



Full Length Research Paper

Using digital storytelling and weblogs instruction to enhance EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills among EFL majors at faculty of education

Dr. Eman Mohamed Abdel-Hack¹ and Dr. Hasnaa Sabry Abdel-Hamid Ahmed Helwa^{*2}

¹Professor of Curriculum and TEFL Instruction, Faculty of Education, Benha University, Egypt

^{*2}Lecturer at Department of Curriculum and TEFL Instruction, Faculty of Education, Benha University, Egypt

*Corresponding authors E-mail: hasnaa2010_11@yahoo.com

Abstract

The aim of this research is to investigate the effectiveness of using digital storytelling and Weblogs instruction in enhancing EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills among EFL majors at Faculty of Education. The design of the research is one group pre-posttest. The sample of the research consisted of forty third-year EFL majors, at Faculty of Education, Benha University, Egypt. The research sample was engaged in certain activities such as storytelling, journal writing, personal diaries and reflection Weblogs. The instruments of the research included an EFL narrative writing questionnaire; an EFL narrative writing test; an EFL critical thinking questionnaire; an EFL critical thinking scale and interview prepared by the researcher. The instruments were applied to the sample of the research before and after implementing the program. Results of the research revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study sample in the pre and post assessment of EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills in favor of the post assessment. Therefore, the EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills of the sample were developed as a result of teaching through integrating digital storytelling instruction and Weblogs. This confirmed that using digital storytelling and Weblogs instruction is effective in enhancing the EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills among EFL majors at Faculty of Education.

Keywords: Digital Storytelling Instruction – Weblogs- EFL Narrative Writing skills- EFL Critical Thinking Skills.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, attention in the EFL classrooms has shifted from teacher-centered to student-centered learning. Along with this shift; language instructors have employed various resources to equip their learners with the knowledge and skills that can make them more autonomous and independent in their learning. The current advancements in the information and communication technology (ICT) have provided the learners with various tools in the form of computer-based or Internet-based resources to help them take charge of their own learning. Thus, many social network services such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter have become the craze among worldwide. With respect to the use of this social media in the teaching and learning

environment, the weblog, podcasts and digital storytelling instruction have become progressively popular as authentic and constructive learning tools especially in the language classrooms (Pinkman, 2005, Seitzinger, 2006).

With the growing popularity of computers and the internet, communication is no longer limited to a traditional face-to-face communication mode. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) prompts mutual and multiple ways of communication that offer people opportunities to produce writing in real-life situated contexts. CMC has been widely received in language teaching and learning. It increases users' target language exposure and production, improves learning attitudes, and encourages learners to learn autonomously and

cooperatively. Weblogs, podcasts and digital storytelling (DS) constitute a typical application of CMC. Blogs have the potential to be a transformational technology in that they provide learning opportunity for learners (Sun, 2010).

Writing requires thinking and cognitive processes to be produced. It is considered the most complex skill because it goes through different stages i.e., prewriting, writing and editing to reach its final product. It is an individual process which requires thinking strategies that allows individuals to express themselves competently in the other language. It is a complex activity that requires a certain level of linguistic knowledge, writing conventions, vocabulary and grammar. It is a process and that heavily influenced by constraints of genres, then these elements have to be present in learning activities. It is a continuous process of thinking and organizing, rethinking, and reorganizing (Al-Hattab, 2006; Franco, 2008; Harmer, 2004; Pope, 2002; Raimes, 2002).

Narrative writing serves as informing function, reporting events that happened or telling stories. Two skills involved in this kind of communication are the placement of events in appropriate sequence and the selection of details to include in the story. A narrative is a time-ordered text that is used to narrate events, create, entertain and emotionally move an audience. Other social purposes of narrative writing may be to inform, persuade and socialize. The main structural components of narrative writing are the orientation, the complication and the resolution (Boucher, 2011).

Teo (2006) indicated that during narrative writing, students face several problems, such as grammatical errors in their writing, and how to generate ideas for better content. Since writing is a complex problem-solving process, teachers are recommended to intervene at points in the writing process that can most benefit the writers. Therefore, in order to help EFL students understand the important components in narrative writing such as character, setting, problem, and solution, they are provided with complete questions that mostly begin with "wh" words to generate ideas such as ; Who did what?; What happened?; Where did it happen?; When did it happen?; Who are the main characters in the story?; Why did he/she/they do that?; What was the problem?; How did he/she/they solve the problem? ; What happened next?

Critical thinking has been recently introduced and gained a high position in foreign language teaching settings so that nowadays enhancing critical thinking in learners is considered one of the foreign language teachers' tasks due to its high position in foreign language classrooms. It refers to the individuals' ability to

think and make correct decisions independently. It refers to the ability of individuals to take charge of their own thinking and develop appropriate criteria and standards for analyzing their own thinking (Shirkhani and Fahim, 2011).

Critical thinking is described as the capacity to work with complex ideas whereby a person can make effective provision of evidence to justify a reasonable judgment, as the shift of learners from absolute conceptions of knowledge towards contextual knowing and as an understanding of knowledge and related to its context. It involves a set of strategies to help students develop reflective analysis and evaluation of interpretations or explanations, including one's own, to decide what to believe or what to do. It involves understanding points of view, evaluating positions, and then establishing a critical position. Students need multiple opportunities to practice critical thinking skills and receive feedback to guide improvement (Çavdar and Doe, 2012).

The promotion of critical thinking into the FLT classrooms is of high significance for several reasons. If language learners can take charge of their own thinking, they can monitor and evaluate their own ways of learning more successfully. It expands the learning experience of the learners and makes the language more meaningful for them. It has a high degree of correlation with the learners' achievements (Shirkhani and Fahim, 2011).

In addition, the relation between writing and thinking is bidirectional and makes writing a valuable part of any language course. One cannot write coherently about a topic without thinking coherently. However that act of writing also influences thinking. When students write, they have a chance to be adventurous with the language to go beyond what they have just learned to say and to take risks (Raimes, 1983).

Eliciting and maintaining students' engagement in narrative writing involves not only what they write about but also how their writing is received and responded to. Teachers respond to students' writing as evaluators who care about form rather than the content. Most EFL students hate to write as they have no experience, no confidence, no ideas, a slender vocabulary, skewed grammar and vague notion of punctuation. So, they should practice, practice and still more practice to learn writing. They are always hesitant to write because they cannot generate ideas and they are afraid of making mistakes. Thus, students' writing might be improved if they understand the elements of critical thinking including: observations, facts, inferences, assumptions, opinions, arguments, and critical thinking (Abdel-Hack, 2009b, Gocsik, 1997).

Therefore, we need an approach for teaching

narrative writing that make students write freely without any pressure or fear from correction. One way to help students to improve their narrative writing and critical thinking skills is to create writing assignments that require students to move back and forth between observation and inference, facts and assumptions. This can be done through integrating technology in the learning \ teaching process through using digital storytelling (DS) and weblogs instruction. Thus, when students use DS and weblogs, they cannot remain passive. They become able to make important critical choices while writing and ask themselves questions. This way would enable them to become better thinkers and better writers.

Thus, with the technological communication explosion and globalization, there is an experienced shift in traditional understandings of literacies to exploring diverse modes of meaning-making. Currently, students encounter and interact with new digital literacies including Weblogs, wikis, digital texts and DS. In an effort to blend technology with education, DS and Weblogs are ways to generate interest, attention, and motivation for the digital generation in today's classroom (Signes, 2008, Yang, 2009).

Combine the old age tradition of storytelling with the latest technology and the result is a compelling tool that motivates students to read more and write better. The technique is called DS. It is a good way to engage students in both traditional and innovative way of telling a story. It is emerging as a way to shape narrative and facilitates efforts to capture classroom moments for preservice teachers to reflect upon and revise practice, as well as to develop a teaching consciousness. There are many different definitions of DS, but in general, they all revolve around the idea of combining the art of telling stories with a variety of digital multimedia, such as images, audio, and video. Digital stories revolve around a chosen theme and often contain a particular viewpoint. They are typically just a few minutes long and have a variety of uses, including the telling of personal tales, the recounting of historical events, or as a means to inform or instruct on a particular topic (Condy, et al,2012; Malita and Martin, 2010; Robin, 2006;Robin,2008:222;Tendero, 2006) .

Also, Robin (2011) defined DS simply as the practice of using computer- based tools to tell stories. It includes multiple forms of media: images and/or video, music, text and narration. Reinders (2011) defined it as simply the telling of stories in electronic form. Students can combine two or more of the following, either produced by themselves or by others: text ;audio ;music ;video; Photos. They can produce a video with voice-over, a website, an audio interview, or simply a written

text. Hull and Nelson (2005) defined it as a form of multimedia consisting of images and segments of video with background music and a voice-over narrative.

DS has emerged over the last few years as a powerful teaching and learning tool that engages both teachers and their students. It is the art of telling stories through the use of various multimedia such as text, images, audio and video. It combines the functions of visualizing and verbalizing, which are essential for language comprehension and thinking. The process of making DS required the students to apply their productive skills (writing and speaking). It is the practice of combining narrative with digital content, including images, sound, and video, to create a short movie, typically with a strong emotional component and captured the imagination of both students and teachers. It also, helps students work in groups (Kieler, 2010, Panagiotis and Kordaki, 2012, Somdee and Suppasetseree, 2012).

DS can also foster a sense of ownership in learners, let learners have a deeper understanding of the text and facilitate learners to have a longer retention rate of the text. It can be used to improve learners' writing skills. DS can construct the learners' experience in the content, facilitate collaborative activities, promote in-class discussion, motivate learners to learn critical thinking skills, and foster understanding of complex ideas (Bran, 2010, Snelson and Sheffield, 2009).

Thus, DS is an excellent application in the foreign context that improves the traditional storytelling techniques, basic word processing programs and social software by incorporating multimedia and multiliteracies resulting in increased levels of engagement, analysis and critical thinking skills. It has been shown to increase learning engagement and improve English reading, writing, oral expression and listening comprehension skills. It is a compelling activity for the language classroom to motivate students to use the language both inside and outside the classroom. It is recognized as a motivating instructional approach that engages students in critical thinking and reflective learning. Technology tools that support DS are readily available and much easier to use today than they were in years past. Teachers must invest more time/effort in getting both content producers and consumers to develop their storytelling and narrative skills. It usually contains computer based images, text, recorded audio narration, video clips and music. It varies in length but in education the most used last between two and ten minutes (Dogan and Robin, 2006b; Gillespie, 2009; Maddin, 2012; Menezes, 2012; Tsou et al., 2006).

Thus, through DS students develop communication skills, learn to ask questions, express opinions, construct

narratives and write for an audience, improve also their language and computer skills by using software that combines a variety of multimedia: text, images, audio, video and web publishing. Also, when digital stories are created, students not only become more technologically literate, but they also become designers, listeners, interpreters, readers, writers, communicators, and thinkers (Banaszewski, 2005).

The process of finding a digital story forces storytellers to choose a topic that can be appropriately conveyed to a particular audience or purpose. This creates an opportunity to reflect on life and find deep connections with subject-matter. After choosing a proper subject's story, DS begins with writing. Based on the outcomes of their initial research and reflection, the digital storytellers begin to write and assemble the needed components of their story. They write, rewrite and continue the writing process through multiple drafts. It is important to note that the most effective digital stories have their genre in writing, so it is important to emphasize the value of multiple drafts. Within the writing, it is important to remember that the story has a central theme. The importance of this theme is for the viewer of the story, even if the story is about another person's experience, the viewer relates to the story because they have experienced similar types of events in their lives or because they are interested or captivated by the theme. Thus, during this process, the digital storytellers will develop communication skills, represented by writing. Through the writing, the digital storytellers can increase their retention and promote critical thinking as well as bring clarity and understanding to complex topics (Malita, 2010).

In addition to DS, weblog is a kind of online diary that has been reported to be a useful tool for language learners for a number of reasons. Weblog provides authentic writing practice, an opportunity to recycle language learned in class, and an alternative way of communicating with teachers and peers. It helps students to develop audience awareness, create a collaborative class environment, and have also been reported to be a motivating learning activity (Khampusaen, 2012; Mynard, 2004).

Weblogs can be a tool for language educators to use in order to encourage learners to reflect on their learning experience and also add comments to other people's Weblogs to encourage further reflection. Additionally, they enhance student analytical and critical thinking skills. When posting Weblogs, Bloggers compose their Weblogs and monitor their writing carefully because they are aware of the reason that their writing will be virtually published and viewed online. When readers read

Weblogs, they develop ideas and provide feedback for the authors (Noytim, 2010).

Therefore, the impact of DS and weblogs comes from students thinking critically about effective combinations among audio and visual components. Each story and weblog requires students to gather evidence to support their story, assemble and organize them in a way to achieve a desired effect. Through DS and weblogs, students begin to comprehend how all the elements of writing a narrative work together and how to manipulate them for the best effects in readers and viewers (Malita and Martin, 2010).

Review of Literature and Previous Studies

1. EFL Narrative Writing Skills

Narrative writing relies on personal experiences and is often in the form of a story. Narrative essays are told from a defined point of view, often in first person, so there is feeling as well as specific and often sensory details provided to get the reader involved in the elements and sequence of the story. It offers writers a chance to think and write about themselves and their experiences (Boucher, 2011).

Sagita (2009) clarified criteria for assessing writing task such as; audience: the writer's capacity to orient, engage and affect the reader. Text structure: the organization of narrative features including orientation and resolution into an appropriate and effective text structure. Ideas: the creation and selection of ideas for a narrative character and setting. Character: the portrayal and development of character. Setting: the development of a sense of place, time and atmosphere. Vocabulary: the precision of language choices. Cohesion: the control of multiple relationships over the whole text, achieved through the use of words, substitutions, word associations and text connectives. Paragraphing: segmenting of text into paragraphs that assists the reader to negotiate the narrative. Sentence structure: the production of grammatically correct and meaningful sentences. Punctuation: the use of correct punctuation to aid reading of the text. Spelling: accuracy of spelling and the words that used.

1a. Elements of EFL Narrative Writing Skills

Narrative writing tells a story; describes feelings and personal experiences; contains personal reflections, interpretations; tells autobiographical stories; describes people, places, and things using devices and techniques

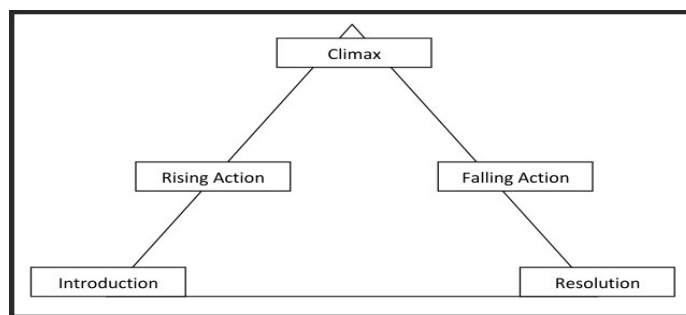


Figure 1. Standard Structure of a General EFL Narrative Essay, adapted from BING (2011:20).

that evoke clear images; may contain dialogue; is told from a particular point of view; makes and supports a point; is filled with precise detail; uses verbs and modifiers; and uses conflict and sequence as does any story. The narrative skill is an important skill to teach in an EFL classroom as narrative writing required a high level of thinking. Thus, it has become standard practice to use the general narrative structure to teach narrative writing for EFL learners. BING (2011) clarified the structure that is seen in typical literary work, as follows in Figure 1 above.

Through stories or narratives, students produce, they reflect their knowledge of an event converted into a communicative form. They create these narratives by combining cognitive and linguistic skills. A narrative is a story, no matter how short or long it is. Components of a narrative can include character(s), setting, kick-off event, character emotions and plans, sequence of events, a direct consequence of the event(s) and a resolution. By using stories, the teacher takes students on journeys of discovery that introduce them to new ideas of lived experience (Bing, 2011).

Narrative writing was addressed because students are required to generate or retell stories in the classroom, and they are evaluated on their ability to express themselves using precise vocabulary and grammatically appropriate sentences in this genre. It is a multidimensional process that involves knowledge of story components, word-level skills (e.g. Spelling), language skills (e.g., grammar and syntactic awareness), vocabulary, mechanics, conventions of print, cognitive abilities (e.g., working memory), and audience awareness (Smith, 2011).

Therefore, in a narrative essay, the writer tells a story about a real-life experience. Everyone enjoys a good story especially one that captures the imagination. However, the narrative essay goes further. In it, the writer places a personal experience within the context of a larger theme, such as a lesson learned. When writing a narrative essay, the writer wants not only to tell a good story, but also convey why the story has meaning.

1b. The Five-Step Writing Process for EFL Narrative Essays

Teo (2006) examined how to write a narrative essay using the five-step writing process. Students should find these suggestions helpful:-

1. Prewriting for the Narrative Essay: In this phase, students think about their life experiences in the context of the assignment's theme. When selecting an experience to write about, they keep in mind that even a small incident can make a good essay topic if it has significance for the writer. If writers feel an emotional connection to their topic, their narrative essay will be more effective. Once a topic is chosen, students should spend time sorting through their memories, and recalling details. Think about the sequence of events and create an outline of the story's narrative flow is very helpful.

2. Drafting a Narrative Essay: When creating the initial draft of a narrative essay, follow the outline, but focus on making the story come alive, using the following techniques:

- Personal narrative essays are most naturally written in the first person, and using "I" gives the story an immediacy that engages the reader.
- In telling the story, don't gloss over the details. Readers have no prior knowledge of the story, and a skipped detail will skew their understanding.
- Use vivid descriptions and words that illustrate. In narrative writing, the writer's job is to involve the reader, rather than simply inform.
- While narrative essays are non-fiction, elements of fiction should not be ignored. True stories also benefit from the writer's ability to use plot-building techniques.

3. Revising a Narrative Essay: In the revision phase, students review, modify, and reorganize their work with the goal of making it the best it can be. In revising a narrative essay, students should reread their work with these considerations in mind:

- Does the essay unfold in an easy-to-understand progression of events? Do the transitions make sense or confuse the reader?

- Does the essay involve the reader in the experience? Could there be more detail that distracts the reader's attention?
- Is the word choice descriptive, or merely informative?
- Has the larger message of the essay been conveyed effectively? Has a connection been made between the experience and its meaning to the writer? Will the reader be able to identify with the conclusion made?

4. Editing a Narrative Essay: At this point in the writing process, writers proofread and correct errors in grammar and mechanics, and edit to improve style and clarity. Having a friend read the essay is a good idea at this point, and allows the writer to see their work from a fresh perspective.

5. Publishing a Narrative Essay: Due to its personal nature, sharing a narrative essay with the rest of the class can be exciting. The important thing is to learn from the experience and use the feedback to make the next essay even better.

2. Critical Thinking Skills

Critical thinking is defined as the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action (Saadati, Tarmizi and Bayat, 2010). They also clarified the constructs of critical thinking in the following table 1 :-

They also classified critical thinking skills into six categories as clarified in the following figure 2:

Therefore, Nasiri, Farsani and Nikoopour (2011) investigated the relationship between critical thinking and the use of direct and indirect language learning strategies by Iranian learners. They reveal that there is a statistically significant relationship between specific direct and indirect language learning strategies such as cognitive, metacognitive, and social with critical thinking. While, Thadphoothon (2005:27) proposed a model of critical thinking in language learning. He clarified the notion of critical thinking in language learning in three major aspects: (1) communication, (2) reasoning, and (3) self-reflection as follows in Figure 3.

Critical thinking is described as the capacity to work with complex ideas whereby a person can make effective provision of evidence to justify a reasonable judgment, as the shift of learners from absolute conceptions of knowledge towards contextual knowing and as an

understanding of knowledge as constructed and related to its context. It involves a set of strategies to help students develop reflective analysis and evaluation of interpretations or explanations, including one's own, to decide what to believe or what to do. It involves understanding points of view, evaluating positions, and then establishing a critical position. Students need multiple opportunities to practice critical thinking skills and receive feedback to guide improvement (Çavdar and Doe, 2012).

David (2012) clarified three key phases of critical thinking: understanding (summarize a key point), evaluating arguments (discuss to what extent the student agrees and disagrees and why) and establishing a position on the topic. Then, he created a set of written journal assignments that develop three goals for student learning related to critical thinking, as follows:

Goal 1: Paraphrase what was said: encourage students to listen to ideas, examine views carefully, gather information, and understand the various points of view on their own terms without immediately judging the merits of the positions. This step involves a willingness to be open-minded and to understand what is being said, how it is being said, and why it is asserted. Teach students how to identify key elements of a logical statement, the principles and assumptions informing the positions, and the evidence used to support the points of view stated in a written work.

Goal 2: Evaluate what was said: the next step requires that students critically evaluate the legitimacy of the arguments advanced in a written work.

Goal 3: Establish a position on the topic: after completing the first two steps, students should be sufficiently prepared to establish, explain, and defend their own position.

Critical thinking refers to a type of thinking that enables individuals to analyze and evaluate information about a situation to make appropriate decisions in their contexts. People who think critically do not take anything for granted, no matter who says. Instead, they raise vital questions, formulate them clearly, gather and assess relevant information, use abstract ideas, think open-mindedly and communicate effectively with others. It encourages learners to think independently, share their ideas, and respect others' opinions. They must be able to carefully determine to accept, reject or suspend judgment about a claim. They must also be able to identify and cite good reasons for their opinions and answers, correct themselves and others' methods and procedures (Kabilan, 2000).

Rezaei, Derakhshan, and Bagherkazemi (2011) clarified that critical thinkers are those who have a strong

Table 1. Constructs of critical thinking

Interpretation	"Weighing evidence and deciding if generalizations or conclusions based on the given data are warranted."
Deductions	"Determining whether certain conclusions necessarily follow from information in given statements or premises."
Evaluation	"Distinguishing between arguments that are strong and relevant and those that are weak or irrelevant to a particular question at issue."
Inference	"Discriminating among degrees of truth or falsity of inference drawn from given data."
Recognition of Assumptions	"Recognizing unstated assumptions or presuppositions in given statements or assertions."

Adapted from Saadati, Tarmizi and Bayat (2010:543)

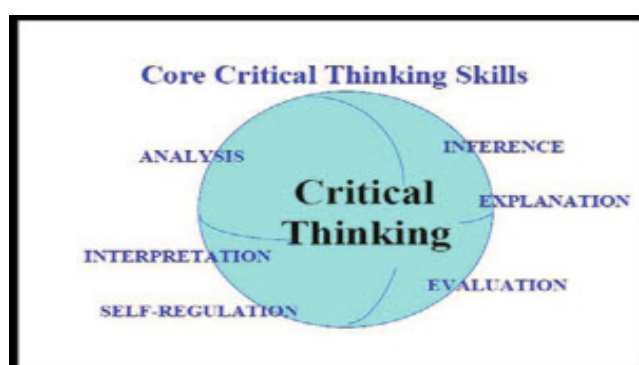


Figure 2. Categories of critical thinking, adapted from Saadati, Tarmizi and Bayat (2010:543)

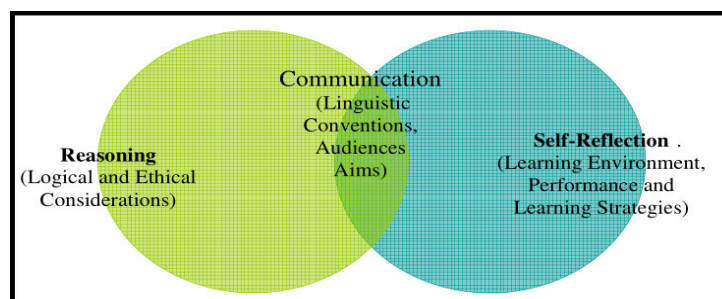


Figure 3. Proposed Model of Critical Thinking in Language Learning, adapted from Thadphoothon (2005:27)

intention to recognize the importance of good thinking; identify problems and focus on relevant topics; distinguish between valid and invalid inferences; suspend judgments and decisions in the absence of sufficient evidence; understand the difference between logical reasoning and rationalizing; be aware of the fact that one's understanding is limited and that there are degrees of belief; accurately explain their decisions; develop and present reasoned and persuasive arguments; distinguish opinions from facts; draw inferences and formulate and ask appropriate questions.

Thus, in thinking critically, one integrates cognitive processes and affective dispositions. The ideal critical thinker possesses the dispositions of: inquisitiveness, self-confidence in one's ability to reason, open-mindedness regarding divergent world views, flexibility, fair-mindedness, honesty about personal biases, understanding of the opinions of others, reasonableness, commitment to remain well-informed, and reflection. To engage in critical thinking, one uses the dispositions in conjunction with the cognitive skills. The cognitive skills of the critical thinker are: interpretation, analysis, evaluation,

inference, explanation, self-regulation and reflection. The skills are used in a recursive and dynamic manner (Kennison, 2003).

Therefore, critical thinking has been recently gained a high position in foreign language teaching settings so that nowadays enhancing critical thinking in learners is considered one of the foreign language teachers' tasks. DS and weblogs are the practice of using digital technologies to enhance the essential practice of narrative writing. It is now easy to add to stories using photographs, recorded sound, related documents, and video. Beyond this, using the internet, students can share stories with far more people.

3. Digital Storytelling Instruction

The concept of DS is closely linked to the use of new technology. It is a combination of the old storytelling tradition and new technology was originally used for other purposes than education and learning. It is a learner centered language learning activity. It is understood as a concept where the focus is on producing and sharing a story based on a personal experience or memory. It is a powerful technology tool in education which integrates computer technologies and the art of telling stories together. It also, can be used as a multimedia tool in language learning to help students improve their English language skills by using technology to tell the story in their own words and voice (Normann, 2011, Somdee and Suppasetseree, 2012).

DS is a means of encouraging student engagement and reflection. This approach combines the use of technology with the benefits and skills of storytelling, e.g. selecting, comparing, inferring, arranging and revising. It was introduced as an approach to encourage and embed student reflection on the activities in which they were engaged, recognizing that reflection can be enhanced as a collaborative process. It employs digital technology to construct narrative. Using digital technologies, students can turn a one-dimensional writing composition into a digital story that can be published and shared to a small, intimate audience or with the world (Jenkins and Lonsdale, 2007, Sylvester and Greenidge, 2009).

DS is an effective way to engage students in their learning. Using the digital medium for storytelling gives students an opportunity for using the tools that are relevant and meaningful in their lives. The ability to tell their story in a variety of ways, combining sounds, music, graphics, photographs, and original artwork, allows them to show their understanding and express their creativity. The power of DS comes from the collaboration and

teamwork process. In a collaborative environment, students are actively engaged in the exchange of ideas and are responsible for reaching their own academic goals as well as helping others in their group to succeed. It engages students in critical thinking, research, writing, creativity, and communication and encourages them to be the creators of knowledge (Miller, 2009).

DS is a process that blends media to enrich and enhance the written or spoken word. It may have a narration overlay and a music background and may combine images, audio, and video to tell a story or make a factual presentation. Digital stories are most often transferred into an 8- to 10-minute video so that they can be viewed over and over. They can be stored online and shared from a distance with anytime, anyplace audience. The presentation element of the digital story is an essential component of the process and the product (Frazel, 2010, Miller, 2004).

Therefore, the process of DS involves connecting the events or information in the story to the audience through personal reflections. It involves writing a script, planning a storyboard, revising the script, sequencing images, adding narratives, adding transitions and adding music. Digital stories are usually three minutes long and include four elements in the writing process: a point of view, a dramatic question, emotional content and economy to limit the scope to a 2 or 3 minute (Gillespie, 2009, Porter, 2004).

3a. History of Digital Storytelling in Foreign Language Learning

Recently, with the emergence of computers and the increasing development of multimedia technology, the general public has the opportunity to create their own DS. The digital story is a short story, only 2-3 minutes long, where the storyteller uses his own voice to tell his own story. The personal element is emphasized, and can be linked to other people, to a place, or to anything that will give the story a personal touch. Thus, digital stories become quite emotional and make an impact on the audience. The digital technology offers powerful means of sharing the stories and spoken narrative is based on a written script developed by the storyteller himself (Lambert, 2006, Zheng et al., 2011).

DS is the practice of combining narrative with digital content, including images, sounds and video, to create a short movie, typically with a strong emotional component. It can range from the simple use of slides and pictures that correspond to a narrative to the complex use of advanced sound, visual, and transition effects. It is a medium of expression, communication, integration, and

imagination. This material is then combined with various types of multimedia, including computer-based graphics, recorded audio, video clips, and music (Malita, 2010, Robin, 2008).

Thus, integrating visual images with written text enhances student comprehension, and DS is an especially good technology tool for collecting, creating, analyzing, and combining visual images with written text. Teachers who are able to create their own digital stories may find that they can be particularly helpful not only in engaging students in the content but also in facilitating discussion about the topics presented in a story and helping make abstract or conceptual content more understandable (Robin, 2008).

DS facilitates the convergence of four student-centered learning strategies: student engagement, reflection for deep learning, project-based learning, and the effective integration of technology into instruction. According to this: (a) DS in an educational process helps students work in groups and strengthen the bonds between students in class, and at the same time between students and their teacher, (b) students acquire several technological skills through storytelling, (c) creating digital stories helps the integration of students with learning difficulties through taking with this opportunity an active role, and (d) the ability to narrate (Clarke and Adam, 2011, Psomos and Kordaki, 2012, Skinner and Hagood, 2008).

3b. Defining Digital Storytelling

There are many definitions of DS, but they all coincide in pointing out that digital stories combine traditional means of telling a story with different types of digital multimedia: images, audio, and video (graphics, text, recorded audio narration, video and music to present information on a specific topic). It is a good way to engage students in both traditional and innovative ways of telling a story. The students learn how to combine some basic multimedia tools such as graphics, animation, with skills such as writing, presentation, technology, interview, interpersonal, problem-solving, and assessment skills (Hibbing & Erickson, 2003, Signes, 2008).

Alexander (2011) presented a five-part definition of digital stories, according to which, for assessment purposes, they should include a compelling narration of a story; provide a meaningful context for understanding the story being told; use images to capture and/or expand upon emotions found in the narrative; employ music and other sound effects to reinforce ideas and invite thoughtful reflection from their audience(s). Michalski,

Hodges and Banister (2005) indicated that DS involves telling stories using multimedia technologies, providing a format for students to put their thoughts together, visually, and aurally. Also, Banaszewski (2005) defined it as a type of visual narrative that requires students to apply these skills. Because the digital story uses still images to carry the visual messages, students need explicit instruction in reading images and learning the codes and conventions.

Hronová (2011) indicated that DS is a useful means of how to combine both personal narratives with the use of technology in the classes of English language. It employs the use of photographs, video, audio and music. He defined it as the practice of combining personal narrative with multimedia (images, audio and text) to produce a short autobiographical movie. It combines a series of still images with a narrated soundtrack to tell a story. It makes use of a wide variety of techniques including standard storytelling, audio and video recording.

DS is a technological application that allows people to communicate a message to other people. It encompasses some key characteristics, such as; flexibility, universality, interactivity and community formation. Flexibility in DS refers to the creation of a non-linear story using digital media technology. Universality means that anyone can become the producer of digital stories, due to the wide availability of computers and easy-to-use software. Interactivity refers to the participation of users in the development of the stories using media characteristics that can be mutually exchanged. Students experience learning by doing while making a digital story. When it is integrated into the classroom setting, can be a compelling teaching method to gain and hold students' attention. It provides a creative and open-ended environment. It encourages student-centered learning (Barrett, 2006, Oyarzun, et.al., 2010, The Digital Storytelling Association, 2002).

3c. Importance of Digital Storytelling in Foreign Language Learning

DS is becoming a promising transformative technology-supported approach for enhancing learning, including critical thinking skills, motivation, and information literacy. Since constructing a successful DS project requires instructors to pose problems that are deeply connected with the course content, students are challenged with thinking critically about effective combinations of content and multimedia elements while considering the audience's perspective. Digital stories allow opportunities for student control of the learning process and self-

expression, fostering learning confidence and learning motivation (Bull and Kajder, 2004, Yang and Wu, 2012).

Alexander (2011) indicated that DS lets students own their creative work, taking the narrative process to them. It can help students' practice collaborative learning. It is the practice of combining narrative with digital content, including images, sound, and video, to create a short movie, typically with a strong emotional component. It can be interactive movies that include highly produced audio and visual effects. It can be instructional, persuasive, historical, or reflective.

Digital stories not only reflect each student's understanding of the subject, but also allow collaboration, which can encourage collaborative skills and creativity. DS integrates technology with learning, facilitates an emotional connection to the content, and allows for the sharing of that content. It addresses the need by giving students opportunities to interact and brainstorm through the creative process. Therefore, there are variety of reasons of using DS in classroom such as; motivates students and involves them in the writing process ,helps improve writing skills by having students learn to write with a concise point of view (Boase, 2008,Kieler, 2010,Robin and McNeil ,2012).

DS is a multimedia text incorporating images complemented by a narrated soundtrack to tell a story. It encourages students to engage with each other. It provides students with a variety of modes that they can use to find and use their own authorial voice through multiliteracies. Thus, it is an application used to explore multiliteracy and can be applied to the EFL context (Gillespie, 2009).

Xu, Park and Baek (2011) indicated that the following figure depicts how DS enhances the four student-centered learning strategies: student engagement, reflection for deep learning, project-based learning, and technology integration into the classroom. These learning strategies can be facilitated through DS activities. They are attracting a great deal of attention from teachers nowadays. To support their views, Sadik (2008) indicated that educators at all levels can use DS to support students' learning by encouraging them to organize and express their ideas in an individual and meaningful way (Figure 4).

All digital stories bring together some mixture of digital graphics, text, recorded audio narration, video and music to present information on a specific topic. It encompasses all narrative forms and processes produced and shared digitally, including narrative, image-only stories, and multimedia narrative integrating image, sound and text. The teachers who implemented DS in their classroom activities reported significantly higher

levels of student engagement and motivation. They also believed that their students displayed improved presentational and organizational skills, and improved in their writing skills. DS enhances their creativity as well as their English language skills (Bran, 2010, Clarke and Adam, 2011, Hartley and McWilliam, 2009, Miller, 2004, Menezes ,2012, Robin, 2008)

Müller et al. (2010) indicated that interactive DS helps teachers to use role-playing methods in classroom. Students can develop and test dialogues that are automatically correctly spoken out and enacted. It fosters thinking in alternatives and functional equivalences, thus arguably enhancing dialogue skills and provides a means for self-directed learning. In addition, Frazel (2010) summarized the value of DS as it is active, not passive, process; creates atmosphere of excitement and fun; fosters appropriate use of technology within curriculum; weaves into all subject areas; and effective for both visual and auditory learners.

3d. Components of Digital Storytelling Instruction

DS is an integrated application of multiple media and software that utilizes the art and techniques of storytelling with new methods, contributing to helping learners become involved in the learning situation. It is an effective approach for helping students collect information, create new ideas and organize their knowledge, which can improve the students' comprehension of the learning content. It is an effective approach to promoting cooperation and knowledge construction in classrooms (Bozdoğan, 2012, Handler-Miller, 2008, Hung, Hwang and Huang, 2012).

The seven elements required for oral narratives of personal experience are point of view; a dramatic question; emotional content; the gist of your voice; the power of soundtrack; economy; and pacing. Paul and Fiebich (2005) described in detail the five elements that are shared by all digital stories: a) The combination of different media used to create them, b) the type of action (content and user), c) the open or closed relationship between the user and the digital story, d) the limitless context through linking to related, relevant information and, e) the presence of multimodal communication.

Moreover, Lambert (2006) has argued that DS has certain key elements:

- Emotional content (while watching a digital story, the audience is deeply engaged and its reaction is rewarding for students, it validates their efforts, creativity and individuality).



Figure 4. Convergence of student-centered learning strategies. Adapted from Xu, Park & Baek (2011:183)

- Voice and images (as students narrate and illustrate their own scripts, their ideas are put across more clearly than in traditional stories, which do not benefit from the input of photos or intonation).

- Economy (digital stories are short, which sharpens the focus of the story)

- Pacing (the author adds emotion to the content where he or she thinks is necessary).

Sylvester and Greenidge (2010) suggested that when developing digital stories in a university classroom setting, students go through the process of writing a story by traditional methods. The story is recorded and preferably as a performance, allowing the audience to hear the personal emotion inflected in the voice. Once the story has been written and read, personal photographs, pictures or image frames that complement the narration are included. Music or sound effects are added to enhance the narration. Finally a title frame is included as well as rolling credits to cite sources, and add acknowledgements. Students used media from the internet to enhance their stories.

Kajder, Bull and Albaugh (2005) clarified the steps to make a digital story. At the start, storytellers acted as storywriters by composing the story and the script. After working on the storyboard with the script order, the script was revised and selected images were sequenced in the storyboard. Students were told to add effects, transitions and titles before recording their voice over the story slides. Narration was required for several reasons: in order to have students try out each function of the digital story, to practice pronunciation skills, to check each student's contribution by hearing their voices and finally to signal the power of one's own voice on the listener.

Thus, according to Chung (2006) narration through storyteller's voice over the images stands as a key factor for the authenticity. After students complete their movie-making tasks, digital stories prepared by pairs were collected as a requirement of the course, unlike YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com>) as the host used for video uploading. Therefore, in the study by Snelson and Sheffield (2009), they selected Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>) as the place of digital story uploads. Thus, students had the chance to see and comment on their friends' work as they wish.

3e. Types of Digital Storytelling

The types of digital stories can be categorized into the following three major groups: 1) personal narratives: stories that contain accounts of significant incidents in one's life, 2) historical documentaries: stories that examine dramatic events that help to understand the past, and 3) stories designed to inform or instruct the viewer on a particular concept or practice. Thus, Hronová (2011) clarified different kinds of DS :-

1. **Photo Stories:** they are combinations of still images and texts. Students only need to know how to take photos and how to make a PowerPoint presentation in which the photos will be put together with the text.

2. **Video Words:** they are combinations of words or phrases and pictures to make a film or a short and simple presentation. The teacher can take some photos and bring them to the classes and ask students to match the pictures with the words.

3. **Presentations:** The most common story-making process is a PowerPoint presentation. A presentation is a combination of a text and pictures to present a certain topic. Students have to summarize the most important ideas and present them in a certain order. They are supposed to know more information than just that which is written in the text of the presentation. Students should be able to speak without notes; they should express their ideas clearly and keep the touch with audience.

4. **Staging:** it is a kind of presentation but the students are not focused on facts but they have to find a way how to perform their feelings, actions, incidents, sayings etc. Students should present the things which are familiar to them.

5. **Video clips:** The last kind of DS is a video clip. While creating a video clip, students put pictures, words, recorded conversations or narrations and music together to make a meaningful story which covers all kinds of digital stories mentioned above. A video clip talks about a certain topic which is familiar to the story-makers and which reflects his or her personal point of view.

Robin (2006) classified the different types of digital stories into three main groups: personal narratives,

historical documentaries, and inform or instruct stories as follows:

A. Personal Narratives: it describes events, details, thoughts, feelings, and experience in the writer's life, where these events are presented in an order similar to what actually happened in time.

B. Historical Documentaries: it describes the life of people or institutions. It can also be created by using achieved content such as photographs and other materials, available on the Internet and other bibliographic sources. Perhaps the most popular type of digital story is one in which the author tells of personal experiences. These stories can revolve around significant events in life and can be emotionally charged and personally meaningful to both the author and the viewer.

C. Stories That Inform or Instruct: it is used primarily to convey instructional material in many different content areas. Teachers can use this type to present information to their students.

3f. Stages of Digital Storytelling in Foreign Language Learning

Several studies have shown that DS goes beyond the capabilities of traditional storytelling by generating student interest, concentration, and motivation, facilitating student collaboration and organization of ideas, helping students to comprehend complex learning content, and presenting knowledge in a meaningful manner (Sadik, 2008, Van Gils, 2005).

DS constitutes a meaningful approach for energizing instructors and motivating students. It provides a clear procedure that helps instructors design instructional activities easily, based on the learning by doing method of constructivism. DS consists of four phases: pre-production; production; postproduction; and distribution (Yang and Wu, 2012).

- Pre-production includes five steps :a) posing questions in authentic scenarios, b) exploring topical information, c) writing the script and eliciting peer review, d) performing oral storytelling, and e) designing a story map and storyboard. At the beginning of class, the instructor poses certain questions about a topic based on contexts or experiences related to the students' lives and interests in order to encourage participants to consider alternatives and decide upon a topic.

- Next, students research the topic for information to write scripts which reflect a logical story or sequence of events.

- After completing the scripts, they question each other, engaging in peer critiquing or coaching. Students first practice telling their stories in a traditional manner,

which aids in the discovery of details essential to their stories.

- Afterward, a story map is designed to illustrate the main components of the story and their relationship to the overall narrative. For instructors, story mapping provides a basis for immediate assessment of students' stories and provides feedback on how to improve weaker elements of their stories. In addition, students represent their stories in a storyboard format, arranging the sequence of scenes, effects, and other digital components.

- Each task in this pre-production phase is paper-based, requiring focus on the content rather than multimedia elements. Writing scripts and story treatments is a key process for creating digital stories since the final product is media-based.

- During the production phase, students prepare multimedia elements and record their own voices.

- Then, in the post-production phase, the content is arranged and edited into a digital story.

- During the distribution phase, students share their comments and digital stories with others. The dynamic process of creating digital stories develops a deeper connection with the subject matter being learned as well as relevant extra-curricular experiences.

Also, Xu, Park & Baek (2011) clarified the steps of DS as it includes both Storybird and Storyboarding ,as follows:-

1. Storybird: It is an extremely engaging collaborative story writing website that embodies three ideas creating, reading, and sharing. It is also a collaborative DS tool that allows students to focus more on the content of their writing rather than drawing pictures. Students are provided with the pictures free collections of art. They just have to add the words to write stories. Once the art is chosen, students are able to build their story by dragging and dropping pictures and creating/writing a story to match the pictures chosen.

For teachers, it is very easy to use because storybird requires minimal teacher preparation and allows them to easily create individual user accounts for students. With that, teachers can view all story books that students are making. Storybird also has online safety for young students built into it. It can be used collaboratively with, either with another student in class or school, or with students from different schools in (Menezes, 2012:300).

2. Storyboard: It allows the user to organize images, text, motion, interviews and music before they begin making their digital story. It allows the user to visualize how the story will be put together. It also inspires new ideas for the user's digital story because the user sees all of the pieces of the story laid out in front of them.

The University of Houston (2009) conducts studies examining the educational uses of DS. They suggest procedures for DS: In the first stage, the storyteller defines the parameters of the story. The learner should select a topic for DS. Next, he should search for image resources for the story (pictures, drawings, photographs, maps, and/or charts), audio resources (music, speeches, interviews, and/or sound effects), and informational content (perhaps from websites, word processed documents, or PowerPoint slides). When the student has gathered all of his resources, he should begin thinking about the purpose of the story.

In the second stage, the storyteller organizes and selects specific audio, images, text, and other content for the story. He should import the images and audio into Photo Story. The storyteller can modify the number of images and image order, if necessary. In the third stage, the storyteller creates, records, and finalizes the story. He should decide on the purpose and point of view of the story and write a script that will be used as narration. He can record the narration with a computer microphone and import the narration into Photo Story. Finally, DS is finalized by saving it as a Windows Media Video. In the fourth stage, the storyteller presents the story and receives feedback. He can show the story to his colleagues and gather feedback about how the story could be improved, expanded, and used in the classroom. If well received, he can teach colleagues how to create their own DS.

Kajder, Bull and Albaugh (2005) presented strategies that offer a starting point for teachers thinking about DS in their classrooms, as follows:

1. Write an Initial Script. The script consists of less than a single double-spaced typed page or the text that can be printed on an index card. The written brief texts can generate a compelling DS. A student who might find a 10 page essay daunting may find a story of this size approachable.

2. Plan an Accompanying Storyboard. The script is a plan for what to say. The accompanying storyboard is a plan for what to show. The storyboard consists of a series of sketches representing the still images and, in some instances, short video clips that comprise the story. Several images are generally sufficient for a two-minute DS.

3. Discuss and Revise the Script. A story circle offers an opportunity to share the script and elicit feedback. Classes divide into small groups, facilitated by a discussion leader or teacher. Students read their scripts aloud and then receive comments framed with the prompt. A key element of DS is the personal dimension. Therefore the revision process often involves

encouraging students to speak in the first person. Images should carry part of the weight of the story conveyed. The revision process often includes discussion of which elements the script can convey and which aspects images should communicate. Students need to talk about what they see as well as what they hear and discuss how these elements can work together.

4. Sequence the Images in the Video story in a digital video editor such as iMovie or Movie Maker begins as students import the images into the timeline of the video editor and sequence them. This is a speedy and straightforward process once students have completed the storyboard. A precursor to this step can involve scaling the images for the right aspect ratio and resolution.

5. Add the Narrative Track. Students begin to narrate the script one sentence at a time, saving each sentence in a separate file to ensure that the order of the sentences is clear. Recording narration sentence by sentence allows students maximum control over the pacing of their work.

6. Add Special Effects and Transitions. The most effective stories often use minimal special effects. However, these effects are frequently an element that initially engages students. A useful compromise involves a requirement for completion of the first five steps before adding special effects. Students only use effects when they contribute to the meaning conveyed within the story.

7. Add a Musical Soundtrack if Time Permits. The final step is to add a musical soundtrack. Importing a soundtrack is a straightforward process in video editors with two audio tracks such as iMovie. An extra step is required in Movie Maker 2, which only has one audio track. Once the narration is completed in Movie Maker 2, the digital movie is rendered, and then re-imported into the video editor. The rendered images and narration are combined into a united video track, freeing the audio track for re-use.

3g. Process of Digital Storytelling

Frazel (2010) divided the process of DS into three stages: preparation, production, and presentation. Although presentation is the final step, it is critical that it informs every aspect of planning and production. The process takes time, and teachers may want to apply assessments throughout the development as follows:-

1. Preparation Stage: During this stage, students may develop a concept map, generate storyboards, and then create a script for written text or narration. The teacher should generate a formative assessment rubric to help guide students throughout the process. Teacher and

students define their audience and determine what the final product will be (video or podcast) and how it will be presented (i.e., in class or posted to the web). They organize the materials and plan for the DS project/assignment. The teacher will decide at this point whether to have students work as individuals, in small groups, or as a whole class. The teacher will also begin creation of a formative assessment. As part of preparation of the assignment, teachers may choose to create an introductory DS about the topic and have students brainstorm ways to find meaning, point of view, or emotional connections of their own.

2. Production Stage: Once all the resources and the storyboard are in place, guided by the formative assessment rubric and a partial script, students begin production work. Students select visual and audio elements of the DS. If they are creating a video product, they will most likely be working with a slide presentation application. Guided by storyboard and script, students prepare a narration. The teacher acts as mentor, depending on grade level, and assists with activities such as putting the slides in order or timing the slides. Music and sound effects may be employed.

3. Presentation Stage: DS should be saved onto a file sharing site or archived onto a CD . It is played for the classroom or posted to the web. There are many genres of digital stories and digital story making applications. There is classic DS, and there are photo essays, e-Portfolios, and Weblogs. Students should not be limited by the categories presented here, only by their own imaginations or limitation of tools and time.

Therefore, DS typically begins with a script. The storyteller assembles rich media to support the ideas and emotions in that script, including music or other audio effects, personal or public domain images, animations or video, and other electronic elements. The storyteller pieces together and edits DS, creating a short movie, usually about two to four minutes long, in one of various file formats (Lambert, 2002, Lambert, 2009, Meadows and Kidd, 2009).

3h. Digital Storytelling and EFL Narrative Writing Skills

DS was introduced as a technique to encourage and embed student reflection on the activities in which they were engaged, recognizing that reflection can be enhanced as a collaborative process. Thus, by using DS, students have the possibility to express themselves in their own way, as well as having the sense of ownership of their digital content creation. Creating DS enables the students to use their own voice and the potential for wide

representation of their ideas. Likewise, through their stories, the students will have the possibility to stand out, and thus they will be more engaged and motivated regarding the self-representation associated with their stories, highlighting specific characteristics or events which are part of establishing their personal identity.

Narrative is an essential component of DS. It invites the past to interact with the present and helps students to construct meaning and make sense of experience. In composing the narrative script for DS, the past is reinterpreted from the present. The composition of a narrative requires introspection and reflection that can ultimately serve to shape students' understanding of both who they are and who they want to become. Within the digital format of storytelling, the meaning communicated through the narrative is enhanced with images and music (Ross, 2010).

Tendero's case study (2006) examined the use of DS and its effects on pre-service English teachers. Data were collected from class discussions, the teacher journal, students' digital stories, and student interviews. Tendero's analysis of the data presented two emerging themes of consciousness and dialogic practice between the students. The reflective process involved (i.e., discussions, journaling, editing of video) gave the prospective teacher the opportunity to critically examine his/her dialogue with students. DS is emerging as a way to shape narrative. It values the power of story as a tool for self-discovery and reflection. It is a creative process to develop self-esteem, critical thinking, Oral and written communication. It has arisen as a form of narrative expression that is crafted into a media production.

Snelson and Sheffield (2009) clarified that DS has arisen as a form of narrative expression that is crafted into a media production. Additionally, through DS, the student is increasing his creativity, visualization skills, oral language and thinking skills. Digital stories consist of a series of moving images combined with narration and a soundtrack to tell a story. These stories generally are relatively short, just a few minutes in length. It is storytelling that contains some mixture of computer-based images, text, recorded audio narration, video clips, or music.

The process of finding DS forces storytellers to choose a topic that can be appropriately conveyed to a particular audience or purpose. After choosing a proper subject's story, DS begins with writing. Based on the outcomes of their reflection, the digital storytellers begin to write and assemble the needed components of their story. The digital storyteller writes, rewrites and continues the writing process through multiple drafts. It is important to note that the most effective digital stories have their

genesis in sound writing, so it is important to emphasize the value of multiple drafts. Within the writing, it is important to remember that the story has a central theme. The importance of this theme is for the viewers of the story viewers relate to the story because they have experienced similar types of events in their lives or because they are interested or captivated by the theme. Thus, during this process, the digital storytellers will develop communication skills, represented by writing. Through the writing, they can increase their retention and promote meaning as well as bring clarity and understanding to complex topics (Malita, 2010).

After the draft is completed and the process of collecting the different components is also finished, a transformation of the essential components of DS into a script would be necessary. At this stage, it is important to remember the final goal of processing DS: a digital story between 2-3 minutes in length, which is composed of about 20-25 images and has a narrative length of about three-four pages. Thus, it is important to understand that DS must be clear, precise, but concise, in order to assure that the message is correctly understood, in the given and proper time. Therefore, the digital storytellers will rewrite and rebuild the stories; assembling also the multimedia elements conveyed, in order to contribute to the meaning of the story, rather than being included only to make the story more interesting. Thus, through DS, students begin to comprehend how all the elements of writing a narrative work together and how to manipulate them for the best effects in readers and viewers.

Therefore, by sharing their creation, the digital storyteller could get formative feedbacks and suggestions from peers. The idea of sharing also includes the documentation of resources, and the inclusion of appropriate citation in their products. Thus, they will be actively engaged in the exchange of ideas and expressing opinions, in asking for and receiving feedback. Another important benefit of sharing the stories is that the digital storyteller is able to observe the story and is therefore detached from the presentation, as opposed to an oral presentation where the author is part of the process. This allows the digital storyteller to actively participate in the critique with their peers. Moreover, by sharing a story, it could be obtained a deeper insight into its meaning can be obtained. The sharing and evaluating of digital stories among peers is an excellent way to foster self-expression (Malita, 2010).

Thus, through DS students develop communication skills, learn how to ask questions, how to express opinions, construct narratives and write for an audience, also improving their language and computer skills by using software that combines a variety of multimedia:

text, images, audio, video and web publishing. The process of storytelling, based on reflection and communication of personal experience, can increase retention and promote meaning as well as bring clarity and understanding to complex topics. Also, when digital stories are created, students not only become more technologically literate, but they also become designers, listeners, interpreters, readers, writers, communicators, and thinkers.

The process of DS provides high-quality learning experience because the learning experience honors the writing process first. Thus, by writing, the digital storytellers have the possibilities to express and enhance their creativity by developing exciting and interesting stories to capture and retain the audience's attention. Moreover, DS enables authors to recapture creativity, develop it and intensify it, apply and reapply it, extend and enhance it (Holdich and Chung, 2003).

3i. Digital storytelling and EFL Critical Thinking Skills

DS is an innovative pedagogical approach that has the potential to engage learners in student-centered learning, and enhance learning outcomes across the curriculum. It provides a vehicle for combining digital media with innovative teaching and learning practices. DS encourages additional educational outcomes. It enhances learners' motivation, and helps teachers in building constructivist learning environments that encourage creative problem-solving based on collaboration and peer-to-peer communication. In addition, it can be used to facilitate integrated approaches to curriculum development, and engage learners in higher order thinking and deep learning (Smeda, Dakichand Sharda, 2010).

Yang and Wu (2012) explored the impact of (DS) on the academic achievement, critical thinking, and learning motivation of senior high school students learning English as a foreign language. The one-year study adopted a pretest and posttest quasi-experimental design involving 110 10th grade students in two English classes. The independent variable was information technology-integrated instruction (ITII) on two different levels lecture-type ITII (comparison group) and DS (experimental group). Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected, including English achievement and critical thinking scores, questionnaire responses for learning motivation, as well as recordings of student and teacher interviews for evaluating the effectiveness of DS in learning. The findings indicate that DS participants performed significantly better than lecture-type ITII

participants in terms of English achievement, critical thinking, and learning motivation. Interview results highlight the important educational value of DS, as both the instructor and students reported that DS increased students' understanding of course content, willingness to explore, and ability to think critically.

3j. Digital storytelling, EFL Narrative Writing and Critical Thinking

For English language learners, DS is highly beneficial. Firstly, they are required to use audio and written text. Secondly, students have to research and document their work, therefore listening and reading skills are also put to use. Thirdly, Web 2.0 stories have the unprecedented advantage that once uploaded on the Internet, they have a potentially huge audience (Bran, 2010, Dogan and Robin, 2008).

English language classrooms must provide students with an opportunity to work with technology and develop skills required for meaning making and representing through digital multimodal texts. This digital literacy should not be understood only as a part of language learning but as something that prepares students for effective performance across the curriculum and in all aspects of the modern life where meaning making and representing activities are required (Churchill et al., 2008, Dreon, Kerper and Landis, 2011, Ninet and Corachán, 2011).

Yang (2012) in her study explores English language learners' crafting process of DS project in an instructional setting. By analyzing two English language learners' DS projects and their personal crafting narratives, the researcher reports how these learners approach multimodal DS composing, construct hybrid texts to deliver their messages, and assign meanings to the semiotic resources used in their DS.

Consequently, Dogan and Robin (2006a) conducted a study to highlight how the teachers incorporated DS in the classroom through investigating the educational uses of creative DS contests for students and teachers. The results clarified that the teachers who used DS in the classroom observed increases in student skills such as presentation skills and writing skills. Somdee and Suppasetseree (2012) conducted a study to investigate the implementation of DS in developing English speaking skills and the satisfaction toward learning from DS of fifty undergraduate students. The students were encouraged to create their own DS by telling the story along with the pictures through window movie maker. Their speaking skills were improved when they rehearse to tell the story with the window movie maker.

Afterwards, all of the digital stories were presented and published through DS websites for sharing the ideas with their friends in the classroom.

Sadik's (2008) mixed-methods study explored the impact DS has on Egyptian high-school students' learning and engagement across the curriculum, including language arts and English language classes. Data revealed that students who created digital stories showed significant improvement in engagement levels and learning outcomes. Students used oral narration more than text and expressed personal connections to the topic, indicating increased engagement through the use of authorial voice. One implication of Sadik's (2008) study is DS may encourage oral expression due to personal engagement with a topic. Increased oral expressive opportunities through DS may result in improved oral communication skills.

Robin's (2005) four-step approach to creating and integrating digital stories into learning was introduced to help groups create, review and evaluate their stories, as clarified in the following table 2.

DS allows students to construct narrative and expository texts through combining multiple media including images (e.g. photos, graphics), voice, music, video, transitions, titles, and movement. They can then save their digital stories as movie files for playback on a computer or they can export their stories to the internet (Boucher, 2011; Di Blas and Paolini, 2013; Skinner and Hagood, 2008; Lammers, 2012; Zheng et al., 2011).

Verdugo and Belmonte (2007) conducted a study to clarify using digital stories to improve listening comprehension with Spanish young learners of English. They show greater improvement in children's progressive understanding of the linguistic structure, vocabulary, sound patterns and prosody of the foreign language as compared to that obtained by learners receiving language instruction without the use of Internet-based technology.

Ramirez-Verdugo and Belmonte's (2007) quasi-experimental study investigated the effectiveness of DS on the understanding of spoken English by elementary Spanish ESL students. Students exposed to the DS scored significantly higher on listening comprehension measures than students who listened to stories told by the teacher. Visual images in the DS and student interaction with the application helped students focus on the oral language. Therefore, the integration of DS may lead to improved reading, writing and oral skills due to improved listening comprehension and levels of engagement. There is a strong case for DS integration into the language arts curriculum based on improved English communication skills.

Table 2. Robin's approach to creating and integrating digital stories

Steps	Procedures
1. Define, collect and decide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select a topic for your digital story • Create a folder on the desktop where you can store the materials you find • Search for image resources for your story, including: pictures, drawings, photographs, maps, charts, etc. • Try to locate audio resources such as music, speeches, interviews, and sound effects • Try to find informational content, which might come from web sites, word processed documents, or PowerPoint slides • Begin thinking of the purpose of your story
2. Select, import and create	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select the images you would like to use for your digital story • Select the audio you would like to use for your digital story • Select the content and text you would like to use for your digital story • Import images into Photo Story • Import audio into Photo Story • Modify number of images and/or image order, if necessary
3. Decide, write, record and finalize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide on the purpose and point of view of your digital story • Write a script that will be used as narration in your digital story AND provides the purpose and point of view you have chosen • Use a computer microphone and record the narration of your script • Import the narration into Photo Story • Finalize your digital story by saving it as a Windows Media Video (WMV) file
4. Demonstrate, evaluate and replicate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show your digital story to your peers • Gather feedback about how the story could be improved, expanded and used in your classroom • Help other groups how to create their own digital story

Adapted from, Robin (2005)

Normann (2011) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the use of DS in language learning and explore young learners' meta-reflections on potentials for learning when DS is used as a learner centered language learning activity. The sample of the study consisted of a group of secondary school students. Data have been collected from questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and reflection logs and been analyzed thematically. Results of the study confirmed that DS improved oral and written language skills among students. The study also showed increased motivation among students.

4. Weblogs

Language teachers can use blogs to ask students questions, share viewpoints, and encourage students to discuss issues and express their concerns. Learners are allowed to collaborate with others to establish a particular topic of mutual interest. Weblog is an easily created, updateable website that allows the learner to publish instantly to the internet from any internet connection. An Internet-based weblog, also known as a blog, is essentially a homepage managed by a writer. It is a set of phenomenon that has, since its inception as a manner of producing anything from online diaries to academic and reflective journals, emerged to have the capacity to engage people in collaborative activity, knowledge sharing, reflection and debate. It is claimed that blogging influences the way students think about thinking (Mynard, 2004).

Although most of blogs on the Internet are personal and journalistic, there has been increasing interest in

applying blogs in education in recent years. Blogs have the potential to be used as supplementary communication means, collaborative tools, and instructional resources in educational environments. In addition, blogs can be used to improve students' writing skills. Weblog or blogging has evolved from a simple online diary for self-expression to a complicated educational tool for writing. It was viewed as a means of developing students' writing proficiency (Cequena, 2013, Tekinarslan, 2008).

4a. Defining Weblogs

Weblog is a type of web application that displays serial entries with date and time stamps. Blogs also possess some features that might help facilitate learning. First, blogs are easy to use. For example, after finishing editing a new post or writing a comment in a blog platform, the post and comment can be instantly published in the cyberspace with a click of the submit button. In addition, blogs can automatically archive the posts in the reverse chronological order with the dates stamped, and it is easy to find past works. As blog technology is easy to use for both instructors and learners, the application of blogs in the educational field is becoming increasingly popular. Second, blogs have much to offer to literacy. Third, blogs facilitate interaction and collaboration (Wu and Wu, 2011).

Blog which is also known as online journal or web diary is an Internet-based resource which was initially used by bloggers (blog writers) as personal journals or diaries. Currently however, blogs are being used to express and share thoughts, ideas and information with

the wider public. They are user-friendly websites which are easy to maintain and frequently updated by their owners. As a social networking and medium for communication, blogs enabled the users to interact not only with the computer, but also with other bloggers. Lately, blog is gradually being used as a pedagogical tool in the classrooms and it is deemed to assume a more communicative role than the less interactive CALL application (Abu Bakar, Latif and Ya'acub, 2010).

Weblog is an online journal that users can continuously update, in their own words, online. It utilizes a simple interface to make it easy for any user to construct, without having to understand HTML or web scripting. In addition, users can even add pictures or audio files to enhance their blog's attractiveness. Furthermore, a blog is interactive in the sense that readers can respond with comments in just a few steps. In terms of language teaching and learning, language learners could use a personal blog linked to a course as an electronic portfolio, showing development over time. Hence, Weblogs could be used to monitor and assess students' work as well as to encourage interaction among students and between teachers and students (Yang, 2009).

Weblogs are innovative in that they require learners to interact with one another, not just the computer. For blog users, or bloggers, the computer is simply the medium for communication. By encouraging interaction with people, blogging takes on a more communicative role than less interactive CALL applications. Blogging, and CALL in general, should not replace face-to-face interaction, but it may provide a practice environment where students can think, reflect, and create language slowly for a real-life audience. Its value as a pedagogical tool appears to be in its authentic, interesting and communicative nature (Pinkman, 2005).

4b. The Importance of Weblogs

Weblogs can stimulate and provide motivation for reading and learning. Through the interactive nature of the blog, one can read and also comment on what one reads in expectation of a little discussion and a quest for common interests and individual differences. By responding on Weblogs, students can get feedback from other audiences throughout cyberspace. They have an opportunity to read things in which they are interested and write things they truly wish to write, thereby determining their own texts in language education and combining text with conversations in a very personal and stimulating way. They are characterized as personal diary-like-format websites enabled by easy to use tools

and open for everyone to read. Therefore, through blogging, people are able to document their reflections about things relevant to their daily life experiences, sharing such things with their friends and/or group members. Weblogs are an ideal resource for the teaching of writing because they are easy to create and maintain; encourage students to be more prolific writers; make writing easier to share; support group work, feedback, and collaboration; provide opportunities to write outside of class; can link to related texts and multimedia; provide students with a sense of authorship; and can be used in various ways by the instructor (Boas, 2011, Yang, 2009).

Weblogs have been asserted to have potential values in English language education for several reasons. They provide opportunities for real communication in an authentic learning environment. The audience of the writing is not limited to the teacher but extends to classmates and other people beyond the classroom. Thus, Weblogs raise an awareness of having an authorship and a readership. They enhance reading comprehension, improve students' writing skills and abilities, provide an exciting and motivating learning environment in reading and writing for learners and promote learner autonomy. Thus, through blogging, students are able to express and share thoughts, ideas and information with the wider public (AbuBakar, Latif and Ya'acub; 2010, Aljumah, 2012; Noytim, 2010).

4c. Types of Weblogs

Using weblogs is a useful way to join technology and education inside the classroom and outside the school. Because blogs are both individualistic and collaborative, they are capable of providing opportunities to encourage self-expression, creativity, and community building. They can be used in different academic contexts and settings for practicing reading and writing because of their multidisciplinary format (Taki and Fardafshari, 2012).

Campbell (2003) clarified three types of Weblog used in the language classroom are the tutor Blog, the learner Blog, and the class Blog. The tutor Blog is run by the tutor for the learner and utilized for student reading practices, exploration of English websites, online exchanges, and a resource of links for self-study. The learner Blog is run by individual learners themselves. It allows individual learners to post their thoughts in relation to the reading. Thus, it encourages learner self-expression and develops a sense of ownership. Learner blog is best suited for reading and writing classes. The class Blog is the result of the collaborative effort of an entire class. It encourages learners to post messages, images and links in relation to classroom discussion

topics. It can facilitate project-based language learning, and can be used as a virtual space for an international classroom language exchange.

Harris (2008) clarified that there are three types of blogs; audio, video and photo blog. The most popular type of audio blog is the music sharing blog. Bloggers normally upload their favorite music or their own composition and share it with blog visitors. They can also provide links or streaming audio media for their subscribers to sites that are musically interesting. Audio bloggers can also document their thoughts through songs and music that they post on blogs. The other type in the audio blog is the voice blogs or voice journals. This type of audio blog features the actual voice of the blog owner in a Podcast-type broadcast. An audio blog primarily publishes audio files, podcasts, or webcasts. It is relatively new on the Internet as the blogosphere is mainly composed of and dominated by text and photo blogs. Video blog is gaining popularity because of its advantage over text-based blogs. It is an effective tool to attract attention. Learners prefer to see videos than written blogs. Photo blog is defined as a form of photo publishing and sharing to be published on a certain blog. The dominance and visibility of photographs on a certain blog over texts is what makes it a distinct form of photo blog. The process of publishing and sharing photographs is called photo blogging which became an impetus by the turn of the century.

4d. Weblogs and EFL Narrative Writing Skills

In the writing classroom; therefore, Weblogs are qualified as a pedagogical tool. They can replace the cycle of steps in developing essay: brainstorming, writing, submitting, receiving feedback, revising writing, and resubmitting. Weblogs clearly benefit the writing classroom. They enable the instructor and students communicate through and about writing. Both sides easily update an online writing promotes blogging as a new form to enhance class discussion and create a community outside the classroom. Blogging provides a space where students can interact with one another and can promote collaboration. Using blog has been claimed to encourage students to write more thoughtfully (Khampusaen, 2012).

For the language teacher, the weblog is a timely arrival which can fulfill many of the needs identified for the effective teaching of writing. The weblog provides a genuine audience, is authentically communicative, process driven, peer reviewed, provides unusual context and offers a completely new form with creative potential. By forming a learner blog, the writing teacher can make

use of blogging in all the stages of writing process from drafting to publishing and assessment. In drafting stage, the students can share their writings through blog pages and this will ease the feedback process (Simsek, 2010).

Through blogs, one can write and also comment on what one writes in expectation of a little discussion and a quest for common interests and individual differences. By responding on blogs, students can get feedback from other audiences throughout cyberspace. Students have an opportunity to read things in which they are interested and write things they truly wish to write, thereby determining their own texts in language education and combining text with conversations in a very personal and stimulating way. Through blogs, one can write and also comment on what one writes in expectation of a little discussion and a quest for common interests and individual differences. By responding on blogs, students can get feedback from other audiences throughout cyberspace. Students have an opportunity to read things in which they are interested and write things they truly wish to write, thereby determining their own texts in language education and combining text with conversations in a very personal and stimulating way (Aljumah, 2012).

Ward (2004) has described a blog project he implemented in reading/writing class, and found many positive results. Ward concluded that a majority of his learners believed that the project assisted their language learning. He also commented that using Weblogs was a way to help increase student interest in their reading and writing.

In his study, Khampusaen (2012) examines the outcomes of a blogging collaboration project among university students on their essay writing skills. Writing feedback was provided by peers and the instructor on blog to help students to write their essays. The results indicated that collaborative blogging improved students' attitudes towards writing. Feedback increased students' motivation to write. Collaborative blogging improved students' writing and supported development of related skills and knowledge. Students' writing skills were improved as a result of feedbacks gained from peers and the instructor. Collaboration, rather than the use of technology encouraged students to improve their writing skills. In addition, students' technology skills improved even though direct instruction related to technology was not provided. Students developed clear literacy skills as they published their essays online. Blogging in writing class made students to become autonomous learners.

Taki and Fardafshari (2012) investigated the effect of weblog-based collaborative learning on young Iranian EFL learners' writing skill and motivation. The participants

were selected from a language institute and divided into two groups of experimental and control group. Analysis of the data revealed that the blogging integrated collaborative learning instruction was more effective than in-class language learning instruction. The results of the study indicate that blogs as a tool for language learning provide a platform for language learners to use the language actively. Finally, learners were motivated to use language and build their autonomy in learning language.

4e. Weblogs and EFL Critical Thinking Skills

Weblogs represent personal diaries that deliver a particular theme which in the real sense offer personal reflection of the blogger about matters that influence his or her daily lifestyle. Personal reflective weblogs are associated to pedagogy and education; they empower students to develop their critical thinking which makes them even more analytical and responsive to every issue they are confronted with (Harris, 2008).

Weblogs can provide an exciting and motivating learning environment where students have a sense of ownership and readership. They can be used to enhance student critical thinking skills, create social interactions between students and the instructor, students and their peers, and students and a global audience. If used in English classes, the issues of students' free choices of topics for Blogging and neglect of teacher correction and feedback should be taken into consideration. However, the focus of Blog writing was on encouraging student self-expression in English, that is, the focus is on meaning and fluency rather than form or accuracy. Weblogs are recommended to foster students' English language development in a genuine learning environment (Akçay and Arslan, 2010).

Duffy and Bruns (2006) clarified that within the structure of a weblog, students can demonstrate critical thinking, take creative risks, and make sophisticated use of language and design elements. In doing so, the students acquire creative, critical, communicative, and collaborative skills that may be useful to them in both scholarly and professional contexts.

5. Digital Storytelling, Weblogs, EFL Narrative Writing and Critical Thinking Skills

Weblog is a one of the application of Web 2.0. It is defined as a simple webpage consisting of brief paragraphs of opinion, information, personal diary entries, or links, called posts, arranged chronologically with the most recent first, in the style of an online journal.

There are five features of weblog: personal editorship; a hyperlinked posting structure; frequent updates; free public access to the content via the Internet; and archived postings. The features of weblogs, including archival of past weblogs by date-posted, hyper linking to other webloggers, instant publishing of web content with little technical skill required, and ways for others to comment/feedback, provide new opportunities for people to present and express themselves online. Blogs are one new technology that has played a large role in reshaping literate environment (Akçay and Arslan, 2010).

According to Kennedy (2003), blogs have the potential to enhance writing and literacy skills while offering a uniquely stylized form of expression. They are an excellent way to use educational technology and storytelling inside the classroom and beyond school walls. Blogs provide opportunities where self-expression and creativity is encouraged. They are both individualistic and collaborative because reading and writing can be used in a variety of academic contexts.

Therefore, they are valuable tools for current writing instruction in particular. They can promote critical and analytical thinking; be a powerful promoter of creative, intuitive, and associational thinking; promote analogical thinking; be a powerful medium for increasing access and exposure to quality information and combine the best of solitary reflection and social interaction.

Context of the Problem

Teachers face many obstacles in English language teaching and learning, for instance, inadequately equipped classrooms and educational technology. They also lack of opportunity to use English in their daily lives. Moreover, most EFL students hate to write as they have no experience, no confidence, maybe no ideas, a slender vocabulary, skewed grammar and probably vague notion of punctuation. So, students should practice, practice and still more practice to learn writing. They are always hesitant to write because they cannot generate ideas and they are afraid of making mistakes (Abdel-Hack, 2009b).

English language teachers in Egypt carry out their teaching activities focusing on contents or information only, because their main focus is to facilitate learners become proficient in English, rather than developing higher order of thinking in them. In other words, our teaching learning activities are confined to knowledge and comprehension level only. Consequently, we are not able to help our students develop higher order thinking skills such as of application, analysis, evaluation and creating. However, it does not mean that the adherents of

critical thinking deny the importance of information; rather they maintain that learners should go beyond the information level, because in real life situations learners need to possess higher order of thinking skills in order to face their challenges. The application of critical thinking in EFL classrooms is quite possible, because the strategies such as Think Pair Share (TPS), quick write, know- want to know- learned (KWL), jigsaw, predictions by terms, debate prescribed by critical thinking are almost familiar to the teachers of English. Similarly, the ABC (Anticipation, Building knowledge, and Consolidation) framework followed in teaching following critical thinking is very much similar to the PWP (Pre-, While and Post) or BWA (Before, While and After) framework used in teaching reading and listening.

To document the problem of the present research, the researcher conducted a pilot study on a sample of third year students enrolled in English Section at Benha Faculty of Education (thirty students). The pilot study consisted of an EFL narrative writing skills test and EFL critical thinking scale. The test included three questions in order to assess the EFL narrative writing skills and critical thinking skills among students. The results of the test and the scale revealed that students lack concision, they often wander to incorporate the ideas without focusing on the main ideas covering the whole topic. Therefore, students cannot gain a concise topic which contains the main ideas and several major supporting details. Concision helps the students make their writing focusing on the main points. The lack of accuracy: students also have difficulty in expressing the main ideas clearly. Generally, they concentrate so much on the unimportant points. The lack of objectiveness: students often have a habit of expressing their own opinions. Many of students involve in the gaps of interpreting their own thoughts and giving their own judgments. They cannot state exactly the author's points of view as well as his or her tone or voice during the selection. The lack of coherence: students are often not skillful in using suitable connections and they do not have a willingness of making a well- organized outline before they write. They consider that writing is simply putting main ideas and supporting details incoherently together without connections.

Problem of the Research

In spite of the importance of EFL narrative writing skills and critical thinking, there is a lack in them among EFL majors at Benha Faculty of Education. This lack revealed itself through analyzing some EFL majors' at Benha Faculty of Education narrative writing skills in the pilot

study (**N=30**). Thus, there is a need for an effective teaching strategy or approach for developing EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills among EFL majors at Benha Faculty of Education. So, the present research aims at examining the effectiveness of using digital storytelling and Weblogs instruction in enhancing EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills among EFL majors at Faculty of Education.

Questions of the Research

To face this problem, the present research answered the following questions:

1. What are the EFL narrative writing skills required for EFL majors at Faculty of Education?
2. To what extent do EFL majors at Faculty of Education these skills?
3. What are the EFL critical thinking skills required for EFL majors at Faculty of Education?
4. To what extent do EFL majors at Faculty of Education these skills?
5. What is the form of the program based on digital storytelling and Weblogs instruction for enhancing EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills among students at Faculty of Education?
6. How far is using digital story and Weblogs instruction effective in enhancing EFL narrative writing skills among EFL majors at Faculty of Education?
7. How far is using digital story and Weblogs instruction effective in enhancing critical thinking skills among EFL majors at Faculty of Education?

Significance of the Research

The significance of the present research is represented in what it may offer for the following:-

EFL Majors at Faculty of Education: as it helps in:-

- Developing some EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills.
- Encouraging and motivating them to use the language orally and written.
- Distinguishing Between Inferences and Assumptions.
- Anticipate the consequences of alternative actions.
- Differentiate evidence from opinion, common sense, anecdotes, and appeals to authority.
- Distinguish opinions from facts.
- Draw inferences.

- Formulate and ask appropriate questions.
- Gather data from multiple sources relevant to a problem to be solved or a decision to be made.

Thinking With Concepts.

EFL Researchers: as it helps in:-

- Encouraging them to implement the digital storytelling instruction in their research.

EFL Teachers: as it helps in:-

- Providing them with some strategies that might help develop EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills among students at faculty of education.

Curriculum planners: as it helps in:-

- Drawing their attention to the efficacy of digital storytelling instruction in narrative writing, critical thinking skills and teaching these strategies in the EFL curriculum.

Instruments of the Research

1. An EFL Narrative Writing Skills Questionnaire, prepared by the researcher.
2. An EFL Critical Thinking Skills Questionnaire, prepared by the researcher.
3. An EFL Narrative Writing Skills Test, prepared by the researcher.
4. An EFL Critical Thinking scale, prepared by the researcher.
5. Unstructured Interview for the evaluation of the effectiveness of digital storytelling and weblogs.

Delimitations of the Research

- Some EFL Narrative Writing skills required for EFL majors at Benha Faculty of Education.
- Some EFL Critical Thinking skills required for EFL majors at Benha Faculty of Education.
- A sample of Third Year students enrolled in English Section at Benha Faculty of Education.

Procedures of the Research

Following procedures were followed to carry out the present research:-

1. Identifying the EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills required for EFL majors at Benha Faculty of Education through:-
 - Reviewing literature and previous studies related to EFL narrative writing skills and critical thinking.
 - Preparing a questionnaire of EFL narrative writing skills required for Third year students.
 - Preparing a questionnaire of EFL critical thinking skills required for Third year students.
 - Submitting the questionnaires to a jury to verify its validity.

- Modifying the questionnaires according to the jury's point of view.

2. Identifying to what extent EFL majors master the EFL narrative writing skills and critical thinking:-

- Designing EFL narrative writing skills test to assess third year students' narrative writing skills.
- Designing EFL critical thinking skills scale to assess third year students' critical thinking skills.
- Designing the interview for evaluating the digital storytelling instruction.
- Submitting the test and the scale to a jury to modify them.
- Modifying the test and the scale according to the jury's opinion.

- Selecting a sample of Third year students enrolled in English Section at Benha Faculty of Education, Egypt.

- Applying the test and the scale to the study sample for identifying to what extent they master EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills.

3. Identifying the features of the program based on digital storytelling and Weblogs instruction through:

- Reviewing the literature and previous studies related to digital storytelling instruction and Weblogs.
- Identifying the procedures that will be followed during using digital storytelling instruction and Weblogs.

4. Identifying the effectiveness of the program based on digital storytelling and Weblogs instruction through:

- Teaching the study sample using the program based on digital storytelling and Weblogs instruction.
- Applying the EFL narrative writing test and critical thinking skills scale to the study sample after teaching.
- Applying the interview to the study sample after the treatment to evaluate the effectiveness of digital storytelling and Weblogs instruction.

5. Collecting and statistical analysis of the data.

6. Analyzing and interpreting results.

7. Recommendations and Suggestions.

Hypotheses of the Research

1. "There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post assessment of the study sample in overall EFL narrative writing skills in favor of post assessment".
2. "There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL narrative writing sub-skills (*text structure; vocabulary choice; organization; sentence structure; paragraphing; punctuation and conventions*) in favor of post assessment".

3. "There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post assessment of the study sample in overall EFL critical thinking skills in favor of post assessment".

4. "There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL critical thinking sub-skills (*interpretation* ; *analysis* , *evaluation* , *inference* ;*explanation* , *reflection* and *self-regulation*)in favor of post assessment".

11. Method and Procedures of the Research

11.1. Participants of the Research

The participants of the research were third year students enrolled in English section, at Benha Faculty of Education, Egypt. Forty students participated in the research.

Instruments of the Research

The researcher prepared the following instruments in order to fulfill the purpose of the present research:-

1. An EFL Narrative Writing Skills Questionnaire.
2. An EFL Narrative Writing Skills Test.
3. An EFL Critical Thinking Skills Questionnaire.
4. An EFL Critical Thinking Scale.

Instruments for collecting qualitative data:

- Unstructured Interview.

The EFL Narrative Writing Skills Questionnaire

The Purpose of EFL Narrative Writing Skills Questionnaire

The researcher prepared questionnaire of EFL narrative writing skills to identify the narrative writing skills that are necessary for EFL majors at faculty of Education (See Appendix A).

Sources of Designing the EFL Narrative Writing Questionnaire

The EFL narrative writing skills were derived from literature and previous studies and books related to EFL narrative writing skills such as: Boucher (2011); Holdichand Chung (2003); SAGITA (2009); Smith (2011); Sun and Nippold (2012).

Description of the EFL Narrative Writing Skills Questionnaire

The EFL narrative writing skills questionnaire consisted of seven main skills (text structure; vocabulary choice; organization; sentence structure; paragraphing; punctuation and conventions).

The EFL Narrative Writing Skills Test

The EFL narrative writing skills test was prepared by the researcher to develop the narrative writing skills (Appendix B). The test measures the participants' EFL narrative writing skills. The test consisted of three questions. It was applied to the study sample to assess their EFL narrative writing skills before and after applying the program.

Timing of the EFL Narrative Writing Skills Test

The time of the EFL narrative writing skills test lasted two hours (120 minutes). The two hours were divided according to the test. The test consisted of three questions. It was counted through getting the mean between the fastest student and the lowest one in answering the test questions.

Piloting of the EFL Narrative Writing Skills Test

The EFL narrative writing skills test was applied to a pilot sample of (N=30) EFL majors at Benha Faculty of Education, Egypt to investigate the suitability of the test for the students; the simplicity/difficulty of questions of the test and the suitability of the time limit needed for applying the tests.

Scoring the EFL Narrative Writing Skills Test

The EFL narrative writing skills test was corrected by the researcher through using a rubric prepared by the researcher.

Rubric for Correcting EFL Narrative Writing Test

Purpose of the Rubric

The rubric prepared by the researcher was constructed to assess students' EFL narrative writing skills.

Description of the Rubric

The rubric for correcting the EFL narrative writing test consists of seven parts; each part has three items ranging from "3" marks to "1" mark. The first part is devoted to text structure; part two dealt with vocabulary choice; part three with sentence structure; part four with organization; part five with paragraphing; part six with punctuation and part seven with conventions.

Scoring of the Rubric

The students were given a rating between "3" to "1" for their performance in the EFL narrative writing test. The students were given "3" marks when their performance is high and "1" mark when their performance is low.

The Purpose of EFL Critical Thinking Questionnaire

The researcher prepared questionnaire of EFL critical thinking skills to identify the critical thinking skills that are necessary for EFL majors at faculty of Education (See Appendix C).

Sources of Designing the EFL Critical Thinking Questionnaire

The EFL critical thinking skills were derived from literature and previous studies and books related to EFL critical thinking skills such as:

Farzaneh, Tarmizi and Baya (2010); Kabilan (2000); Nasiri, Farsani and Nikoopour (2011); Rezaei, Derakhshan and Bagherkazemi (2011); Shirkhani and Fahim (2011); Thadphoothon (2005).

Description of the EFL Critical Thinking Skills Questionnaire

The EFL critical thinking skills questionnaire consisted of seven main skills (interpretation; analysis; explanation; reflection; evaluation; inference and self-regulation).

Description of the EFL Critical Thinking Scale

The researcher designed the Critical Thinking Scale (CTS), was used to evaluate EFL majors' narrative writings for evidence of critical thinking. The Critical Thinking Scale included (22) items for students to understand and give true response. Each item has a five-point-Likert format: (5) strongly agree- (4) agree- (3) not sure- (2) disagree, (1) strongly disagree. Each item on the

Critical Thinking Scale addressed the extent to which the student demonstrated one of the critical thinking skills on five-point Likert scale (See Appendix D).

Correction of the Scale

The items of the EFL Critical Thinking were corrected using the scoring sheet. The positive and negative items were corrected using a rating scale from "5" to "1".

Unstructured interview

Interviews are the most common way of collecting data in qualitative research. Carrying out interviews allowed me to investigate more in depth students' own reflections. Since I carried out unstructured interviews, this also gave me the flexibility to adapt the questions based on the respondents' answers, or to go more deeply into the matters by asking supplementary questions.

Designing the interview guide

According to Normann (2011) an interview guide gives an overview of the various topics to talk about, and also of the order of the questions. For unstructured interview, the guide only gives a rough suggestion of possible questions. I considered that having a pre-prepared interview guide would help me focus on relevant topics during the interviews. The interview guide was developed around three main themes as follows:

1. **Motivation:** Various aspects respondents and interviewees point to as motivating in their own learning.
2. **Learning:** What respondents and interviewees understand with learning, both with respect to the learning process and learning outcome.
3. **Digital storytelling as a language learning activity:** What kind of learning potentials respondents and interviewees define from DST used as a learning activity in second language learning

In addition to using open questions where I simply asked the interviewees to tell about, or share reflections around, the majority of my questions were *what and how questions*.

Purpose of interview

To use digital storytelling and weblogs instruction into learning, teachers must view it in a positive manner, be comfortable with and use it effectively. Therefore, the need is emphasized to determine what teachers are

thinking about when they are using DS and weblogs and what they are concerned about at the end of the adoption process.

To gain understanding of using DS and weblogs into learning and provide richer detail and insights into teachers' experiences, a set of interview questions for individual interviews, as qualitative methods, were asked of each teacher in order to provide consistent data. These questions are framed to determine the perceptions of the teachers around issues of using DS and weblogs into learning.

Individual interviews, which were conducted during and after the period of implementation, were conducted in person by the researcher, and data were analyzed to identify patterns, beliefs, values and practices, as related to the teachers' digital storytelling integration. Questions that were asked of participants included:-

- What is your view of DS and weblogs?
- What positive features of DS and weblogs instruction were you able to identify at the end of the implementation period?
- How do you perceive your role as a teacher to use DS and weblogs?
- How do you perceive your role as a teacher to integrate DS and Weblogs?
- Do you think DS positively or negatively influences student learning? Describe
- What obstacles did you face in using DS and Weblogs with your students and how can they be overcome?

Determining the Validity of the Research Instruments

In order to ensure the validity of the research instruments, two methods were used, as follows:

1- Face Validity

In order to determine the face validity, the EFL narrative writing skills questionnaire and the test and the EFL critical thinking questionnaire and scale were submitted to a jury of EFL staff members in Curricula and Teaching Methods (**N=8**), (see **Appendix E**). In the light of the jury's feedback, the instruments are suitable for the students' level. The instruments have clear instructions and appropriate for measuring what they are intended to measure. Thus, it could be said that they have face validity.

2- Content Validity

Content validity required the researcher to examine

accurately and systematically the content of the instruments to determine whether the instruments contain a representative sample of the behavior it is intended to measure. To clarify the content validity of the instruments, they were developed in the light of a systematic and accurate review of literature and related studies. It determined the general form of the instruments, their items and how they should be graded. The content of instruments are representative of the skills that are intended to be measured.

Determining the Reliability of the Research Instruments

The reliability of the instruments was measured by using the test-retest method. The instruments were administered to a group of EFL majors, at Benha Faculty of Education. Then, they were administered to the same group again after two weeks. The Pearson correlation between the two administrations was (0.88) which is significant at the 0.01 level. This means that the instruments are reliable.

Design of the Research

The present research followed the quasi-experimental research in the form of one group pre-test and post-test design with both quantitative and qualitative data analyses. .

12. MATERIAL OF THE RESEARCH

The program based on digital storytelling and weblogs instruction

The purpose of the program is to enhance EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills for EFL majors at Benha Faculty of Education and providing them with some theoretical knowledge about the EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills (For the program, see **Appendix F**). It aimed at achieving the following objectives:-

- Develop EFL majors' ability to organize the narrative features including orientation, complication and resolution into an appropriate and effective text structure.
- Develop EFL majors' ability to choose the vocabulary and expression that are suitable for the topic.
- Develop EFL majors' ability to control the multiple threads and relationships over the whole text, achieved through the use of referring words, substitutions, word

associations and text connectives transitions, pronouns, causal linkage.

- Develop EFL majors' ability to orient, engage and affect the reader.
- Develop EFL majors' ability to segment the text into paragraphs that assists the reader to negotiate the narrative.
- Develop EFL majors' ability to produce grammatically correct, structurally sound and meaningful sentences.
- Develop EFL majors' ability to use correct and appropriate punctuation principles.
- Develop EFL majors' ability to use consistent agreement between parts of speech and focus on accuracy of spelling and the difficulty of the words used.
- Develop EFL majors' ability to clarify the context, purpose, issue, problem/question, meaning.
- Develop EFL majors' ability to break down, examine, or otherwise explore the issues, available information, arguments
- Develop EFL majors' ability to determine the merit, value, efficacy, advantages, worth, authenticity, validity, impact, or significance, of something (e.g., the evidence, claims, assumptions, biases, arguments, perspectives, etc.).
- Develop EFL majors' ability to use evidence and standards that together are necessary for coming to a conclusion, making decisions, identifying alternatives generalizing, planning.
- Develop EFL majors' ability to state results, justify procedures, explain meaning and present arguments.
- Develop EFL majors' ability to reflect self- examine, pose questions about thinking and self-correct.

The program based on DS and weblogs instruction consisted of six sessions, the first two sessions of which were devoted to the introduction of the program to the sample of the study. The remained sessions were instructional sessions through which the EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills were presented to the study sample. The program lasted seven weeks. The researcher used PowerPoint presentation, printed handouts, the video clips, and pictures in implementing the program. It was conducted by the researcher with the study sample for seven weeks with 120 minute sessions every a week.

The following is a list of the activities addressed during training:

- Storyboard.
- Storybird.
- Personal diaries.
- Journal writing.

- Reflection blogs.

Guidelines of the program

- Building a rapport between the researcher and students.
- Providing non-threatening atmosphere.
- Encouraging interaction between the students and the researcher and between the students themselves.
- Encouraging students' participation in the activities and tasks.

FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

The findings of the present research are presented in the light of the hypotheses of the research using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings are stated as follows:-

1-The quantitative findings were dealt with and presented according to the hypotheses of the study as follows:-

Findings of Hypothesis (1)

The first hypothesis states "there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post assessment of the study sample in overall EFL narrative writing skills in favor of post assessment".

Table (2) presents the students' mean scores, standard deviations, t -value and level of significance of the pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL narrative writing skills.

As shown in table (2) that "there is a statistically significant difference between the means scores of the pre and post assessment of the study sample in overall EFL narrative writing skill in favor of post assessment", where "t-value" is (24.599) which is significant at the (0.01) level of significance. Thus, the first hypothesis was supported.

Findings of Hypothesis (2)

The second hypothesis states "there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL narrative writing sub- skills in favor of post assessment".

The second hypothesis has the following sub-hypotheses

- "There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL text structure skill in favor of post assessment".

Table 2. "t" test between in the pre and post assessment of the studysample in the overall EFL narrative writing skills

Skills	Measurement	N	Mean	S. D.	"T" value	Df	Sig.
Overall EFL narrative writing Skills	pre	40	26.05	2.708	24.599	39	0.01
	post	40	49.00	4.000			

Table 3. "t" test between in the pre and post assessment of the studysample in the EFL narrative writing Sub-skills

Narrative writing sub-Skills	Measurement	N	Mean	S. D.	"T" value	Df	Sig.
Text Structure	Pre	40	3.750	0.669	14.967	39	0.01
	Post	40	6.900	0.871			
Vocabulary Choice	Pre	40	3.475	0.597	18.577	39	0.01
	Post	40	7.050	1.085			
Organization	Pre	40	3.925	0.829	13.275	39	0.01
	Post	40	7.175	1.299			
Paragraphing	Pre	40	4.125	0.883	16.757	39	0.01
	Post	40	7.125	0.992			
Sentence Structure	Pre	40	3.750	0.981	22.193	39	0.01
	Post	40	7.425	0.931			
Punctuation	Pre	40	3.625	0.774	14.287	39	0.01
	Post	40	6.900	1.236			
Conventions	Pre	40	3.725	0.784	11.661	39	0.01
	Post	40	6.750	1.149			

▪ "There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL vocabulary choice skill in favor of post assessment".

▪ "There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL Organization skill in favor of post assessment".

▪ "There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL Paragraphing skill in favor of post assessment".

▪ "There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL Sentence Structure skill in favor of post assessment".

▪ "There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL Punctuation skill in favor of post assessment".

▪ "There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL Conventions skill in favor of post assessment".

Table (3) presents the students' mean scores, standard deviations, t -value and level of significance of the pre

and post assessment of the study sample in EFL narrative writing skills.

As shown in table (3) that "there is a statistically significant difference between the means scores of the pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL narrative writing sub- skill in favor of post assessment", where "t-value" is (**14.967**) for text structure; (**18.577**) for vocabulary choice ; (**13.275**) for organization ; (**16.757**) for paragraphing ; (**22.193**) for sentence structure ; (**14.287**) for punctuation and (**11.661**) for conventions which is significant at the (**0.01**) level of significance .Thus, the second hypothesis was supported.

Findings of Hypothesis (3)

The third hypothesis states "there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post assessment of the study sample in overall EFL critical thinking skills in favor of post assessment".

Table (4) presents the students' mean scores, standard deviations, t -value and level of significance of the pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL critical thinking skills.

As shown in table (4) that "there is a statistically significant difference between the means scores of the pre and post assessment of the study sample in overall

Table 4. "t" test between in the pre and post assessment of the studysample in the overall EFL critical thinking skills

Skills	Measurement	N	Mean	S. D.	"T" value	Df	Sig.
Overall EFL critical thinking Skills	pre	40	46.275	3.922	62.180	39	0.01
	post	40	96.925	2.556			

Table 5. "t" test between in the pre and post assessment of the studysample in the EFL critical thinking Sub-skills

Critical Thinking sub-Skills	Measurement	N	Mean	S. D.	"T" value	Df	Sig.
Interpretation	Pre	40	6.525	1.261	30.037	39	0.01
	Post	40	13.850	0.949			
Analysis	Pre	40	4.600	0.928	40.385	39	0.01
	Post	40	13.675	1.047			
Evaluation	Pre	40	2.650	1.511	7.444	39	0.01
	Post	40	4.475	0.505			
Inference	Pre	40	10.225	2.496	29.771	39	0.01
	Post	40	23.750	1.032			
Explanation	Pre	40	8.425	1.083	21.817	39	0.01
	Post	40	13.600	1.0573			
Self-regulation	Pre	40	7.100	1.6299	20.171	39	0.01
	Post	40	13.600	1.105			
Reflection	Pre	40	6.750	1.316	28.684	39	0.01
	Post	40	13.975	0.8002			

EFL critical thinking skill in favor of post assessment", where "t-value" is (62.180) which is significant at the (0.01) level of significance .Thus, the third hypothesis was supported.

Findings of Hypothesis (4)

The fourth hypothesis states "there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL critical thinking sub- skills in favor of post assessment ".

The fourth hypothesis has the following sub-hypotheses

- "There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL interpretation skill in favor of post assessment ".
- "There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL analysis skill in favor of post assessment ".
- "There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL evaluation skill in favor of post assessment ".
- "There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post assessment of

the study sample in EFL inference skill in favor of post assessment ".

- "There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL explanation skill in favor of post assessment ".
- "There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL self-regulation skill in favor of post assessment ".
- "There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL reflection skill in favor of post assessment ".

Table (5) presents the students' mean scores, standard deviations, t -value and level of significance of the pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL critical thinking sub-skills.

As shown in table (5) that "there is a statistically significant difference between the means scores of the pre and post assessment of the study sample in EFL critical thinking sub- skill in favor of post assessment", where "t-value" is (30.037) for interpretation; (40.385) for analysis; (7.444) for evaluation; (29.771) for inference; (21.817) for explanation; (20.171) for self-regulation and (28.684) for reflection which is significant at the (0.01)

level of significance. Thus, the fourth hypothesis was supported.

2- The qualitative findings were conducted using the data obtained from the semi-structured interview.

The interview aimed at finding the students' reactions and comments to their learning through the DS and weblogs. It took place after the students were given the last post-test. Twenty students were interviewed. Each interview lasts between ten to fifteen minutes. While interviewing, a tape-recorder was used to ensure the interview process and ease review process. Then, the data was classified into positive and negative reactions.

Does Digital Storytelling (DS) and weblogs instruction provide positive opinions toward improving EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills?

To answer this question, a total of twenty students were interviewed in this study, as the topics are related to the feeling of using DS and weblogs for enhancing EFL narrative writing skills. The students were asked about how they feel about using DS and weblogs. All of the students had positive feelings of DS and weblogs. Eighty-five percent of them said that they like DS and weblogs because they allowed them to practice and improve English writing skill and higher order thinking skills. They were easy to use and also interesting and enjoyable. Here are some of the results during the students' interview:

"I like them. I think they are very useful."

"DS and weblogs are very interesting and beautiful. Moreover they are very easy to use. I can understand the vocabulary on the website."

The students were asked "Do you enjoy using DS and weblogs? Why? Or Why not?" All of them answered "Yes, I do." They enjoyed using DS and weblogs because they are very beautiful and the lessons are easy to understand with many pictures. As some of the students' interview are shown:

"I am so excited that I know how to use the technology improving my EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills."

"I enjoyed using the website because I can practice my English language by telling the story. I can tell my story whenever I want and nobody laugh at me when I say something wrong."

The students were asked ***"Do you think EFL narrative writing skills have improved?"*** All of them answered "Yes, I do." They think their own English speaking skill have improved because they had more confidence to write with their own DS and weblogs when they tell the story. For example:

"I think my narrative writing and critical thinking skills have improved because it makes me happy with writing activity."

The students were asked how the DS and weblogs help them to improve their narrative writing and critical thinking. Many students liked to study by themselves to improve their narrative writing and critical thinking. They think the website promoted independent learning to narrate the story. As some of the students' interview are shown:

"It makes me more interested in writing process and activities. Moreover I also have opportunity to think critically when I tell the story. It is an interesting activity."

Eight students reported that they benefited from the experience, particularly in terms of planning different tasks. They all stated that their motivation to learn had increased. Seven students also added that the exchange of viewpoints assisted them in writing more thoughtfully, and they had improved their writing skills through regular posting on the blogs. Pedagogical intervention could, therefore, encourage students to show their ability to become independent learners through DS and blogging. Hence it is imperative that the right type of activity is chosen when using blogs as a tool for learning so that learners can profit from the learning environment.

According to the findings, it can be concluded that DS and weblogs had positive effects on the improvement of students' narrative writing and critical thinking skills. Students are motivated, engaged and interested in DS and weblogs. Robins (2008) found that digital storytelling has captured the imagination of both students and teachers. At all levels of the study and in most subjects can use digital storytelling in many ways to support students' learning by encouraging them to organize and express their own ideas and knowledge in an individual and significant ways.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The main purpose of this study is to enhance EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills among EFL

majors through using digital storytelling and weblogs instruction. The program included variety of tasks and activities for helping students to enhance their EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills. The results of the study investigated that, the program proved to be statistically and educationally significant in enhancing students' narrative writing and critical thinking skills.

Therefore, the online nature and user-friendly characteristics of both DS and Weblogs encourage students' self-expression in English. DS and Weblogs are a powerful tool for English language learning particularly writing skills. The sense of ownership in the Blogging process encourages students to write more freely – they are engaged in fluency work, rather than accuracy work. In other words, they focus on meaning rather than forms and the writing is meaningful in an authentic environment. Blogging increases student interest, motivation and confidence in writing. Interestingly, students' awareness of a 'real' audience with Weblogs being publicly accessible encouraged them to monitor their writing. These results are consistent with Snelson and Sheffield's study (2009) clarified that through DS, the student is increasing his creativity, visualization skills, oral language and thinking skills. Yang and Wu's study (2012) confirmed the impact of (DS) on the academic achievement, critical thinking, and learning motivation of senior high school students learning English as a foreign language.

Therefore, students described their writing strategies such as planning their writing, reference checking in terms of grammar and spelling, and making sure their writing would convey the meaning they intended. In spite of some mistakes and errors of student Blog entries, student writing conveyed the meaning. They exhibited their writing abilities in using complex sentences, ideas and opinions expressions. They also used the pictures and photos to illustrate their writing. Interestingly, Blog entries of the student that were read and commented by the foreigners confirm a 'real' and 'global' audience. The students like the comment facility and value exchanging ideas and opinions as fostering their analytical and critical thinking skills.

A weblog encourages students to read, write, and converse more often. Web logs offer opportunities for authentic expression in the external world. Weblogs can motivate students to write and get them to understand that there is an audience for them, and that their communication through words needs to be effective because their peers and the world are reading. Through blogs, one can write and also comment on what one writes in expectation of a little discussion and a quest for common interests and individual differences. By

responding on blogs, students can get feedback from other audiences throughout cyberspace. Students have an opportunity to read things in which they are interested and write things they truly wish to write, thereby determining their own texts in language education and combining text with conversations in a very personal and stimulating way. These results are consistent with Khampusaen (2012) who examined the outcomes of a blogging collaboration project among university students on their essay writing skills. Duffy and Bruns (2006) clarified that within the structure of a blog, students can demonstrate critical thinking, take creative risks, and make use of language and design elements.

The results of the research are consistent with Sadik's (2008) mixed-methods study explored the impact DS has on Egyptian high-school students' learning and engagement across the curriculum, including language arts and English language classes. Data revealed that students who created digital stories showed significant improvement in engagement levels and learning outcomes. Students used oral narration more than text and expressed personal connections to the topic, indicating increased engagement through the use of authorial voice. One implication of Sadik's (2008) study is DS may encourage oral expression due to personal engagement with a topic. Increased oral expressive opportunities through DS may result in improved oral communication skills.

Digital storytelling is the practice of combining still images with a narrated soundtrack including both voice and music. The process of digital storytelling begins similarly to the 'traditional' writing process and includes brainstorming or topic selection and drafting. However, after the drafting process, students construct a storyboard or story map to visualize how the story will look. Here, the students plan what media to use and how they might best work together to depict an important, engaging, and informative story. Next, students proceed to the production stage.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, DS and weblogs were suitable tools for EFL majors at Benha Faculty of Education, Egypt for increasing their knowledge of English. Moreover, they were a means for increasing students' motivation to improve and practice their EFL writing and critical thinking skills. In this research, encouraging students to learn was defined as persuading students to participate in the activities, by making activities interesting for them, making them believe that they

will be able to improve their EFL writing and critical thinking skills through DS and weblogs. An interesting instruction and activities in the classroom also can attract the student to participate teaching and learning in the classroom.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

In the light of previous results, the following recommendations could be presented:

- Training teachers of English language on integrating digital storytelling instruction and weblogs while teaching English to their students in the early educational stages.
- English language teacher should emphasize the development of the students' narrative writing and critical thinking skills in the early educational stages to develop in the following stages.
- Curriculum designers should make use of integrating digital storytelling instruction and weblogs when designing English language courses.

Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the findings of the present study, the following implications for further research were suggested:-

- Investigating the effect of integrating digital storytelling instruction and weblogs on English language learning among primary school students.
- Clarifying the influence of integrating digital storytelling instruction and weblogs on other language skills such as listening and reading acquisition .
- Investigating the effectiveness of integrating digital storytelling instruction and weblogs on developing students' attitudes towards studying English and reading awareness.
- Clarifying the effect of using other strategies on developing students' EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills.

REFERENCES

- Abdel-Hack EM (2009a). Fostering critical thinking dispositions and writing performance using journal writing technique. In, A.A. El-Marasafy and E.M. Abdel-Hack (Eds), *NEW TRENDS IN TEACHING READING AND WRITING*, (pp.333-367). Benha, Egypt: Middle East Center for Educational Services.
- Abdel-Hack EM (2009b). Task-based learning as an off shoot of communicative language teaching: implications in writing production. In, A.A. El-Marasafy and E.M. Abdel-Hack (Eds), *NEW TRENDS IN TEACHING READING AND WRITING*, (pp.211-270). Benha, Egypt: Middle East Center for Educational Services.
- Abu Bakar N, Latif H, Ya'acob A (2010). ESL Students feedback on the use of blogs for language learning. *3LThe Southeast Asian J. Eng. Lang. Stud.* 16 (1), 120-141.
- Akçay A, Arslan A (2010). The using of blogs in Turkish education. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* , 1195–1199
- Alexander B (2011). *THE NEW DIGITAL STORYTELLING: Creating Narratives with New Media* . Santa Barbara, California: Praeger.
- Al-Hattab AAM (2006). *Self-esteem and Writing Achievement of Saudi EFL Students in Secondary Schools*. Unpublished Master thesis, Faculty of Education & Humanities, Taibah University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- Aljumah FH (2012). Saudi Learner Perceptions and Attitudes towards the Use of Blogs in Teaching English Writing Course for EFL Majors at Qassim University. *English Language Teaching*, 5(1), 100-116.
- Australian Emergency Management Institute (2009). Living with Disaster Digital Stories: Teaching Guide. Australian Emergency Management Institute. A Centre of Excellence Attorney-General's Department.
- Available online at <http://blog.nus.edu.sg/eltwo/2011/04/12/digital-storytelling-in-the-foreign-language-classroom/> (Retrieved on 2-9-2013).
- Banaszewski TM (2005). *DIGITAL STORYTELLING: SUPPORTING DIGITAL LITERACY IN GRADES 4 – 12*. Unpublished Master thesis, Georgia Institute of Technology.
- Banister S, Hodges D, Michalski P (2005). Digital Storytelling in the Middle Childhood Special Education Classroom: A teacher's story of adaptations. *TEACHING Exceptional Children Plus*, 1(4) Article 3. Retrieved [date] from <http://escholarship.bc.edu/education/tecplus/vol1/iss4/3>.
- Barrett H (2006). Convergence of student-centered learning strategies. *Technology and Teacher Education Annual*, 1, 647-654.
- Beach R (2012). Uses of Digital Tools and Literacies in the English Language Arts Classroom. *RESEARCH IN THE SCHOOLS* , 19 (1), 45-59
- BING J.P.K.(2011). *ENHANCING NARRATIVE WRITING SKILLS THROUGH ACTION-ADVENTURE VIDEO GAMES*. Unpublished master thesis, Faculty of Education University Teknologi Malaysia.
- Boas IV (2011). Process Writing and the Internet: Blogs and Ning Networks in the Classroom. *English Teaching Forum* (2), 26-33.
- Boase C (2008). Digital storytelling for reflection and engagement, a review of the potential for digital storytelling. Report produced as part of the Phase 1 of The Higher Education Academy / JISC Higher Education e-Learning Pathfinder Programme.
- Boffo V (eds). *digital storytelling for employability* (pp.1-10). Firenze: Firenze university press
- Boucher KH (2011). *A Comparative Study of ELL and EL1 Narrative Competence During the Kindergarten Years*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto.
- Bozdoğan D (2012). Content analysis of elt students' digital stories for young learners. *Novitas-ROYAL (Research on Youth and Language)*, 6 (2), 126-136.
- Bran R (2010). Message in a bottle Telling stories in a digital world. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 2, 1790–1793.
- Bull G, Kajder S (2004). Digital storytelling in the language arts classroom . *Learning & Leading with Technology*, 32 (4), pp.46-49.
- Campbell AP (2003). Weblogs for Use with ESL Classes. *The Internet TESL Journal*, ix(2). Retrieved on 15-12-2013, from <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Campbell-Weblogs.html>
- Çavdar G, Doe S (2012). Learning through Writing: Teaching Critical Thinking Skills in Writing Assignments. Available online at <http://www.sagepublications.com>. (Retrieved on 6-10-2013).
- Cequena MB (2013). Does Blogging Facilitate the Development of Students' Writing Skills? *Philippine ESL Journal*, 10, 126-147.
- Chung S (2006). Digital storytelling in integrated arts education. *The International Journal of Arts Education*, 4 (1), 33-63.

- Churchill N, Ping LC, Oakley G, Churchill D (2008). DIGITAL STORYTELLING AND DIGITAL LITERACY LEARNING . *Readings in Education and Technology: Proceedings of ICICTE*, pp.418-430.
- Clarke R, Adam R (2012). Digital storytelling in Australia Academic perspectives and reflections, 11, 157-176. Available online at <http://www.sagepublications.com>. (Retrieved on 6-10-2013).
- Condy J, Chigona A, Gachago D, Ivala E (2012). PRE-SERVICE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING IN DIVERSE CLASSROOMS. *TOJET: The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 11 (3) .
- David H (2012). Tips From Innovative Teaching at UWF: Develop Critical Thinking Skills through Journal Writing. Available on line at (iris.nyit.edu/~dhogsett/) (Retrieved on 13-11-2013).
- Di Blas N, Paolini P (2013). Beyond the School's Boundaries: PoliCultura, a Large-Scale Digital Storytelling Initiative. *Educational Technology & Society*, 16 (1), 15–27.
- Digital Storytelling Association (2002). The center for digital storytelling. Retrieved 18 September, 2013, from <http://www.dsaweb.org>.
- Dogan B, Robin B (2008b). Implementation of Digital Storytelling in the Classroom by Teachers Trained in a Digital Storytelling Workshop. In K. McFerrin et al. (Eds.), *Proceedings of Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education International Conference 2008* (pp. 902-907). Chesapeake, VA: AACE Available on line at <http://www.coe.uh.edu/digital-storytelling/evaluation.htm> (Retrieved on 2-9-2013).
- Dogan B, Robin BR (2006a). Educational uses of digital storytelling :creative digital storytelling contests for K-12 students and teachers. Available on line at <http://www.coe.uh.edu/digital-storytelling/evaluation.htm> (Retrieved on 2-9-2013).
- Dreon O, Kerper RM, Landis J(2011). Digital Storytelling: A Tool for Teaching and Learning in the YouTube Generation. *Middle School Journal*, 42 (5), pp.4-9.
- Duffy P, Bruns A (2006). The Use of Blogs, Wikis and RSS in Education: A Conversation of Possibilities. In *Proceedings Online Learning and Teaching Conference* , pp. 31-38, Brisbane
- Emily N, Skinner EN, Hagood MC(2008). DEVELOPING LITERATE IDENTITIES WITH ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS THROUGH DIGITAL STORYTELLING. *The Reading Matrix*, 8(2), 12-38.
- Farzaneh Saadati F, Tarmizi RA, Baya S (2010). Assessing Critical Thinking of Postgraduate Students. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 8 , 543–548.
- Franco CP (2008). Using wiki-based peer-correction to develop writing skills of Barazilian EFL learners. *Novitas-ROYAL*, 2 (1), 49-59.
- Frazel M (2010). *Digital Storytelling :Guide for Educators*. WASHINGTON: International Society for Technology in Education.
- Gillespie E (2009). DIGITAL STORYTELLING AND THE ENGLISH LEARNER: Integrating Digital Storytelling into the English Learner's Curriculum .Available online at (<http://www.writersstore.com/article.php>) (Retrieved on 2-9-2013).
- Gillespie E(2009). Running Head: DIGITAL STORYTELLING AND THE ENGLISH LEARNER: Integrating Digital Storytelling into the English Learner's Curriculum. University of British Columbia
- Gocsik K (1997). Teaching Critical Thinking. (Available on line at www.Dartmouth.edu. (retrived on 12-12-2013).
- Handler Miller C (2008). Tales from the Digital Frontier: Breakthroughs in Storytelling. Writers Store, http://www.writersstore.com/article.php?articles_id=505. Retrieved on 30-9-2013.
- Harmer J (2004). *How to teach Writing* .London: Pearson Longman.
- Harris D (2008). Blogging 100 Success Secrets: 100 Most Asked Questions on Building, Optimizing, Publishing, Marketing and How to Make Money with Blogs.
- Hartley J, McWilliam K (2009). Computational Power Meets Human Contact. In: J., Hartley and K., McWilliam (eds). *Story Circle: Digital Storytelling Around the World*. (3-15) New York: Blackwell Publishing.
- Hibbing AN, Rankin-Erickson JL (2003). A picture is worth a thousand words: Using visual images to improve comprehension for middle school struggle readers. *The Reading Teacher*.
- Holdich CE, Chung PWH(2003). A 'computer tutor' to assist children develop their narrative writing skills: conferencing with HARRY. *Int. J. Human-Computer Studies* 59, 631–669.
- HRONOVÁ K (2011). *Using Digital Storytelling in the English Language Classroom*: bachelor thesis. Brno: Masaryk University, Faculty of Education, Department of English Language and Literature.
- Hull GA, Nelson ME (2005). Locating the semiotic power of multimodality . *written communication*, 22(2), pp. 224-261.
- Hung CM, Hwang GJ, Huang I (2012). A Project-based Digital Storytelling Approach for Improving Students' Learning Motivation, Problem-Solving Competence and Learning Achievement. *Educational Technology & Society*, 15 (4), 368–379.
- Jenkins M, Lonsdale J (2007). Evaluating the effectiveness of digital storytelling for student reflection. *Proceedings asclite Singapore*.
- Jianing X (2007). Storytelling in the EFL Speaking Classroom. *Internet TESL Journal*, 13(11), 1-8.
- Kabilan MK (2000). Creative and Critical Thinking in Language Classrooms. *The Internet TESL Journal*, VI, (6). Available on line at <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Kabilan-CriticalThinking.html>. (Retrieved on 9-11-2013
- Kajder S, Bull G, Albaugh S (2005). Constructing Digital Stories. *Learning & Leading with Technology*, 32(5), pp. 40-42.
- Kennedy K (2003). Writing with weblogs. Tech learning. Available on line at <http://www.techlearning.com>. (Retrieved on 15-12-2013).
- Kennison MM (2003). *The evaluation of critical thinking, reflective writing, and cognitive word use in Baccalaureate Nursing Students*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, West Virginia University, U.S.A.
- Khampusaen D (2012). Collaborative Blogging: A Tool for Teaching Writing in EFL Classroom. *Paper presented at International Conference on Education and Management Innovation, Singapore*.
- Kieler L (2010). Trials in Using Digital Storytelling Effectively With the Gifted. *Reflection*, 33(3), 48-52.
- Lambert J (2002). *Digital storytelling capturing lives, creating community*. New York: Routledge.
- Lambert J (2006). *Digital Storytelling Cookbook*. Berkeley: Digital Diner Press, available at: <http://www.storycenter.org/cookbook.html>
- Lambert J (2006). *Digital storytelling: Capturing lives, creating community*. Berkeley, CA: Digital Diner Press.
- Lambert J (2009). Where It All Started The Center for Digital Storytelling in California. In: J., Hartley and K., McWilliam (eds). *Story Circle :Digital Storytelling Around the World*. (79-90) New York: Blackwell Publishing.
- Lammers WP (2012). *DIGITAL STORYTELLING: BUILDING 21 ST CENTURY LITERACY SKILLS IN THE SECONDARY CLASSROOM*. Unpublished Master thesis, UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA.
- Maddin E (2012). Using TPCK with Digital Storytelling to Investigate Contemporary Issues in Educational Technology. *Journal of Instructional Pedagogies*, 7. Available online at <http://www.aabri.com/manuscripts/11970.pdf>
- Malita L (2010). Digital storytelling : As An innovative Pedagogy For the 21 st century students. In: L, Malita and V., Boffo (eds). *digital storytelling for employability* (pp.43-56). Firenze: Firenze university press
- Malita L (2010). digital storytelling introduction . In: L, Malita and Malita L, Martin C (2010). Digital Storytelling as web passport to success in the 21 st Century. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 2, 3060–3064.
- Martin C (2010). Tools For digital storytelling. In: L, Malita and V., Boffo (eds). *digital storytelling for employability* (pp.23-42). Firenze: Firenze university press
- McWilliam K (2009). The Global Diffusion of a Community Media Practice: Digital Storytelling Online 37. In: J., Hartley and K.,

- McWilliam (eds). *Story Circle :Digital Storytelling Around the World*. (37-76) New York:Blackwell Publishing.
- Meadows D, Kidd J (2009). "Capture Wales": The BBC Digital Storytelling Project. In: J., Hartley and K., McWilliam (eds). *Story Circle: Digital Storytelling Around the World*. (91-117) New York:Blackwell Publishing.
- Menezes H (2012). USING DIGITAL STORYTELLING TO IMPROVE LITERACY SKILLS. Paper presented at IADIS International Conference on Cognition and Exploratory Learning in Digital Age (CELDA) . An online ERIC database fulltext No. *ED.542821*.
- Miller CH (2004). *Digital Storytelling: A Creator's Guide to Interactive Entertainment*. BOSTON: Elsevier, Inc.
- Miller EA (2009). *DIGITAL STORYTELLING*. Unpublished master thesis, UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA.
- Müller W, Iurgel I, Otero N, Massler U (2010). Teaching English as a Second Language Utilizing Authoring Tools for Interactive Digital Storytelling. *LNCS 6432*. 222–227.
- Mynard J (2004). A blog as a Tool for Reflection for English Language Learners. Available on line at www.Asian EFL Journal.com. (Retrieved on 14-12-2013).
- Nasiri J, Farsani MA, Nikoopour M (2011). On the Relationship Between Critical Thinking and Language Learning Strategies Among Iranian EFL Learners. *Journal of Technology & Education*, 5(3), 195-200.
- Ninet MGZ, Corachánn AB (2011). CREATTYE EVALUATION OF COMPETENCE THROUGH COMMUNICATTVE DIGITAL STORY. *The Groue.Worhing Papers on English Studies* 18, 285-303. ISSN: 1137-005X
- Normann A (2011). *DIGITAL STORYTELLING IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING: A qualitative study on students' reflections on potentials for learning*. Unpublished Master thesis, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim.
- Noytm U (2010). Weblogs enhancing EFL students' English language learning. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 2, 1127–1132.
- Oyarzun D, del Puy Carretero Md, Mujika A, Arrieta A (2010). Establishing Communication Channels for Digital Storytelling Applications. *LNCS 6432*. 260–263.
- Özcan D (2010). Contributions of English teachers' behaviours on students' creative thinking abilities. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 2, 5850–5854
- Panagiotis Psomos P, Kordaki M (2012). Pedagogical analysis of educational digital storytelling environments of the last five years. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 00 (2012) 000–000
- Paul N, Fiebich C (2005). The Elements of Digital Storytelling . Available on line at <http://www.inms.umn.edu/elements/> Retrieved on 2-9-2013.
- Pinkman K (2005). Using Blogs in the Foreign Language Classroom: Encouraging Learner Independence. *The JALT CALL Journal*, 1(1), 12-24.
- Pope R (2002). *The English Studies Book: An Introduction to Language, Literature and Culture*. London; Routledge.
- Porter B (2004). DigiTales: About digital storytelling. Retrieved 22Oct., 2013, available on line at <http://www.digitales.us/about/index.php>
- Psomos P, Kordaki M (2012). Pedagogical analysis of educational digital storytelling environments of the last five years. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 46, 1213 – 1218. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.05.277.
- Raimes A (1983). *Techniques in teaching writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Raimes A (2002). Ten steps in planning a writing course and training teachers of writing. In; Jack, C.R. and Willy,A. D.(eds). *Methodology in language teaching: An Anthology of current practice*. (pp.316-324).Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ramirez-Verdugo D, Belmonte IA (2007). Using digital stories to improve listening comprehension with Spanish young learners of English. *Language Learning and Technology*, 11(1), 87-101.
- Retrieved January 29, 2009, from <http://lit.msu.edu/vol11num1/ramirez/default.html>.
- Reinders H (2011). Digital Storytelling in the Foreign Language Classroom . *ELTWorldOnline.com*, 3. ELTWorldOnline.com, 3.
- Rezaei S, Derakhshan A, Bagherkazemi M (2011). Critical Thinking in Language Education. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2(4), 769-777.
- Robin B (2006). The educational uses of digital storytelling. In C. Crawford et al. (Eds.), *Proceedings of Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education International Conference*, 709-716. Chesapeake, VA: AACE. <http://www.coe.uh.edu/digital>-Retrieved July 12, 2012.
- Robin B (2008). Digital Storytelling: A Powerful Technology Tool for the 21st Century Classroom. *Theory into Practice*, 47, 220–228.
- Robin B (2011). The educational uses of digital storytelling website. Available online at: <http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu> (Retrieved on 16-9-2013).
- Robin BR, McNeil SG (2012). What Educators Should Know about Teaching Digital Storytelling. *Digital Education Review*, (22), (Available online at <http://greav.ub.edu/der/>)(Retrieved on 2-9-2013)
- ROSS DB (2011). *DIGITAL STORYTELLING: ORDINARY VOICES, EXTRAORDINARY STORIES*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Appalachian State University.
- Sadik A (2008). Digital storytelling: A meaningful technology-integrated approach for engaged student learning. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 56(4), 487-506. doi:10.1007/s11423-00809091-8
- SAGITA DI (2009). The effect of teaching writing narration using series pictures in the second grade of Muhammadiyah 10 junior high school at Surakarta. School of teaching training and education OF Muhammadiyah university of Surakarta. Available on line at kenanaonline.com/files/0020/20487/A320020264.pdf. Retrieved on (5-11-2013).
- Seitzinger J (2006). Be Constructive: Blogs, Podcast, and Wikis as Constructivist learning Tools, Learning Solutions. Available on line at <http://www.learningsolutionsmag.com/articles/220/>. Retrieved on 16-12-2013.
- Shirkhani S, Fahim M (2011). Enhancing critical thinking in foreign language learners. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 29, 111 – 115
- Signes CG (2008a). Integrating the old and the new: digital storytelling in the EFL classroom more. Available on line at www.uv.es/gregoric/ Retrieved on 24-9-2013
- Signes CG (2008b). PRACTICAL USES OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING. Available online at <http://blog.nus.edu.sg/eltwo/2011/04/12/digital-storytelling-in-the-foreign-language-classroom/>(Retrieved on 2-9-2013).
- Simsek Ö (2010). The Effect of Weblog (blog) students' writing performance. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 2, 953-958.
- Skouge JR, Rao K (....). Digital Storytelling in Teacher Education: Creating Transformations through Narrative. *Educational Perspectives* , 42 (1) and(2).
- Smeda N, Dakich E, Sharda N (2010). Developing a framework for advancing e-learning through digital storytelling , in IADIS International Conference e-learning 2010, Ed. Miguel Baptista Nunes and Maggie McPherson. IADIS International Conference, e-Learning 2010 Freiburg, Germany, 26 - 29 July 2010, 169-176.
- Smith C (2011). *NARRATIVE WRITING IN NATIVE ENGLISH AND ESL LEARNERS: DEVELOPMENTAL TRAJECTORIES AND PREDICTORS*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto.
- Snelson C, Sheffield A (2009). Digital Storytelling in a Web 2.0 World. *Paper presented at TCC Proceedings, Boise State University, Boise, ID, USA*.

- Somdee M, Suppasetseree S (2012). Developing English Speaking Skills of Thai Undergraduate Students by digital storytelling through Websites. (Available at www.fllt2013.org/private_folder/Proceeding/166.pdf) (Retrieved on 2-9-2013).
- Sun L, Nippold MA (2012). Narrative Writing in Children and Adolescents: Examining the Literate Lexicon. *LANGUAGE, SPEECH, AND HEARING SERVICES IN SCHOOLS*, 43, 2–13.
- Sun YC (2010). Extensive writing in foreign-language classrooms: a blogging approach. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 47(3), 327–339. DOI:10.1080/14703297.2010.498184
- Sylvester R, Greenidge WL (2009). Digital Storytelling: Extending the Potential for Struggling Writers. *The Reading Teacher*, 63(4), pp. 284–295. DOI:10.1598/RT.63.4.3.
- Taki S, Fardafshari E (2012). Weblog-Based Collaborative Learning: Iranian EFL Learners' Writing Skill and Motivation. *Int. J. Ling.*, 4(2), 412–429.
- Tekinarslan E (2008). Blogs: A qualitative investigation into an instructor and undergraduate students' experiences. *Austral. J. Educ. Technol.*, 24(4), 402–412.
- Tendero A (2006). Facing versions of the self: The effects of digital storytelling on English education. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, 6(2), 174–194.
- Teo AK (2006). Using a Peer Assisted Writing Activity to Promote ESL/EFL Students' Narrative Writing Skills. *The Internet TESL Journal*, XII (8). Available online at <http://iteslj.org/>. Retrieved on (19-12-2013).
- Thadphoothon J (2005). *Promoting? Critical Thinking in Language Learning Through Computer-Mediated Collaborative Learning: A Preliminary Investigation*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Canberra, Australia.
- Tsou W, Wang W, Tzeng Y (2006). Applying a multimedia storytelling website in foreign language learning. *Computers & Education*, 47(1), 17–28. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2004.08.013.
- University of Houston (2009). The Educational uses of digital storytelling. Available at <http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu>.
- Van Gils F (2005). Potential applications of digital storytelling in education. In *Paper presented at the 3rd twente student conference on IT. University of Twente, Department of Electrical Engineering, Mathematics and Computer Science*.
- Verdugo DR, Belmonte IA (2007). Using digital stories to improve listening comprehension with Spanish young learners of English. *Language Learning & Technology*, 11(1), 87–101.
- Wang AY (2012). Exploring the relationship of creative thinking to reading and writing. *Thinking Skills and Creativity* 7, 38–47.
- Ward JM (2004). Blog assisted language learning (BALL): Push button publishing for the pupils. *TEFL Web Journal*, 3(1), 1–16.
- Wu HJ, Wu PL (2011). Learners' Perceptions on the Use of Blogs for EFL Learning. *US-China Education Review*, A (3), 323–330
- Xu Y, Park H, Baek Y (2011). A new approach toward digital storytelling: an activity focused on writing self-efficacy in a virtual learning environment. *Educational Technology & Society*, 14 (4), 181–191.
- Yang SH (2009). Using blogs to enhance critical reflection and community of Practice. *Educational Technology & Society*, 12 (2), 11–21.
- Yang YC, Wu WCI (2012). Digital storytelling for enhancing student academic achievement, critical thinking, and learning motivation: A year-long experimental study. *Computers & Education* 59, 339–352
- Yang YD (2012). Multimodal composing in digital storytelling. *Computers and Composition* 29, 221–238.
- Zheng J, Yang J, Zhang H, Wang L, Sun Z, Xue H +(2011). Application of Digital Storytelling in Comprehensive Practice Activity Curriculums. *CCIS*, 243. 406–414.

How to cite this article: Abdel-Hack E.M., Helwa HSAA (2014). Using digital storytelling and weblogs instruction to enhance EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills among EFL majors at faculty of education. *Educ. Res.* 5(1):8-41