

**#DIGITALSTORYTELLING: INSTAGRAM AS A TOOL TO ENGAGE
CULTURAL AWARENESS AND CRITICAL LITERACY IN HIGHER
EDUCATION ENGLISH LEARNERS**

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AFFIDAVIT

“I, Jackeline Valencia Londoño, hereby declare that this master’s thesis has not been previously presented as a degree requirement, either in the same style or with variations, in this or any other university” (Article 92 Advanced Education Student Code, Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana)

Jackeline Valencia Londoño

*This adventure encouraged me to reaffirm that I am eager to be the best teacher for
those lovely beings that cross my path.*

This is for you all.

With love,

Jackie

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I vow to keep diving into stories and promoting reading to learn about the world in order to build the society we deserve.

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Abstract

This qualitative research describes how a digital storytelling journal can be used to engage higher education learners at a public university from Medellin in cultural awareness and critical literacy practices to enhance their English language skills. Instagram platform was used as a tool to enable students to create and share narratives based on curriculum and institutional platform content. Stories on the platform were used to go beyond answering comprehension questions in English by connecting them with learners' culture and local community problems. In this, cultural awareness and critical literacy take place to problematize text messages in order to compose a new version of the story based on the learners' real-life experiences to generate ideas for a better society. Twelve university students enrolled in the English level 3 participated in this study. The instruments used to collect data were surveys, students' artifacts on Instagram and the teacher's journal. The aim of this study is to describe the learners' usage of the English language when creating a digital storytelling journal, and develop cultural awareness and critical literacy spaces where personal characteristics and identities are acknowledged and linked to institutional tasks. The findings show that lesson planning is essential prior to digital storytelling. Furthermore, digital storytelling enhances learners' use of real photographs, talks about realities, real-world issues, and social justice. Also, it encourages face-to-face participation, and institutional material appropriation. This research serves for university educators interested in deconstructing conventional ideas digital storytelling, cultural awareness, critical literacy.

key words: Language learning, higher education, digital storytelling, cultural awareness, critical literacy, Instagram

Introduction

What learners listen to, read, and see is extremely significant in the process of acquiring a language. Typically, classrooms use these tools to instruct students in terms of comprehending input, answering questions, becoming skilled in the language, and performing well on standardized examinations. Traditionally, university English programs construct curriculums with a lot of material to help students reach this goal; nevertheless, emerging literacies go beyond the old concept of coding and decoding words. The goal of this research is to discover how neutral texts can be empowered as tools to promote not only language learning in university students, but also cultural awareness and critical literacy moments through the creation of digital stories on Instagram that depict the reality learners live on a daily basis by using language as a vehicle. This allows participants in education to appreciate tactics that improve language acquisition by enabling the use of narratives, since every story may be utilized to go beyond the standard aims of literacy. This study, on the other hand, shows an open dialogue to grasp the switch role that this research may provide to language learners.

CHAPTER 1

Exploring Digital Storytelling as an opportunity for building Cultural Awareness and Critical Literacy in English learners

1. Introduction

1.1. Description of the situation

Stories are everywhere. I started telling and flicking through narratives from a very early age and I have not stopped until today; since they have served me as an amazing way to learn about myself, others, and the world (Kerry-Moran & Aerila, 2019; Le Hunte & Golembiewski, 2014). Certainly, language education has taken advantage of stories; however, their implementation in classrooms has been reduced to the conventional definition of literacy, which only comprises the decoding and encoding of words and texts (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Lankshear & Knobel, 2018). Literacy, on the other hand, is an everyday growing idea that has expanded beyond this goal (Lankshear & Knobel, 2014; Leu et al., 2017), as it is primarily concerned with allowing learners to build their knowledge of the world through written words (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Mora, 2012). Conveying a world meaning is a common classroom practice from kindergarten to secondary school, and university education levels are also growing in its implementation (Kocaman-Karoglu, 2014). As part of my training in the master's program, I was invited to find strategies to move beyond the standard conceptions of reading and writing in the field of higher education English learning.

I had the opportunity of sharing learning experiences at a public university in Medellin city. In this place, students were distinguished for working while completing their academic assignments. Furthermore, there were approximately 40 students in a

classroom, leading to passive involvement, limited opportunities to take part in communicative tasks, and challenging learners' engagement. Subsequently, universities are characterized by only conducting language classes to make learners get good results in national standardized tests (Jiménez et al., 2017; López, 2009), as well as make them effective users of a foreign language such as English (MEN, 2020). Therefore, this pedagogy approach reduces learners' literacy practices to solely exploring common forms of reading and writing to succeed in the communication of the target language (Gómez-Jimenez & Gutierrez, 2019). Although we teachers understand that developing such practices is fundamental in the journey of language learning (Bacon, 2017), language should also serve as a medium to support cultural awareness appreciation (Carreño, 2018; Hazaea, 2020) and critical literacy moments (Behrman, 2006; Janks, 2014; Lombardi & Behrman, 2016; Mora, 2014; Vasquez, 2017) and

New literacies are concerned with reading texts in order to get beyond their surface meaning (Gómez-Jimenez & Gutierrez, 2019) to construct meanings in society's day-to-day practices (Gee, 1999; Leu et al., 2017) and social change (Janks, 2014; Lombardi & Behrman, 2016; Vasquez et al. 2019). Teaching scenarios should be spaces where learners can read stories to respect and comprehend culture in terms of how individuals behave and think as a result of their backgrounds (Mora, 2014), and to empower their cultural awareness (Isariyawat et al., 2020). Furthermore, those teaching moments should serve to problematize stories messages (Vasquez, 2017), analyze the language and power relationship (Freire, 1993; Janks, 2010, 2014), question perspectives from others (Vasquez et al., 2019), transform and improve settings (Parlindungan, 2017). In language education scenarios, learners' voices are often omitted (Stewart et al., 2020), and teachers have significant power to provide “more

opportunities for students to construct knowledge from their experiences as well as unveil and question power messages infused in our society” (Gómez-Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019, p. 103).

In Colombia, the education of the English language has been set for all the educative populations (pre-school, primary and secondary school, and university settings) with the General Law on Education of 1994 and the enactment of Law 1651 (July 12, 2013). The language policy program, Bilingual Colombia 2014-2018, aims to foster language proficiency in learners to partake in the global economy and cultural openness (MEN, 2016), and all the teaching actions concentrate on this purpose. The booklet *Pedagogical Principles and Guidelines: Suggested English Curriculum of English* (MEN, 2016) was one of the strategies implemented by the Ministry of Education (MEN), and it proposed a guide for communicative competences from preschool to 11th graders, where institutions should develop learning spaces to transform students’ environment (MEN, 2016). According to the MEN (2016), language learning scenarios should “develop the necessary competences to cope in their current and future life, contributing to the construction of an equitable and inclusive society respectful of differences” (p. 43). Although we could infer that cultural awareness and critical literacy practices are essential to fulfill that objective, there is little evidence on how to include such moments, or how to avoid restricting learning to the achievement of standardized competences.

Despite this, higher education institutions do not depend on government curriculum guidelines; instead, they are responsible for establishing their own syllabus (Law 30, 1992) to attain B2 English competence in their students (MEN, 2020). Technology integration has played an important role in the country's policies on

language learning as a strategy. Over the previous few decades, the TIC Ministry and universities have produced programs aimed at increasing the digital ecosystem's massification and integrating information and communication technology (ICT) (MinTIC, 2021). In the public university where I teach, the English curriculum is designed to primarily develop linguistic competencies established in policies through the implementation of technology and ICT. It was clear in its courses objectives that the goal was to stimulate learners' critical literacy in cultural, political, and social issues from various contexts (Higher Education Institution Medellin, 2018), regardless of the fact that their curriculum was entirely comprised of traditional literacy exercises that include reading and writing in order to demonstrate basic comprehension.

These goals made me think that higher education students needed educators who can help them to continue expanding their cultural and world knowledge while using language as a tool to develop awareness of their role in society, critical literacies, and their role as transformative human beings. I began to wonder how I might explore cultural awareness and critical literacy in my learning settings and with my students in order to make their learning more meaningful, to “discover and learn about their life, their identity, their people, their places, their culture, and their society as well as gain valuable insights about other people, places, cultures, and societies” (Rodríguez, 2017, p. 4).

1.2. Justification

The public university where I work has set resources that I was unable to modify since they were part of the institutional identity, and curriculum. In view of this, I realized that I might benefit from the institution's technological inclusion, topics, and literacy shifting to the internet sources and environments, particularly in out-of-school

settings (Lankshear & Knobel, 2018; Leu et al., 2017; Mora, 2014). The settings allowed the construction of meanings in society in day-to-day practices where knowledge, values, beliefs, and feelings aid learning (Lankshear & Knobel, 2018; Parlindungan, 2017; White & Hungerford-Kresser, 2014). I realized that online scenarios such as social media are popularly used by learners not only as a form of entertainment but as a way to tell their own stories and learn from others. Instagram, a social multimodal media platform introduced in October 2010, has risen to prominence as one of the most popular social media platforms (Al-Ali, 2014). On a daily basis, Instagram was part of my daily life, and I saw my people telling different life “stories” through videos and images. This tool could offer me an opportunity to create digital stories with my learners, seek institutional objectives, and my teaching goals of creating cultural awareness and exploring critical literacy.

Most of the ways in which people spend their spare time are through social networks. These enable users to connect, develop, and post a wide range of content that promotes experiences where cultural encounters occur; qualities that quickly attract people (Silius et al., 2010, p 52). People frequently upload content that is relevant to their lives, which leads to narrating their life stories there. I saw those entries as our own personal life journal in which we desire to transmit meaning, express our creativity, laugh at ourselves, connect with others, freeze moments, and share our worldview with those around us. It is not only about writing something and reading other people's captions, or decoding and encoding signals; narratives allow us to uncover new perspectives on the world (Robin, 2016). This notion constitutes the digital storytelling approach, and it could allow students to engage in the construction of the tales and become both readers and tellers at the same time (López, 2017).

Digital storytelling (DST) is more than simply a report on previous events; it is also a means of developing one's own self-concept (Stodd, 2014). Students' digital narratives enable them to portray a voice, personal experiences, and cultural traits (Kim & Li, 2021), as well as “clarify issues, propose solutions, and identify the steps that needed to be taken” (Kim & Li, 2021, p. 57). Critical literacy moments may now be integrated with DST, which strives to provide places for texts to connect with students' reality (Janks, 2014). Certainly, I have grasped the kind of language learning opportunities my university students deserve after all this inquiry, and I have found a motivation to foster meaningful cultural awareness encounters and critical literacy moments for them.

1.3. Objectives

This qualitative case study seeks to 1) describe the learners' usage of the English language when creating a digital storytelling journal of personal narratives, 2) develop cultural awareness spaces for higher education English learners where their personal characteristics and identities are acknowledged and linked to institutional tasks, and finally 3) create spaces for encouraging higher education English learners' in moments of critical literacy. Furthermore, I want to decode learners' passive roles into active ones.

2. Contextual framework

Narratives have enormously benefited language education, and those storylines are already being employed not simply to code and decode meanings, or, as traditionally in the scenario of English language education, to know what a term equals in the mother tongue. People have used stories as a medium to go beyond the conventional meaning of words, learn about the world, and uncover the deeper meanings they may have. This

study aimed to use the established reading material from the university where I teach to empower higher education learners' English language skills by creating a digital storytelling journal of narratives that engaged cultural awareness and critical literacy moments.

This research was addressed to a public higher education institution located in Medellin city. For students who have finished their high school education, this public university offers technical education as well as engineering degrees. This institution aspires to generate knowledge in the disciplines of humanities, science, arts, technique, and technology via teaching, research, extension, and social projection activities to provide learners with skills and practices to enhance the society in which we live. As part of its objective to accomplish contemporary society's expectations and respond to globalization demands, the university encourages students to acquire a foreign language. As a consequence, the English learning program has become part of their curriculum. The purpose of this program is to prepare students to obtain a level of proficiency in a foreign language that allows them to advance academically and have better employment opportunities. There is a high emphasis on governmental goals and language as a tool for connecting with the rest of the world, as well as its importance for industry sectors.

According to the country's language policy and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001), learners must obtain B2 proficiency in the English language (MEN, 2020). To attain this ambition, learners must complete eight predetermined English language levels in the syllabus to graduate. Each level has a weekly hourly intensity of 4 hours, and courses use a flipped-classroom approach. This requires students to conduct an exploration of certain themes through readings, videos, vocabulary, and grammar topics located on an institutional platform.

Learners should study the platform's contents and attend classes to communicate what they learned by answering teachers' questions about the themes. Learners should commit two of the allocated hours to working individually on material appropriation, and they must also attend class for the teacher to verify they have grasped and mastered the themes.

Learners from all city sectors attend lessons at this public university, and most of them work and study at the same time. Classes present thirty to forty students, resulting in passive enrollment, limited opportunities to participate in communicative tasks due to encounters that aim to verify the learners' understanding of the platform content, and challenging learners' engagement with the English language as many of them drop out of this subject.

Historically, English courses used a face-to-face methodology in this public university; however, the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) surfaced in the city in March, 2020, radically altering the conduction of lessons. As a result of this pandemic, online meetings were the main scenario to develop English classes, and this became a factor that also caused learners to discontinue their education. Because of the learners' lack of participation, most of the classes returned to the typical face-to-face methodology from the second semester of the year 2022. As part of my training for this master's degree, I wished to influence the dynamics practiced in my workplace. I directed this research to my learners from this institution. On the other hand, I wished to respect the institutional perspective of language learning. That is why this study attempted to increase learners' involvement in English education as well as rekindle their enthusiasm for learning English that they could lose when working on digital devices from home.

I was called to integrate learners' personal cultural features through the construction of a digital storytelling journal that shows not only how learners could grasp the institutional material in terms of language acquisition but also how, by the exploration of the topics, they could reflect a worldview to promote cultural awareness and critical literacy moments.

This research represented an opportunity to explore new ways of learning a language that go beyond the conventional methods of coding and decoding words to provide a unique answer that does not represent learners' lives and evidently do not transgress the class time. This study, on the other hand, was a strategy for engaging learners in the empowerment of their own lives via the knowledge of the power of language and comprehension and value of themselves and others' understanding of the world. This was a chance for me as a teacher, my students, and the public university where I teach to not only increase their language skills but also to increase the engagement of students in the study of a foreign language. Furthermore, I wanted to decode learners' passive roles into active ones. Finally, this was an opportunity to keep providing information to the field of higher education language learning within the umbrella of the various concepts and themes this research covered.

The purpose of this study was to go beyond the surface meanings that “neutral texts” and material from the public university where I teach English could provide an opportunity to not only learn a language, but also to explore DST journal on Instagram as a space for learners to share their cultural characteristics and beliefs to appreciate the diversity of the classroom members and appreciate the world from another lens. The question that led this research for the purposes of this study was:

How does the creation of a digital storytelling journal on Instagram engage higher education English learners in cultural awareness and critical literacy practices?

CHAPTER 2

Reviewing Digital Storytelling, Cultural Awareness, and Critical Literacy's Literature

3. Literature Review

3.1. Research in the field

This section aims to present a literature review on the research conducted about the key concepts for this study which are digital storytelling, cultural awareness, and critical literacy. I focused my search for literature on English education in higher education scenarios. These studies helped me to be more connected with the comprehension of the possible opportunities of implementing core aspects in my study. Also, I found correlations between the studies when identifying the methodology employed, data gathering procedures, findings, and conclusions. Furthermore, I concluded a discussion on what I learned from the literature and how this reveals an opportunity for a study that explores the possibilities of uncovering cultural awareness and moments of critical literacy through the creation of a digital storytelling journal of higher education learners' personal narratives in the public university where I teach.

I started gathering papers in the area for my study in resources including EBSCO, Research Gate, Academia.edu, JSTOR, Taylor & Francis, and others. By using the keywords digital storytelling, cultural awareness, and critical literacy, I searched journals on language and English language teaching and learning such as JHETP, TESL-EJ, ENLETAWA, IKALA, CALJ, HOW, and a few more; nevertheless, I included certain papers outside of the time span since I acknowledged they were particularly relevant to my study.

Exploring relevant studies on DST

While searching electronic databases, I noticed that stories are an ancient cultural tradition to preserve customs (National Geographic Society, 2014), and also are part of the educational exercise. Language education implements the term DST as an answer to the contemporary technology needs for literacy practices of the era (Greene et al., 2018; Moradi & Chen, 2019). Robin (2006, 2008, 2016) defines DST as the skill or art of telling stories employing technological devices and a mix of digital material (Yang et al., 2020). In this session, I discuss some of the research conducted on this topic.

Practices that enhance language learning by the use of DST. Technology is a powerful tool that transforms how stories are told, and how learning scenarios integrate narratives to learn and teach. There is some research that describes the influence of DST on the development of language skills. Moreover, despite research concentration is on school environments, this review focal point is on university settings.

DST is a way of telling tales that allows students to use technical devices and a variety of digital materials to generate meaning (Lambert, 2013; Robin, 2006, 2008, 2016). Some of the most noteworthy findings when using this approach are connected with the development of linguistic competences such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, and even vocabulary and grammar management in a target language (Castillo-Cuesta et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2020). Yang et al. (2020) explore the effects of DST on seventh-grade students' English as a foreign language course over eight-weeks in a Taiwanese school. Scholars bring to light that when participating in authentic DST activities, learners improve their oral proficiency, and actively participate in activities that help them to be creative thinkers.

In a similar vein, James et al. (2019) evaluate DST as a means of improving students' speaking abilities through the narration of personal tales in VideoScribe during five weeks. As an outcome, twenty students were more engaged in developing speaking since DST is an approach that enables learners to become active learners. Similar findings are obtained in Tunç's (2017) study, where ten high school students acquired communication skills mostly as a result of their interest in technology. Furthermore, these studies support the notion that DST increases language acquisition by boosting learners' participation in the creating process (Eisazadeh & Rajedram, 2020; Robin & McNeil, 2019).

Har & Zainol (2018) suggest DST as a tool that allows personalized learning based on the learners' age, needs, learning styles, level of proficiency and competency. In their case study, six 11-years-old children from a Malaysian public primary school who had few opportunities to use the language in their daily lives participated in a course of eight weeks where eight digital stories were produced using a tablet application. The study was conducted under The Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which proposes that learning occurs via visual and verbal actions and DST improves students' vocabulary learning, their enthusiasm and willingness to learn. Sixteen observations and semi-structured interview sessions were part of the data collection instruments.

Although there is an important number of specialized software to develop DST, Tarigan et al. (2021) investigate the use of Instagram as a medium for creating digital tales in an Indonesian high school to enhance students' language by conveying narratives in a more personal way. The findings reveal that social media may be used to motivate the students, increase academic accomplishment, promote cooperative

learning, and improve writing abilities. This study offers activities that teachers might use in Instagram DST, such as writing about travel experiences, reviewing famous people in history, creating role-play practices, and more. Regarding the Colombian context, Gonzalez (2020) shows in a qualitative study how the use of DST with personal stories on social media platforms such as Facebook promotes learning awareness, writing coherence and cohesiveness, and collaboration. He concludes that “feedback plays an important role in the writing process and in the creation of digital stories” (Gonzalez, 2020, p. 101).

High education scenarios and DST. I discovered a number of studies that demonstrate how levels of motivation, self-confidence, and appreciation for learning a foreign language may change as a result of the implementation of DST in university settings (Hava 2021; Mirza, 2020; Nassim, 2018; Salama, 2019; Yeh & Mitric, 2019). As this strategy provides benefits, it may also present challenges.

Nassim’s (2018) study presents a deeper understanding of the use of multimodal approaches such as DST in language learning courses at Arab Open University as a strategy to support reading engagement. In this case study, twenty-four English level 2 students built a portfolio of digital storytelling assignments that were graded using a rubric, along with a survey to determine students' attitudes on the use of DST in English class. The author finds that students embraced the incorporation of technology and the development of tales, resulting in active participation, increased confidence and competency in their communicative abilities, and teamwork. This study relies on the assumption that DST does not exclusively belong to children, but adults’ engagement can be enhanced as well (Lim et al, 2022). Accordingly, Salama (2019) discovers DST as a solution to speaking weaknesses of students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Using

Storybird, girls aged 18 to 22 presented their narratives during a six-month period. Findings show that this tool can give learners possibilities to strengthen their vocabulary and motivation, as well as cooperative work, accurate grammatical use, and speech abilities like stress, tone, and intonation.

On the other hand, Hava (2021) highlights the influence of DST on a group of 60 first-year pre-service teachers in a Turkish university with the implementation of a pre-experimental study. Three digital stories were created over nine weeks to assess learners' levels of motivation, self-confidence, personal usage, and attitude domains toward the use of digital storytelling. Data analysis suggests that learners found DST as unnecessary, difficult, and time-consuming. Nevertheless, the authors report that participants' language abilities improved. As a result, DST is an important tool that can be incorporated in learning situations to assist students to improve their attitudes not just about telling digital tales, but also about language learning motivation.

Yeh & Mitric (2019) discuss how Instagram provides chances to increase engagement in writing, spoken skills, and language acquisition among American college students. In this study, the authors use Instagram to reflect the learners' world to boost active engagement by the completion of DST posts and assignments. Although learners' interest and engagement levels may grow, this tool symbolizes a medium separated from learning environments, and needs to be transferred to academic commitments. It is vital to note that at the beginning of the task development, learners, particularly those who are unfamiliar with social media platforms, may feel hesitant and insecure. Similarly, Mirza's (2020) conducted a study on a group of 20 second-year student-teachers at the Lebanese University. With the goal of improving teaching skills and language proficiency, 15-minute digital stories related to education were posted on a

YouTube channel. Findings reveal that, despite learners' difficulties, and their perception that creating videos was a time-consuming task, DST is a powerful educational tool that fosters meaningful classroom interactions, improves digital literacies and critical thinking skills, and improves essential language skills.

Cultural awareness involvement through DST. Some of the learning benefits of DST practices facilitate the enrichment of learners' involvement and the development of linguistic abilities. However, according to Ribeiro (2016), DST goes beyond restricting learning and story creation in technology devices because it widens cultural awareness on “how a person creates and tells their own narrative ultimately shapes their own self-perception” and how “stories connect people with their inner selves, with others and, ultimately with society” (p. 4). In a case study, Hamilton et al. (2019) discover that creating digital tales is a potential technique for attaining high-quality reflection on cultural self-awareness, awareness of worldviews, and interest in other cultures. They propose criteria in their study to examine DST in terms of cultural awareness. Similarly, Grant & Bolin (2016) investigate the improvement of students' technological and cultural competency through the use of DST. They conclude that it supports cultural learning and helps learners to interact with diversity concerns.

Scholars research on cultural awareness

Now that I reviewed DST, I find its influence on cultural awareness. Before attempting to grasp what cultural awareness is, it is important to first define the term culture. Clearly, this concept has been presented as what a person has established in terms of behaviors in a community and what is transmitted and modified from generation to generation (Iskan et al., 2017); and authors such as Bonilla & Cruz-Arcila (2014) describe culture as the presence of social diversity and its respective power

relationships. Some scholars, however, argue that culture is what people express and acquire through language (Kramsch, 1993) in certain social settings (Cárdenas, 2011). Cultural qualities cannot be disregarded or taken for granted when discussing language learning (Bonilla & Cruz-Arcila, 2014), since they are the vehicle that delivers meaning to communication, as stated by Golovátina-Mora (2015) as it allows to encounter Other and the Self (Mora & Golovátina-Mora, 2011)

This section seeks to offer studies on this topic (also known as intercultural awareness and cross-cultural awareness). Due to the high ethnic and cultural diversity existing in our country, our students face intercultural experiences every day (Carreño, 2018). It is critical to recognize that cultural awareness is not something that teachers pretend to meet in class just as a personal wish; rather, it is an implication of language learning. School curriculum should grow on the knowledge of target language, but also on broadening perspectives on language acquisition and accepting and valuing cultural diversity (Yurtsever & Özel, 2021).

Cultural awareness as a strategy to engage language acquisition. Culture is a crucial aspect to produce language (Hernandez et al. 2021; Oanh & Minh, 2018; Yurtsever & Özel, 2021). Previous researchers have seen cultural content as an opportunity to foster cultural knowledge, and a way for meeting motivation in language acquisition. Individuals are outstanding educational resources who have gathered information, ideas, and skills as a consequence of their lived experiences from their everyday lives about their homes, backgrounds, and numerous settings where they have been, according to González, Moll, and Amanti (2005). These Funds of Knowledge (González & Moll, 2002) may be introduced into classroom settings on one hand because they are an indivisible and embedded quality in humans; and on the other hand,

they provide a chance to strengthen language and its learning by integrating curricula with households and individuals (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). Regarding the inextricable link between language and culture, Hernandez et al. (2021) analyze two questionnaires that assessed the attitudes of ninety Peruvian teachers and ninety intermediate English students at the National University of San Marcos towards the effectiveness of including cultural knowledge on English learning. One questionnaire was given to participants to show their agreement about the improvement of competence through cultural awareness material. It reveals that familiarity with English culture assists learners to enhance their learning. Instead of focusing on linguistic skills, culture may be valued in terms of parallels and differences; elements that easily captivate learners and activate their learning schemas (Hernandez et al., 2021).

Research on specific language abilities has also been conducted. Oanh & Minh (2018) suggest that by incorporating lessons that encourage cross-curricular issues in listening, students' attitudes improve because they understand better and gain useful experiences to broaden their world. This research was conducted on thirty EFL students enrolled in a Vietnamese university. Similarly, Kamaeva et al. (2022) explore the impact in listening skills by using cultural awareness materials on seventy-five students from English and Persian culture classes. Three groups were used to collect data; two as experimental groups where cultural-based concerns were instructed, and one as a control group where no special materials were included. Following the completion of all audio files, learners were given a listening motivation and comprehension posttest, and an attitude questionnaire to measure their perspectives on the usefulness of cultural awareness in their language learning performance. The experimental groups demonstrate stronger motivation and understanding rather than the control group.

With the same methodology, during nine sessions Mashudi et al. (2022) consider the effects of English cultural awareness on the grammatical knowledge of forty advanced Indonesian English learners. Participants took part in two groups of twenty; one experimental and one of control. A grammar pre- and post-test were given to both groups to measure their grammar management, while lectures were taught using English cultural materials in the experimental group, and a traditional approach in the control group. The findings demonstrate that the experimental group performed better than the control group after the interventions because English cultural awareness helped them improve their grammatical understanding.

Furthermore, by raising students' understanding of English culture, they may successfully increase their competences and get greater outcomes when it comes to speaking skills, as Menacho-Vargas et al (2021) report. One hundred upper-intermediate learners from Peru took part in courses that placed them into two groups: culture, where culturally-based dialogues were held, and conventional, where talks were guided from a traditional perspective. The results show that culturally-based talks might improve students' speaking skills and allow them to learn more effectively. Hence, Hidayati et al. (2017) document how the incorporation of cultural lessons in the target language affects students' speaking and reading as learners become fluent and gain new vocabulary after analyzing the data obtained through an interview, observation, field note, and recording in Indonesia.

Moreover, Yurtsever & Özel (2021) examine fifty studies on cultural and intercultural awareness in order to assist educators in improving the practice of the four linguistic skills in the classrooms. As a consequence, they propose four foundations that may well support the enhancement of cultural awareness classroom practices, which

include the creation of lesson components, promotion of interaction, and establishment of dynamic and personal connections with content and the subject. They acknowledge that “improving cultural awareness skills may not happen rapidly over studying a single coursebook, repetitive tasks or limited opportunities of communication with target language speakers especially during foreign language learning” (Yurtsever & Özel, 2021, p. 119).

Cultural awareness in higher education scenarios. Although a series of research explored how to enhance learners’ language abilities by the use of cultural awareness content, research in university scenarios have been addressed to appreciate culture and promote the knowledge of the other (Carreño, 2018; Hazaea, 2020; Iscan et al., 2017; Kiziltan & Zülal, 2020). According to Iscan et al. (2017), universities must consider materials and methodologies in order to positively contribute to students' learning processes, acknowledge their learning styles, and significantly influence their cultural perceptions. The author draws this statement after conducting a descriptive research at a Turkish university to discover learners' thoughts regarding cultural transfer when studying a foreign language. The authors emphasize that teaching culture has been interpreted as merely observing the target language's one; yet, it is critical to be aware of one's own culture and cultural identity in order to promote intercultural dialogue (Byram, 2012; Mora & Golovátina-Mora, 2011; Moncada, 2016; Tomalin & Stempleski, 2013).

Cartoons can also help learners improve their cultural awareness in the target language. Kiziltan & Zülal (2020) study the influence of cartoons on the cultural awareness and motivation of sixty-seven intermediate students at a university in Turkey. The study included three cartoons: *Great Expectations*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Treasure*

Island, but only half of the students had access to the cartoon versions, while the remaining twenty were exposed to texts. According to the findings, cartoons are better for motivation and educational success, and developing cultural awareness unconsciously. Critical thinking skills may even aid in learning more. Hazaea (2020) discovers that students appreciate themselves and other cultures by completing a reading assignment regarding a dinner invitation about foreign culture by writing on the food diversity issue. The findings were derived from a scrutiny of the pre- and post-creation of reflective essays after an introduction to critical discourses.

I discovered a few papers on cultural awareness in Colombia; however, Carreño (2018) describes a teaching experience that was intended to enhance intercultural competency for university-level students in a higher education institution. Students from various nations and cultural backgrounds enrolled in this study to learn about others and appreciate differences while they had the chance to examine, express comments, and discuss a variety of themes that dealt in depth with culturally-related topics in today's society. Data was collected from students' submissions in virtual forums, and the author finds that connecting with people from different cultural backgrounds raises one's understanding and appreciation of difference. Cultural awareness, according to the author “is actually about offering chances in which students can develop the willingness to learn from others and consider that everyone has something to give, even if they do not belong to dominant groups of society” (p. 132). Cárdenas (2011) concludes that “the application of cultural awareness is a practical approach since the students can reflect about their origins or cultural views” (p. 46) as well as their “point of view upon the understanding of the society in their immediate reality” (Sosa & Casas, 2012, p. 47).

Cultural Awareness as a step to promote critical literacy moments. Students' cultural awareness may assist critical literacy moments as learners “take perspectives and establish harmony, broaden their horizons, respect individual differences and establish social responsibility” (Rosos et al., 2022, p. 308). On the other hand, “in learning a foreign or second language, critical literacy can be a means of involving learners in a process of exploring the new” (Esteban-Nuñez, 2014, p. 26). According to Rincón & Clavijo-Olarte (2016), students' communities and cultural characteristics provide exceptional chances for making learning relevant. In their study learners “broadened their possibilities for expressing different points of view regarding the problematic social situations that exist in their barrio” (p. 80). It evolves into a means of moving beyond isolated words and into transformative actions (Vasquez, 2017).

Likewise, Isariyawat et al. (2020) administer semi-structured interviews to learn how one hundred students of Thailand's Buriram Rajabhat University perceived literature, but also its effect on their cultural awareness and language abilities. It reveals that reading on cultural issues can go beyond and transgress the reading practice to personal reflection. Liu (2017) asserts that critical literacy moments “enable EFL learners to fulfill responsibilities as global citizens to respect and sustain culture differences, to understand issues from global and multicultural perspectives” (p. 137).

Critical Literacy as a lens to Discover Meanings Beyond the Surface Words.

Literacy is commonly defined as the process of writing and reading to improve one's spoken expression. Despite the fact that the concept of literacy has been understood across time, academics today use the term "new literacies" to transgress the ideas of remembering a written code of symbols to link them to individuals' experiences and knowledge of the world. According to Leu et al. (2017), there is no precise

definition for this term because new literacies emerge every day of our lives, while tomorrow's demands may change. Nevertheless, it primarily refers to the way people make meaning through language (Rowse & Walsh, 2011) in social practice and interactions (Rowse et al. 2018). According to Lankshear and Knobel (2018),

New literacies provide a basis for moving education away from its traditional form of learning *about* – content knowledge absorbed from curriculum subjects – toward a model of learning as collaborating *producers* of knowledge within processes of learning to become ‘kinds of people’ who take on ‘ways of being in the world’. (p. 7)

As part of this fundamental idea, critical literacy arises with the idea of reading, but with a new viewpoint. Critical literacy requires going beyond the superficial meaning of words and the world (Gómez-Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019; Lankshear & Knobel, 2018; White & Hungerford-Kresser, 2014). This teaching approach prioritizes the appreciation of reading the world in a way that goes further than surface meaning to the recognition of other viewpoints that enables the construction of knowledge in everyday sources (Comber, 2015; Vasquez et al., 2019; Dharamshi, 2018; Fajardo, 2015; Leu et al., 2017; Vasquez, 2017). This part of this study looks at how critical literacy has been established in the classroom.

Critical literacy that promotes self-and other learning. I gathered some crucial conclusions about prior experiences from critical literacy research. Although it has proven difficult to distinguish between the two, critical reading and critical literacy are not synonymous. Critical reading requires significant thought and the use of multiple abilities to reach a conclusion, forecast, and so on. Inquiring into power and

dominance concerns through disclosing hidden signals is what critical literacy is all about. In a control group, Sultan et al. (2017) discover that the critical literacy strategy has an influence on critical reading abilities such as interpretation, analysis, making an inference, assessment, explanation, and self-regulation. The students were engaged in debating problems based on previous knowledge and experience, allowing them to pose questions from many angles and relate the text's significance to its context in real life.

Liu (2017) assesses how the deployment of key literacy moments in a Chinese EFL class affects language accomplishments and learners' identities. Lessons were taught to two classes of thirty-six students each: one with critical literacy moments and the other with regular reading teaching. According to the author, critical literacy improves EFL student motivation and learning efficiency by fostering coding, semantic, pragmatic, and critical competences. On the other hand, when critical literacy acknowledges people's diversity, identities are shaped and changed. More significantly, this study emphasizes that all participants' voices are valued in order to confront social injustice (Liu, 2017).

Through class discussions, recording, and class observations, Riwayatningsih's (2022) research in an Indonesian university reveals that students' beliefs and attitudes toward their critical literacy comprehension of online media information through writing practices can lead students to shape their beliefs and attitude into several conceptions such as using prior knowledge, arguing ideas, and problematizing issues to understand people's feelings and experiences. Stewart et al. (2020) assert that students crave to read, but only about topics that help them learn more about themselves and others; this thought boosts students' literacy engagement.

Gustine (2018) concludes that teachers lack knowledge of critical literacy as a methodological approach to teaching English after conducting a survey of twenty-one English teachers at a university in Bandung, but they have a sense of how to lead students to problematize what is perceived as normal in society through the appreciation of everyday texts. On the other hand, Rosos et al. (2022) use quantitative and qualitative methods such as surveys, questionnaires, and lesson plans to discover that teachers used problem-posing, social justice promotion, and counter-text creation to focus on critical literacy; nevertheless, the lack of school resources, learners' language competency, and the school's concentration on testing affected practices.

Kunnath & Jackson (2019) attempt to address teaching critical literacy concerns by utilizing social media platforms such as Twitter to bring learners' outside context. In this action research case study, it was discovered that Twitter has affordances because it can amplify student voice once learners are taught about critical. "Twitter is not only a practical means of implementing critical literacy, but it is also a good opportunity to teach effective social media use from a critical perspective," the authors write (Kunnath & Jackson, 2019, p. 70). After participating in a character journaling project, White & Hungerford-Kresser (2014) conclude that "when used for character journaling, social networks can provide a culturally relevant, collaborative, and multi-genre forum through which students can make new meanings with texts" (p. 642). There, students constructed Facebook profiles to experience a tale through the eyes of many characters from Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Students created personalities based on their own interpretations based on what they read and their personal identities.

Colombian research on critical literacy and ESL education. There are few studies related to critical literacy as many of them only rely on the basic reading skills

(Giraldo, 2018) and hardly encourage the connection to the real world (Castaño-Roldán & Correa, 2021; Giraldo, 2018; Gómez, 2017; Gómez-Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019).

However, educators must shift from promoting learners to being passive learners to transformational intellectuals (Gómez-Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019; Kumaravadivelu, 2008).

Esteban-Nuñez (2014) reports the findings of an action research project that focused on identifying how critical literacy abilities arose when thirty-five students in a university in Boyacá enquired about culture and identity problems from various texts. It discovered that learners' voices play an important part in language lessons, as well as enable students to “look at their own opinions, biases, and perceptions of reality, and to consider those of others” (Esteban-Nuñez, 2014, p. 26). The writer states that once students see the world through new lenses, they will never experience literature in the same manner again. This theory is related to Vasquez's (2013, 2017) concept of critical literacy as a way of life.

Giraldo (2018) examines in an action research, critical literacy practices with undergraduate students at a private university in Tolima. Two separate groups from the same level were chosen to participate in activities. As a consequence, despite their varying levels of involvement, both groups achieved their aim of reading the world critically while having fun. “Teachers need to teach their students how to analyze texts, so that students can discern patterns, designs and complexities, and to develop the capacity to redesign and reshape the texts” (Giraldo, 2018, p. 104), the author claims.

Gómez-Jiménez & Gutiérrez (2019) use interviews, focus groups, surveys, student artifacts, and the teacher's journal to explain how eighteen students and their teacher interacted with critical literacy at a Medellin university. This case research finds

that critical literacy helps people “to reflect on the power they have as agents of social change while developing language skills” (p. 91). Teachers must provide areas where students may explore subjects connected to their culture, but they must also be mindful of the time and effort required, as well as the fact that students will not respond to activities in an expected manner.

Gómez (2017) concludes in a qualitative case study that participant's comments on the news enhance discussion of social and cultural topics that allow critical literacy moment, but awareness as well. The author states that “encouraging EFL learners to discuss conflicting events of the real world is not a common practice in EFL education [...] seldom confront learners with issues of identity, cruelty, unfairness, and adversity that are present in the real world” (Gómez, 2017, p. 325). Similarly, Castaño-Roldán & Correa (2021) discover when developing critical readings about Pablo Escobar, alcohol, and gun usage at a university in Medellin that, and factors may be viewed as an impediment to learners develop critical literacy practices, learners actually go beyond than what is expected; however, teachers' instruction and support is essential.

3.2. Historical and Political Issues in Education

Education is a basic human right (UNICEF, 2007) that is essential for societal development. Education, according to IBE-UNESCO (2015), should be “a key means to the ends of greater economic and social equality, of eradicating poverty, and of national economic, social and political development” (p. 4). In response to contemporary educational demands, Article 67 of the Colombian Political Constitution of 1991 (República de Colombia, 1991) proclaims that education is a right and a public service for the community, with the societal goal of developing social, fair, and participating citizens. To accomplish this, fundamental knowledge disciplines are mandatory in the

classroom curriculum knowledge (MEN, 2020), with English being defined as the language to be learned through the Law of Bilingualism in Article 8 (1651, 2013).

Nevertheless, before knowing the English language teaching and learning in the Colombian setting as it is now, there has been a goal in the promotion of foreign languages since the Colonial days (Gómez-Sará, 2017). Official plans, however, have surfaced since 2004. The goal throughout this session of this study is to go through the background of Colombia's foreign language which has played an important role in the historical and political issues in language education and the understanding of literacies from a legal point of view.

Several initiatives come with the purpose of integrating Colombian employee engagement into the global economy through mastery of the world language. Initially, The National Plan of Bilingualism (MEN, 2009) is the strategy made by the government to encourage language competency in learners in order for them to participate in the global economy and cultural openness. Following the government transition, the Program for Strengthening the Development of Competences (MEN, 2012), the National Plan of English: Colombia Very Well! (MEN, 2014) and currently policy, Bilingual Colombia program (MEN, 2016) lead language learning in the country. Although the initiatives emerged in a different time period, they have embraced the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) to guide the levels of competency and mastery learners must acquire in the English language. It is vital to stress that literacy practices are only understood in the context of typical literacy moments, in which learners have the goal of coding and decoding text in order to demonstrate their proficiency in the target language. The standardized national tests Saber 11 and Saber Pro illustrate how

learners are measured. These tests focus only on learners' knowledge of abilities such as reading, vocabulary, and grammar.

Despite the fact that this plan states that not only linguistic competencies, but also pragmatic and sociolinguistic competencies, as well as different literacy practices that go beyond the traditional are represented, as stated in the titled Basic Standards of Competences in Foreign Languages: English (MEN, 2020), there seems to be no coherence in the evaluation process because those are not displayed in the way learners are tested. Regarding university settings, students must foster a B2 intermediate English level based only on the mentioned skills. On the other hand, the booklets titled Pedagogical principles and guidelines: Suggested English curriculum (MEN, 2016) and Basic learning rights: English (MEN, 2016) surface solely on the basic schools, particularly the sixth through eleventh grades, guiding literacy practices in classrooms.

Although these publications and the language policy do certainly not give guidelines for incorporating literacy lessons into higher education settings that go beyond the traditional ideas of reading and writing, other regulations mandate that institutions have autonomy in their approaches and educational procedures. Article 68 of the Colombian Political Constitution of 1991 (República de Colombia, 1991) and Article 28 of Law 30 (1992) state that education in universities shall be independent.

This historical review allows me to understand that, while there is no precise guide for higher education instructors to follow for what should be done with literacy in such settings, there are clear grounds on what learners must know before studying in this setting, and what the aim for them is after they accomplish their academic titles, and the way their competences will be measured. Universities have the freedom to design their curricula to fulfill governmental and educational goals. Finally, in order to achieve

the objectives, bilingual education policies in Colombia integrate several principles connected to digital storytelling, cultural awareness, and critical literacy.

Concepts featured in policies, particularly in the recent booklet created by the current policy, Pedagogical principles and guidelines: Suggested English curriculum (MEN, 2016), advocate the use of ICT as part of the competencies that students can attain as "the language is done in a useful manner in scenarios that are analogous to real life" (p. 23). This concept seems to be an open door to connect ordinary technology such as a cellphone and a social media platform such as Instagram in order to reflect on daily life while employing a target language. In terms of cultural awareness, this booklet suggests that English classes should be places where concepts like globalization must play an essential role in "promote the understanding of the place each person holds in the current world, the value of one's own culture, their role in development of the identity of students and their capacity of understanding other cultures" (MEN, 2016, p. 22). There is an intercultural awareness embraces the knowledge of the target language's culture and also appreciates the own and Colombian culture. Eventually, there is a proposed guide that opens a space for transversality; that suggests dialogue on issues that help language learners generate meaning by the enhancement of critical literacy moments.

3.3. Colombian Legal Aspects since 1990

Aware of the importance of mastering a foreign language such as English, as established by the Ministry of Education through the Bilingualism Law (1651, 2013), and the policy Bilingual Colombia (MEN, 2016), the university where this study is addressed, has created an English program that aims to foster English language competences among its enrolled students. "The country requires bilingual professionals

prepared to communicate and interact in different fields of knowledge and face the challenges of the labor market, which requires competitive people capable of meeting the needs of the environment” according to the institutional curriculum (Higher Education Institution Medellin, 2018). Although it is clear that language policies require higher education learners to be proficient in the English language at the B2 level (MEN, 2020) in accordance with the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), there is no guide that states how this goal must be met, but it is clear that an integral education should be promoted, as stated in Education Law (115, 1994), and by the Higher Education Law (30, 1992).

With that goal in mind, the public university addressed in this study seeks to develop linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic communicative competences in students who enroll in their academic programs, despite the fact that they do not achieve the B1 competence that school-graduated learners are expected to achieve according to the MEN (2016).

To that end, this higher education institution develops language encounters through a communicative approach in which “the student carries out activities and tasks related to communicative acts, through interaction, the use of contextualized vocabulary and grammatical structures, which facilitate the understanding of oral and written texts” (Higher Education Institution Medellin, 2018).

As part of this university's language learning perspective, the teachers' function is envisioned as a mediator, and the students' role is regarded as an autonomous figure who is the owner of his or her own learning process. Knowing the role of participants in learning encounters, the institution has used a flipped methodology in which learners are assigned with examining digital content contained in the institutional platform

where different themes are taught on a weekly basis. Learners find input related to common topics that convey grammar content, reading original stories of the institutional character (whose name is not called to protect the institution's identity), videos about how the topics are lived in different parts of the world, a forum to discuss the topics, a pronunciation component, and a set of multiple-choice tests that pretend to check the learners' retention of topics. After students have verified and studied the activities, they must meet with the mediator professor to engage in an interview about the weekly theme and their knowledge of the activities. This approach requires four weekly hours: two hours for the independent study and two hours for the interview session. Students must complete eight English levels in order to graduate, and as a consequence, they must attain a B2 level as specified in national plans (MEN, 2016).

Although there is a set of resources that are part of the institutional identity and mediator professor must follow, the Law of Higher Education (Law 30, 1992) supports professors' academic freedom when they address education moments to the accomplishment of integral education (Law, 115) and the achievement of B2 competence (MEN, 2016, 2020), and thus these two factors can be addressed from the digital storytelling, cultural awareness, and critical literacy point of view this study aims to explore.

3.4. Experts in the field of study

DST and its principles. DST has an impact in various applications, primarily in humanities and social science subjects (Wu & Chen, 2020; Yang et al. 2020), which include personal stories, digital story archives, memorial stories, avocational stories, and stories in medicine and health as McLellan (2007) describes. Regarding language learning, it is an approach that “combines the art of telling stories with a mixture of

digital media, including text, pictures, recorded audio narration, music and video” (Robin, 2016, p. 2), while allowing the learners’ use of language for expressing meanings in oral, written, or visual forms (Yang et al. 2020).

When integrating, teachers must take several factors into mind. For example, it is growing in popularity because, as stated by Moradi & Chen (2019), it reacts to the era's present technology demands and replies to literacy practices carried out in the twenty-first century (Greene et al., 2018). Narratives do not clearly represent separated texts, but rather represent the creation of human meanings via the use of digital technology (Lambert, 2013). DST “aims to provide opportunities for learners to express their knowledge through a variety of modalities, thereby making allowance for modes other than just writing” (Eisazadeh & Rajedram, 2020).

The process of creating a digital story is completely connected with one's own personal experiences, and Lambert (2003; 2013) defines "Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling" as owning an insight, personal emotions, finding a moment, visualizing, hearing, assembling, and finally, sharing the story. Anderson (2016), on the other hand, argues that good DST creations should be intentional and feel real to learners, and it should encourage areas of interest that link with learners' deep love. Finally, Eisazadeh & Rajedram (2020, p. 80) outlines four sequential processes for employing DST: "pre-production; production; post-production; and dissemination." Rather than being necessary actions to take, those processes are some guidelines for individuals who choose to implement DST.

According to Robin & McNeil (2019), “the process of creating digital stories has been shown to help learners organize and express their ideas, increase reading comprehension, and scaffold the development and formation of sociocultural identities

and critical literacies” (p. 3). As shown by Lamber (2013), DST is a type of reflective activity that involves the creation of content via technology generated by an own and powerful voice with an own understanding concerning people, places, and objects (Somdee & Suppasetseree, 2012).

Cultural awareness and its foundations. Cultural awareness (intercultural awareness or cross-cultural awareness) notions highlight the importance of each of these facts in language learning situations. Individuals' cultural backgrounds have a significant impact on the process of language acquisition and cannot be separated (Byram, 2021; Ramos, 2013). Culture, on the other hand, has been reduced to learning about the target way of life (Byram, 1986, 2012, 2021; Esteban-Nuñez, 2021), and has been framed around the idea of becoming bilingual in existing heterogeneous societies (Kramsch, 2011; Mora & Golovátina-Mora, 2011). Culture is ingrained in all human everyday actions and is usually combined into a social structure that allows for human advancement and roles in society. Culture, according to Bonilla & Cruz-Arcila (2013), is the result of language and is “an expression of social diversity, ideologies and power relationships” (p. 29); therefore, culture is the sixth skill of the language, as recognized by Kramsch (1993).

Individuals acquire culture and language "by the process of cultural conditioning" (Golovátina-Mora, 2015, p. 3), which is an activity that leads to the development of social communication skills and capacities. While linguistic competencies and national plan objectives are important in the process of learning a language (Byram, 2012, 2021; Esteban-Núñez, 2021), developing cultural awareness, as well as "constant reflection and identification of the self when compared to others and vice versa" should be encouraged (Byram, 2012). Golovátina-Mora (2015) defines

culture as a social construct with a defined community meaning, with language functioning as an important communication instrument for cultural progress and information transfer.

According to Zhou (2021), there are two approaches to building cultural awareness and self-consciousness. The first is concerned with the learners' process of finding connections and distinctions among individuals, while the second is concerned with the continuing development of their own identity as they discover who they are and construct a model of self. It is vital to mention that it can only be attained by “knowing others, accepting, and respecting their culture” (Yurtsever & Özel, 2021, p. 104). Byram (1997) proposed the ideas of skills, knowledge, education, attitudes, and skills as “factors in intercultural communication” that enable the production of fostering moments since language and culture are inseparable words. While there is a relationship between culture and language, using both does not provide the awareness dimension; instead, social analysis is required (Byram, 2012). Cultural awareness includes three characteristics: knowledge of one's own culturally-induced conduct; awareness of the culturally induced behavior of others; and the ability to explain one's own cultural stance (Tomalin & Stempleski, 2013, p. 5).

Baker (2009, 2012) establishes a list of three stages of cultural awareness; it includes twelve aspects that might be addressed inside the classroom. Level 1 demonstrates the fundamental cultural awareness features connected to self-culture. Level 2 reflects a more comprehensive understanding of one's own culture and other social groups. Finally, level 3 is defined as intercultural awareness, which is the ability to negotiate between diverse cultures (Baker, 2009, 2012).

Critical Literacy and its key aspects. This approach promotes an idea of reading that goes beyond the limited power that educational procedures have given to text comprehension and implementation as the traditional notion of only decoding symbols (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Lankshear & Knobel, 2018). Critical literacy, on the other hand, is a way of life (Vasquez, 2017; Vasquez et al., 2019), and a social practice (Gee, 1999) that views reading texts as an opportunity to go beyond their surface meaning (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Gómez-Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019; Lankshear & Knobel, 2018; White & HungerfordKresser, 2014). It has grown into a paradigm for bringing teaching and learning into classrooms with the purpose of helping readers to experience the world from many perspectives by employing a lens that allows them to generate meanings in any text (Comber, 2015; Vasquez et al., 2019; Dharamshi, 2018; Fajardo, 2015; Leu et al., 2017; Vasquez, 2017). This understanding develops a way of being “to question, explore, or challenge the power relationships that exist between authors and readers” (Norris et al., 2012). Written words are not neutral texts free of intention, and any text may be utilized to generate social change by producing critical literacy moments (Behrman, 2006; Janks, 2014; So, 2016; Vasquez, 2017; Vasquez et al., 2019).

McLaughlin & DeVogd (2004) establish four criteria for establishing a relationship between the reader, the author and written words. It proposes that critical literacy should focus on issues of power to encourage reflection in front of the excluded voices. Second, it should concentrate on the problem, rather than accepting a statement. Third, it is dynamic to the contexts in which it is fomented. Finally, numerous viewpoints should be uncovered. Similarly, Lewison et al. (2002) propose four attitudes on major societal concerns given in texts. Those who argue that written words examined

through a critical literacy lens have the potential to disrupt a commonplace by problematizing a text, examine the multiple viewpoints of characters, focus on sociopolitical issues to examine power relationships, and finally, take action and promote social justice to promote change and achieve social justice (see George, 2020). It is not necessary to integrate all of these aspects in order to engage in critical literacy activities, as literature may be questioned by any of those factors (Norris et al., 2012). Janks (2010, 2014) highlights the emphasis on fostering critical literacy in order to achieve transformation (Behrman, 2006).

Finally, Comber (2006) recommends questions that students should consider when reading material as follows: Who is narrating this tale? How did you come across this? Did you understand the most significant parts of your culture? What portions of the tale have yet to be told? According to Vasquez (2017), the themes covered should be relevant to students' everyday lives, experiences, and interests. As a result, Vasquez et al. (2019) establish that critical literacy is a lens, rather than a topic to be taught.

What I Learned from this Review: Specific Directions for Future Research

After studying a number of papers and research in the disciplines of DST, cultural awareness, and critical literacy, I discovered that the three ideas have played a significant part in the process of enhancing learners' language abilities. I realized that they are in fact linked.

Student can learn about themselves, others, and the world by creating digital stories, and they can expose their own unique vision of the world in the face of life issues, thus it is possible to use digital stories as a way to develop cultural awareness, which allows learners to know and value others, generate critical literacy moments that

invite learners to go beyond the surface meanings and the limited coding and decoding of digital stories. I learned that to foster that, conventional software is not needed, but social media represents an opportunity to integrate learners' daily lives. I noticed that some research uses the three notions to go beyond the idea of conceptualizing language acquisition as the concept of communicating in the target language. I found essential considerations for my research, as a need for research that tries to integrate the three domains, especially for my setting.

In terms of methodology, I discovered that the most commonly used research method was qualitative, and the majority of them were particularly described as case studies and action research. Questionnaires, student artifacts (digital stories, photos of learners' works), recordings, the teacher's notebook, and class observations were used to collect data. There was a triangulation procedure of the data obtained for data analysis. Authors such as Chiang (2020), Salama (2019), and Taringan et al. (2021) acknowledge that DST has numerous benefits for language acquisition, but further study is needed to determine whether students may benefit even more from this strategy. Regarding cultural awareness, Hernandez et al. (2021), Oanh & Minh, (2018), and Yurtsever & Özel (2021) argue that it is a component that learners cannot disregard and that there is a need to continue growing it in higher education situations. Janks (2014), Liu (2017), Stewart et al. (2020), and Vasquez (2013, 2017) all advocate for more research in the critical literacy field to continue incorporating learners' voices.

4. Conceptual framework: Defining the Pillars of This Study

The concepts that depict my research foundations: Digital storytelling, cultural awareness, and critical literacy. I define those in terms of how each one supports my research and also to display a connection between them to facilitate language learning.



Figure 1. Digital storytelling, cultural awareness, and critical literacy connections

Digital Storytelling

For the purpose of this research, digital storytelling is an approach that allows learners to create their own narratives through the use of technology devices, while incorporating written text, photographs, pictures or graphics, recorded audio narration, music, and even videoclips (Lambert, 2013; Robin, 2006, 2008, 2016). Although tales are part of a cultural tradition through oral expression, technology provides a variety of benefits to storytellers, particularly in the English learning environment, due to a shift in the learners' roles. A conventional method of delivering a tale allows for communication, however a digital storyteller fosters the title of author, a person who spends time planning, producing, and publishing to an audience (Choo et al., 2020).

It is feasible to improve all linguistic competences in a target language while telling digital tales, including reading, writing, speaking, listening, and even vocabulary and grammar management (Castillo-Cuesta et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2020). Digital storytelling, on the other hand, offers venues where motivation may be increased (Robin & McNeil, 2019). Although digital stories are used for many reasons such as historical documentaries and to inform the audience on a certain issue, in light of this research, it is essential that learners express personal narratives that show a unique point of view from a specific topic. Those personal narrative unique views, as Robin & McNeil (2019) state, “can be used to facilitate discussions about current issues such as race, multiculturalism, and globalization and can be a positive way of dealing with emotional issues” (p. 2).

As it “allows individuals to express the uniqueness of their own and others’ lived experiences and brings voice the individual, group or community perspective” (Grant & Bolin, 2016), digital storytelling offers a distinct advantage that allows learners to use language in light of their own background and context (Green, 2013). When experimenting with the process of creating digital narratives about any topic, students express their own viewpoint, which is interpreted in the way that others see them. According to Ribeiro (2016), “stories bring meaning to lives; they convey values and emotions, aid in reaffirming and validating lives and experiences. Additionally, stories connect people with their inner selves, with others and, ultimately with society” (p. 5).

Eisazadeh & Rajedram (2020, p. 80) suggest four stages to effectively generate narratives using DST, which will be used in this study: pre-production, production, post-production, and distribution of digital stories. Learners are exposed to stories that

are unfamiliar to them during the pre-production stage (in this case, institutional material is the input they will receive); on the other hand, the text must be explored in order to provide elements for learners to write their own scripts and storyboards to be reviewed. The following phase, production, entails the construction of the narrative using technological channels. The third phase entails improving the tale with the help of the teacher and even peers. Finally, the final component, distribution, is sharing and enjoying the stories of the learners.

Regarding those components, it is important to emphasize that digital storytelling nowadays occurs not only through software designed to create stories, but also through social media. Mirza (2020) emphasizes that young adults constitute for a considerable portion of internet users who consume, create, and share digital content, and that social media is now being utilized to convey personal narratives. According to Robin & McNeil (2019) “when digital stories are published online, students have the opportunity to share their work with their peers and gain valuable experience in critiquing their own and other students’ work, which can promote gains in emotional intelligence and social learning” (p. 3). Conversely, learners participate in learning activities within educational institutions and schools, but also outside them (Moradi & Chen, 2019). Similarly, social networks promote literacy skills, allowing students to get a better awareness of the world by telling them about the various perspectives people may have on different matters. Grant & Bolin (2016) state “digital storytelling projects have the potential to challenge student understanding of diversity concepts and social justice issues and build critical educational and work-force skills” (p, 47).

I never realized the power of stories until I started teaching. Every week, my students and I were required to complete some digital learning activities that include

watching videos that tell a story and accomplishing reading exercises whose sole purpose is to answer traditional questionnaires about our understanding of those, and retelling what they remember. Now, I am aware not only of the importance of tales, but also of the multiple cultural encounters that they may bring us in class, and how we can support opportunities to make learning more meaningful by creating personal narratives using digital technologies, as is required in digital storytelling.

My goal with this concept is to engage learners in creating their own narratives through social media platforms such as Instagram, which is a social media application that allows the creation of content, in order to generate learning associated with language, cognitive, social, and emotional aspects, and, more importantly, allowing knowledge of the world and cultural empowerment. The following notion will define the concept of cultural awareness and how it relates to this study.

Cultural Awareness

In view of this study, “cultural awareness can be defined as understanding culture and being aware of the different beliefs and ideas” (İşcan et al., 2017, p. 54). Culture is a person's way of life that shapes expectations, beliefs, practices, behaviors, and concerns of an individual or a community (Kiziltan & Ayar, 2020), and English learning environments house individuals from diverse backgrounds and cultures. However, cultural awareness moments have mostly focused on discovering target language features.

According to Hidayati et al. (2017), when trying to understand different cultures, learners are unable to resist thinking about their own. Cultural awareness has primarily been addressed to the concept of identifying cultural similarities and differences;

however, Sosa & Casa (2012) emphasize the significant benefits that this development may bring as “opening the possibilities of broadening a reflective point of view upon the understanding of the society in their immediate reality” (p. 47).

Certainly, the use of cultural awareness encounters encourages students to reflect on their origins or cultural perspectives. Furthermore, it “allows individuals to explore different worlds and allows them to break stereotypical beliefs and prejudices and to look at the world from a broader and richer framework” (İşcan et al., 2017, p. 54). In words of Álvarez & Bonilla (2009)

Awareness has to do with the acknowledgment, tolerance and acceptance of that diversity and the ability to reflect and evaluate it critically. It will let the individual explore, question, examine and strengthen his/ her cultural identity rather than undermining the importance of his language, culture and so on in front of another culture. Moreover, an individual will be open-minded to read other cultures and speakers of other languages in order to make sense of their diversity and particular identities. (p. 163)

This study bases his understanding of cultural awareness by the theory defined by Tomalin & Stempleski (2013). They identify three attributes of cultural awareness that promote the reflection when integrating activities with that aim as (Tomalin and Stempleski, 2013, p. 5):

- awareness of one’s own culturally-induced behavior
- awareness of the culturally-induced behavior of others, and
- the ability to explain one’s own cultural standpoint

The goal of this study is to assist learners in developing an understanding of their own cultural trait because it has been taken for granted (Bonilla & Cruz-Arcila,

2014), so although we all speak the same language and want to learn a foreign one, our context is heterogeneous (Mora & Golovátina-Mora, 2011). However, Tomalin & Stempleski (2013) highlight, in order to achieve this goal, learners must be able to represent their voices through information sharing. Teachers must build environments in which tales, or "digital storytelling," represent the cultural variety of their students.

Referring to Bowers & Flinders (1990, as cited in Norris et al., 2012), culturally responsive instruction requires students to engage in relevant social action while reading words. Short stories, on the other hand, have significant content that can help students become more socially aware (Byram, 2012, 2021). Isariyawat et al. (2020) indicate that students are able to think more critically about each narrative by creating social links with characters and various items discovered in the stories.

Baker (2009) defines three levels of cultural awareness, which recognize the understanding of one's own culture, the culture upon another, and the dialogue between the two in order to explore social issues of inequity and question them socially and culturally in stories (Norris et al., 2012). This is a fundamental step towards developing cultural awareness and skills such as teamwork and empathy (Yurtsever & Özel, 2021). In view of this study, it is critical to recognize that acquiring a language is not an isolated component, but rather a cultural vehicle (Byram, 2021; Ramos, 2013). Learners can create possibilities to transcend banal prejudices and examine societal concerns relating to their own reality by uncovering and sharing this, by making digital stories. With this in mind, we may comprehend that cultural awareness is a necessary stage in developing critical literacy in English learning.

Critical Literacy

Literacy, in light of this study, does not represent the limited power that education practices have given to the implementation of texts in classes, as the notion of coding and decoding symbols to grasp meaning (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Lankshear & Knobel, 2018), but rather as opportunities to create spaces for critical literacies. Critical literacy “uses texts and print skills in ways that enable students to examine the politics of daily life within contemporary society with a view to understanding what it means to locate” (Bishop, 2014, p. 52); it is about reading texts in order to get beyond their surface meaning (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Gómez-Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019; Lankshear & Knobel, 2018; White & Hungerford-Kresser, 2014).

This teaching perspective, which is even appreciated as a way of being and living (Vasquez, 2013, 2017; Vasquez et al., 2019), recognizes that texts and practices are never neutral (Vasquez, 2017; Vasquez et al., 2019), and that learners deserve to uncover the hidden messages behind the visible text lines (Comber, 2015; Vasquez et al., 2019; Dharamshi, 2018; Vasquez, 2013, 2017) to “reflect upon the role that language and texts play in the construction of the self and the social” (Bishop, 2014, p. 55). Although texts play an important role in any language class, as in the public university where I teach, they are only included with the traditional goal of producing moments in which learners must identify their key content and complete reading comprehension exercises as building vocabulary (Leu et al., 2017; Hickey et al., 2017).

As a result, it is vital to realize that critical literacy is not synonymous with critical reading or critical thinking (Gómez & Leal, 2015; Sultan, 2017; Vasquez et al., 2019). The first relates to a learner's capacity to reflect and evaluate a text, whereas critical literacy refers to the idea of challenging texts and messages rather than just

absorbing information (Riwayatiningsih, 2022) in order to alter social justice and equality (Behrman, 2006; Janks, 2014; Lombardi & Behrman, 2016; Parlindungan, 2017; So, 2016). By allowing learners to problematize story messages, their voices are raised, (Lopez, 2019; Stewart et al., 2020) due to the conventional role reading, or teachers, permits them to play.

Although learners seem to want to read about their preferences (Stewart et al., 2020), ordinary texts and practices may be used to take a critical literacy perspective (Janks, 2014), but that material can be addressed to develop relevance in their lives (Vasquez, 2014). In my setting, I am powerless to modify the reading material assigned to my students; nevertheless, critical literacy moments may be cultivated from any piece of knowledge in order to examine social justice in situations, and any topic can pique learners' attention if it is relevant to their life (Vasquez, 2014; Vasquez et al., 2019).

As a result, critical literacy does not always imply a hostile perception regarding the texts' stance; rather, "it means looking at an issue or topic in different ways, analyzing it, and suggesting possibilities for change and improvement" (Vasquez, 2017). Janks (2014) suggests that critical literacy should enable us to engage more profoundly with the texts we bring into our classrooms and into the lives of our students, as well as contextualize them with their lives outside of school (Bishop, 2014).

In addition, critical literacy is not related to the notion of analyzing text, but with the idea of producing them (Janks, 2010; Luke, 2013; Vasquez et al., 2019). On one hand, learners become more active in the process of portraying their own voices, and on the other hand, text reflects existing issues. Critical literacy is an invitation to bring culturally meaningful artifacts to school that enables meaningful discussions about and understanding of things that matter to different communities (Vasquez et al., 2019).

To open spaces for critical literacy, Lewison et al. (2002) suggest four dimensions of critical literacy that help to develop reflective stances about important social issues presented in texts, and guide the selection of class activities (see George, 2020). Those contend

- Disrupting the commonplace: Problematizing all subjects by questioning texts from the cultural position and determining whether they support or break the current quo.
- Interrogating multiple viewpoints: Reflecting on one's own and others' perspectives, and seeing these various voices and realities as the hushed ones.
- Focusing on socio political issues: Uncovering the links between power and language revealed in the text in order to engage in everyday politics.
- Taking action and promoting social justice: Fostering contemplation places in order to take action on the world in order to transform it.

It is not required to integrate all of these dimensions in order to participate in critical literacy exercises, as text can be inquired by any of those dimensions (Norris et al., 2012). Additionally, for this study, Comber (2006) suggests some questions that may be addressed in order to promote all those critical literacy moments. Those invite readers to unfold hidden messages.

In my case, my purpose is to present learners with opportunities to question their own reality by problematizing and questioning information that appears neutral but has a hidden message to allow them to deconstruct social inequalities (Janks, 2014).

Connecting Digital Storytelling to Cultural awareness and Critical Literacy

I have always utilized tales in my classrooms since they have helped me learn more about myself and the world throughout my life. Although I have used stories in my classes, they have only been addressed to accomplish institutional directions such as making learners foster competencies to achieve reading comprehension and critical reading skills, or making learners write about hypothetical situations that are not aligned with their own realities. Now that I have had the opportunity to delve into the literature and related concepts of this research, I have gained a new perspective on the true power of tales and storytellers.

Essentially, digital storytelling, while similar to the oral tradition of telling stories, provides learners with the opportunity of authorship, allowing them to construct quality material that reflects who they are and what has meaning in their lives, and connects them to their inner selves, others, and society (Ribeiro, 2016). And it appears to be more cohesive to learners' generation when it is executed through the integration of areas that are familiar to them, such as social networks like Instagram. Digital storytelling, on the other hand, allows students to practice their listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities.

Later, digital storytelling appears to be an opportunity to explore learners' backgrounds in ways that reflect their role in society and how they can become aware of their classmates who, despite coming from the same city or studying in the same institution, have a completely different perspective on the world in the face of the same issues. It is not only about evaluating the distinctions that all students in the classroom have, but also about how we can appreciate those differences in order to acknowledge

that we may learn from one another while strengthening our own cultural features and worldview.

Here is when, by the creation of digital stories that reflect cultural traits in front of social issues, critical literacy moments can be enhanced. Spaces where questioning the absolute truth of texts are moments that my higher education students deserve, because literacy is about expanding the knowledge of the world by using a lens in order to transform the hidden messages of social inequality that traditional literacy cannot convey.

This master's program has challenged me to move above the linguistic barrier presented by the standardized assessment processes in my country. I am committed to create places in which students may challenge the truth provided by text by adopting a stand that does not simply remain in the end result of a test or in the achievement of failure in the English subject, but with a real-life transformation of the status quo. Teachers must be prepared to establish environments in which learning may be understood from a number of cultural viewpoints in order for students to have an impact on their communities (Vasquez et al. 2019).

CHAPTER 3

Moments of Cultural Awareness and Critical Literacy through a Digital Storytelling Journal

In this chapter, I describe the methodological process and the approach that constituted the development of this study. It served as the foundation for my qualitative study on how the creation of a digital storytelling journal on Instagram can assist higher education English learners in cultural awareness and critical literacy practices. In addition, I describe the research question that inspired this study, the participants and their setting, the research design, data collection instruments and its analysis.

It is key to stress that the curriculum and materials of the English program at the public university where this study was conducted were respected for this research because they were the content that inspired this study. These were the sources to create digital stories on Instagram from a different perspective that allowed learners to learn about themselves, others and problematize their messages while engaging their language abilities.

5. Methodology

The present research is founded on the assumption that educative settings are unique places represented by human behavior, experience, attitudes, intentions, and motivations (Ahmad et al., 2019), and we teachers seek to comprehend the different social issues and phenomena that can occur in those specific contexts (Anas & Ishaq, 2022) to produce significant knowledge for its members (Jameel et al., 2018). This idea allowed me to understand that a specific topic deserves to explore how things work in

the place where I teach in an in-depth way to, as Anas & Ishaq (2022) argue, “promote greater understanding of not just the way things are, but also why they are” (p. 90).

I began to explore methodological paradigms and the one that best suited my research was the qualitative research, and Leavy (2017) defines that through the exploration of people's subjective experiences and meaning creating processes, qualitative inquiry studies allow researchers to discover the depth of meaning of situated subjects and phenomena of interest. Creswell (2016) indicates how every qualitative research begins with an issue that needs to be addressed or understood via the gathering and analysis of data obtained from individuals who can answer questions that represent personal unique perspectives and viewpoints depending on a specific setting. More than building broad generalization, qualitative studies aim to contextualize the findings regarding a specific context (Sánchez, 2019).

This approach enabled me to comprehend my role as a teacher researcher in my own classroom with the intention of continuing improving my teaching practices and my learners' learning experiences. As stated by Kumaravadivelu (2008), “teachers cultivate and extend research skills that help them and their students to explore problems they themselves have posed about life in and outside the classroom” (p. 14). These features provided an excellent basis for this research to examine and understand learners' experiences in order to see the phenomena from many perspectives in a contextualized situation. In consequence, this study carried out a case study methodology which allowed me to get in-depth examination of my inquiring topic.

5.1. Type of research

A case study is a methodology seen in social and life sciences, as the education field (Yin, 2018) and language Education. A case study is particularly employed where

a relevant phenomenon from real-life context needs an in-depth investigation (Schoch, 2020; Yin, 2018). Schoch (2020) states that one of the most important outcomes provided by the implementation of a case study is that they provide the opportunity to understand and learn about the experiences to the researcher, community and readers. Yin (2018) proposes that in order to comprehend complex social dynamics, scholars need to concentrate on a specific issue or "case" grounded in ordinary life. For this, multiple sources of data are necessary to well know the complete appreciation of the phenomena (Houghton et al., 2017).

What I intended to do was to share my students' storytelling production, and explain how I gave power to their voices to let them express their perception of the world from their own cultural background and how they appreciated different social issues represented in our institutional reading material. I want to reflect on my students' experience using Instagram as a tool to engage their cultural awareness by critical literacy moments to teach English in the public university where I give classes.

Research Question

To help direct my research, I advocated answering the following question: How does the creation of a digital storytelling journal on Instagram engage higher education English learners in cultural awareness and critical literacy practices?

5.2. Instruments

I used different instruments that allowed me to gather data in this case study to better grasp the voices of participants. For instance, three different data gathering techniques took part in this study: Surveys, learners' artifacts, and a teacher's journal.

Survey. To begin this study, I administered a survey (Appendix A) to my students to gain information that helped me to grasp their initial appreciation of the

main issues of this research, which are digital storytelling, cultural awareness, and critical literacy. A survey is a paper-and-pencil feedback form summary that comprises asking participants concise questions (Hancock et al., 2021). I wanted to understand the learners' viewpoints and ideas about embracing Instagram as a medium to create and read stories, meet their and other people's cultural attributes, their appreciation for the university material for the English classes' development, and how they read those. Furthermore, once we completed the study, participants completed a final survey (Appendix B) to determine whether their initial ideas had changed.

Learners' Artifacts. Learners' creation of artifacts played an important role during this study and its analysis. Those reflected how learners used English language to create digital stories on Instagram and engaged institutional material for their English program to raise their cultural awareness and uncover moments of critical literacy moments. According to Yin (2018), artifacts provide a chance for researchers to acquire deeper perspectives of the phenomena, allowing them to capture information that was not visible at the time of observation.

Teacher's Journal. I obtained and documented information from my classes by observing students' short and informal comments, expressions, and any detail that could offer me with a better picture of the insights they experienced in this study. Moreover, the teacher's journal served as a place for me to write my opinions on the observations I found interesting, as well as my reactions to student virtual artifacts. Said by Fusch et al. (2017), journalism is used to gather and remark on all that could be seen and heard about the research with one's personal perspective to find correlations.

5.3. Population

I carried out this research at a public university located in Medellín. This institution offers undergraduate and postgraduate studies, but mainly it is known for its technical and engineering programs that are a referent in the city. The participants of this study were twelve students of technical programs from different areas enrolled in English classes of the university. A flipped classroom approach is employed in all English levels to have learners practice linguistic tasks at home before coming to class and participating in language classes where a teacher assesses the learners' grasp on themes located in the institutional platform (this presents activities of reading, listening, grammar, and pronunciation). Classrooms are equipped with a TV, white board, internet connection, and some have access to smart boards.

Most of the students come from neighborhoods from the city, as well as some regions, municipalities and country's cities. Some of them pay for their studies with their own money, but most of them are participants of governmental plans that provide a scholarship, as "Matricula 0" or "Sapiensa".

5.4. Sample

Students, between 17 and 50 years old, enrolled in two groups of "English 3" participated in this study. Considering students frequently drop out of their classes, I conducted this research in both classes to ensure a significant number of participants. Students' English level proficiency was not preestablished as they did not count with a language certification (some of them could be considered to have an A1 level, while others a B1 level).

Selecting a sample. I collected data during the development of the activities of the English level 3 groups in the second semester of the year, and also from the learners'

English use and accomplishment of tasks on Instagram. Although all the class members accepted the invitation to participate in the project, I decided to select a sample of twelve students.

Although I decided to implement story creation with all of my students, I knew that the analysis of all of that data was going to be tedious and would not represent a significant outcome since many students drop out of courses and do not attend classes; it is for this reason I developed a criteria list to collect representative data. The following were the categories: Active involvement in class, as well as frequent attendance to ensure engagement during the data gathering process and the students' construction of all of the tales on Instagram.

Recruitment procedures: Securing consent. It was required to plan an appointment with the English program coordinator to explain the goal of this study and to assure him that the institutional methodology would be followed. Furthermore, I emphasized that each curriculum topic was going to be used not only to learn English, but also as an input to create digital tales on Instagram based on them to engage cultural awareness and critical literacies. I explained to the coordinator that in class, we were going to take a look at the institutional stories in the platform from a new angle. He accepted and signed the consent letter (Appendix C).

Ethical Considerations. When it comes to a thorough knowledge of social phenomena, qualitative research must pay special attention (Mohd, 2018) in the protection of human subjects, researchers must assess and anticipate ethical problems. Pseudonyms were used to substitute learner names in this publication to safeguard their identity. Furthermore, the location and name of the public university where this study was conducted were omitted. On the other hand, participants and the program

coordinator were told about the study's purpose as well as the sort of information that they would provide with this research. All the learners who agreed to participate, signed a consent letter (Appendix D).

Research design

I had a typical encounter the second week of class to let students know what we were going to accomplish with this project. I chose two groups of English level 3 students, and in both, my students and I developed a lesson as it should be: we covered the themes of the institutional platform, we verified our understanding of the material, and we accomplished the grammatical objectives. Then, based on the dimensions of Lewinson et al. (2002), I asked four questions to listen to learners' opinions about the content studied in order to explore their cultural attributes and generate a critical literacy moment. It was at that point that I announced that we were going to start a digital diary of narratives on Instagram to allow us to write about our own lives based on the answers they provided in our discussion. I was amazed by their volunteerism in both groups, and they all agreed to take part in the initiative.

Despite the fact that we had sixteen academic weeks to cover different stories and grammar topics, I chose the themes I thought were the most important to work on cultural awareness and critical literacy concerns since they allow learners to analyze societal problems and may be a greater opportunity to compose stories. I restructured classes to strike a mix between institutional learning materials, objectives and opportunities for learners to engage in digital storytelling, cultural awareness, and critical literacy. The literature review taught me that any work may be questioned based on common concerns such as power, social exclusion, or stereotypes, and that a key step

in doing so is to problematize them via the students' daily and cultural experiences in order to elicit a critical position.

Table 1

Selected Material from Curriculum for the Project: Plot and Critical Literacy Stance

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Type of material</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Reflections upon critical literacy</u>
The informal Economy	Video	The story talks about a city person who sells on the streets from the city.	Social class Multiple perspectives Authors' purposes Social ideologies Unemployment
Affordable housing	Written story	The story talks about a family who moves to another house.	Social class Multiple perspectives Authors' purposes Social Inequality Poverty and Homelessness
Public transportation	Video	The story talks about the future of transportation.	Social class Multiple perspectives Authors' purposes Social stereotypes Human Rights
Public health	Written story	The story is about a boy who was injured in an accident and needed medical assistance.	Social class Multiple perspectives Authors' purposes Exclusion Health Care Availability

Note. Original names of the stories and their characters have been omitted in order to protect the identity of the institution.

Regardless of the fact that I had already produced moments in which learners develop their own tales that reflect their cultural qualities using digital media, I am exploring the field of critical literacy and its relationship with digital storytelling and cultural awareness. In light of the researchers who inspired this study, I developed a strategy to analyze societal problems before having a discussion in class. Those stories presented social issues as poverty, social class, social stereotypes, exclusion, inequality, among others; however, learners directed their lens of the critical stance. As a result, I

pondered Lewison et al.'s (2002) Four Dimensions of Critical Literacy: disturbing the ordinary, probing diverse points of view, focusing on sociopolitical perspectives, and taking action and supporting social justice. This chart has a description of each step and a sample of the questions I used to promote each (Table 1).

Research development

To begin this research, I requested my students from the beginning of the semester to register an Instagram account using their institutional email, which was absolutely private and aimed to engage learners in meaningful English language learning moments to strengthen their linguistic skills. Then, to understand the first insights of learners about the idea of using English language to create a digital storytelling journal on Instagram, cultural awareness, and critical literacy, I administered a survey (Appendix A) to participants. Then, in the subsequent meetings, we began to create our virtual artifacts on Instagram.

We addressed a different topic in each lesson. According to the institutional model, learners should prepare material each week at home to participate in communicative tasks at class. Thus, we covered all class objectives in each encounter and then analyzed the stories via a new lens. To do this, I employed Lewison et al. (2002) dimensions to facilitate the discovery of further non-explicit signals from the materials they analyzed (Table 2). This dimension also enabled us to identify Tomalin & Stempleski's (2013), and Baker's (2009) three cultural awareness characteristics. Those allow consciousness of their own culture, others, and establish a point of view to tackle social issues in tales (Norris et al., 2012).

Lewison et al. (2002) dimensions invite readers to disrupt the commonplace, interrogate multiple viewpoints, focus on socio political issues, and take action and

promote social justice. To "disrupt the commonplace" of the stories, we brainstormed the main concept of stories and the parts that were taken-for-granted. Then, we questioned what the authors' intention in the text was by attempting to uncover hidden messages, and comprehend the role of suppressed voices in the stories. Because tales are about everyday occurrences in our city, we discussed potential characters who may appear in the story, but their version was not included. In the third step, we discussed a reason why their voices were muted to discover a social issue that may be presented in the stories such as poverty, social class, social stereotypes, exclusion, inequality, among others. Finally, in the last stage of the dimensions, we promoted social justice by creating our own version of the narrative based on our cultural understanding of the story's topic, the story's suppressed voices, and its hidden social issue.

Table 2

Questions to Evoke Critical Literacy Moments by Lewison et al.'s (2002) Dimensions

<u>Dimensions of critical literacy</u>	<u>Aim</u>	<u>Question to inquire texts</u>
Disrupting the commonplace	Problematizing by questioning texts from the cultural position and determining whether they support or break the current quo.	What is the concept of public spaces we have in Medellin?
Interrogating multiple viewpoints	Reflecting on one's own and others' perspectives, and voices and realities of the omitted ones.	What is the author's intention?
Focusing on socio political issue	Uncovering the links between power and language in the text to engage in everyday social problems.	What connection do you find between the text and real-life situations?
Taking action and promoting social justice	Fostering contemplation places in order to take action on the world in order to transform it.	How would you improve the story plot?

To construct our own stories, we had to collect photographs or videos of places in the city that would be used in the narrative of the story, and we had to write a short story in which we were the protagonists. Learners faced the writing processes given by Eisazadeh & Rajendram (2020), which suggested a pre-production, production, post-production, and distribution process to publish their digital tales on Instagram of what was not seen in the story. In this sense, we composed stories for all course participants to read and comment on.

Finally, I conducted another survey (Appendix B) to determine learner engagement with this project and their final insights about it. Throughout this process, I documented everything that occurred in class as well as the many impressions that learners' participation on Instagram allowed me to discern.

Data Analysis

I created four categories to analyze data based on my research question, literature review and conceptual framework.

Telling stories on Instagram to meet language objectives set by the university English program. This category arose from the idea of analyzing how my students encouraged Instagram use as a tool to build their own narratives while simultaneously engaging and reaching the language objectives for their course set by the university English department. The three designed instruments to gather information will serve to analyze this category.

Learners' digital storytelling and cultural awareness. Students' virtual artifacts sparked in this category, as they helped me grasp how digital tales mirrored their ability to convey meanings in texts to construct a new version that allows me to

identify their cultural characteristics. The learners' artifacts and the teacher's journal provide information to get findings related to this category.

Learners' cultural awareness connected with critical literacy. This category was derived via the data collecting analysis and triangulation process. This knowledge allowed me to consider not just how learners might construct narratives based on one's own cultural features, but also how such created narratives question the status quo from institutional "neutral" materials. To analyze this category, the learners' artifacts and the teacher's journal will be examined.

Institutional material to develop cultural awareness and critical literacy. This category took place from the need to determine whether institutional content might be used to engage learners linguistically by incorporating cultural awareness and critical literacy into the learning environment. The surveys, learners' artifacts and the teacher's journal allow one to get a better picture regarding this category.

Summarizing the Information

To make sense of the material gathered from multiple sources for this study, I developed an ongoing examination and interpretation of the data in order to gain a thorough understanding of the issue, draw conclusions (Hancock et al., 2021). For this, I used three strategies to reduce data such as coding, charting and mapping.

Coding. To discover emerging patterns, designate categories, and capture their essence (Schoch, 2020), I coded all of the information that reappeared consistently in the data I gathered. I coded the content from my teacher's journal in order to indicate similar information and establish data links.

Charting: Analysis of learners' artifacts. I went through all of the learners' artifacts uploaded on Instagram for each of the four tales they created. I separated the material into four columns when doing this study. Using this method, I was able to organize information by headings to appreciate participants' answers and summarize it in matrix form (Neale, 2016). I discovered data related to how English was utilized on Instagram, how the narratives represented learners' cultural awareness and critical literacy, and how institutional material was used to assemble the project.

Mapping: I also made a visual structure, which I divided into four sections: initial survey, teachers' journal, learners' artifacts, and final survey. With this map, I was able to get a bird's-eye view of the learners' perspectives during the course of this study's development as it allows the understanding of concepts in a visual way (Mezmir, 2020). This was an ongoing process that helped me grasp the direction of our research and draw conclusions.

Trustworthiness

This case study was created to help readers learn more about digital storytelling, cultural awareness, and critical literacy. All participants' responses are appreciated, and in order to continue working on developing a better language education proposal, all of their responses were respected, and societal stereotypes were avoided since their opinions reflect who they are and what they think. Although working with cultural awareness and critical literacy elicits sensible topics of debate, classrooms were safe spaces to communicate, recognize and celebrate differences and similarities in heterogeneous classrooms, which is part of the process of learning a language.

All participants and the director of the university program were informed of the study's goal, while preserving their right to enhance their language skills. Their identities, on the other hand, will not be revealed. Furthermore, polianguation was employed, which means that all of the participants' numerous replies will be used to form a more exact image of their voices for the study in order to increase the study's validity and reliability.

CHAPTER 4

Engaging Cultural Awareness and Critical Literacy on a Digital Storytelling Journal

In this chapter, I will discuss the key findings I reached after analyzing all of the data I collected while doing this research. Surveys, a teacher's journal, and students' virtual artifacts on Instagram assisted me in identifying some patterns that allowed me to comprehend more about the scenario in which I teach, which is a public university institution, while also displaying a better overview of Instagram as a tool to engage English learning, cultural awareness, and critical literacy. The following research question has been addressed with this study: How does the creation of a digital storytelling journal on Instagram engage higher education English learners in cultural awareness and critical literacy practices? In particular, I arranged four categories: a) Telling stories on Instagram to meet language objectives set by the university English program, b) Learners' digital storytelling and cultural awareness, c) Learners' cultural awareness connected with critical literacy, d) Institutional material to develop cultural awareness and critical literacy.

To present the outcomes of this study, I will use pseudonyms to allude to the students who took part in this study (Table 3). Sections of my teacher's journal and participants' artifacts will be employed to illustrate this story at all stages. However, it is important to emphasize that the majority of the data was obtained in English; and in only certain cases, Spanish dialogues were performed as a medium through which learners conveyed their spontaneous ideas in class and answered the written surveys, which were then translated into English to present the findings.

Table 3

Student Participants

<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>
Olivia	Hugo
Eva	Lucas
Iris	Rudy
	Aquiles
	Hector
	Erick
	Jacob
	Apolo
	Bruno

6. Findings

The significance of lesson planning before digital storytelling to foster language goals. I implemented digital storytelling as a strategy to appreciate culture and disclose social inequalities to foster English language objectives at the university where I teach. However, before attempting to have students represent their narratives on Instagram, it is essential to develop a tactical lesson plan that allows learners to perceive institutional texts as more than just something they must understand to advance to the next English subject, but as an opportunity to problematize their knowledge of the world while learning. The exploration of one's own and others' cultural values, the grasping of institutional material (stories in the platform and grammar content), a critical literacy discussion, and an opportunity to consider social action are some of the components that my lessons included to bridge the institutional objectives and digital storytelling for

students. In my teacher’s journal, I wrote this entry: “Although I told my students of our goals and we already wrote a post on Instagram, I need to continue offering lessons that allow them to understand the class activities' goals and our purpose: an Instagram story.” (Teacher’s Journal, September 06th/2022).

The institutional methodology is based on flipped learning, which requires students to complete their work at home before going to class to share their knowledge. To ensure the success of this practice, I structured the courses into phases with varied exercises to assist students comprehend the need of studying the topics before classes. I provided them with a graphic organizer format in which they could outline the platform's themes in preparation for class (Appendix E). Before composing each Instagram story, I provided some questions in all classes that allowed learners to demonstrate their material comprehension, as well as some questions based on Tomalin and Stempleski's (2013) cultural awareness components and Lewison et al. 's (2002) critical literacy dimensions (Figure 2).

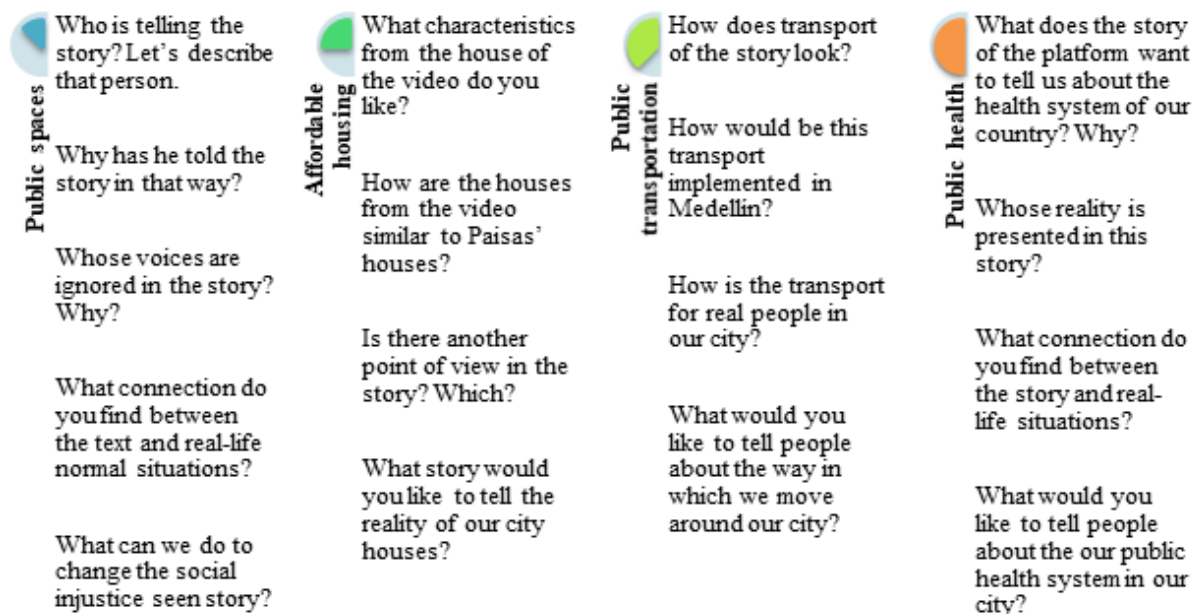


Figure 2. Questions intended to encourage cultural awareness and critical literacy in each class topic.

Because encounters were limited to two hours every week, I had to ensure that learners could work efficiently on the topics while still enjoying the process. I used interactive exercises in the lesson on public transportation to allow students to communicate what they had learned at home while also developing cultural awareness and critical literacy. For example, I began the session by having students complete a puzzle based on a photograph of our city's normal transportation congestion. Then I asked them to describe it using the language they had studied, and then I asked them to compare and contrast it with the story on the institutional platform. After that, I allowed learners to answer questions on cultural awareness and critical literacy (Figure 2) before concluding with a role play in which they adopted a character and represented the message they thought the story did not reveal to the people based on what they have lived. This was critical in moving the final question, which was: What would you like to tell people about the way in which we move around our city?

The goals I kept in mind throughout the process were cultural awareness and critical literacy, and it allowed learners to convey what they understood about the world while also problematizing the stories. Hector, in his first story, allowed readers to see his version of the story while integrating grammar, personal cultural traits, a problem to address and a possible solution, as well as a real picture that illustrated his story (Figure 3).

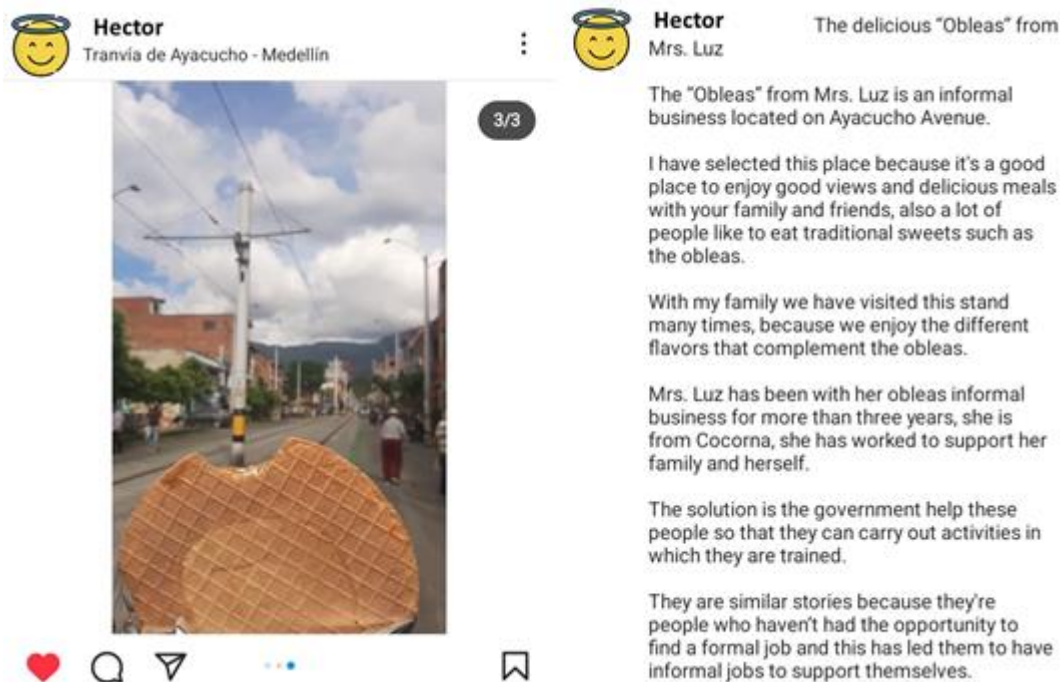


Figure 3. Hector's post and its connection with lesson planning.

Jacob, a participant, stated in the final survey that the classes were different from what he was used to; nonetheless, the manner in which lessons were approached was dynamic and allowed him to create his stories. I found this information when analyzing the category about telling stories on Instagram to meet language objectives set by the university English program.

Learners use real-life photographs to tell tales, communicate meaning and language learning. Students can create their own narratives utilizing digital devices while including textual content and, most crucially, visual assistance (Lambert, 2013; Robin, 2006, 2008, 2016). After interpreting the data collected under the category named "learners' digital storytelling and cultural awareness", I discovered that photographs are used by students not only to embellish their tales and fulfill a requirement on the Instagram application, but also to share their unique point of view on a certain issue in their local community. Students showed through pictures to their

classmates that their stories were not imagined ones, and that those can help readers to better understand their texts. This is an entry on my teacher's journal:

It is amusing to observe how students are more concerned with what photo they put on Instagram than with crafting a story. Today, Erick told me that he required more time to visit the location and snap the perfect photo he intended. Although he feels shy about taking a photo on the street, he told me that an image is the most important element to tell a story. (Teacher's Journal, August 16th/2022)

Learners utilize real pictures to communicate their thoughts and become familiarized with the language they use in their digital stories. On the one hand, photographs may be used to illustrate scenarios, elements, and even the learner's daily life which also are used to write their ideas. Those visual elements can be used to produce a contrast between what the stories on the institutional platform exhibit and what they intend to express. In addition, photos are used to construct short phrases relating to the grammar and topic discussed in the story they created. For example, Bruno, Apolo, and Iris created their narratives emphasizing their stories and the photographs they took (Figure 4). They used the photographs as a way to accomplish the objective of the unit we were working on which was: The learner can use vocabulary, form sentences in the present perfect tense and write short simple sentences to talk about the informal economy (Higher Education Institution Medellin, 2018). It is evident when they use ideas such as "I have eaten a lot of empanadas" (Iris, 2022), or "I have noticed that the cart was full of beautiful flowers" (Bruno, 2022).



Figure 4. Apolo's (left), Iris' (center) and Bruno's (right) photos about informal economy.

Digital storytelling offers a distinct advantage that allows learners to use language in light of their own background and context (Green, 2013). To build cultural awareness and critical literacy, what happens in a classroom to promote those moments is a key factor, but what learners live outside of class (Moradi & Chen, 2019) represent one of the most important factors which can support meaning transmission by the use of real-life photographs.

Digital storytelling facilitates learners' discussions about realities and real-world concerns. I found that the building of an Instagram digital storytelling journal portrays the learners' realities and community challenges once I reduced the data of the category "learners' digital storytelling and cultural awareness". Typically, while learning a new language, the teaching approach is focused on the study of the target language (Byram, 1986, 2012, 2021; Esteban-Nuñez, 2021); nevertheless, this journal helps students to understand who they are and what they want to improve in their community while using language to convey meaning. Digital narratives provide a

chance to learn about oneself and get away from textual cultural stereotypes (Işcan et al., 2017).

In the majority of the created tales, learners provided answers based on what they know, do, and observe on a daily basis about the various topics. Despite the fact that learners' narratives were based on the stories presented in their English level's institutional platform, over half of the learners believed that the stories there mirrored a reality different from the one they have experienced, according to their answers on the initial and final surveys (Figure 5).

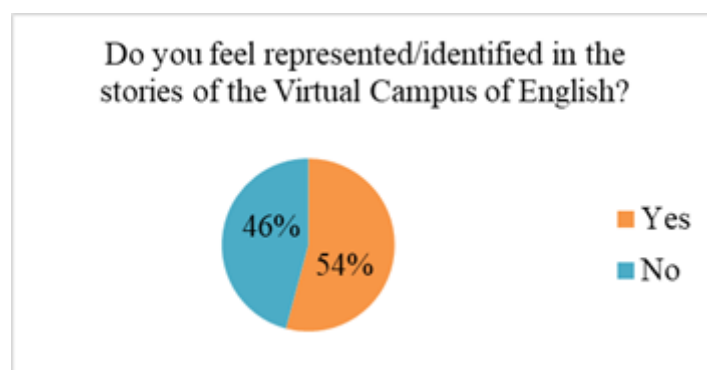


Figure 5. Learners' beliefs about the institutional platform and their reality connection.

Learners noticed this since the beginning of the study, and, as I wrote in my teacher's journal, they consider it is important to rewrite the text from other point of view: "Today learners and I discovered that the story number one on the platform appears to be very different to what we have experienced in our lives... and we need to tell our own version urgently" (Teacher's Journal, September 22nd/2022).

When we discussed the platform's topic and content regarding affordable housing, students used their Instagram profiles to share what they understood about owning a home in our community. Although the text on the institutional platform described the quality of housing that the government provides to residents from Brussels; Aquiles, Eva, and Lucas made entries that helped us comprehend that the

narrative in the platform uncovered messages of unfairness, poverty, pollution, humiliation, and a lack of chances for many local citizens.

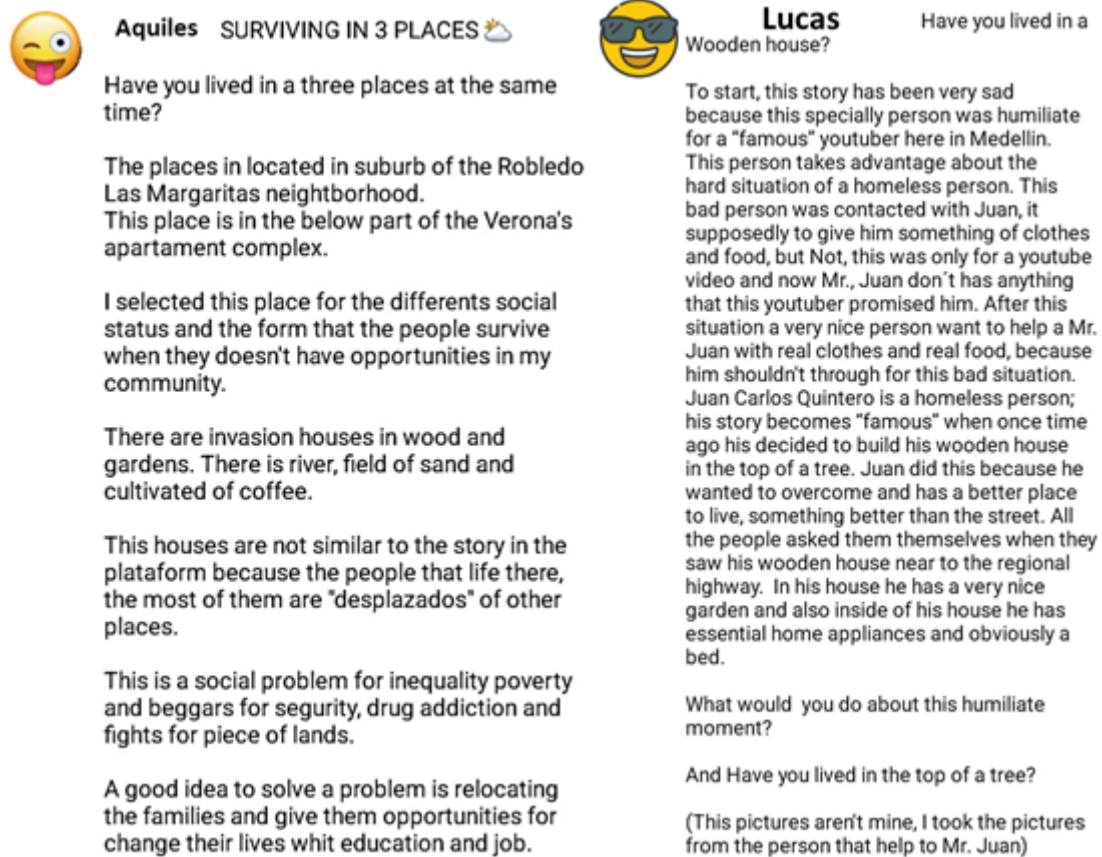


Figure 6. Aquiles' (left) and Lucas' post for affordable housing (right).

For example, Aquiles' narrative highlights the variety of residences in our community as well as the many socioeconomic statuses that coexist in a single neighborhood (Figure 6). In the text, he conveys the real truth that he has had the opportunity to face, and problematizes the message provided by the text. On the other hand, Eva enables readers to grasp that not everyone in our city had access to the house mentioned in the platform's narrative, and that people sometimes should live beneath the bridges (Figure 7). Lucas presents a tale about how individuals can only afford a tree home and how society ignores these difficulties, even though youtubers have earned money off of them (Figure 6).



Eva The people from the bridge 🧑🧑🧑

Have you ever lived in a house under a bridge?

This house is in Cristo Rey's Park in Medellin. I chose this house because it seems uncommon and sad 😞, because not all people have the same opportunities of living in a house with facilities.

It is a house under a bridge; however, the owners have there a bed, a tv 📺, a fridge, a garden 🌻🌻 and one dog 🐕. In Christmas they have decorated the house. 🎄

They are kind people, and the dog is very popular around the zone.

They live in the poverty and the pollution of the place due to a tree which is full of rats 🐭, they don't have a decent home to live in.

A good idea to solve this problem is that the government help homeless people.

This story is not similar with the one in the platform because this story doesn't have any in common with the unit #5

Figure 7. Eva's discussion post about affordable housing.

As these posts reveal, digital stories connect individuals with their own perceptions of their reality (Ribeiro, 2016), allowing them to think more critically about each narrative in order to develop social connections issues (Isariyawat et al., 2020). The self-identification of the culture allows learners to develop a critical stance; it also enables students to engage the target language for real-world purposes.

Developing social justice in learners' local settings through digital storytelling. Writing digital storytelling on Instagram became a platform for students to express not only their personal knowledge of the world in English language, but also to question the current social problems and status quo in their local communities while advocating for a better living for all (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Gómez-Jiménez & Gutiérrez, 2019; Lankshear & Knobel, 2018; White & Hungerford-Kresser, 2014). Although students worked on this project under a private Instagram account, they formed a community with their classmates and teacher when they became followers of one another.

Learners demonstrated that language is limited to a means of communicating and expressing ideas to others. It is a means of presenting their everyday grievances in front of their lives, while they also go beyond by providing solutions to them. Each Instagram post contained elements related to the participants' cultural daily basis characteristics, their positive or negative stance in front of the covered topic on the platforms' stories, and more significantly, each entry proposed ways to build a better community to make our living spaces more egalitarian and socially just (Lombardi & Behrman, 2016; Parlindungan, 2017). Instead of addressing an imaginative problem, we talked about ones that are real.

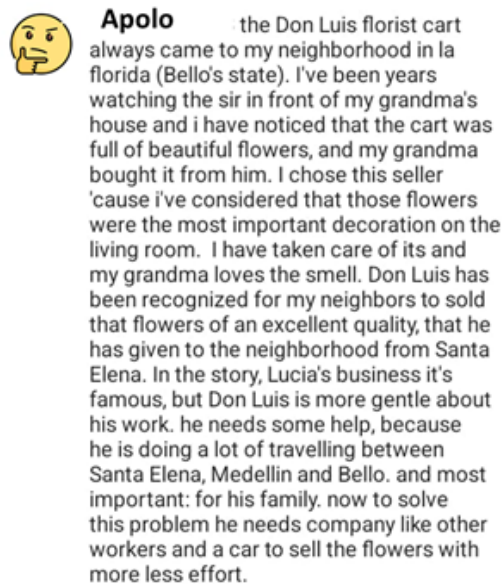



Figure 8. Apolo's post and his point of view about the informal economy.

In their digital story, each learner attempted to advocate an action that indicated changes in the power structure and allocation of resources, or even little actions that can affect our communities. Iris, in her story discussing public transportation, emphasized the problems we face traveling around the city; however, she also advised that we should find a better method to get around the city, such as by bike (Figure 9). Apolo, on the other hand, claims that the informal economy is vital to his family because they


cherish the flowers "don Luis" sells, and that by supporting informal sellers, we can establish a better society (Figure 8). Similarly, Rudy suggests that there should be no distinction between those who have access to private or public health care, since we all deserve competent medical care (Figure 9).

When reading the entries of my learners, I wrote this in my teacher's journal:

I have read some of the posts my learners submitted, and it is impossible not to feel how your heart beats with intensity. On one hand, I really feel surprised about all their language accomplishments, but also, I cannot avoid being fascinated about their ideas to make the world a better place to live. (Teacher's Journal, October 4th/2022).

 **Rudy** | "Que elegancia la de Francia"

Today I want to tell you about how I take care of myself, first, I usually take a lot of vitamin C, to increase my defenses.
Also in some occasions I do a little of exercise.
In addition, I have acces to public health system named "SURA" and in my opinion the service it's very bad. But the company in which I work, gives to me a private service called "servicio complementario" that service has a very good attention, it's very fast, complete, and efficient, it's for that reason I chose the title of this post.
I remember the last time when I went to the emergency center by a great pain on my back, I went for my "private" service so the attention was very fast, with many exams and medicines for free, and also they give to me a private room.
Otherwise, when I went for my "EPS" I had to wait a long time.
I Think the private service, has more coincidences with the history that the "EPS" services.
My opinion its also, we have many social problems with the public healt on Medellin (maybe also Colombia?)
I think the private service not should be the good service, and the public service should be the bad service. They don't have to play with the healt of the people...
And a posible solution it's a cheap private service who can attend more people.

 **Iris** | MY FRIEND OF ADVENTURES 🍷💖🍌🌿🍷

This transport is very popular for the community, almost a member of a family has a motorcycle 🏍️. The reason is in that is more cheap to travel than a car 🚗 and you can arrive more fast.
This is my transport, it has helped me very much('cause it has given me the Chance to get Job and study in another city) and to has make me so happy because I have been in wonderful places with good people.
I always travel to Medellin City because I study there five days a week . Before I worked in Itagüi and Bello.
This transport isn't similar to air taxis in the story, because you can travel to where you want without any problem, while these taxis have a route.
For Medellin, Those air taxis must fly above the 🚇 metro, and to be next to service stations with educated people. Because another way that will be dangerous.
I consider, all cities in Colombia 🇨🇴 have problems in the way peole move, because there are many population, every time there are more people and less streets for walk 🚶 . It's a real problem. We should consider to use another way to move like a 🚲 bike as far as possible.

Figure 9. Rudy's post about public health (left) and Iris' post about transportation

(right).

Although I could identify all of the ideas their life experiences have given them for becoming change agents, learners also recognize that the digital journal had an aim, one that helped them to see the world from a different perspective as they shared their perspective in the final survey (Figure 10). In the initial survey, learners did not recognize the platform's stories as an opportunity to see the world from other lenses. However, Rudy sent a message to me during the process of writing stories and I wrote my thoughts about: "Rudy thanked me because he told me that I transformed the way he looked at the world. In reality, all I have done is read and listen to what they have discovered about their own world."

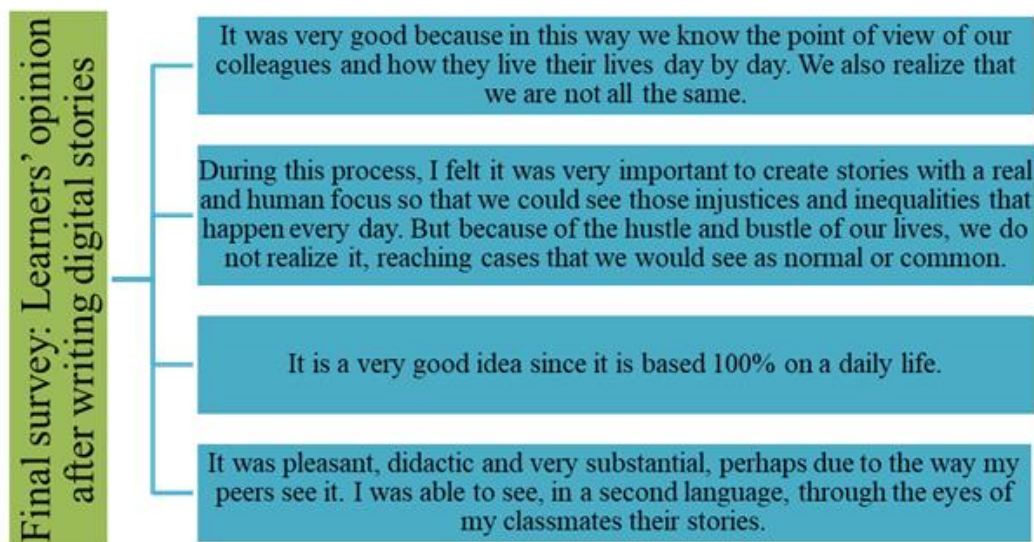


Figure 10. Some learners' final beliefs after completing the digital storytelling journal on Instagram.

As the sessions progressed, learners experienced more key literacy moments even without my assistance. Learners used our sessions to unearth messages and adopted this as a way of life (Vasquez, 2013, 2017; Vasquez et al., 2019). In the final survey, students expressed their thoughts on the journal's development, and several

agreed on the necessity of writing about their experiences. This finding emerged from the category titled “learners’ digital storytelling and cultural awareness.”

Learners use a digital journal to support face to face participation in classes.

When poliangulating the data about “telling stories on Instagram to meet language objectives set by the university English program”, I discovered that during the process of writing narratives on Instagram, students demonstrated that a digital journal is more than simply a place to write stories in English about their everyday lives and issues; it is also a place that allows them to connect with face-to-face class dynamics and alter their roles in terms of participation and involvement.

Throughout the initial stages of a project, learners had a passive attitude toward the progress of the lessons. I noted their interventions were little, except from what they retrieved from the institutional platform's material. Consequently, as the lessons progressed, their participation grew. Learners’ digital stories were merely the tip of the iceberg since classes were where they elaborated on their thoughts and had genuine discussions with their peers about cultural topics and critical literacy moments by communicating experiences, thoughts, and points of view on the platforms’ topics and discovered issues on the texts.

I realized that students have many ideas to contribute to the class and feel pleased by sharing those as they feel valued. In the first and final surveys I conducted to gain knowledge about the learners' beliefs about the creation of tales, I found that from the beginning to the end of the project, all learners greatly enjoyed sharing stories about their everyday lives (Figure 11).

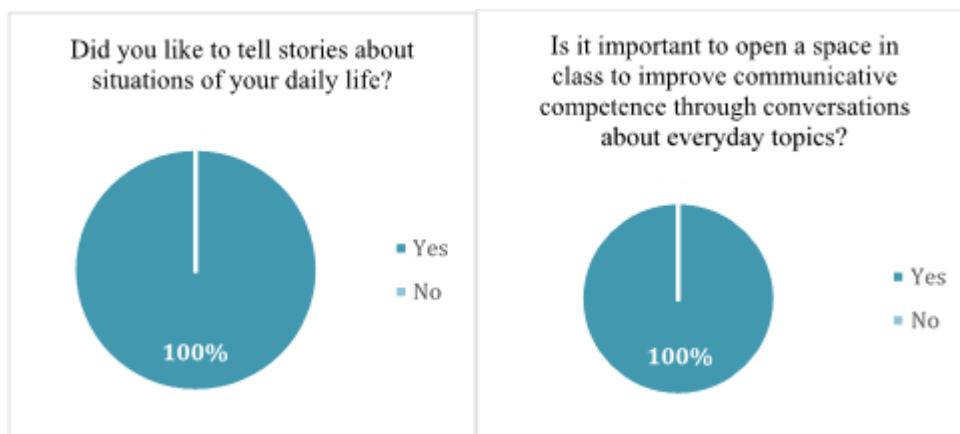


Figure 11. Students' opinion about telling their own narratives.

Olivia, for example, wrote a post on the informal economy in which she detailed her experience with "Doña Sandra" while presenting her critical viewpoint (Figure 12). Although we can see how she used her digital journal to enhance her cultural knowledge and critical literacy, her story was only a small portion of what she shared and discussed in class. We were discussing the many realities that informal merchants confront in class, and I took notes in class on what she said:

Olivia today helped me to realize that her narrative deserves to be heard in her voice. She mentioned in class that, while we are discussing informal sellers as individuals who are quite different from us, she realized that Doña Sandra is also a single mother like her... yet life has placed her in unequal circumstances. Without her involvement in class, I would not have been able to perceive this standpoint. (Teacher's Journal, August 25th/2022)



Figure 12. Olivia's story about informal economy.

A digital story journal allows students to develop a dynamic and intimate interaction with the content as well as with themselves (Yurtsever & Özel, 2021). New thoughts emerged in face-to-face class after the writing process. Bruno wrote about the public health system (Appendix F) and expressed his support for it. This narrative was unique from the others, as the one written by Jacob (Appendix G), Erick (Appendix H) and Hugo (Appendix I). We could grasp why, though, by listening to Bruno's intervention in class. I wrote the following note regarding Bruno's story: "Bruno's story is different, since he works in a public health facility... His experiences are certainly unique, and his participation in class provided us with a comprehensive picture of the issue." (Teacher's Journal, September 22nd/2022)

Digital storytelling encourages English learners to develop their communicative abilities and appropriation of the institutional material. After composing stories in which students explore their cultural ideas and critical viewpoints through many themes, they have a deeper knowledge of the institutional content available on the site. This knowledge, however, was not in terms of increasing the capacity to answer comprehension questions in the target language, but of employing the information in the texts to move beyond the traditional patterns of reading and writing.

After analyzing the learners' artifacts on Instagram, I discovered that appropriation of the institutional platform means a way to comprehend the material, but with a different aim. When a learner goes beyond the surface meaning of a text to connect with his or her own life, problematize messages that are taken for granted, and utilize the acquired ideas to produce a new text with a real purpose, a teacher knows there is appropriation. A digital storytelling journal is a tool that enhances the relationship between narratives and learners since it enables them to share transformational ideas with others rather than just fictitious things, allowing them to grow in understanding of who they are and their role in society. Regarding this idea, I wrote this entry on my teacher's journal:

I spent a long time believing that learners' objectives had to be confined to replying to my comprehension questions; but they have shown me that they can do more with the same topics' knowledge: they can construct and dream about a better society. It is amazing to see how much insight they have as they can talk about the platform's stories while simultaneously using it to talk about their lives and question social structures. (Teacher's Journal, October 8th/2022)

The institutional material is an opportunity for learners to learn about the English language, at the same time we might broaden their scope by realizing that any text has perspectives transmitted by its writers, and its messages can serve to question the systems. In the final survey, the majority of learners believed that employing this strategy helped them understand the platform's contents better (Figure 13). One of the learners claimed that “the job done with the stories is good because it helped me learn many new words and reinforce the topics of the virtual platform” (A learner comment in

the final survey). I identified this finding with the data gathered in the category “institutional material to develop cultural awareness and critical literacy.”

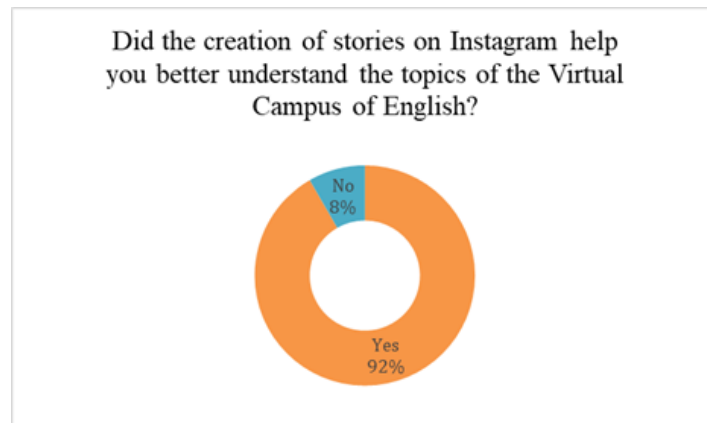


Figure 13. Students' perspectives on their grasping of institutional material after the project completion.

CHAPTER 5

Considerations for creating a Digital Storytelling Journal to Engage Cultural Awareness and Critical Literacy

The current qualitative research attempted to discover how the creation of a digital storytelling journal on Instagram engaged higher education English learners in cultural awareness and critical literacy practices. This study arose from the idea of promoting English language in the university where I teach by empowering higher education students to think beyond the traditional notions of reading, writing, and answering comprehension questions about text, that for this case were the institutional material they should study in their English course. For this, I designed lessons that were not only limited to achieving the course goals, but also lessons that allowed learners to grasp the material they needed to study in order to write new stories that reflected who they and their communities are, as well as the society they want in a digital scenario like Instagram.

In this chapter, I will respond to the research question that guided this study: How does the creation of a digital storytelling journal on Instagram engage higher education English learners in cultural awareness and critical literacy practices? In addition, I will explain the connection between my findings in this study and the literature review I introduced in Chapter 2. Furthermore, I will discuss the implications of this study, illustrate the limitations I encountered, and describe how this work might be used as a reference for future research.

7. Conclusions

I believe that stories are everywhere, and that everyone has a story to tell that may teach people about themselves, others, and the world. This study was a strategy that allowed students to create a digital storytelling journal on Instagram in which they may differ significantly from traditional English use. To accomplish this, a sample of twelve students read and comprehended four of the given texts for their English level 3 course on their institutional platform, and then posted four new versions of those stories based on their own perspectives on the world through cultural awareness and critical literacy practices.

The purpose of this study was to discover how the creation of a digital storytelling journal on Instagram engages higher education English learners in cultural awareness and critical literacy practices via the application of surveys, the gathering of virtual artifacts from students on Instagram, and the notes from my teacher's journal. I divided the data into three groups for analysis: Telling stories on Instagram to meet language objectives set by the university English program, Learners' digital storytelling and cultural awareness, Learners' cultural awareness connected with critical literacy, and Institutional material to develop cultural awareness and critical literacy. Coding, Charting and Mapping were the strategies I used for data reduction.

To answer the research question of this work, the outcomes of this research indicate that lesson planning is essential prior to digital storytelling. Furthermore, digital storytelling enhances learners' use of real photographs to communicate meaning, talks about their different lived realities, real-world issues of their local communities, and expresses social justice demands. Also, it encourages learners' face-to-face

participation, and institutional material appropriation. In the section that follows, I will explain how the findings in each category relate to the literature review for this study.

How Telling stories on Instagram can meet language objectives set by the university English program

In light of the data I collected and analyzed, my findings indicate that by creating a digital storytelling journal that incorporates learners' unique points of view and seek of social justice, I established a link between the institutional syllabus of the higher education where I teach, the engagement of cultural awareness and critical literacy spaces. Throughout the development of this study, I found a significant connection between the principles of Eisazadeh & Rajedram (2020) and Choo et al. (2020) which highlight the concept of having phases to create digital tales. Eisazadeh & Rajedram (2020) claim that the process of building tales has four stages which are pre-production, production, post-production, and distribution of digital stories. Although those principles do not imply that a lesson is required to write stories, there is a need to construct a preceding action to ensure the achievement of the story aims. Additionally, Yurtsever & Özel (2021) declare that repetitive tasks and lessons are required to guarantee a link between the narratives and linguistic skills. I discovered that, once a teacher develops lessons that allow learners to create their tales, as Robin & McNeil (2019) state, stories can possess rich value in terms of ideas that facilitate discussions about current issues of the personal reality of learners.

The information I gathered enabled me to realize that, while a story can emerge from any subject or situation, a plan must be followed to achieve all the desired goals. In my journal, I explained the great value of developing lessons that permit learners not

only to participate in spaces to reflect about who they are and the society they want, but also spaces that allow them to learn the language based on the objectives addressed for their English level:

It's fascinating to reflect on how, at the start of the process of producing tales, my students were frightened of writing because they assumed it would be a solitary activity. Although I have no doubts in their abilities to convey their thoughts, I know the importance of following a lesson plan that helps them to connect all of the objectives. Writing requires dedication and actions that assist the process while also generating student interest. (Teacher's Journal, September 28th/2022)

Certainly, a digital storytelling journal empowers learners to improve all linguistic competences in a target language (Castillo-Cuesta et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2020), but as my findings suggest, it also supports learners' face to face participation in classes, an idea that connects with Robin & McNeil (2019) notion of increasing motivation processed by creating stories. Similarly, Grant & Bolin (2016) and Nassim (2018) suggest that stories assist learners to raise their voices and social media like Instagram.

Digital storytelling engages learners' and teacher's cultural awareness

According to the findings of this study, when students create a digital storytelling journal on Instagram, they employ real-life images to transmit meaning and explain in English language the many realities they and their local surroundings have.

These ideas are associated with Hidayati et al.'s (2017) argument that while learners are learning a language and exploring any issue, they cannot avoid thinking

about their cultural characteristics. It was evident when students presented their stories as they did not write about fictitious settings or fantasy characters, but rather about genuine concerns in their communities that are observable to others and represented by photographs they take for their Instagram artifacts. Lambert (2013) and Robin (2006, 2008, 2016) argue that digital storytelling enables students to express meaning by including different media such as images and redefining their roles as authors. Furthermore, I relate these concepts to the findings of Tarigan et al. (2021), who declare that Instagram helps learners to present their ideas and narratives in a more personal way.

Additionally, I found that learners' stories were inspired by the material they have to read on the institutional platform; however, those served as an input to reflect about the different practices, behaviors, and concerns of individuals or a community (Kiziltan & Ayar, 2020). This viewpoint is shared by Ribeiro (2016), who claims that digital storytelling provides learners with a tool for portraying and engaging in dialogues about their life goals, self and others' perspectives, and society. On the other hand, Tomalin & Stempleski (2013) suggest that once learners work on cultural awareness, they reflect about the self, the others and develop a dialogue between both (Byram, 2012; Mora & Golovátina-Mora, 2011; Moncada, 2016), notion what could be evidence on one of the entries of my teachers journal: "Artifacts reflect not just the learner's unique viewpoint on the platform's concerns, but also the individuals in their community. It's fascinating because they can recognize themselves as people, the others, and express views based on power dynamics" (Teacher's Journal, September 15th/2022). However, some authors only rely the cultural awareness practices on the discovery of the target language, rather in the exploration of their own culture or both as

Hernandez et al. (2021), Hidayati et al. (2017) and Mashudi et al. (2022). I realized that, while a foreign culture may appear to be highly appealing to learners, learners can actively participate in learning activities based on once their own experiences and traits are taken into account. On the other hand, authors like Byram (2012), Mora & Golovátina-Mora (2011), Moncada (2016) and Tomalin & Stempleski (2013) agree with this study when they say that developing a conversation with various cultures, including the own, is necessary to promote cultural awareness.

Learners' cultural awareness as a step to find critical literacy moments

The main takeaway from this category is that a digital storytelling journal facilitates learners' discussions about real-world concerns and encourages them to use writing to advocate for social justice in local settings.

This study was based on the ideas of Lewison et al. (2002) which invite teachers to promote problematization texts following dimensions to disrupt the commonplace, interrogate multiple viewpoints, focus on socio political issues and take action. Once those dimensions were explored in class, learners read text allocated in their institutional platform, they transgressed the traditional notions of comprehending ideas, decoding and coding words (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Lankshear & Knobel, 2018) to create their personal narratives on Instagram that uncover a political message on them. When they did it, they took a stand, favorable or adverse, to expose social problems in their communities, viewpoints that are shared by writers such as Comber (2015), Vasquez et al. (2019), Dharamshi (2018), and Vasquez (2013, 2017).

Collected data shows that classes were places to study material and communicate ideas; and Instagram, in particular, became a site where students reflected

on social concerns to bring ideas to class, as well as a medium for producing writings that proposed ideas to improve the society in which they live (Behrman, 2006; Janks, 2014; Lombardi & Behrman, 2016; Parlindungan, 2017; So, 2016). For example, when learners wrote their own versions of stories about the informal economy topic, they each advocated ideas to their reality and the difference between the text in the platform, but they also tried to analyze a different problem that the text did not cover, such as the lack of opportunities and the social inequality that society faces on a daily basis. According to authors such as Sosa & Casas (2012) and Rincón & Clavijo-Olarte (2016), tales assist learners to acquire a point of view on their knowledge of their reality, which makes learning relevant.

Finally, a digital storytelling journal altered how students viewed texts. As time passed, learners viewed text through a new lens, which is consistent with the views of Vasquez (2013, 2017) and Vasquez et al. (2019), who claim that literacy is not a topic to be covered in class, but rather a way of life that is involved in the encouragement of these moments.

Institutional material to develop cultural awareness and critical literacy

Based on what data allows to know at this point, a digital storytelling journal connects learners in the comprehension of the institutional material. In terms of input acquisition, it enables learners to answer knowledge and structure questions, but it also enables learners to appropriate the material on the platform to create new knowledge.

The artifacts posted by the learners on Instagram helped me comprehend that any text has the potential to encourage the learning of all language skills, but it can also serve learners to learn about themselves, others, and the world (Carreo, 2018; Hazaea,

2020; Kerry-Moran & Aerila, 2019; Le Hunte & Golembiewski, 2014) and call for a better society (Behrman, 2016; Vasquez et al. 2019) . This conclusion is consistent with Janks' (2014) claim that teachers and students can interact more deeply with texts when such texts enable them to link with their lives (Bishop, 2014) through developing critical literacy.

Vasquez (2017) and Vasquez et al. (2019) claim that texts are not neutral words that lack an intention, and once learners understand a text, they can engage it to transcend and examine societal concerns. Authors like Comber (2015), Dharamshi (2018), Fajardo (2015) and (Leu et al. (2017) also agree with this idea when they assert that knowledge can be built in everyday sources.

Limitations

Although this study achieved favorable results in the setting in which I teach, I encountered a number of challenges and limitations over which I had no control. For example, my pupils and I had extremely little lesson time. We had two hours per week to achieve institutional goals, work on cultural awareness and critical literacy, and develop and post a story on Instagram; additionally, to seek alternative sources that provided us with a better understanding of other perspectives on the issues and themes on the institutional platform. It is essential for students to visualize the same phenomenon, but in a different context, in order to connect it to their own lives and develop a stronger position in the face of any social issue they may encounter when participating in cultural awareness and critical literacy activities.

I also discovered issues with student attendance and course permanence. Although classes at this institution are known for having a large number of students,

learners did not attend all of them, impacting their participation in the development of crucial concepts to work on their digital tales. On the other hand, several students dropped out of the course without warning, which had a significant impact on the participants' involvement. Additionally, learners' writing abilities were barely developed and it affected how learners conveyed their views in writing. Furthermore, while we as teachers may believe that everyone understands how to handle and administrate an Instagram or other social media account nowadays, a large proportion of students are unfamiliar with social media platforms, which led to unfavorable perceptions and remarks at the start of the research.

Finally, the flipped classroom methodology requires students to work on the material prior to class at home to participate in lessons about the topic and facilitate the development of the activities; however, students did not complete the tasks, which hampered the development of the lessons and the grasping of cultural awareness and critical literacy practices.

8. Pedagogical implications

The outcomes of this study, in broad terms, imply that creating a digital storytelling journal on Instagram engages higher education English learners in cultural awareness and critical literacy practices while fulfilling language objectives for the English level they are studying. These study findings suggest some implications for university administrators, university English teachers, and policymakers to engage these practices and the prospects for improving our teaching and learning practices in our context.

Although it is critical to establish goals for the various English levels at the higher education level that correspond to the country's language policies, university

administrators should empower the curriculum, and the freedom of teaching the law allows them to do it in a new way. They must promote a curriculum that extends beyond the goal of gaining language skills and preparing students to take and succeed in national tests. Additionally, this study encourages university administrators to allow students to go beyond language exploration, coding and coding of written signs, and answering reading comprehension questions in order to develop curriculums that value students as integral human beings who can use build stories using the target language as a communication tool to raise their voices and achieve a better life for all. Furthermore, a curriculum should be created based on the lives and cultures of the learners, therefore providing opportunities for them to share their perspectives on any problem is vital. University-accessible digital materials should stress the need of bringing learners' outside lives into the classroom.

Similarly, this study is an open door for university English teachers to comprehend that our classrooms do not allot homogeneous humans, but rather heterogeneous ones who need to be heard and valued, and that their worldview might represent a new lens to see our reality. It is critical to empower the institutional curriculum to provide places and lessons that make learners experience institutional resources as a chance to construct their own knowledge of the world, rather than as something foreign to their lives. Typically, university teachers are challenged by the large number of students who abandon English courses because they see it as a duty instead of an opportunity, and this study suggests that teachers should acquire the skills to negotiate curriculum in preference of only adopting it.

Finally, this research suggests to policymakers that higher education English learning should not be based on viewing higher education learners as individuals who

merely need to acquire a foreign language to participate in the labor market.

Encouraging learners to share stories about who they are and their communities on a daily basis, as well as provide solutions for social justice, should be used as a governmental approach to ensure community members' participation in building the society they deserve.

Certainly, a national plan, without a doubt, should suggest more than an English level of proficiency that university students must acquire, but classroom activities that invite all members of the learning community to take on a different role that goes beyond the acquisition of language competences to empower the transformation while using the language as a vehicle.

9. Further research

Future research requests for studies concerned with improving the limitations I identified while developing this work, such as negotiating more time to work on each platform's topic to develop in class and devoting more time to the process of writing stories with learners, searching for strategies that promote learners' attendance and engagement in the English course, developing writing abilities on learners, and working more effectively with institutional approaches such as flipped classroom and instruction about social media.

In addition, further research on establishing digital storytelling journals that involve cultural awareness and critical literacy should focus on higher education settings and how curriculum may be integrated with learners' experiences and societal concerns to produce meaningful learning. I also believe there is a need for additional studies that engage students in the development of tales for a longer length of time, such as a full academic semester, since I only had the opportunity to do so for a couple of

months. Future research, for example, should provide learners with a thorough understanding of cultural awareness and critical literacy practices, as well as teacher training, particularly for those who are paid by the hour and may not have a genuine connection to the university's curriculum or institution.

Finally, I truly think there is an urgent need to conduct research into how English university teachers connect the institutional curriculum and the designed materials those possess with practices that go beyond traditional notions of reading texts, and how those curricula are empowered to allow learners develop their cultural awareness and claim for social justice through language when writing their personal narratives.

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11. Appendixes

Appendix A: Initial Survey

ENCUESTA 1: Tus creencias antes del estudio

Nombre:

Fecha:

Instrucciones: Marca con una **X** la opción que está más acorde con tu opinión frente al enunciado.

	Digital Storytelling	Cultural Awareness	Critical Literacy
#	Preguntas	Sí	No
1	¿Te gusta contar anécdotas y/o situaciones de tu cotidianidad?		
2	¿Estás interesado en contar historias sobre lo que te gusta, crees y piensas?		
3	¿Crees que las características de Instagram (como subir historias, publicaciones con texto, fotos y vídeos, leer y comentar publicaciones de otros) permiten que sea una buena herramienta para plasmar tus historias cotidianas para el aprendizaje del inglés?		
4	¿Crees que el uso de Instagram puede ser una herramienta efectiva para practicar tu inglés?		
5	¿La creación de historias en Instagram podría ayudarte a comprender mejor los temas del Campus Virtual de inglés?		
6	¿Te gustaría leer las historias creadas en Instagram por tus compañeros para aprender inglés?		
7	¿Consideras que es importante aprender sobre las características culturales de tus compañeros?		
8	¿Conocer las características culturales de tu compañero es beneficioso para aprender un idioma?		
9	¿Es importante abrir un espacio en clase de expresión oral para mejorar la competencia comunicativas a través de conversaciones sobre temas de la cotidianidad?		

10	<i>¿Interactuar a través de las publicaciones de Instagram puede ayudarte a mejorar tu comunicación e interacción con tus compañeros de curso?</i>		
11	<i>¿Crees que Instagram puede ser una herramienta para reconocer rasgos propios de tu cultura a través de la creación de historias?</i>		
12	<i>¿Crees que la interacción en Instagram con tus compañeros de curso y sus narraciones puede ser una herramienta para aprender sobre sus rasgos culturales?</i>		
13	<i>¿Te sientes representado/identificado en las historias del Campus Virtual de inglés?</i>		
14	<i>¿Consideras que las historias del Campus Virtual de inglés pueden ser leídas desde diferentes perspectivas?</i>		
15	<i>Cuando tú lees el material del Campus Virtual de inglés, ¿tienes presente la mirada o perspectiva de alguna otra persona como el punto de vista de un vendedor ambulante?</i>		
16	<i>¿La idea de crear un diario digital en Instagram para contar tu propia versión de las historias usando el inglés es interesante para ti?</i>		

Elije una de las preguntas de la encuesta y explica tu respuesta.

Yo elijo la pregunta número _____.

Appendix B: Final Survey

ENCUESTA 2: Tus creencias después del estudio

Nombre:

Fecha:

Instrucciones: Marca con una equis la opción que está más acorde con tu opinión frente al enunciado.

Digital Storytelling			Critical Literacy
-----------------------------	--	--	--------------------------

#	Preguntas	Sí	No
1	<i>¿Te gustó contar anécdotas y/o situaciones de tu cotidianidad?</i>		
2	<i>¿Fue fácil contar historias sobre lo que te gusta, crees y piensas?</i>		
3	<i>¿Crees que las características de Instagram (como subir historias, publicaciones con texto, fotos y vídeos, leer y comentar publicaciones de otros) permitieron que fuera una buena herramienta para plasmar tus historias cotidianas para el aprendizaje del inglés?</i>		
4	<i>¿Crees que el uso de Instagram fue una herramienta efectiva para practicar tu inglés?</i>		
5	<i>¿La creación de historias en Instagram pudo ayudarte a comprender mejor los temas del Campus Virtual de inglés?</i>		
6	<i>¿Te gustó leer las historias escritas en Instagram por tus compañeros para aprender inglés?</i>		
7	<i>¿Consideras que fue importante aprender sobre las características culturales de tus compañeros?</i>		
8	<i>¿Conocer las características culturales de tu compañero fue beneficioso para aprender un idioma?</i>		
9	<i>¿Es importante abrir un espacio en clase de expresión oral para mejorar la competencia comunicativa a través de conversaciones sobre temas de la cotidianidad?</i>		
10	<i>¿Interactuar a través de las publicaciones de Instagram te ayudó a mejorar tu comunicación e interacción con tus compañeros de curso?</i>		

11	<i>¿Crees que Instagram fue una herramienta para reconocer rasgos propios de tu cultura a través de la creación de historias?</i>		
12	<i>¿Crees que la interacción en Instagram con tus compañeros de curso y sus narraciones fue una herramienta para aprender sobre sus rasgos culturales?</i>		
13	<i>¿Te sientes representado/identificado en las historias del Campus Virtual de inglés?</i>		
14	<i>¿Consideras que las historias del Campus Virtual de inglés pueden ser leídas desde diferentes perspectivas?</i>		
15	<i>Cuando leíste el material del Campus Virtual de inglés, ¿tuviste presente la mirada o perspectiva de alguna otra persona como el punto de vista de una madre?</i>		
16	<i>¿La idea de crear un diario digital en Instagram para contar tu propia versión de las historias usando el inglés es interesante para ti?</i>		

Después de haber participado en la creación de un diario de narrativas en Instagram, ¿Cuál es tu opinión del trabajo realizado y de este proceso?

Appendix C: Informed Consent Letter for the English program

coordinator

TÍTULO DE LA INVESTIGACIÓN: #DIGITALSTORYTELLING: INSTAGRAM AS A TOOL TO ENGAGE CULTURAL AWARENESS AND CRITICAL LITERACY IN HIGHER EDUCATION ENGLISH LEARNERS

INVESTIGADOR:

Jackeline Valencia Londoño

jackeline.valencia@upb.edu.co

3113174044

PROPÓSITO DEL ESTUDIO

Estimado Coordinador de programa,

Yo, Jackeline Valencia Londoño, soy estudiante de la Maestría en Procesos de Aprendizaje y Enseñanza de Segundas Lenguas de la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana. Uno de los requerimientos para aspirar al título de magíster es el desarrollo de un proyecto de investigación como parte de mi trabajo de grado (tesis). Para dicho trabajo, he propuesto la investigación “#Digitalstorytelling: Instagram as a Tool to Engage Cultural Awareness and Critical Literacy in Higher Education English Learners”. Este trabajo de investigación está dirigido por la Mg. Monica María López Ladino, Profesor Asociado de la Maestría en Procesos de Aprendizaje y Enseñanza de Segundas Lenguas de la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana.

El propósito de este estudio es describir cómo el contenido de la plataforma institucional puede convertirse en una oportunidad para que los estudiantes universitarios creen narrativas digitales que potencialicen su nivel lingüístico, conciencia cultural y literacidad crítica.

Es importante que usted entienda las razones por las cuales se está haciendo este estudio y que implicaciones tiene. Por favor, lea la siguiente información cuidadosamente y pregunte al investigador cuando algo no esté claro para usted o si necesita mayor información.

Procedimiento

Como parte de la investigación se hará la recolección de datos dentro de los grupos denominados “Inglés 3” que me fueron asignados este semestre. Dicha recolección de datos consiste en realizar encuestas, tomar apuntes de observación sobre las clases y muestras de narraciones desarrolladas en una red social por los estudiantes. Esta recolección de datos se planea desde el 8 de agosto hasta el 29 de octubre del 2022.

Esta carta, entonces, tiene por objeto solicitar su autorización para que yo, en el marco de este proyecto de investigación, pueda llevar a cabo el trabajo de campo para

desarrollar esta investigación. A los estudiantes que vayan a apoyar esta tarea se les entregará una forma de consentimiento similar. Aquellos que participen en esta tarea lo harán en completa libertad y se espera que no haya ninguna coerción para su colaboración. Ellos estarán en completa libertad de no participar, sin que ello pueda constituir motivo de represalias en la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana. Ellos estarán en derecho de ver el producto final y, de no estar de acuerdo con algo en el mismo, se harán los cambios del caso.

CONFIDENCIALIDAD

Las respuestas en este estudio serán anónimas. No se escribirá ningún tipo de información que revele la identidad de los estudiantes o de la institución donde se realizará la investigación. Para efectos de confidencialidad, se utilizarán seudónimos para los participantes, y generaliza la información sobre la institución.

INFORMACIÓN DE CONTACTO

Si tiene preguntas acerca de este estudio, puede contactar al investigador en cualquier momento. Su información la encontrará en la primera página de este documento.

puede contactarme directamente al correo jackeline.valencia@upb.edu.co. También puede contactar al Coordinador Académico del programa, Mg. Rubén Darío Cano Blandón, en el correo ruben.cano@upb.edu.co.

CONSENTIMIENTO

He leído la información en esta carta y estoy de acuerdo con la participación de los estudiantes de esta institución en esta investigación.

Firma del Coordinador de programa. _____ Fecha _____

Firma del investigador _____ Fecha _____

Appendix D: Informed Consent Letter for the Participants

TÍTULO DE LA INVESTIGACIÓN: #DIGITALSTORYTELLING: INSTAGRAM AS A TOOL TO ENGAGE CULTURAL AWARENESS AND CRITICAL LITERACY IN HIGHER EDUCATION ENGLISH LEARNERS

INVESTIGADOR:

Jackeline Valencia Londoño

jackeline.valencia@upb.edu.co

3113174044

PROPÓSITO DEL ESTUDIO

Estimado Estudiante,

Yo, Jackeline Valencia Londoño, soy estudiante de la Maestría en Procesos de Aprendizaje y Enseñanza de Segundas Lenguas de la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana. Uno de los requerimientos para aspirar al título de magíster es el desarrollo de un proyecto de investigación como parte de mi trabajo de grado (tesis). Para dicho trabajo, he propuesto la investigación “#Digitalstorytelling: Instagram as a Tool to Engage Cultural Awareness and Critical Literacy in Higher Education English Learners”. Este trabajo de investigación está dirigido por la Mg. Monica María López Ladino, Profesor Asociado de la Maestría en Procesos de Aprendizaje y Enseñanza de Segundas Lenguas de la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana.

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Esta carta, entonces, tiene por objeto solicitar su autorización para que yo, en el marco de este proyecto de investigación, pueda llevar a cabo el trabajo de campo para desarrollar esta investigación. A los estudiantes que vayan a apoyar esta tarea se les entregará una forma de consentimiento similar. Aquellos que participen en esta tarea lo

harán en completa libertad y se espera que no haya ninguna coerción para su colaboración. Ellos estarán en completa libertad de no participar, sin que ello pueda constituir motivo de represalias en la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana. Ellos estarán en derecho de ver el producto final y, de no estar de acuerdo con algo en el mismo, se harán los cambios del caso.

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INFORMACIÓN DE CONTACTO

Si tiene preguntas acerca de este estudio, puede contactar al investigador en cualquier momento. Su información la encontrará en la primera página de este documento.

puede contactarme directamente al correo jackeline.valencia@upb.edu.co. También puede contactar al Coordinador Académico del programa, Mg. Rubén Darío Cano Blandón, en el correo ruben.cano@upb.edu.co.

CONSENTIMIENTO

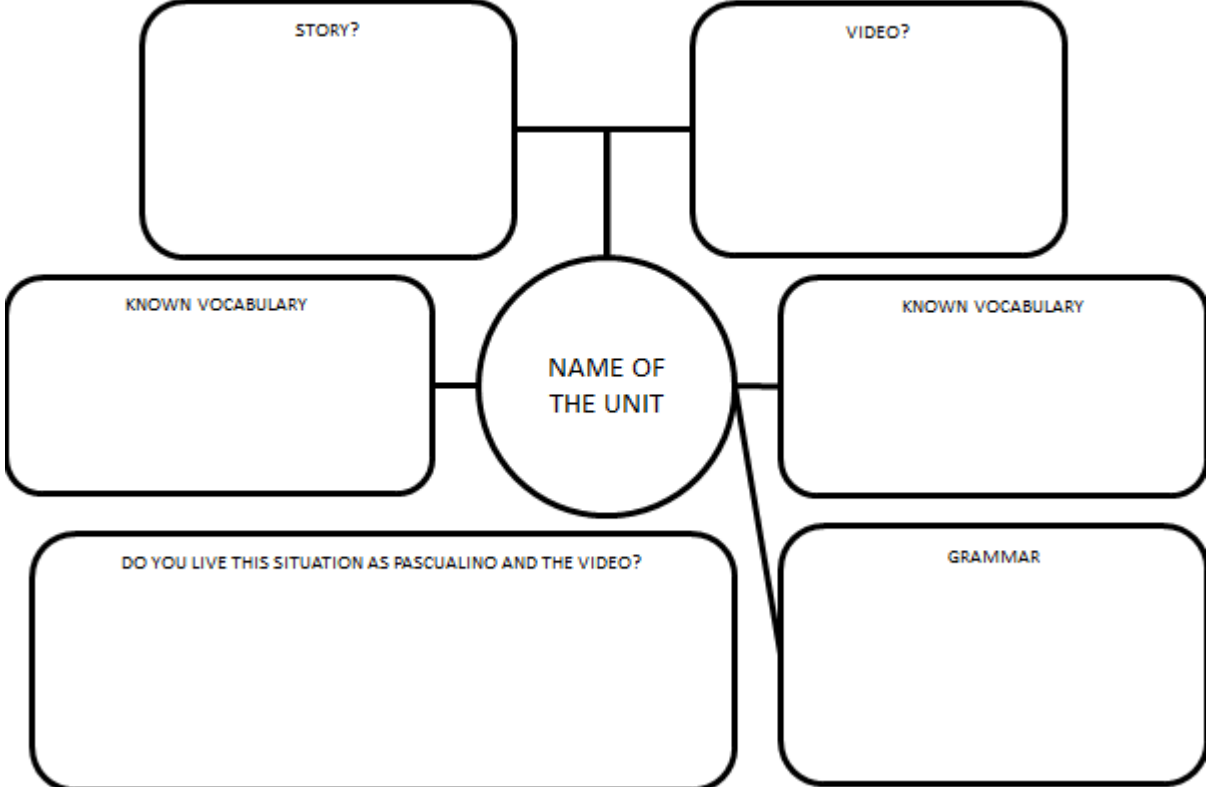
He leído y entiendo toda la información suministrada y he tenido la oportunidad de hacer preguntas. Entiendo que mi participación es voluntaria y soy libre de retirarme en cualquier momento, sin dar ninguna razón o justificación. Entiendo que se me entregará una copia del consentimiento y acepto voluntariamente participar en este estudio.

Firma del investigador. _____ Fecha _____

A continuación encontrará un apartado para diligenciar su firma. Fecha _____

Appendix E: learners' format to complete before coming class

UNIT #	YOUR NAME:
--------	------------



```
graph TD;
    A((NAME OF THE UNIT)) --- B[STORY?];
    A --- C[VIDEO?];
    A --- D[KNOWN VOCABULARY];
    A --- E[KNOWN VOCABULARY];
    A --- F[DO YOU LIVE THIS SITUATION AS PASCUALINO AND THE VIDEO?];
    A --- G[GRAMMAR];
```

Appendix F: Bruno's story about public health



Bruno My name is **Bruno** and I want to tell you that I am part of the health service at Sura's house. I personally believe that it is a very good service because it favors both the rich and the poor, facilitating the movement of people with mobility difficulties and terminal illnesses, among others, carrying Nursing service (sampling and administration of medications), doctors (illness monitoring), physical and respiratory therapy (better quality of life and proper management of disability) Caguro plan (accompaniment to newborns), dentistry (for elderly people and people with mobility problems).
This service is provided throughout the metropolitan area from Caldas to Barbosa and the east (Guarne, Marinilla, Sanctuary, La Ceja, El Retiro, San Antonio de Pereira, Rionegro, Llano Grande, among others)
It is a pride to be part of the best home health service in Colombia.
I believe that although we have many shortcomings in the health system in Colombia, we have an excellent health service compared to many countries in Colombia, we all have access to it by paying or subsidized.



Bruno



Appendix G: Jacob's story about public health



Jacob
in Colombia!

The public health

I take care of myself doing with a healthy diet. I don't like go to the hospital for the periodic checkup, I hate that the doctor only type in your computer and finally only send Acetaminofen"

I don't have access to the public health, but I am cotizante in the EPS Sura, really in this country between public health and private health is not difference. Both system fail to all users. 8 months ago, I had an urgent appointment with the otology... Yes! 8 months have passed and I don't think that appointment will ever come. In this country it's hour of remove the EPS, because the principal problem of hospitals and clinic is that the EPS They do not provide enough resources for proper operation.

The solution is reform alls the EPS

Appendix H: Erick's post about public health



1 Me gusta

Erick : COLLAPSE IN PUBLIC HEALTH. 🙄💀🙄🙄

This hospital belongs to the municipality of Bello, has two cedes, one for children and one for adults.

Unfortunately, corruption and administrative mismanagement make it a bad experience for some citizens to consult these IPS.

The lack of resources sometimes causes doctors to exceed and the emergency department to collapse.

This history does not resemble that of the platform since users repeatedly cannot be treated for lack of professionals.

Appendix I: Hugo's post about public health



2 Me gusta

Hugo | "La eterna espera que desespera"

It is no secret to anyone that the health system in Colombia is very bad, the waiting rooms are full of people seeking medical help or help from a nurse.

accessing public health in Colombia is very complicated, because the waiting rooms are always full and it takes hours to give you attention.

I have had experiences like you are, where it has taken more than two hours for me to be attended

The solution to this problem is to have more care centers, so that everyone has access to public health and does not have to wait much hours.