

The following are general comments about the structure and contents of an academic essay written for university – they are not prescriptive and intended as an educational guide only.

**Discuss** the use of digital storytelling in the teaching and learning of language and critically report on one journal article that investigates the use of digital storytelling in the language-learning context.

**Commented [G1]:** Carefully analyse the question, highlighting key words and phrases.

**Commented [G2]:** Take note of 'Discuss' which means that you are being asked to present a variety of aspects on the topic.

**Commented [c3]:** It is not necessary to write the question at the top of your essay. This is just here so that you understand what the essay is about.

### 1. Introduction

Digital storytelling combines various types of multimedia – images, music, narration, text and video clips – to make a story that is appealing and interesting to a digital reader (EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative, 2007) and is increasingly used in teaching and learning (Afrilyasanti & Basthomi, 2011). It is an invaluable educational tool in relation to language learning because it can be used in a variety of ways (Thomas & Page, 2011). Digital storytelling has the potential to influence the student audience and help them 'make better meaning' from the content they are exposed to. This report will discuss the potential and limitations of digital storytelling along with some fundamental technical information. It will then focus on one journal article that investigates the use of digital storytelling in language learning contexts.

**Commented [A4]:** Start with some background information to help orientate your reader 'as to the subject' being discussed.

**Commented [A5]:** Support your point of view with evidence from your reading.

**Commented [c6]:** Alert the reader's interest by giving concise, relevant background information on the topic.

**Commented [A7]:** This is the thesis statement-which highlights the student's main opinion/line of argument in this paper.

**Commented [A8]:** This paper is written in report format. Use of numbered headings and sub-headings as well as succinct paragraphs are all appropriate for report writing.

### 2. Role of Digital Storytelling

Digital storytelling is an attractive educational aid because it "captivates and engages" (Stanley & Dillingham, 2011, p. 24) learners and helps develop artistic, technical, organisational and storytelling talents in students (Ohler, 2005). It brings together language, literacy and technology and this makes it an appealing activity for students who are likely to already be surrounded by various types of digital media (Stanley & Dillingham, 2011). Digital stories are often the personal story of the writer but may also be fiction, and may be based on a single topic or spread across many. Aside from the personal narrative, digital

**Commented [c9]:** Headings form sign posts and assist the reader to focus on the most important content. They should match the information you provide in your introduction. The lecturer was happy to have headings in this piece of writing – to help clarify the ideas and break down the information into sections.

**Commented [G10]:** This is the start of the body of the essay. It should have a logical sequence.

**Commented [c11]:** Citation includes a page number because it refers to a direct quote.

It's a good idea to add your name and student ID# to the bottom of your page for identification purposes.

stories can also include a wide variety of different topics (Alexander, 2011). However, there are limitations to digital storytelling. Iannotti (2005), an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher and an avid supporter of digital storytelling, argues that it can be exhausting to supervise and guide the development of a whole class of individual students' digital storytelling projects. She found that despite carefully checking the drafts of her students' stories, many of her students "got lost along the way" (Iannotti, 2005, p. 11). This led her to conclude that although digital storytelling provided "meaningful, relevant and authentic learning experiences for students" it needs to be kept simple with group work and "realistic goals" (Iannotti, 2005, p.12). Also, there is a danger that students will be distracted by the technological side of digital storytelling and place less emphasis on the actual creation of the story. Stanley and Dillingham (2011) stress that the story is always more important than the digital presentation and Ohler (2008) acknowledges that "no technology or special effects can replace a well-developed story with literary elements and personal voice" (p. 6). Despite its limitations, however, digital storytelling has powerful potential to influence, captivate and engage learners of many disciplines.

### 3. Technology Use

Digital storytelling is aided by the multitude of available technologies and software packages that enhance, develop and produce it. Consequently, the way digital stories are created may vary according to this constantly changing digital technology (Alexander, 2011) and the wide variety of supporting software. Windows Movie Maker (<https://www.windows-movie-maker.org/>) is already installed on a large number of computers and, if not, it can be downloaded for free. Photos and videos can be imported and edited, and narration and music can be added. Microsoft Photo Story (<https://microsoft-photo-story.en.softonic.com/>) can also be downloaded for free. Photos can be dragged onto a window and then arranged to tell

**Commented [G12]:** Reporting verb 'argues' is often followed by 'that'. Using this reporting verb shows that you agree with the writer.

**Commented [G13]:** Use of the reporting verb 'acknowledges' shows that you believe that the literature is correct.

**Commented [A14]:** The topic sentence outlines what the paragraph is about.

**Commented [G15]:** Your own knowledge must be supported by evidence from your reading.

the visual story. The program also allows the user to add narration and music. Digital stories can also be created using Mixbox, Tikatak, Scrapblog, Microsoft Office PowerPoint, Prezi or similar software. In addition, images can be downloaded from such sites as Google Images or Flickr and there are a number of free music sites where music can be downloaded. Audacity is free software for recording and editing narration. It is very easy to use an iPad for digital storytelling using such apps as Story, Sonicpics or Storyrobe (<https://sites.google.com/site/digitalstorytellingwiththeipad/apps-for-digital-storytelling>). In summary, it is clear that the array of new technologies and software products that can produce digital stories is somewhat vast and able to produce highly effective and engaging visual accounts.

**Commented [A16]:** Using transition signals such as 'in addition', 'furthermore', 'moreover' etc. can help to develop cohesion in your text and flow in your writing.

**Commented [A17]:** The concluding sentence of the paragraph sums up the ideas nicely and also somewhat ties back to the topic sentence.

#### 4. Analysis of Case Study Presented in a Journal Article

The journal article, 'Starting Language Schema for English-Language Learners: Teacher-Composed Digital Jumpstarts for Academic Reading' (Rance-Roney, 2010), offers a comprehensive illustration of how digital storytelling can support ESL learners' academic literacy and reveals another way in which digital story telling can enhance teaching and learning. Rance-Roney (2010) describes teacher-composed digital storytelling as a way of supporting ESL learners who may be required to engage in "challenging academic text" (p. 386). This is an interesting observation as digital storytelling is an excellent way of helping to scaffold content for ESL learners who face challenging materials. Rance-Roney goes on to say that at the very beginning of their learning, first providing learners with a digital story that offers cultural background to the text can help them to fully engage and 'collaborate' with the contents. Rance-Roney (2010) calls this a "digital jump-start" (p. 386). To illustrate this, she uses the example of teaching an ESL class, reading and writing a unit on the USA Civil Rights movement. In order for her students to understand the importance of this history, and to be able to find the readings that they needed, they had to have considerable

**Commented [G18]:** Name of the journal is given because this formed part of the question.

**Commented [G19]:** 'Describes' is a reporting verb which shows a neutral attitude towards the literature.

**Commented [A20]:** The student adds their analysis here of what the literature means. This is an important feature in academic writing. DO not simply describe literature-but ANALYSE what it means to YOU.

**Commented [G21]:** These are 'signpost' words which guide the reader.

**Commented [G22]:** Using the present tense indicates the information is current.

knowledge of the topic, be familiar with some words and phrases and be able to acquire a wider comprehension of the diverse nature of US society and politics. Rance-Roney (2010) and some of her fellow teachers began to experiment with digital storytelling as a tool to provide these needs. This way of using digital technologies to scaffold students is a very effective tool in engaging with and imparting supporting information to help students learn.

Rance-Roney (2010) reveals that by using digital storytelling, they were able to scaffold reading, focussing on developing sentence structure and specific vocabulary with the aim of developing language capability. It is becoming increasingly common in the classroom that the potential of using technology to scaffold students' learning has enormous potential. This trend is set to increase and hopefully, this will encompass the role of digital storytelling.

### 5. Digital Jump-Starts

To create a digital jump-start, Rance-Roney (2010) initially composes a script which gives background information and introduces frequently repeated vocabulary appropriate to the topic and then images are chosen to illustrate the new vocabulary with a word typed at the top of the image. Lastly, the script and supporting media are uploaded to the chosen software.

The final digital stories can be used repeatedly in the classroom and the students can take them home. Rance-Roney (2010) notes that initially it took the teachers two to three hours to produce a digital story, depending on how careful they wanted to be, but as they got used to the process there was a considerable decrease in this time. The teachers made the following recommendations: choose subject matter that predicts but does not replace the topic, look at the story from the point of view of an ESL learner, use 10 to 12 key words that are important to the vocabulary of the topic, compose a script that is slightly challenging, keep content relevant and give the students encouragement to create their own digital stories. The teachers all agreed that digital jump-starts gave a "rich pre-reading experience" and

**Commented [A23]:** Student's voice is present here. This is their analysis.

**Commented [DS24]:** Concluding sentences here wrap up this paragraph and reinforce/summarise the arguments being made.

**Commented [A25]:** Use of headings should be as 'noun phrases'. Do not use questions or statements as headings in your work. Just put 'nouns' together to work as headings and sub-headings.

**Commented [G26]:** Indicates a sequence of information.

**Commented [G27]:** Continues to indicate sequence.

**Commented [G28]:** Continues to indicate sequence.

**Commented [G29]:** Long and short sentences add a variety of rhythm to the essay.

enabled students to be independent learners giving them “a critical sense of control over the English language” (Rance-Roney, 2010, p. 394). Thus, the creation of digital stories to facilitate learning does take effort and some technological expertise; however, the advantages of using such technology can aid students’ retention, comprehension and enjoyability of their subject matter.

**Commented [A30]:** The concluding sentence here ties everything up and summarises the arguments in this paragraph.

## 6. Conclusion

To summarise, it can be seen that from the very first lesson digital storytelling incorporates the four language learning elements of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Developing each of these ‘macro skills’ can be incorporated into the creation of a digital story as the lessons progress. Furthermore, this technological aspect of digital storytelling makes it appealing to students and encourages engagement and creativity. It is a valuable tool in a language-learning classroom and can bring the subject matter to life, as well as aid students’ comprehension.

**Commented [G31]:** Introduce the conclusion with words such as these or similar words such as ‘In conclusion’, ‘To conclude’, ‘Therefore’, ‘Consequently’

**Commented [A32]:** The conclusion ties up all the arguments together that have been presented in the paper.

## 7. Reference List

- Afrilyasanti, R., & Yazid, B. (2011). Digital storytelling: A case study on the teaching of speaking to Indonesian ESL students. *Journal of Language in India*, 11(2), 81-91.
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- Iannotti, E. (2005). How to make crab soup: Digital storytelling projects for ESL students. *Transit*, 1(1), 10-12. Retrieved from <http://worldroom.tamu.edu/Blog/Text/June18/How-to-Make-Crab-Soup-DigitalStorytelling-Projects-for-ESL-Students.pdf>
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- Ohler, J. (2008). *Digital storytelling in the classroom: New media pathways to literacy, learning, and creativity*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
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- Stanley, N., & Dillingham, B. (2011, February 21). Making learners click with digital storytelling. *Language Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://www.languagemagazine.com/?s=Nile+Stanley+and+Brett+Dillingham>
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Always start your reference list on a new page. In this paper, APA referencing style has been used to provide a list of all the books, journals and websites cited. For more information on APA referencing, please refer to: <http://libguides.library.curtin.edu.au/referencing/apa>

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