Promoting Students' Intercultural Awareness Through Digital Storytelling in EFL Challenging Interactions
Voices from Digital Native Teachers in Secondary School Contexts

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ABSTRACT

Digital literacy has been an emerging and increasing topic in ELT, with numerous studies conducted to explore how digital-mediated tasks promote students' critical awareness of cultural realities. This study explores how digital native secondary school teachers implement digital storytelling in EFL challenging interactions. The study examines the pedagogical approaches used by digital native teachers to stimulate students' intercultural awareness in EFL challenging interactions. The study participants were identified based on a test to predict the strengths of some attributes of digital nativeness proposed by Teo's Digital Native Assessment Scale. Six teachers identified as digital native teachers volunteered to participate in the study. The data were gathered from interviews, online group discussions, and students' artifacts. The interviews were administered in the initial process of the study to get the teachers' understanding of digital storytelling and intercultural teaching. Results indicated that teachers' digital nativity contributes to their theoretical approach to intercultural communication in promoting students' intercultural awareness in EFL challenging interactions. Digital intercultural pedagogy is highly proposed to be included in the Indonesian secondary EFL curriculum. Therefore, the EFL curriculum development at all levels in Indonesia is suggested to adapt to diverse sociolinguistic contexts and various multicultural backgrounds.

Keywords: Digital native teacher, Digital storytelling, EFL challenging interaction, Intercultural awareness.

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital technology enhancement plays a significant role in integrating Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in classrooms. High-level ICT integration enables multi-modal, collaborative, and poly-synchronous types of engagement between teachers and students (Huang, Liu, Tlili, Yang, & Wang, 2020). Teachers and students rely on digital communication while physical walls are built due to physical interaction challenges and 21st-century skills issues, including communication, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, problem-solving, analytic reasoning, intercultural awareness, ethical conduct, and digital literacies (Binkley et al., 2012; Mishra & Kereluik, 2011; Pegrum, 2014). Literacy in the digital realm is thought to support the use of digital technologies for various reasons, including the production of material and the exchange of messages (Oakley, Pegrum, Xiong, Lim, & Yan, 2018). Consequently, digital technologies, such as hardware, applications, and supporting infrastructure, have been incorporated into schooling systems around the world, influencing the work of teachers (Starkey, 2020). Regarding teachers' familiarity with digital technology use, digital nativity emerges in literature to differentiate teachers' digital literacies.

EFL teachers teaching secondary schools -by Prensky's dichotomy (2001) - are divided into digital native teachers (DNs) and digital immigrant teachers (DIs). The two subsets of teachers share different levels of digital literacy. The different characteristics possessed by the two subsets of teachers indicate different educational operating systems and different ways of interacting with digital technology. Teachers today employ technology to supplement a wide variety of pedagogical approaches, from the more conventional structural approach, which emphasizes the study of linguistic structure, to the more recent communicative approach, which emphasizes the study of how language

is used in context (Chun, Kern, & Smith, 2016; Scott & Beadle, 2014).

Digital storytelling is regarded as an effective approach for assisting students in communicating their intentions through the use of narratives (Hung, 2019). Students have benefited from using digital stories not only in terms of improving their literacy, technology, and other learning outcomes but also in developing twenty-first-century abilities such as critical thinking and creative problem-solving (Ohler, 2013). Digital storytelling encourages the utilization of the digital tools required for communication in the digital age (Robin, 2008) and the capacity to convey one's thoughts creatively (Skouge & Rao, 2009). Digital storytelling, which typically uses words, music, and images to tell a story in a way that is both intelligible and interesting, is reported to significantly improve students' self-confidence and personal use (Hava, 2021). The study also revealed that digital storytelling could help EFL students learn new words and improve their writing, speaking, and listening skills. The findings indicate that digital storytelling can be a valuable and effective instrument for teachers to use in the classroom to encourage students' linguistic and technological development.

There is also the argument that people can be transformed and given more power through digital storytelling, leading to a critical knowledge of their social reality (Lambert, 2013). It also provides a genuine platform for young people to experiment with, analyze, and modify popular culture and mold their own narratives (Anderson & Macleroy, 2017). A rising amount of evidence suggests that young people enjoy a sense of empowerment when they are able to influence the production process and when they are able to express their own experiences and expertise (Mills & Levido, 2011). Influenced by contemporary research into the interconnectedness of digital storytelling and interculturality, this current study explored how digital native teachers stimulate students' intercultural awareness through a digital storytelling approach in EFL challenging interactions. To understand how digital storytelling creates intercultural spaces, it is necessary to examine the responses of digital native teachers to digital storytelling and intercultural education in EFL secondary school settings.

1.1. Digital Native Research

Prensky's definition of a digital native specifies that the term should be applied to individuals who were born after the 1980s. They have so much expertise with technology that you may consider them natural speakers of the languages used in digital technologies. To put it another way, the dominant notions of the digital native stem from an individual's prior experience with technology as well as their familiarity with using technology for a variety of applications (Prensky, 2001).

However, even if one was born before the 1980s, "digital nativity" can be displayed by someone who has grown up with and become proficient in many forms of technology. This indicates that many instructors (if not all) can become "digital natives" through exposure to and practice with digital tools even if they did not grow up in a digitally dominant culture (Ball et al., 2019).

Digital native research has helped shape how technology is used in schools, how we think about learning and teaching, and how we study today's students (Wilson, Hall, & Mulder, 2022). Digital natives' specific characteristics and multimedia preferences have been utilized to facilitate the implementation of innovative technology. Access to technology, age, experience, and digital literacy level has been added to studies of digital native traits, along with other variables (Ng, 2012; Teo, 2013; Thompson, 2013). Scholars have investigated whether digital native features correspond with other aspects, such as digital competency or technology addiction (Wang, Sigerson, & Cheng, 2019). This study sought to bridge the gap between the digital native characteristics of teachers and the intercultural awareness of students.

1.2. Digital Storytelling and Students' Intercultural Awareness

Computer users are given the opportunity to become creative storytellers through the medium of digital storytelling (Robin, 2008). This is accomplished by following the conventional steps of selecting a topic, writing a screenplay, and developing an interesting story through the incorporation of a number of different forms of multimedia content, including computer-generated visuals, recorded audio, computer-generated text, video clips, and music (Robin, 2008). Story creation in a web-based multimedia system has been shown to boost learner engagement, lead to more authentic language use, and ultimately lead to better student outcomes (Hwang et al., 2016). Because of this, numerous scholars agree that creating and sharing digital stories is an excellent method of enhancing language learning (Kim, 2014; Miller & Kim, 2015; Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009; Yuksel, Robin, & McNeil, 2011). Digital storytelling is an effective technological technique for collecting, creating, evaluating, and integrating graphical visuals with written text, which has been shown to improve and accelerate student comprehension (Burmark, 2004). Teachers who can build their own digital stories may find that they are particularly useful not only for engaging students in the content but also for promoting conversation about the themes provided in a narrative and for making abstract or conceptual content more intelligible (Robin, 2008). Students must be able to achieve intercultural competency or intercultural literacy in today's increasingly interconnected world (Oakley et al., 2018). As contemporary methods of foreign language

instruction emphasize language as a social practice, including actual human reciprocal action (Oakley et al., 2018), digital technologies can be used to promote digital literacy and intercultural literacy.

Digital literacy has been an emerging and increasing topic in English language teaching (ELT), with numerous studies conducted to explore how digital-mediated tasks promote students' critical knowledge of the realities of cultural contexts. The outcomes of a classroom-based study on the application of digital photograph-mediated intercultural assignment suggest that digital photograph-mediated cultural task helps students develop a critical awareness of cultural reality (Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018). This study demonstrates how the composition of tasks and the incorporation of digital graphics as teaching aids contribute significantly to students' critical understanding of sociocultural reality. Through the use of discourse theory, students are argued to gain a better understanding of how culture is produced from multiple perspectives. Learning about one's perspective and how it relates to different perspectives helps students better appreciate various cultures. This study is claimed to extend the work of Kiss and Weninger (2017), which studied the use of visual text - cultural pictures in the EFL classroom to help students comprehend a cultural item, suggesting that culturally-rich photos can be valuable learning resources for students learning about various cultures with teachers serving as facilitators in this regard.

Multimodal narratives that include text, images, sounds, and videos are the norm in digital storytelling, which is created on digital devices such as computers, tablets, and smartphones (N. Churchill, Ping, Oakley, & D. Churchill, 2008). The internet is a common medium for its widespread digital dissemination. Foreign language instruction has benefited from the use of this multimodal digital storytelling. Digital narratives have been claimed to enhance students' intercultural awareness and understanding (Ribeiro, 2016). It is important to highlight, however, that digital stories are not limited to fictitious narratives but can instead be non-fictional, factual texts detailing real-world events (Oakley et al., 2018).

1.3. EFL Challenging Interactions

Inadequate knowledge of the language, cultural norms, or cultural expectations impedes effective and successful communication during an intercultural exchange; similarly, negative attitudes toward cultural differences that discourage contact with others or choosing to participate only in homogenous communities are examples of obstacles that impede intercultural interactions (Czerwionka & Mugford, 2020). According to Bennett (1993), cultural diversity, which includes but is not limited to variations in an individual's values, beliefs, ideas, viewpoints, and formative experiences, is

the major barrier to effective and appropriate intercultural exchanges. Learners of a second language and those who communicate across cultural boundaries can both benefit from increasing their intercultural awareness by taking part in intercultural mediation. This will help them better address the difficulty of cultural meaning-making (Czerwionka & Mugford, 2020). Nurturing intercultural awareness can be accomplished in two ways: "drawing links between acts and meanings located in varied cultural frameworks" and "developing capacity for attentive and deliberate examination" (McConachy, 2018).

It might be challenging for some teachers to adopt digital storytelling in their classrooms, particularly in certain subject areas. The issues that arise are typically associated with gaining access to and making use of various forms of technology. During this time, students' awareness of other cultures should be developed by employing the already available technology. To address this deficiency, this study was carried out to investigate the perspectives held by teachers on the implementation of digital storytelling to promote students' cross-cultural understanding.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative interpretative analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) with a semi-structured in-depth one-to-one interview. The interpretative study allows the researchers to produce detailed descriptions and individual interpretations of the study findings. In collecting the data, semi-structured in-depth one-to-one interviews (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) and online discussion sessions were used in this current study to investigate the subject matter connected to personal and subordinated voices flexibly.

2.1. Research Site and Participants

To identify digital native teachers, seventy-eight English teachers from 15 secondary schools in Lampung, Indonesia, were recruited to fill in the Digital Native Assessment Scale (Teo, 2013). The teachers were identified as teaching in public and private secondary schools in six different regions in Lampung.

2.2. Participants Collection Procedure

For the purpose of measuring digital nativity, Teo (2013) created the Digital Native Assessment Scale (DNAS). This survey was used to know whether the teachers are included as digital natives or digital immigrants. Constructed on a Likert scale, varying from "strongly agree" (valued 7) to "strongly disagree" (valued 1), the survey is used to measure the teachers' degree to which they: (1) grow up with technology (*GrowT*), (2) comfortable with multitasking (*MultiT*), (3) reliant on graphics for communication (*GraphicC*), and

(4) thrive on instant gratifications and rewards (*InstantGR*).

In the current study, DNAS was distributed online to the respondents through WhatsApp, with informed consent provided as the introduction. Seventy-eight teachers joined the survey. Their demographic information is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' demography in the survey

Category		N	%
Gender	Male	16	20.5
	Female	62	79.5
Birth year	Before the 1980s	32	41.1
	After the 1980s	46	58.9
Qualification	Bachelor degree	65	83.3
	Master degree	13	16.7
Affiliation	Public school	69	88.5
	Private school	9	11.5
Teaching experience	Under 2 years	3	3.9
	2-5 years	9	11.5
	6-10 years	13	16.7
	Over 10 years	53	67.9

Table 2. The degree of participants' digital nativity

Characteristics of digital native	Digital native degree
GrowT	5.41
MultiT	5.07
GraphicC	5.53
InstantGR	4.82
Average	5.21

Table 3. Participants' demography in the interview and online discussion session

Category		Teachers					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
Gender	Male	√	-	-	-	-	-
	Female	-	√	√	√	√	√
Birth year	Before the 1980s	-	√	-	-	-	-
	After the 1980s	√	-	√	√	√	√
Qualification	Bachelor degree	√	√	√	√	√	-
	Master degree	-	-	-	-	-	√
Affiliation	Public school	√	√	√	-	√	√
	Private school	-	-	-	√	-	-
Teaching experience	Under 2 years	-	-	-	-	-	-
	2-5 years	√	-	√	√		-
	6-10 years	-	-	-	-	-	√
	Over 10 years	-	√	-	-	√	-

The result of the digital native characteristic identification of the respondents is 5.21. The score from the items represents the degree of the participant's perceptions of the four attributes in the Digital Native Assessment Scale. It is illustrated in Table 2.

The average score in Table 2 shows a very high level on a scale ranging from 1 (low) to 7 (high). The respondents are therefore considered to be digital native teachers. Of the 78 respondents identified as digital native teachers in the survey, 6 teachers were invited to join an in-depth interview and group discussion. These 6 teachers represent different schools located in different districts. The interviewed participants' demography is illustrated in Table 3.

2.3. Data Collection and Data Analysis

An online semi-structured interview was conducted for each participant. The researchers delivered questions to elicit teachers' understanding of digital storytelling, intercultural teaching, and students' intercultural awareness as the key terms of the study. The questions delivered to the participants focus on their familiarity with the key terms. In the interview session, the participants were also asked about the possibility of implementing digital storytelling and intercultural teaching in the classroom. Participants' responses in the interview sessions were analyzed thematically.

For further explorations of the teachers' understanding of digital storytelling, intercultural teaching, and students' intercultural awareness, the participants were invited to join an online group discussion. Students' artefacts in the form of digital storytelling uploaded online were displayed in the group discussion session to elicit a more in-depth discussion on the topic. Recorded data and notes the researchers took in the online discussion session were descriptively interpreted for the analysis.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Digital Storytelling: Teachers' Perspectives

The first question eliciting teachers' familiarity with digital storytelling in the interview session ended in different responses. Of the six teachers interviewed, four of them were not familiar with digital storytelling.

> I have heard the term, but I am not familiar with it. I have never used it in my class. (T2, T6, interview)

Digital storytelling was considered to be a new approach to English language teaching. They were not able to make any distinction between storytelling and digital storytelling. One of the three participants articulated digital storytelling as a tool, while the others

regarded storytelling as simply displaying video in teaching.

> Digital storytelling is a tool in teaching. Teachers can have digital tools to teach the students about storytelling. (T3, interview)

> It is about showing students a video with digital devices. (T4, interview)

Teachers' different conceptions of digital storytelling indicate generation gaps. Significant gaps exist between generations, with teachers and students often possessing different degrees of expertise in managing modern technology (Chamberlin-Quinlisk, 2013). Different skill levels in operating digital tools influence teachers' conception.

However, as the online group discussion was developed, the four teachers grew their knowledge. Having a shared comprehensive understanding of digital storytelling, the two teachers showed their collegial support. These two teachers' responses in the interview showed that they belong to a solid digital native who has spent enough time interacting with technology over the years to have acquired sufficient experience and familiarity with it. It indicated that teachers' digital nativity contributes to their understanding of the theoretical approach to digital storytelling. Aided by the videos displaying digital storytelling in the online group, the two teachers helped their colleagues to build their conception of digital storytelling.

Students' digital storytelling artefacts displayed in the group helped the teachers reach their visual conception of digital storytelling. The 'affinity spaces' in which participants in online groups were invested in a process of learning and teaching each other, with some becoming experts and mentors (Gee & Hayes, 2011), were constructed in the group. This process involved participants learning from and teaching each other about a particular topic. Following the conclusion of the discussion, there was an agreement that the use of digital storytelling should be considered an alternative methodology for the instruction of the English language. Teachers were able to learn, through participation in an online discussion, about the goals of digital storytelling, which included providing an opportunity for everyday people to have their stories heard, as well as about the ways in which the technique was being implemented in educational settings (Lambert, 2013).

3.2. Intercultural Teaching: An Implicit Approach

In conceptualizing intercultural teaching, the six teachers who participated in the current study shared a similar understanding. They acknowledge one established conception of interculturality as the exchange of information between people of different cultural backgrounds or linguistic backgrounds within or across national borders (Kramsch, 1998).

> Interculturality in teaching to my perception, is teaching a foreign language culture to the students. We introduced American or British culture to our students. (T5, interview)

Implementing intercultural teaching in EFL classrooms is pointed out to be important by the teachers.

> I think we need to introduce our students to cultural differences. (T3, interview & online discussion)

> Once I told my students that in western culture, when you meet someone in the first meeting, you cannot ask some questions Indonesian people conventionally ask. (T6, interview)

> When you teach your students English, you should also teach British or American culture. (T1, interview)

These perspectives reinforce the idea that the foreign language classroom offers an alternate perspective on intercultural education, one in which the intercultural is manifested through representations of cultural outsiders linked with the foreign language being studied (Escudero, 2013). Teaching foreign languages has shifted from being largely linguistic (learning how to communicate effectively in the target language) to being intrinsically intercultural (Tolosa, Biebricher, East, & Howard, 2018). However, as the objectives of intercultural learning are quite complex, acknowledging the interactive nature of culture and transmitting it to their students is difficult to put into practice (Göbel & Helmke, 2010).

> I have never carried out explicit intercultural teaching. Introducing foreign culture to students was only a glimpse of cultural discussion in the classroom. (T2, T4, interview)

> I introduced them to cultural differences, but I didn't take them as the focus of my teaching. (T3, interview)

This implicit grasp of cultural assumptions, beliefs, and practices has been the foundation of effective communication for the previous two decades (Tolosa et al., 2018). Teachers' responses in the interview showed that they shared similar experiences in intercultural teaching. Intercultural teaching was brought to the classrooms implicitly.

3.3. Intercultural Awareness for Both Teachers and Students: Challenging Situations

The implementation of language instruction with an emphasis on intercultural competence is a challenge for practitioners around the world (Biebricher, East, Howard & Tolosa, 2019). When the teachers were asked about stimulating students' intercultural awareness with digital storytelling, one of them mentioned the challenges:

It is not easy to assign students to make digital storytelling. Some of my students cannot access the signal. Some of them even share the phone with their family members. (T6, interview & online discussion)

However, notwithstanding the challenges associated with technological issues, teachers acknowledged the significance of intercultural instruction in English language teaching.

Teachers should know more about intercultural teaching. Teachers should also develop their intercultural awareness. (T1, T5, T6, interview & online discussion)

I think we should also teach our students about intercultural awareness. And I think intercultural Awareness should be included in the curriculum. (T5, interview & online discussion)

We need to learn how to teach the students about intercultural awareness using digital media. (T4, T5, interview & online discussion)

Teachers' views indicate their needs for digital intercultural pedagogy. Digital intercultural pedagogy should be proposed to be included in the Indonesian secondary EFL curriculum. As Indonesians are multiculturalists, curriculum development at all levels in Indonesia is suggested to get adapted to diverse sociolinguistic contexts along with various multicultural backgrounds. And one way to deal with the challenge of developing the intercultural is to include an intercultural dimension in pre-service and in-service language teacher education programs (or, more audaciously, in all teacher education preparation) to take advantage of the awareness that different language teachers already have because of their own experiences with other cultures and use this awareness as a starting point to rethink the relationship between culture and language (Tolosa et al., 2018). In instructing EFL students about different cultures, an alternate approach would be to cultivate an environment of mutual learning and discussion of cultural similarities, differences, and tensions among the students.

3.4. Teachers' Pedagogical Approach in Implementing Digital Storytelling

A significant research report was revealed from an in-depth interview with T4. She showed her comprehensive understanding of digital storytelling. T4 is well-versed in the digital storytelling method. She defined Digital storytelling as:

… the new type of storytelling that is released digitally; it can take the shape of video movies, comics, or short stories published on digital platforms such as flipbook and movie maker. In digital storytelling, a video with animation, images, and music might be considered. (T4, interview)

She justified that digital storytelling enhanced students' English skills by fostering the development of their literacy and imagination in creating artistic stories. She also said that it could assist individuals in improving their speaking and writing skills, as well as their pronunciation. To practice digital storytelling, she employed augmented reality (AR) for her digital storytelling teaching; she argued that AR provides a variety of images as inspiration for the creation of fresh narrative stories.

I introduced AR to my students. They downloaded an application and then created the story using the application. (T4, interview & online discussion)

She asserted that this approach raised the students' participation in an engaging project. Connecting digital storytelling with students' intercultural awareness, T4 supported the argument that students' intercultural awareness is increased by digital storytelling.

I do agree that digital storytelling can be used to promote students' intercultural awareness. Students use audio and video as learning sources during the listening phase of digital storytelling. There are also audio and video resources from non-native English speakers who speak English fluently, such as Chinese and Indonesian speakers. The students will then create an original story based on the storytelling culture. Writing digital storytelling is the end result, and to me, it is mind-blowing that non-native speakers can enjoy digital storytelling as a process. (T4, interview)

However, regardless of the instructional method's effectiveness in implementing digital storytelling, she also mentioned the challenges. Class heterogeneity and varying degrees of English proficiency posed the challenges.

The findings of this study highlight the necessity for teachers to investigate the interplay between students' linguistic repertoires, their social contacts, and their prior knowledge to develop new strategies for dealing with difficult conversations in their challenging interactions. In addition, for students and teachers to develop intercultural awareness, it is necessary to have a cultural meaning-making framework that incorporates communicative competence, intercultural competence, and a focus on overcoming problems associated with cultural meaning-making (McConachy, 2018).

4. CONCLUSION

Recordings of teachers' voices from interviews and an online discussion session generated significant recommendations for additional research. The study found that instructors' digital nativity helps their theoretical approach to intercultural communication in fostering students' intercultural awareness in EFL exchanges that are difficult. As the online discussion

session concluded with recommendations, it is strongly suggested that digital intercultural pedagogy be incorporated into the Indonesian secondary EFL curriculum. It is recommended that EFL curriculum development at all levels in Indonesia be adaptable to diverse sociolinguistic situations and multicultural backgrounds.

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