological diversity of Türkiye makes it necessary to address the needs of different regions in education. One of these needs is the development of basic language skills of bilingual primary school students. Insufficiency in basic language skills can lead to students not reaching the desired level academically and early school leaving. According to a study from Türkiye, Şanlıurfa (Şimşek and Şahin, 2012), students whose native language is different from the language of instruction are up to 25% more likely to consider leaving school at least one time, while other students are 11% more likely to consider leaving school at least one time. The difference between the mother tongue and the language of instruction more than doubles the likelihood of early school leaving. Therefore, language skills in that regions need to be improved at the primary school level.

During the Covid-19 pandemic period, the problems of related to language deficiencies of students with different mother tongues who stayed away from school and teachers in disadvantaged regions have become more visible upon returning to school (Sönmez, 2023). For these reasons, practices starting from the classes and spreading to the schools are deemed necessary in regions facing negative situations. In order for these practices to be suitable for the age, digital transformation is needed in teaching environments. In the European Commission Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027(European Commission, 2020), it is stated that digital transformation should start from classrooms and teachers.

New generation and holistic practices are needed for the development of basic language skills such as reading, writing, speaking and listening. Based on the research in the literature, Arıcı and Taşkın (2019), state that the four basic language skills of reading, speaking, listening and writing are essentially divided into two as comprehension and expression. It is argued that it develops according to the principle of holism among basic language skills. It is mentioned that teaching activities are mostly focused on reading and writing skills and listening and speaking skills are neglected (Özbay, 2003). There is a need for practices that include all language skills, not one or two language skills. Barton and Sawyer (2003),emphasise that especially classroom teachers should be aware of strategy teaching for the development of language skills and different teaching models should be included in education programmes. Digital story activities could enhance teachers improve their students language skills.

Digital story is a technological tool for narrative or informative text, which involves the use of sound, music and animation (Skinner and Hagood, 2008). User-contributed content is enriched with text, video, images and audio via computer or other technological devices (Robin, 2008). These "audiovisuals" which are strong element for engaging students with text (Suwardy, Pan and Seow, 2012). The digital stories can be presented as the form of either video or digital paper. The animations can move or remain stationary. Music, background noise and spoken dialogue can serve used as sound in audio elements.

Digital stories are created by an individual or collective storyteller (Hartsell, 2017). Classroom activities with digital stories offer flexibility and variability. Students have the chance to develop collaborative or personal projects. Teachers can guide and manage the process of activities. Beyond the creation process, teachers can utilise the same or other digital stories to achive the objective of lesson.

Method

This study design is a phenomenological research. Phenomenological research emphasises the experiences in daily life. The concepts and situations shaped by these experiences form the basis for theories. The phenomenological

studies are researches that provide data that would shed light on research on problems or solutions (Ersoy, 2019). In phenomenological research, interviews are a siginificant data collection tool. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2016), state that the interaction between the researcher and the participant is important in interviews in phenomenological research and argue that interviews shape the phenomenon with interaction. Documents are also utilized as a data source in phenomenological research (Creswell, 2016).

Qualitative research methods were used in this study. One-to-one interviews were conducted with the teachers participating in the study and focus group interviews were conducted with the students. The digital stories analysed through document analysis. The analysis of the data in the study was carried out with the phenemology data analysis process by Moustakas (1994). Important expressions were identified, common expressions were grouped and thematised.

Participants

In order to determine the teachers and students who would participate in the 12-week study in the 2021/2022 academic year, volunteer teachers were included in the study by interviewing schools in the provincial center and rural areas of Şanlıurfa in the southeastern region of Türkiye. Two classroom teachers from urban schools and four classroom teachers from rural schools in Şanlıurfa and total of 120 primary school third grade students were included in the study. Participant students in the study who live in the Şanlıurfa region where the students speak Arabic as their mother tongue. The majority of the students are introduced to Turkish, the official language of education, in the first grade. There are different cultural structures between techers and students. All of the teachers participating in the study are young teachers who started working in Şanlıurfa after graduating from university. It is therefore assumed that they are eager to adopt new practices and teaching techniques. In addition, they were actively involved in the research process since this research aimed at improving basic language skills was aimed at solving the problem in the region.

Data Collection Tools

In the study, semi-structured interview forms were designed to collect from teacher and student interview data. The interview forms were examined by two experts and finalised. Document analysis table were used to analyse the criteried data in the digital stories.

Use of Digital Stories for Basic Language Skills

Lambert (2012), describes the steps of digital story creation as a process of sharing the "right moments" in lives with emotion and insight by seeing, hearing and combining them into digital stories. In the study, it was aimed to create digital stories with a project-based approach and all digital stories were created for students with the contributions of students. As a result of collaborative work with students, digital stories were created with story topics, story flow, student pictures, student and teacher voice recordings. Students actively participated in the digital story production process and activities related to basic language skills.

Since the digital stories were intended for primary school students, they were enriched with animations, children's pictures and sounds to enrich and attract attention. During the process, activities for different courses were carried out with primary school students. Therefore, an interdisciplinary approach was followed in language skills.

The teachers participating in the study worked in co-operation from the beginning. In particular, issues such as which subjects should be included in digital stories and which subjects should be selected for digital stories were discussed. They held meetings during the process and shared their activities for basic language skills in the process of creating digital stories and exchanged ideas with each other. Teachers became more competent in digital stories with the webinar held with a university lecturer specialised in digital stories.

Creating a digital story involves a process that starts with technology and continues with technology. For this reason, computers, phones, projection devices were used very effectively in the process. Web 2.0 tools such as Photo Story 3, Canva, My Story Book were used for digital story making. All teachers used these tools with their students and became more competent in using these tools in the process.

Findings

Data was gathered using qualitative methods through interviews with teachers and students. The effectiveness of digital story activities in improving the essential language abilities of bilingual students was explored through questions posed to teachers. Additional inquiries were made into the advantages of using digital stories for language learning and any difficulties encountered when integrating digital story activities into programmes focused on language skills development. Data from students was collected through focused group interviews. The questions asked about their feelings towards digital storytelling activities, how they participate in such activities, and their willingness to join another digital storytelling activity.

Teachers views on digital story activity for bilingual students' basic language skills are as;

> *"It was a great opportunity to engage students who are bilingual. They were able to improve basic language skills with different learning styles. The students have felt very motivated." (T1)*

"I believe that digital stories can be used more effectively in class. I think that these visual and auditory stories are more effective especially for children whose mother tongue is different. Digital story is a good application for small village schools like ours to improve ourselves and our students." (T3)

Teachers views on digital story activities are as;

"Digital stories are very effective ways of teaching. I think students and teachers should learn how to make a digital story. Digital story activities will be very useful to improve basic language skills. We had activities in reading, writing, listening and speaking through digital stories. This is good way to teach and improve language skills. I am very happy to participate in this process with colleagues from different schools." (T6)

"Digital story activity is useful for language speaking activities. Students do listening and speaking at the same time. They have learnt a lot of new words for making digital stories. It is good vocabulary activity for primary level." (T2)

Bilingual students views on use of digital story activites in class are as:

"We used flower pictures of me from my home. When I saw them on the screen, I felt very happy. I really like flowers and stories about flowers." (S12)

"Thank you for digital stories! I voiced a story which we made. I hope we will create new digital stories again. Because I want to record my voice for new stories." (S3)

As a result of the interview data analysis, teachers stated that digital stories attracted the attention of bilingual third grade primary school students and provided latent learning in language skills, that students used basic language skills together with digital stories, and that even students who did not participate in the lesson in creating digital stories through collaborative work were involved in the application. In the focus group interviews with the students, it was stated that the students liked creating digital stories very much, and they were very happy to see their own drawings and vocalisations in the stories. There are some shots from examples of digital stories which students and teachers made (Figure 1 and Figure 2).

Figure 1. Tohumun Hikayesi (Story of the Seed)

Figure 2. Kuşların Yolculuğu (Journey of the Birds)

Table 1 has prepered for document analysis data. 20 digital stories were analyzed.

Table 1. Document Analysis of Digital Stories

Number of digital stories voiced by students and teachers	6 story voiced by students 4 story voiced by teachers 10 story voiced by students and teachers
Number of digital stories illustrated by students and teachers	5 story illustrated by students 10 story illustrated by teachers 5 story illustrated by students and teachers
Number of digital story texts written by students and teachers	10 digital story text written by students 7 digital story text written by teachers 3 digital story text written by teachers and students
Subject of digital stories	8 digital story about cultural elements 7 digital story about lessons curriculum 5 digital story about life of students.
Text types used in digital stories	11 informative text 9 narrative text

Discussion

When digital story texts are analysed (Table 1), it is seen that different texts are handled. Barton and Sawyer (2003) emphasised that reading texts in different styles will diversify students' reading experiences and that these texts can be informative and narrative texts. Digital story activity is available for diiferent text types. Teachers can use it for teaching aimed information or giving messege from a narrative text.

Based on the interview findings, pupils could express themselves using their voice, illustrations, written text, and cultural elements within digital stories. This has the potential to increase motivation and overcome language barriers. Chin Su and Liang (2014), found that subtitled animated cartoons increased motivation for language learning more than text-based materials. Beyond the motivation it is possible use all basic language skills at he same activity.According to whole language theory, the reader and the text should be considered as a whole together with the four basic language skills (Ateş, 2021). Using more than language skills at the same time, present good results. The production of digital stories by students is intended to their "multiliteracy skills" according to Vinogradova, Linville and Bickel (2011).

From data of this research found that 8 digital story about students' cultural elements. It means students tend to use materials from their enveriment. According to Skinner and Hagood (2008), students represent and reflect upon their lives, their cultural resources and interests on digital stories. Picture of Göbeklitepe (Figure 2) is ancient place from Şanlıurfa. There is a data about flower interest from a student (S12). 7 digital story scenerio written by teachers and subjects are all about curriculum. Teachers involved curriculum to digital story activities. From research data small school from rural area can use digital stories (T3). Robin (2008), stated that digital storytelling have become increasingly more affordable and accessible. It is seen that rural schools can use digital stories via digital devices.

Digital stories can be used as instructional tools by teachers (Burmark, 2004; Robin, 2008; Hartsell, 2017). According the research data found that while some of stories centered on interest of students, others on curriculum.

Teachers from this study have utilized digital stories as an insturctional tool for curriculum outcomes (Table 1 and Figure 1).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, bilingual students all over the world are increasingly encountering language barriers(Sun et al., 2023) Schools in certain regions of Türkiye face issues with students experiencing language barriers (Kızıltaş, 2022). Digital storytelling is considered as an activity that can overcome this challenge. Digital stories have used of a lot of study for teaching new language (Vinogradova, Linville and Bickel, 2011), teaching math (Büyükkarcı and Müldür, 2022) or develop basic language skills (Kurudayıoğlu and Bal, 2014 ; Ciğerci and Gültekin, 2017; Demirbaş and Şahin, 2022).

Most of the research on digital story for bilingual students has been conducted in secondary schools in America (Ma, 2023). In this study focused on digital stories for bilingual students basic language skills. Research findings showed that teachers found this activity useful for involving bilingual students in class. It was seen that the teachers could easily use this activity in the classroom, that they could include all language skills in an activity, and that the students enjoyed the application. From digital stories documents it is understood that bilingual students contributed this activity with their voices, texts, pictures, cultures in collaborative way.

Especially the lower language proficiency at primary level is a big problem for learning objectives. Advantage of digital story activities can be applied to almost all language learning outcomes. In the classroom, digital story activities can be used in the same session for listening, speaking, reading and writing skills outcomes. For instance some of the outcomes of the third grade Turkish language lesson (MEB, 2019) which are "gives prepared speeches", "reads with the attention to punctuation marks", "describes the text he/she listens/watches in outline", "writes narrative text" can be used in digital story activities. In this way, teachers and students can use whole language skills in one activity. It can be suggested that digital story creation applications should be used for longer periods of time in all lessons in primary school, and that they should be used to develop basic language skills in younger age groups such as kindergarten, first and second grades of primary school.

References

Arıcı, A. F., & Taşkın, Y. (2019). Okuma becerisinin diğer dil becerileriyle ilişkisi. *IJOFE*, *5*(2), 185–194.

Ateş, S. (2021). Temel Dil Becerilerinin Gelişmesinde Çocuk Edebiyatı. Içinde A. Şahin (Ed.), *Çocuk Edebiyatı* (1.Baskı). Pegem Akademi.

Barton, J., & Sawyer, D. M. (2003). Our students are ready for this: Comprehension instruction in the elementary school. *The Reading Teacher*, *57*(4), 334–347.

Burmark, L. (2004). Visual presentations that prompt flash & transform. *Media and Methods*, *40*(6), 4–5.

Büyükkarcı, A., & Müldür, M. (2022). Digital storytelling for primary school Mathematics Teaching: Product and process evaluation. *Education and Information Technologies*, *27*, 5365–5396.

Chin Su, S., & Liang, E. (2014). Elementary Students' Motivation and Attitudes toward English Animated Cartoons at a Cram School. *International Journal of Arts and Commerce*, *3*(5), 15–36.

Ciğerci, F. M., & Gültekin, M. (2017). Use of digital stories to develop listening comprehension skills. *Issues in Educational Research*, *27*(2), 252–268.

Creswell, J. W. (2016). *Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri* (M. Bütün & S. B. Demir (ed.)). Siyasal Kitap.

Demirbaş, İ., & Şahin, A. (2022). The Effect of Digital Stories on Primary School Students' Listening Comprehension Skills. *Participatory Educational Research (PER)*, *9*(6), 380–397.

Ersoy, F. (2019). Fenomenoloji. Içinde A. Saban & F. Ersoy (Ed.), *Eğitimde Nitel Araştırma Desenleri* (3.Baskı). Anı Yayıncılık.

European Commission. (2020). *Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027*.

Hartsell, T. (2017). Digital storytelling: An alternative way of expressing oneself. *International Journal of Information and Communication Technology Education (IJICTE)*, *13*(1), 72–82.

Kızıltaş, Y. (2022). Bilingual Students, Language Conflict, Language - Culture Shock: Situations Faced by Teachers Assigned to Eastern Regions of Turkey. *Journal of Theoretical Educational Science*, *15*(1), 191–215.

Kurudayıoğlu, M., & Bal, M. (2014). Ana Dili Eğitiminde Dijital Hikâye Anlatımlarının Kullanımı. *Sakarya Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, *28*, 74–95.

Lambert, J. (2012). *Digital storytelling: Capturing lives, creating community.* (4. Edition). Routledge.

Ma, Q. (2023). *The Use of Digital Storytelling in Bilingual/Multilingual Students' Meaning-making: A Systematic Literature Review*. The University of Western Ontario.

MEB. (2019). *Türkçe Dersi Öğretim Programı*. http://mufredat.meb.gov.tr/ProgramDetay.aspx?PID=663

Moustakas, C. E. (1994). *Phenomenological Research Methods*. Sage Publications.

Özbay, M. (2003). Türkçe Öğretiminde İhmal Edilmiş Bir Alan: Dinleme Eğitimi. Içinde *Anadolu Çağdaş Eğitim Vakfı Cumhuriyetimizin 80. Yılında Türkçemiz*.

Robin, B. R. (2008). Digital Storytelling: A Powerful Technology Tool for the 21st Century Classroom. *Theory*

Into Practice, *47*(3), 220–228. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405840802153916

Şimşek, H., & Şahin, S. (2012). İlköğretim İkinci Kadame Öğrencilerinde Okulu Bırakma Eğilimi ve Nedenleri (Şanlıurfa İli Örneği). *Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, *12*(2).

Skinner, E. N., & Hagood, M. C. (2008). Developing Literate Identities with English Language Learners Through Digital Storytelling. *The Reading Matrix*, *8*(2), 12–38.

Sönmez, H. (2023). A case study examining the Turkish language skills of bilingual children according to adverse teaching conditions. *European Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *11*(2), 341–373.

Sun, X., Marks, R. A., Eggleston, R. L., Zhang, K., Lau, C., Yu, C. L., Nickerson, N., & Kovelman, I. (2023). Impacts of the COVID-19 disruption on the language and literacy development of monolingual and heritage bilingual children in the United States. *Reading and Writing*, *36*, 347–375.

Suwardy, T., Pan, G., & Seow, P.-S. (2012). Using Digital Storytelling to Engage Student Learning Accounting Education: (2012), Singapore. *An International Journal Management University School of Accountancy*.

Vinogradova, P., Linville, H. A., & Bickel, B. (2011). 'Listen to My Story and You Will Know Me'': Digital Stories as Student-Centered Collaborative Projects. *TESOL Journal*, *2*(2), 173–202.

Yıldırım, A., & Şimşek, H. (2016). *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri* (10.Baskı). Seçkin Yayıncılık.