Digital Storytelling As A Strategy For Increasing students' emotional intelligence and cope with depression while learning english as a second language
La narración digital como estrategia para aumentar la inteligencia emocional de los estudiantes y hacer frente a la depresión mientras aprenden inglés como segunda lengua

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Abstract

This article presents a brief revision about the benefits of using digital storytelling in the EFL classroom to increase levels of emotional intelligence in students and, with that, cope with depression while they are also developing communicative skills and go through meaningful learning experiences, this as a strategy for inclusive education and education for all. This, thanks to digital storytelling, which is an actual tool that may take advantage of the development of technology and the interest that young people feel for it and taking into account depression is a mood that can affect students' performance at school and their other life scenarios, the proposal of the digital storytelling arises as an educational strategy of inclusion. For this article, it was used a Documentary Research Methodology where different articles and books related to the topic were gathered to give scientific and credible support. It was found that, as it was hypothesized, emotional intelligence is a big influence in people who suffer from depression and that people with high emotional intelligence can better respond to emotional affections such as depression and anxiety. Digital storytelling resulted to be a good strategy to improve students' emotional intelligence and with that work as a tool to cope with depression

answering with this to the special needs of students with depression while at the same time they can improve their cognitive language skills.

Resumen

Este artículo presenta una breve revisión sobre los beneficios del uso de la narración digital en el aula de inglés como lengua extranjera para aumentar los niveles de inteligencia emocional en los estudiantes y, con ello, hacer frente a la depresión mientras también desarrollan habilidades comunicativas y atraviesan por experiencias de aprendizaje significativas, esto como estrategia de educación inclusiva y educación para todos. Así, gracias a la narración digital, que es una herramienta actual que puede aprovechar el desarrollo de la tecnología y el interés que los jóvenes sienten por ella y teniendo en cuenta que la depresión es un estado de ánimo que puede afectar el desempeño de los estudiantes en la escuela y otros escenarios de vida, surge la propuesta de la narrativa digital como una estrategia educativa de inclusión. Para este artículo se utilizó una Metodología de Investigación Documental donde se reunieron diferentes artículos y libros relacionados con el tema para dar un sustento científico y creíble. Se encontró que, tal como se planteó, la inteligencia emocional influye mucho en las personas que sufren de depresión y que las personas con una inteligencia emocional alta pueden responder mejor a afecciones emocionales como la depresión y la ansiedad. La narración digital resultó ser una buena estrategia para mejorar la inteligencia emocional de los estudiantes y con ello funcionar como una herramienta para sobrellevar la depresión respondiendo con esto a las necesidades especiales de los estudiantes con depresión a la vez que pueden mejorar sus habilidades cognitivas del lenguaje.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, EFL strategies, inclusive education, education for all, depression, motivation for EFL students.

Palabras clave: Inteligencia emocional, estrategias de inglés como lengua extranjera, educación inclusiva, educación para todos, depresión, motivación para estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera.

Introduction

According to the world health organization (2017), depression and anxiety are the commonest mental disorders around the world. For 2015, it was estimated that around 4,4% of the world population suffered from depression, which is a big problem taking into account "depression is ranked by WHO as the single largest contributor to global disability" (WHOMSD, 2017). Depression is more often presented in countries with low incomes such as Colombia and it can affect every person at any age, not being the exception children and adolescents. Depression could represent a disability for students due to they will have more difficulties and special education needs to fulfill a successful learning process than their non-disabled partners; children with depression belong to a group which is called Emotionally Disturbed Students and they belong to the group of students who need special and inclusive education. It has been established (Goleman, 1995) people with higher emotional intelligence (EI) are better at managing depression and that also EI helps to diminish it (Davis, S. K., Nowland, R., & Qualter, P., 2019). Along with this, there are researchers (Sulistianingsih, E., Jamaludin, S., & Sumartono, S., 2018., Robin, 2008., González, 2010) that have shown Digital

Storytelling as an effective strategy to increase emotional intelligence, involving each student in the class and attending to their needs while at the same time, it can be used to develop language skills, social skills, among other things.

According to Slavin (1996), education for all is "an alternative to the sorting paradigm, is practices based on the belief that all children can learn to high levels". Taking this into account, it is important to remark the great responsibility schools have to deal with, having an inclusive education that allows the teaching strategies to adapt to each students' needs and to emphasize that every student can learn with the rightful help (Cotán, 2017).

For educational institutions it is both, a commitment with the society and a great challenge to implement inclusive education in the classrooms as it demands certain bonding inside the educational community and, in the same way, it has to meet students' "first-order emotional needs" such as "affiliation, belonging, identity and support" (Montero and Fernández, 2011, as cited in Figueroa, et al, 2017). As it has been just mentioned, inclusive education is not only teachers' responsibility, but of a full educational community. It involves a great part of the society and as it is established by CRUE and Fundación

ONCE (2014: 30), "the information and awareness of agents present in the educational process must be done from the premise that the rights of people with disabilities are a matter of citizenship and not of solidarity" (Cotán, 2017) and according to, Figueroa, M, G. C- & Velázquez, L., inclusive education could be defined as a way of interacting where every person is considered as an active participant that may contribute to the development of the society by creating effective affective bonds (Figueroa, et al, 2017).

It has to be remarked that every student, no matter his or her condition, has duties and rights and, as everybody, they have to be considered an important part of the society. They have to be recognized as subjects who are able to make positive contributions to society. In like manner, the affective filter is a standpoint matter since, as Mora (2018) believes "emotion is the substrate that makes the brain work well. And as is established by several authors (Carrillo, 2020; Mora, 2014; Bilokcuoglu, H. & Debreli, E. 2018; Yazan, 2018; Krashen, 1982), the affective filter is fundamental in educational processes for learning to be assured and this affective filter could only be given in spaces where participation is provided to each student thus one of the objectives from inclusive education is to provide opportunities of significant

participation to students (Henderson y Milstein, 2003, cited in Blanco, 2008) and this significant participation will be permeated by emotions.

In Colombia, there exists special legislation for inclusive education. As shown in Carrillo (2020, table 8, p. 59.) in Guide No 12: "Fundamentación Conceptual para la Atención en el Servicio Educativo a Estudiantes con Necesidades Educativas Especiales", it is established the need for a pedagogical transformation that responds to students with special needs such as auditory and visual limitations, deafblindness, autism, motor disability, cognitive disability and abilities and exceptional talents (Carrillo, 2020). Within this group, it is not included the student population with ED even though these students may represent a big challenge for teachers and per se the whole classroom. Furthermore, in line with Barnett (2012), some studies indicate that compared with their other partners, students with ED may face more difficulties such as the probability of belonging to criminal groups, school dropouts, teen pregnancy, suicide, drug abuse, and delinquency. (Wagner & Cameto, 2004; Wagner, Kutash, Duchnowski, & Epstein, 2005, as cited in Barnett, 2012). Those are some of the various reasons why more attention should be directed to students with ED. Along with

this, it is also shown that English Language Learners belonging to the group of ED students are rarely taken into account despite the several risks existing in their process of education (Rogers-Adkinson, et al, 2012). That's why it is necessary to generate new strategies inside the EFL classroom to attend to students' needs and, in this case, students with ED.

Depression is one of the commonest mental illnesses (Cudzik, M., Soroka, E. & Olajossy, M. 2019) that affect people in their daily life, and students with depression belong to the group of emotionally disturbed students. Flynn (1999 as cited in Sulistianingsih, E., et al, 2018) stated that as time is passing, students are increasing their IQ levels but, by another hand, their emotional skills are getting worse every day. This is worrying due to depression can provoke students to suffer a lot and also perform poorly at school (Lesser, 2021) and other fields of their lives.

Despite depression being one of the commonest mental illnesses, there are still several authors (Gresham, 2005, p. 215, Olympia, Farley, Christiansen, Pettersson Jenson & Clark, 2004, p. 835, Barnett, D. 2012) who affirm it remains certain vagueness in the definition and treatment of this emotional disturbance. Even so,

researchers have come up with strategies that might help to cope with depression along with educational processes. One of these strategies is Digital Storytelling that, in line with (Sulistianingsih, E., et al, 2018), brings several benefits into the classroom:

> "Digital storytelling can build intimate contacts, message delivery/religion values, imaginative / fantasy education, emotional education, help in the process of self-identification, enriching the inner experience, entertainment, and attention, enriching character". (Sulistianingsih, E., et al, 2018)

Digital Storytelling may be defined as the use of new technologies for developing the art of telling stories; these stories are narratives that can include audio, images, videos, and a big sort of multimedia elements. Following Robin (2006), seven elements conform digital storytelling: Point of view, a dramatic question, emotional content, the gift of your voice, the power of the soundtrack, economy, and pacing. From these elements, it is worth highlighting the *emotional content* and the *gift of your voice* due to it enables the students to talk about strong feelings and give value to them (Robin, 2006) as a method to develop EI. Besides this, digital storytelling works as a

powerful tool these days that almost every student emerges in the world of new technologies (Robin, 2008) and helps them to enhance their skills in fields such as research, writing, organization, technology, presentation, interviews, interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, and assessment skills (Robin, 2006).

This article aims to expose the negative influence depression may have in students' academic life as an obstacle to learning English as a second language. With this, as the main objective, Digital Storytelling is going to be proposed as a strategy to cope with depression by increasing students' emotional intelligence and motivation while learning English as a foreign language obeying the principles of education for all given that this can be considered as a strategy for inclusive education taking into account students with depression form part of the students with emotional disturbances and they need special strategies to attend to their necessities so they form part of the group of students with special needs. For the specific objectives it is taken into account:

1. To expose the utility of digital storytelling as a technological strategy for 21rts century classrooms.

2. To show to what extent digital storytelling can increase emotional intelligence as a strategy to cope with depression in students.

3. To expose how digital storytelling can be a useful tool for teaching English as a foreign language maintaining students' motivation.

Literature Review

The Emotional Disturbance (ED) in its federal definition stands for "...a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance by" (Williams, 2008):

a. An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.

b. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.

c. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.

d. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.

e. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. (Code

of Federal Regulations, Title 34, Section 300.7(c)(4)(i), as cited in Williams, 2008).

Emotional disturbance is the same as saying *mental disorders,* but this first term is more often used in educational contexts (Wu, F., Chang, L., & D'Amato, R. C. 2017). It is a global concept that involves different types of emotional and behavioral affections which do not find their origin in physical abnormalities in the brain (ibid.). According to Wu, et al, (2017) out of the words Emotional Disturbance and Mental disorders there exists another variety of terms to refer to students in these conditions, such as "students who are behaviorally disabled (BD), emotionally disabled, psychologically and emotionally handicapped, emotionally disordered, and emotional/behaviorally disabled (EBD)". Inside this group of EDs, it can be found a range of different mental disorders that differ one and another due to their differences in diagnosis and treatment. Some of the commonest disorders are:

- Anxiety disorders;
- Depression;
- Bipolar disorder (sometimes called manic-depression);
- Conduct disorders;
- Eating disorders;

- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD); and
- Psychotic disorders. (Center for Parent Information & Resources, 2021)

In line with the Center for Parent Information and Resources (2021), emotional disturbance is commonly treated with a combination of medications and psychosocial interventions, including cognitive-behavioral therapy, family psychoeducation, social skills training, interpersonal psychotherapy, or relaxation training. But, on the other hand, there are authors (Gresham, 2005, p. 215, Olympia, Farley, Christiansen, Pettersson Jenson & Clark, 2004, p. 835, Barnett, D. 2012) who affirm it remains certain vagueness in the definition and treatment of these EDs; there is not a special formula or set of symptoms that could be always attributed to one specific disorder because of that treatments may vary from patient to patient.

As already mentioned, ED is a term that gathers together different emotional and behavioral affections (also considered as mental disorders) and between them, it can be found that depression is one of the most commonest of these affections. Students with depression are also considered as emotionally disturbed and this emotional affection could be defined as "a mood

disorder that can begin at any age and which is characterized by persistent sad or irritable mood throughout the day" (Crundwell & Killu, 2007).

With this definition, it can be seen how depression could be an obstacle for students' life and consequently for their academic learning and teaching environment also with English as a second language learning process, due to the lack of motivation present in their daily life as this is one of the fundamental aspects in an educative environment; motivation "...is an important factor that has a positive influence in any educational learning process especially in learning a second language" (Rehman, et al, 2014).

It is also important to remark that teachers shouldn't give a medical diagnostic for students, that is something only experts, such as psychiatrists, ought to do. Even so according to the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES), there are some characteristics that teachers may identify as depressive conducts inside the classroom such as:

- Sad mood.
- Social withdrawal.

- Does not participate in usual activities.
- Shows limited effort or motivation.
- A decline in self-care or personal appearance.
- Decreased work or school performance.
- Appears detached from others.
- Crying for no apparent reason.
- Inappropriate responses to events.
- Irritability.
- Apathy.
- Uncooperative.
- Suicidal thoughts/ideation.
- Suicide attempts.

There doesn't exist a definitive diagnosis or treatment for depression there are some cases in which depression may show resistance and neither the drugs nor therapy show positive results (Little, A., 2009), but researchers have found that emotional intelligence plays an important role at the moment of analyzing the cases of people with depression. Goleman in his book *Emotional Intelligence* defines emotional intelligence as the ability to recognize our feelings and those of others, to motivate ourselves, and to manage emotions appropriately (Goleman, 1995). It has been shown that students that have the ability to differentiate their emotions recognize their feelings and manage themselves no matter

their emotional state show lower rates of depression and anxiety (Davis, S., et al, 2019). Continuing with Goleman (1995), he has established five elements that can give a better understanding of the abilities people with emotional intelligence may have and these are: "self-awareness, self-motivation, self-control, empathy, and skill in relationships" (Goleman 1996 as cited in Sulistianingsih, E., et al, 2018.). Taking into account emotional intelligence it is important to recognize the value of self-esteem and the recognition of our different emotions to achieve desirable emotional health. For students it is necessary to start recognizing their emotions in various situations, this will help them to better respond to their life experiences and not be defeated by negative emotions and uncomfortable situations. With this recognition comes another tool that is the same way is fundamental for emotional intelligence and it is the care we give to what we feel. According to Cudzik, M., Soroka, E., & Olajossy, M. (2019) "high levels of emotional intelligence enable us to cope with depression more effectively".

Vallery, et al, (1993) established three different types of motivation where one of them being the motivation that exists by participating in activities that may evoke positive feelings (Fajardo and Sanabria, 2021). According to the University of Wollongong in Australia, a digital story is a "multimedia presentation combining a variety of digital elements within a narrative structure (a story). Media may include text, images, video, audio, social media elements (e.g. Tweets) and interactive elements" (UWA, 2020). Digital storytelling is a tool that can be used to motivate students and teachers inside the classroom; besides this, it is useful to improve emotional intelligence (Robin, 2008, Sulistianingsih, E., Jamaludin, S. & Sumartono, S. 2018) and produce meaningful learning for students. As teachers, we can combine students' personal life experiences with academic subjects matter. The creativity of students may be developed and the creation of transmedia narratives can encourage students' motivation. They will be using elements that they can find interesting and combine them to create new ways of learning and knowing themselves (Robin, 2008).

By using digital storytelling students are going to improve their emotional intelligence but also can be used as a strategy to teach English as a second language having in mind the affective filter for the process of learning. Stories are effective educational tools because as Krashen showed (1981) "stories are effective as educational tools because they

are believable, rememberable, and entertaining. The believability stems from the fact that stories deal with human-like experiences that we tend to perceive as an authentic and credible source of knowledge" (Krashen, 1981, as cited in González, 2010). Through stories memory may be reinforced, the things that students learn in stories are going to be better remembered due to students will be emerged in the story and maybe feel a type of connection with the characters o events that occur inside the stories (González, 2010)

Students must receive knowledge through adapted scenarios that can be related to their daily reality. This means, to bring context into the classroom for the students to have meaningful learning which they can relate to real-life situations and not only as a knowledge that can only be used inside the classroom. This can be reached by storytelling, thanks to its relation to reality and common situations, besides this, storytelling also contains a sense of "irreality", fantasy or fiction that may seem interesting for students and impulse their creativity, so it works as a tool to call students' attention and have them motivated to keep learning (Sulistianingsih, E., et al, 2018). In addition, students while working with digital storytelling are going to reinforce their cognitive language skills

and improve especially in reading and writing and as digital storytelling involves different platforms, they can also improve their speaking and listening abilities (González, 2010).

Finally, digital storytelling also works as an inclusive strategy for EFL due to it is going to take into account students who are emotionally disturbed and have special learning needs; "Inclusion in school refers to the concept of participation since the purpose of inclusive processes involves it as an achievement without any type of exceptions or restrictions" (Figueroa, et al, 2017). Working with digital storytelling will allow students to participate without exceptions.

It can be a useful tool because it would take into account the whole classroom students' needs. The cognitive skills are going to be reinforced (González, 2010, Figueroa, et al, 2017) and it is also a framed topic regarding Estándares Básicos de Competencia en Lenguas Extranjeras which is a work carried out by the national ministry of education in Colombia in its national bilingualism program in agreement with the British Council (MEN:2006 as cited in Vargas, A., et al, 2017), where it is stated that from level A1 in first to third grade, students are able to understand short tales with draws and an active interpretation

from the teacher. This gives digital storytelling value, hence in virtual storytelling platforms we can find different types of narratives which include graphic animations, songs, and even games for the kids to better interact with the story and have a meaningful experience and the same students can be able to create their own stories while they are learning and reinforcing their language skills.

Methodology

For this article, it was implemented the Documentary Research Method which is a methodology that is conducted by the use of official documents or special relevance for the research. This type of research doesn't need a population sample, only documents that are socially, historically, and culturally relevant for what is being studied. According to Bailey (1994, as cited in Uddin, 2010) "documentary research method refers to the analysis of documents that contains information about the phenomenon we wish to study". The documentary method is used in researching and classifying physical sources, most commonly written documents, whether in the private or public domain (Payne and Payne 2004 as cited in Uddin, 2010). In line with Uddin (2010), for documentary research, it is important to take into account that the information, as with other types of

research, is going to be handled scientifically and there are some conditions when choosing the documents that are going to be used in the research process. For choosing the articles to work with for this research proposal it was used digital academic platforms obtained through the library system from the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas such as, Mendeley (which also works as a bibliography gestor), Google Scholar, and SpringerLink and there were also used other digital platforms such as Redalyc and Academia.edu and various web pages.

For the selection of the articles, it was taken into account the following keywords: emotional intelligence, digital storytelling, depression, inclusive education, English teaching as a foreign language, and motivation in the classroom. After this quest, the articles were selected depending on their titles, abstracts, methodologies, and conclusions; if they were related and were useful for the topic of study, they were kept on Mendeley's bibliographic gestor for later doing a deep analysis taking into account the main purposes of the articles and selecting special quotations that could serve for establishing this research proposal.

This research proposal originated in the course of Inclusive Education Strategies for EFL Teaching Context in the Universidad

Distrital Francisco José de Caldas for the Bachelor's degree in Foreign Languages. It was first examined the concept of inclusive education and the population with special needs, with this it was decided to work with the population with emotional disturbance due to the weak recognition that has been given to it in terms of inclusive education in the EFL context. After this, it was decided to work specifically on students who suffer from depression, and taking into account the diagnosis and treatment for this disturbance it was proposed storytelling as a strategy to improve emotional intelligence and diminish depression rates thank storytelling is a useful tool to make our students aware of their emotions and to come up with strategies to handle them. Besides this, storytelling showed to be a good strategy because, besides it increasing students' emotional intelligence, it also is a useful tool to develop language competencies in students and help them to have a better process of learning a foreign language.

Discussion

Digital Storytelling has come up as a useful strategy in classrooms due to it reinforces different aspects of our students' lives not only referred to the academic field. Between the benefits that can be attributed to digital storytelling, we find that students "increase in research skills, increase organizational skills" and acquire a "greater interest in the content being taught". (Paull, 2002; Salpeter, 2005 as cited in Robin, 2008). Along with this, digital storytelling also works as a tool for increasing emotional intelligence (Robin, 2008) and the main communicative skills at learning a foreign language such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking (González, 2010).

Emotional intelligence (EI) has real importance and interprets a special role in students' education in their early lives. "Emotional intelligence has an important role in the success of children in the future because having a good emotional intelligence will make them be able to overcome all the situations and conditions in their life" (Sulistianingsih, 2018.). Students with emotional intelligence are able to recognize their feelings and can learn how to respond in front of different situations that could be sentimentally relevant for them. Despite EI being a tool that is going to serve students for their entire lives, education hasn't given the importance it deserves due to its not being considered to measure IQ in students (Paavola, 2017). Following Paavola (2017), EI is important to raise children with personality and good social skills, that is why it is necessary to implement strategies and techniques inside the classroom to develop emotional

intelligence as it also can be combined with curricular topics for the English class.

As stated in Sulistianingsih, et al, (2018) storytelling is one of the sources that should be used to increase EI in students, due to their help to bring into the classroom some topics with moral responsibility and teachings for their daily life. These stories may also help teachers to come up with topics such as self-care or emotions which are themes that in the same way are included in the curricular program for English as a second language. Besides this, Storytelling is not only useful for developing EI but also to learn a foreign language in kids thanks to it is a fun way of learning a language and teachers can get closer to student's interests and likes, also it is a way to motivate students and develop their "cognitive language skills" being a "fun, motivating, memorable and lasting" experience (Porras & González, 2010). In addition, digital storytelling also works as a tool to increase social awareness in the classrooms (Robin, 2016), and that could be used to ensure inclusive education due to students are going to have better recognition of each other to realize each one of them as competent, singular and a valuable part of the society thus promoting inclusive scenarios where everybody will be able to participate (Figueroa, et al, 2017).

Despite this, some aspects may be considered as obstacles for implementing digital storytelling as a strategy to cope with depression in the English classroom; as is pointed out in Robin (2006, 2008, 2016), teachers have to take into account which tools are available for students to interact and create their digital stories; there are going to be schools with a lower budget for technological sources and the creations or interactions of the students with the narratives can be limited, However, Robin (2006) proposes that these kinds of narratives can be created with basic programs such as Microsoft Word or PowerPoint which have easier access.

Along with this, another important point is that teachers must recognize Digital Storytelling is a strategy to diminish depression and to help students better identify and manage their emotions to increase emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995) but it is not the cure of this emotional disturbance. Students with depression could develop a resistant depression where different strategies may seem worthless (Little, 2009), so teachers must work with a multidisciplinary team that involves the full collegiate body and medical and familiar support.

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