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Research article

Developing Literacy Skills of Lower Primary Students Through Digital Storytelling

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Abstract

The development of literacy skills among young school children is an important factor in achieving academic success, having a direct impact on their ability to understand and use information effectively. In the current educational context, digital storytelling is an innovative and engaging resource that can contribute to young school children's development of literacy skills. This study analyzed the impact of digital stories use on the emergent literacy of primary school children, highlighting their benefits in the development of reading, comprehension and reflection on a written text skills. The study used a mixed-method research design, combining both quantitative (standardized tests) and qualitative (focus-group) methods to gain a detailed insight into the impact of digital stories on the development of literacy in young school children. The participants were 25 second graders who underwent an educational intervention using digital stories. The assessment of students' progress was carried out through the application of the Learning Strategies Assessment Questionnaire (SMALSI), the Reading Comprehension Strategies scale, the focus being placed on aspects such as reading, monitoring and re-reading texts, as well as self-testing to ensure content comprehension. The quantitative analysis followed the variations in scores obtained in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages, and the qualitative component included parent and teacher focus groups on students' literacy level. The results of the study highlighted that exposure to digital stories significantly increases literacy levels in the post-experimental stage compared to the pre-experimental stage.

Keywords:
early schooling, literacy skills, digital stories, primary students, functional literacy, digital storytelling, literacy index

1. Theoretical background

1.1. Primary school children's literacy skills

Education is a major factor in human development, and primary education is a particularly important stage in building the essential knowledge and skills of each individual. Starting school means integrating the child into a new environment, in which he/she is involved in a continuous process of training for life, which will have a profound influence on the development of his/her personality and the way in which it will consequently manifest itself in various school and social contexts (Șerdean, 2007).

In the present study, we refer to the basic acquisition cycle, i.e. to students in the second grade. The basic acquisition cycle includes the preparatory, first and second grades, the main objective being the adjustment to the school system requirements and *initial literacy*. It aims to assimilate the basics of the main conventional languages (writing, reading, calculus), to stimulate the children's creative potential, their intuition and imagination, and to build motivation for learning which is understood as a social activity. The initial literacy targeted at the level of this cycle is reflected in the general competences foreseen by the school curriculum of the subject *Communication in Romanian*: (1) receiving oral messages in known communication contexts; (2) expressing oral messages in different communication situations; (3) *comprehending/receiving* a variety of written messages in known communication contexts; (4) writing messages in different communication situations.

In order to have an overview of the competences that pupils should acquire at the end of their schooling, it was necessary to identify the defining aspects of literacy skills. In this regard, Article 91 of the Law on Pre-University Education 198/2023, the National Curriculum for primary, secondary and high school education focuses on the key competences promoted at European level, which determine the pupil's training profile. The eight key competences include reading, writing and message comprehension;

Within this framework, the subject *Communication in Romanian* contributes significantly to the development of *reading, writing and message*

comprehension skills. This competence is found in the educational policy document *Benchmarks for the design, updating and evaluation of the National Curriculum*, under the name of *literacy competence*. It is defined as "the ability to identify, understand, express, create and interpret concepts, feelings, facts and opinions, both orally and in writing, using audio-visual and digital media in any subject or in any context. It involves the ability to communicate and interact effectively, appropriately and creatively with others." (p. 20).

The above mentioned document also states that the outcomes of primary education are represented by key competences formed at an elementary level. The elementary level refers to the acquisitions acquired by the pupil at the end of primary education, which enable him/her to carry out simple operations in known contexts, that is mainly familiar/concrete contexts. In terms of cognitive development, this level corresponds to the stage of concrete operations. Key competences begin to take shape at the elementary level, but are not yet sufficiently structured to be operable in new contexts without adult support.

Competence is a multidimensional concept having an important role in different domains, including in education. Popovici Borzea (2017) supports the idea that competence is different from the terms *ability* and *capability*, although they are used in the definition of the concept.

For all stages specific to early schooling**,** the analysis of language acquisition (a particularly important process pertaining to this stage) must take into account vocabulary range, oral discourse features, writing and reading, as well as the internal language characteristics and its specific roles. In the case of young school children, it is important to emphasize that all of these components are profoundly influenced by the process of learning to read and write. This process is the central element of the transformations in the language realm characteristic of the 7-10 years old age group (Crețu, 2016). Early education, especially the pre-school training group (Ro. *Grupa mare*), provides the prerequisites for the acquisition of writing and reading. Later, in school, pupils go through the three essential stages (pre-primary, primary and post-primary), each of which has a well-determined role in the development of these skills. Thus, the early school stage is the period during which children's literacy skills are shaped, consolidated and developed.

The study of the subject Communication in Romanian, started in the preparatory class and continued up to the second grade, aims at the gradual development of literacy skills, adapted to students' level of understanding, but also to the specific needs corresponding to each age group.

Literacy is also known as *literacy competence* or *literacy* (Iliescu, 2023). We express our preference for using the phrase *literacy skills* rather than *literacy competence* because of the targeted age group, as *competence* implies a higher stage of development than that specific to fundamental acquisitions. However, competence is the ability to apply knowledge, i.e. *know-how type* structures and skills in familiar or changing contexts. Two aspects are essential "the application of what a person knows or can do with reference to a specific task or problem and the ability to transfer this skill between different situations" (Borzea, 2017, p. 147).

Although frequently used in common language, the term *literacy* is not yet defined in the Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language. According to the definition provided by *The International Literacy Association*, literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create and communicate using written, audio and digital materials across all disciplines and in any context.

The definition provided by the European Union Council for the concept of *literacy*, officially translated as "literacy", is similar to the above-mentioned definition: "Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, express, create and interpret concepts, feelings, facts and opinions, both orally and in writing, using visual, auditory/audio and digital materials pertaining to different subjects and in different contexts. It involves the ability to communicate and connect with others effectively, appropriately and creatively." (Official Journal of the European Union, 2018, p. 8).

In the Cambridge dictionary, literacy is defined as the ability to write and read, as well as having the needed knowledge about a subject/topic or particular/specific knowledge. Literacy refers to the communicative competences in one's mother tongue with reference to receiving and producing written messages (Scripcariu, 2024).

Literacy competences, also known as *functional literacy*, play a crucial role in a person's life, contributing to the development of critical thinking, understanding and expressing ideas clearly, enabling individuals to have an active involvement in their social life (Iliescu, 2023).

The concept of literacy reflects a person's ability to relate to a text. The competent reader has the ability to understand and interpret the text in detail, from the very first reading. He/she uses the information in the text, evaluating both its ideational content and its form, reflecting on the message and actively interacting with the text, which will, in turn, facilitate the achievement of goals, the expansion of knowledge, the development of potential and active participation in society (OECD, 2018).

Literacy involves the display of three skills: (1) *Localization of information*, which involves the ability to find an explicitly stated idea in a text without requiring interpretation, inference or assumption on the part of the learner in order to give a correct answer; (2) *Comprehension*, which refers to the ability to attribute meaning to words, statements or events presented in a text. This involves, on the one hand, the mastery of circumscribed vocabulary knowledge and, on the other hand, the ability to organize information logically and chronologically; (3) *Reflection*, which concerns the ability to analyze a text or a text sequence, either to infer the conveyed message or to critically evaluate the information presented (PISA, 2018).

The literacy level is now considered an important factor in a country's international competitiveness. International comparative assessments of reading proficiency among students, such as *PISA* (The Programme for International Student Assessment) and *PIRLS* (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study), are carefully taken into account by government authorities (Botnari, 2019).

The study on the literacy level of Romanian students, conducted in 2023 by BRIO (*The Digital Platform for Improving School Performance*) and its partners, presents the following categories of literacy level, specifying the indicators specific to each level:

(1) The *non-functional* level: identifies information expressed directly in a simple sentence or in joined sentences; this identification is possible when the statements are highlighted in the text and do not contain double negatives or contradictions; recognizes characters, space or time of the action only when they are explicitly stated in the text.

(2) The *minimum functional* level: identifies explicit information in texts with a complex structure; it identifies information even when it is not clearly highlighted or when the text contains multiple negations or apparently contradictory elements; recognizes relationships between characters, the spatio-temporal framework of the action, even when not explicitly mentioned, making use of personal knowledge and experience; identifies the central idea or theme of a text, even when these are not explained; differentiates between main and secondary information; formulates a general conclusion on the basis of an argument; understands the meaning of less common words or expressions, using clues or the general meaning of the message; chronologically orders the events or stages of an action presented in the text.

(3) The f*unctional* level: interprets the text on the basis of its ideas and information; identifies and interprets causal relationships presented in the text; associates causes and effects of certain actions or behaviours presented in the text; makes advanced inferences and formulates interpretations on hypotheses suggested by the text; makes comparative analyses between characters, events, concepts, specifying similarities and differences between them; draws conclusions from a series of arguments; identifies the main message of the text; recognizes generalizations that are present in the text or are suggested by the text.

The report of the aforementioned study highlights the following results (Iliescu, 2023):

(1) The literacy level of pupils aged 6-14 is low: 42% of them fall in the *non-functional* category, 47% reach a *minimally functional* level, whereas only 11% are categorized under the *functional* category. Compared to the data of the first report from 2021-2022, the current situation is almost unchanged, with no significant changes.

(2) At the end of two school cycles, pupils' literacy progress is modest: the report shows a reduction of only 4% in the percentage of pupils in the *non-functional* category and a negligible increase of 1.5% in the *functional* category.

(3) Girls outperform boys on the literacy level. Thus, 39.98% of girls are in the *non-functional* category, while for boys the percentage rises to 43.65%. Boys also have a lower percentage of *functional* literacy, with 9.27% of boys compared to 13.25% of girls.

As can be observed from the results presented, pupils' literacy level, including those in early schooling, is low. This underlines the need for adopting effective strategies to stimulate the

development of literacy skills from the earliest years of schooling.

There are multiple ways in which the development of literacy skills can be supported among young school children, each with the potential to stimulate an interest in reading, enhance text comprehension and the clear expression of ideas. Numerous studies support the idea that digital stories contribute to children's literacy development.

Digital storytelling is often used in a variety of contexts, the most significant of which is improving students' literacy skills in the classroom (Punama et al., 2022). Telling stories through digital technologies, contributes to the development of creativity and motivation as well as to the development of students' speaking skills (Chambers & Yunus, 2017).

According to Adara (2020), digital storytelling is an effective alternative for supporting children's literacy development. The author emphasizes the importance of parents' active involvement in this process, not only teachers'. To this end, it is important that parents receive appropriate training in the use of digital storytelling in order to develop their children's literacy skills.

The study conducted by Von Gillern (2017) investigates how first and second graders, develop new literacy practices by creating digital stories using computer coding. It emphasizes the essential role of digital stories in improving children's digital communication skills and overall literacy skill development.

Zuraini et al. (2024) explore in their study the ways in which digital storytelling influences literacy among English as a foreign language (ESL) learners.

The results indicate the fact that students engaged in digital storytelling activities demonstrated higher levels of text comprehension. This is due to students' cognitive and emotional engagement, which was facilitated by the creative storytelling process. In these activities, students synthesized the information they read, made connections between ideas, and critically evaluated story elements through collaboration and dialogue.

The study concludes that digital storytelling is a valuable tool in education, significantly improving literacy while encouraging engagement, critical thinking and positive learning experiences for students.

The digital story proves to be a valuable educational tool in the development of pupils' literacy skills, especially in primary education. Through children's active participation in the narrative process, supported by the use of digital technologies, it stimulates deep understanding of the text, the development of critical thinking, the ability to analyze and synthesize, collaborative skills, etc.

The cognitive and emotional involvement generated by digital stories contributes significantly to authentic learning and the formation of a positive relationship with the reading and writing processes, which can be an essential step in increasing pupils' functional literacy.

1.2. Digital stories

Stories have always played an essential role in children's education. By listening to them, young children develop their language, creative thinking, empathy and fundamental social-emotional skills.

Today's technological developments have imposed a new way of telling children stories, namely digital storytelling. By integrating multimedia elements, they have become increasingly widespread, offering multiple benefits for learning (Ferțigan & Goga, 2024).

The interdependence between storytelling and digital storytelling, can be a challenge for educational theorists and practitioners, clear delimitations between the two concepts being consequently needed. Thus, digital storytelling refers to the technique of using various digital tools (a device, a web application, images, sounds, videos, etc.) to create digital stories.

From a process and product perspective, digital storytelling is the creative process and the digital story is the resulting product (Catalano, 2021).

In its traditional form, storytelling or narration is an expository method that facilitates children's access to magical universes full of mystery and fantasy through the specific contents of fairy tales, myths, legends and stories. An essential component in the storytelling process is the teacher's emotional involvement, as he/she brings the stories to life while creating authentic connections with the listeners.

Classical storytelling can be made more effective through the use of illustrative materials (storyboards, evocative images, video projections, short films, auditions, cartoons, etc.).

Numerous neuroscience studies emphasize that while reading or listening to stories, the brain activates

certain regions involved in perceiving and experiencing events as real. Thus, children have the opportunity to actively engage in the unfolding of the story, modeling and reinterpreting the narrative thread (O'Byrne et al., 2018).

Other studies highlight that storytelling involves multiple brain areas, including those responsible for cognitive control, emotion processing and self-control, empathy development, and social interactions (Catalano, 2021; Farantika, 2022). Therefore, stories play a significant role in the articulation of cognition, facilitating the translation of abstract ideas into concrete realities by ascribing meanings to imaginary, fantastical, and magical content (Isbell et al., 2004).

According to Cozolino (2017), in order to support optimal brain development, it is essential that the design of learning activities take into account the following four aspects: (1) teacher-student relationships are based on support and trust as effective learning occurs in a safe and stable relational environment, (2) positive emotions are activated and stressful conditions are removed or significantly reduced, (3) there is a balance between focusing on thoughts and emotions, (4) stories are used creatively.

Digital stories, like traditional stories, focus on a specific topic while being approached through digital technologies. They include computer images, text, narration, audio recordings, videos, music, etc., which contribute to creating engaging multi-sensory experiences. Within digital stories, a variety of subjects are used, ranging from life experiences and recounting historical events, to identifying cultural patterns from different parts of the world.

Digital storytelling is an emerging teaching strategy because it brings novel elements compared to the classical form of storytelling, generating a rapid increase in children's interest and curiosity towards it (Catalano, 2021). Due to its complexity, digital storytelling goes beyond the limits of a method or process of instruction. The digital storyteller, taking on author's role as well, must identify a topic that is as engaging as possible, prior to drafting and writing the story. To make the story interesting, the storyteller has to write the story and, using digital tools, insert images or background sounds. Digital stories can range in length from two to ten minutes and fall into three categories: (1) informative and instructive stories, (2) personal stories and (3) stories about historical events (Robin, 2006).

Most often, digital stories are interactive, allowing children to unfold the story by touching the screen. In this way, children are no longer passive receivers but become active participants in the story.

Digital storytelling is characterized by several key elements (multimedia, interactivity, digital accessibility), which give it a particular identity in the modern narrative context. These key elements differentiate them from other storytelling media: (1) they integrate different modes of exposition (text, animation, graphics, audio, etc.), combining visual, auditory and interactive stimulation; (2) the content is interactive and adaptive, allowing children to personalize their experience by exploring different versions of the story; (3) they involve various game elements (tasks, challenges, puzzles), which generate active and meaningful learning experiences, giving children the opportunity to contribute to the construction of the story; (4) they can be used on different digital devices (tablet, laptop, smartphone, etc.), allowing them to be accessed at any time and from any place; (5) they offer the possibility to update and optimize the content, ensuring a new experience every time they are replayed.

Digital storytelling retains the fundamental characteristics of traditional storytelling, while, at the same time, translating them into an interactive digital context. The essential components of a story (characters, plot, action, conflict, epilogue) are integrated into a modern approach that gives users the opportunity to actively engage with the unfolding story.

The characters in digital stories need to be carefully constructed, highlighting their unique traits to stimulate readers' interest and empathy. New technologies make it easier to create a complex presentation of characters by combining images, sounds, animation and voice. Users can interact with these characters and influence their development within the story.

The narrative thread of digital stories is often flexible and adaptable. Readers can identify alternative versions, influencing the narrative structure, provided that each option maintains the logical coherence of the unfolding of the events in the story.

Multimedia elements contribute to an engaging narrative environment. Animations and sound effects place users in an immersive fictional space, and interactive illustrations enhance the comprehension of

the text, transforming the story into a much deeper experience (Ferțigan & Goga, 2024).

The formative nature of digital stories is supported by numerous scientific studies. Harpiyani et al. (2022) argue that digital stories contribute to the development of both critical thinking and moral values among students. In addition, they foster balanced socioemotional development, improve social interaction skills and learning strategies (Di Blas et al., 2010; Göçen Kabaran & Duman, 2021), while also contributing to students' increased motivation levels in relation to the learning process (Solissa et al., 2024).

Digital storytelling supports language and communication development and contributes significantly to children's literacy process (Savva et al., 2021). They are a contemporary form of narrative expression, bringing together the specifics of classical storytelling with the opportunities offered by digital technologies. When used in a balanced way, they contribute to positive and meaningful learning experiences while maintaining the authentic spirit of fairy tales and traditional stories.

2. The research methodology

Our research aimed to investigate the effect of digital stories on the literacy skills of young school children. Our sample was a convenience sample of 25 pupils (10 boys and 15 girls), aged between 8 and 9, enrolled in the second grade at an urban school. Their parents have given their written consent for the pupils to participate in the study and have been informed about the aim, objectives and duration of the study.

Both qualitative (focus group) and quantitative (questionnaire survey) methods were used to collect data. The pre- and post-test research design was used for a single sample in order to check the level of literacy skills at the baseline and end point of the research. Thus, after the completion of the intervention program entitled *Digital Stories for Super Readers*, the results obtained in the pre-experimental stage will be compared with those obtained in the post-experimental stage to determine whether it had an effect and the literacy skill level of the students participating in the study increased.

The focus group method was used in order to discover students' preferences regarding the format of the texts and stories they read. The discussion started with the question *Do you read stories in digital or print format?* It was explained to the pupils what texts in digital format entail and where they could access such texts. Following the discussion, 15 children opted for printed books and the remaining 10 said they preferred digital stories.

The discussion continued with specific questions to identify pupils' preferences regarding the format of the digital stories they access in their free time: (1) digital stories with text and pictures; (2) audio stories; (3) digital stories with animations. With reference to animation based digital stories, half of the pupils said that they preferred this to a story with text only. Also, from the discussions, we found that audio stories are not popular for this age group, only 9 pupils chose audio stories over animations, arguing that they are more captivated by a story if it is accompanied by sound, pictures and animations.

In terms of the questionnaire-based survey method, the *Strategic Assessment of Learning Strategies Questionnaire (SMALSI), the Reading Strategies/ Comprehension Scale* from the list of scales targeting students' strengths, was used, tracking aspects such as skimming, monitoring and re-reading texts, as well as self-testing to ensure content comprehension.

The questionnaire consists of 15 items, scored on 4-step Likert scales, where 1 is never and 5 is always. An example of an item is: *Before reading a text, I skim through it to find information and keywords.*

To test the fidelity of the scale, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated for the 15 items and a value of 0.794 was obtained, which is considered a good value (Taber, 2018). The results show that the items are correlated with each other, reliably measuring the literacy skill level of second graders.

2.1. Research Aim: The research aimed to investigate the impact of digital stories on the literacy skills of second grade students aged 8 to 9 years old in the subject of *Communication in Romanian.*

2.2. Research Objectives:

O1. To identify the level of literacy skills of second grade students measured at two distinct moments of the study.

O2. To develop and implement a *Digital Stories for Super Readers* intervention program based on digital stories.

O3. To analyze the effectiveness of the program by comparing the results obtained by the students participating in the study at pretest and posttest stages.

2.3. Research questions:

1. To what extent will *The Digital Stories for Super Readers* Intervention Program influence the increase in literacy skills of second graders?

2.4. Research Hypothesis: The Digital Stories for Super Readers Intervention Program built on digital stories contributes to the increase in second graders' literacy skills of second graders.

2.5. Research variables:

independent variable – the *Digital Stories for Super Readers Intervention Program*

dependent variable – second graders' level of literacy skills

The intervention program entitled *Digital Stories for Super Readers* proposes 10 activities structured in accordance with the school curriculum for the subject *Communication in Romanian*, second grade. The program has been built on the basis of the two specific competences 1.2 Identifying a variety of information from a listened text and 3.1 Reading written messages encountered in the familiar environment, which facilitated the design of the activities included in the program.

For each of the two selected competences, 5 activities were carried out as follows:

Competence *1.2. Exploring digital stories* (interactive discussions about the characters in the story and their action); *Magic stories* (identifying the main ideas in a supporting text using the starburst method); *Storybook* (illustrating fragments of text by drawing, while respecting certain information); *Story map* (identifying key elements in a story such as the role of characters in the story, the logical sequence of events, the place of the action, the message of the story); *Little writers* (filling in some gap-filled statements with information from an audited text).

Competence *3.1. Reading written messages encountered in the familiar environment*: *Stories come to life* (creating digital stories based on read texts, using the *Book Creator* platform); *At the library* (reading texts in digital format on students' initiative); *The best reader* (reading a text respecting punctuation marks and identifying key elements); *The storyteller's chair* (reading a text and narrating it); *Characters and stories* (reading a text and identifying the character and the story).

3. Research results

Quantitative data were analyzed with the SPSS statistical program variant 29. To test the hypothesis, the parametric paired samples t-test was chosen because the results of the Skewness and Kurtosis statistical tests showed that the data are normally distributed. The paired-samples t-test is used for two sets of scores coming from a single sample of participants. Therefore, the same sample of participants was measured at two different points in time on the same variable (Paraschiv, 2023).

The *reading comprehension strategies* scale score was calculated according to the SMALSI questionnaire methodology, on 5 levels. Each item offers 5 options, on a 5-step Likert scale. Accordingly, to determine the level of literacy skills, the sum of the points added according to the options chosen will be calculated and the total score will be related to the following values: inadequate level - maximum 29 points; poor/below average level - between 30 and 39 points; average level - between 40 and 60 points; very good level between 61 and 70 points; extremely good level ≥ 71.

The results of the *Reading Comprehension Strategies* scale, applied in the pre-experimental phase, showed that 21 children have an inadequate level of literacy skills and 4 of them have a developmental level close to the average threshold. Children with an inadequate level of literacy skills almost never use strategies while reading a text, skim over the text, lack the ability to identify key aspects of a text, do not use association strategies and most often show reading problems. Children who score 30-39 points have a rather low level, being below average. They only occasionally apply reading, note-taking or rereading strategies and have difficulty in identifying key aspects of a text.

In the experimental phase, the 10 activities based on digital stories were carried out, which helped children to acquire certain strategies for reading and understanding a text. Thanks to these activities, there is an increase in the post-experimental stage in the level of literacy skills held by second graders, indicating that 14 students have an inadequate level, 10 children have a level close to the average threshold and 1 of them has an average level.

In order to test whether the increase in literacy skills was statistically significant, a paired-group t-test was applied, comparing the results obtained in the two pre-test and post-test stages. The results showed a statistically significant increase. Therefore the mean obtained in the pre-test stage had a value of 19.52 (M=19.52, SD=7.22) and in the post-test stage the mean of literacy skills increased to 28.64 (M=28.64,

SD=5.68). The T-test showed a statistically significant increase, the Alpha threshold indicating a very good value t(24)=-9. 49, p<.001. The results obtained demonstrate that the intervention program had a positive and significant impact on the development of literacy skill levels in students enrolled in second grade. To highlight the practical importance of the intervention program, we calculated the effect size. Thus, we calculated Cohen's d coefficient which indicates the standardized difference between means (Sava, 2011) and obtained a value of d=1.89. Based on this value, we can state that the effect size obtained from the intervention program *Digital Stories for Super Readers* which aimed to increase the level of literacy skills, is strong (Popa, 2010; Sava, 2011). Therefore, the results show that the intervention program had a statistically significant effect both statistically and practically even though the sample was small.

4. Limitations and future directions of action

One of the limitations of the study is the small number of participants, which limits generability to a larger population. Another limitation could be the nature of the single sample, where it is difficult to control for factors that may influence the variables. Studies with larger and more diverse samples, as well as the use of parallel samples, could facilitate the generability of the results and provide an overview of the effectiveness of digital stories in developing literacy skills of primary school pupils.

Developing literacy skills through the integration of digital storytelling is a vast topic, which can be studied from multiple perspectives: (1) the digital technologies used in the creation of stories, (2) increasing motivation for reading, (3) the socio-cultural context, (4) the cognitive processes involved in literacy, (5) teacher training in the use of digital storytelling, (6) parental involvement, etc.

5. Conclusions and further discussions

The results of our research showed a low level of literacy skills in the second grade students participating in the study in the pre-experimental stage, but the implementation of the Digital Stories for Super Readers intervention program, resulted in a statistically significant increase in the level of literacy skills in the post-experimental stage. At the same time, the results of the study emphasize that the use of digital stories in teaching activities encourages students to apply strategies for reading and understanding a text such as: identifying key words, identifying main ideas, presenting the story in a logical sequence, enriching vocabulary with the acquisition of new words, etc.

The results of our study align with the results of other studies categorized under this topic. Yazici & Bolay (2017) state that -through stories- children understand language structure and phrasing. Thus, they learn how language is used and developed, they understand the process of writing at the same time recognizing new grammatical formulations and structures. Moreover, they state that story-based activities improve vocabulary, organize thought processes, present complex narrative sequences, and give pupils the opportunity to discover different sentence structures, consequently supporting creative thinking skills.

Hamouda (2023), emphasizes in his research the idea that digital stories significantly improve students' reading skills, motivation, critical thinking, self-confidence and enthusiasm. The results suggest that the use of digital storytelling in education can effectively develop literacy skills among primary school students.

Gavrikov (2024) argues that integrating digital stories creates a dynamic educational environment that stimulates students' motivation and improves literacy skills through various reading experiences.

Corroborating the results of our study with those provided by the field literature, we conclude that digital stories represent an effective didactic strategy in the training and development of young school children’s literacy skills.

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