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DIGITAL STORYTELLING AS AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO FOSTERING CREATIVITY AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

The rapid development of digital technologies has transformed the ways in which learners access, process, create and communicate knowledge. In English Language Teaching (ELT), these developments have encouraged teachers to move beyond conventional language exercises towards learning experiences that integrate language, creativity, technology and meaningful communication. Digital storytelling has emerged as one such innovative approach. It combines the traditional art of storytelling with digital resources such as images, written text, narration, music, sound effects, animation and video to create short multimodal narratives. The present paper examines digital storytelling as a pedagogical approach for fostering creativity and English language development in the English language classroom. Drawing on relevant literature on digital storytelling, multimodality, constructivism, multiliteracies, technological pedagogical content knowledge and experiential learning, the paper discusses how digital storytelling can provide learners with opportunities to develop vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing, listening, speaking, pronunciation, communication and digital literacy. The paper also considers the role of collaboration, learner autonomy, motivation, critical thinking and reflection in digital storytelling activities. It argues that digital storytelling can transform learners from passive recipients of language into active creators of meaningful multimodal texts. At the same time, successful implementation requires careful task design, appropriate technological support, teacher guidance, manageable cognitive demands and responsible use of digital resources. The paper concludes that digital storytelling has considerable potential as a learner-centered approach to English language education because it brings together language learning, creativity, technology and purposeful communication within a single classroom activity.

Keywords: *Digital Storytelling, English Language Teaching, Creativity, Language Development, Multimodality, Digital Literacy, Learner Autonomy, 21st Century Skills.*

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INTRODUCTION

The nature of language learning has changed considerably with the growth of digital technology. English learners today encounter language not only through textbooks and classroom conversations but also through videos, podcasts, social media, digital advertisements, online stories, websites, presentations, animations and other multimodal forms of communication. Consequently, English language classrooms need pedagogical approaches that recognize the changing nature of communication and provide learners with opportunities to use language in meaningful and creative contexts.

Traditional language teaching has often placed considerable emphasis on vocabulary exercises, grammar practice, reading comprehension and controlled writing activities. These practices remain important for language development but learners also need opportunities to use English for authentic communication, personal expression, collaboration, problem-solving and creative production. Digital storytelling provides a way of bringing these dimensions together. It allows learners to construct stories by combining language with photographs, illustrations, recorded narration, music, sound effects, video clips, animation and other digital elements.

Digital storytelling can be understood as the creation of a short narrative through the integration of traditional storytelling techniques and digital media. Robin describes digital storytelling as a powerful technology-supported educational tool because it allows learners to communicate ideas by combining different forms of media. Lambert similarly emphasizes the importance of personal voice, narrative construction, creativity and reflection in digital storytelling. Thus, digital storytelling is not simply the use of technology to present a story. It is a process through which learners plan, compose, design, revise and communicate a meaningful narrative.

The value of digital storytelling in English language education lies particularly in its ability to integrate language learning with creativity. When learners create a digital story, they must decide what they want to communicate, organize their ideas, select appropriate vocabulary, construct sentences, develop a sequence of events, prepare a script, record their voice, select visual materials and revise the final product. The activity therefore creates a meaningful context in which several aspects of English language development can occur simultaneously.

The present paper discusses digital storytelling from a conceptual and pedagogical perspective. It does not report an empirical investigation or present primary data. Instead, it synthesizes relevant theoretical perspectives and existing scholarship to examine how digital storytelling can contribute to creativity and English language development. The paper also proposes practical ways in which teachers can integrate digital storytelling into English language classrooms.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

The paper has the following objectives :

1. To examine the concept and pedagogical significance of digital storytelling in English language teaching.
2. To explore the relationship between digital storytelling and creativity.

3. To discuss how digital storytelling can support the development of English language skills.
4. To examine the contribution of digital storytelling to learner engagement, collaboration, autonomy and digital literacy.
5. To relate digital storytelling to relevant theories of language learning and educational technology.
6. To identify practical principles for implementing digital storytelling in English language classrooms.
7. To discuss the challenges and limitations associated with the use of digital storytelling.
8. To suggest directions for future pedagogical practice and research.

CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

The present paper follows a conceptual and literature-based approach. It draws on existing scholarship concerning digital storytelling, English language teaching, multimodal learning, creativity, multiliteracies, constructivism, experiential learning and educational technology. Rather than measuring the effectiveness of digital storytelling through a particular classroom experiment, the paper analyzes how its characteristics correspond with established principles of language learning and learner-centered pedagogy. Therefore, the discussion focuses on the pedagogical possibilities of digital storytelling and on the conditions under which it can be meaningfully integrated into English language classrooms.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Digital storytelling has received increasing attention as an educational practice because it combines narrative, technology, creativity and communication. Robin identifies digital storytelling as a technology-supported learning practice that can engage learners in creating meaningful narratives while developing technological and communication skills. Lambert's work on digital storytelling also highlights the importance of personal expression, narrative voice, creativity and community in the construction of digital stories.

The educational value of digital storytelling has been examined across different learning contexts. Wu and Chen's systematic review demonstrates the broad pedagogical relevance of digital storytelling and identifies its potential for supporting learner engagement, creativity, collaboration and multimodal communication. In language education specifically, systematic reviews have reported that digital storytelling has been used to develop different language skills, particularly writing and speaking, while also supporting motivation and digital literacy.

Sabari and Hashim's systematic review of digital storytelling in English language teaching indicates that many studies have employed project-based approaches and that writing is an important area of language development within digital storytelling activities. Their review also identifies the potential of digital storytelling for supporting the four language skills. More recent systematic work by Yu and Zeng further indicates that digital storytelling in English language education has been associated in the literature with communication confidence, digital

literacy, language development, motivation, learner autonomy, collaboration and cognitive engagement.

Research focusing on particular language skills provides additional support for the pedagogical relevance of digital storytelling. Studies have examined its relationship with speaking development, writing performance, vocabulary learning, reading comprehension and learner engagement. For example, Nami and Asadnia examine learner-created digital stories in relation to vocabulary learning, while Ajabshir investigates digital storytelling in relation to EFL writing and different dimensions of language performance and engagement. Bai and Xian examine digital storytelling in an EFL speaking context, demonstrating the relevance of storytelling tasks to oral language development.

Therefore, the literature suggests that digital storytelling should not be viewed merely as a technological activity. Its significance lies in the interaction between language, narrative, creativity, multimodality and social communication. At the same time, the literature also indicates the need for careful instructional design. Digital technology by itself does not guarantee language development. The educational value of digital storytelling depends on the quality of the task, the teacher's guidance, the linguistic objectives, opportunities for revision and feedback and the extent to which learners actively construct meaning.

RESEARCH GAP

Although existing scholarship has established the pedagogical relevance of digital storytelling, several areas require further conceptual and pedagogical attention. Much of the existing literature concentrates on individual language skills, particularly writing and speaking rather than considering how digital storytelling can integrate language development with creativity as interconnected learning processes. There is also a need to examine more closely how learners' creative decision-making operates throughout the complete storytelling process, from idea generation and script development to visual design, narration, revision, and reflection.

Another area requiring attention is the relationship between digital storytelling and the changing nature of literacy. Contemporary learners need to interpret and produce texts that combine linguistic, visual, auditory and spatial modes. Digital storytelling provides a natural environment for this kind of multimodal composition. However, its role in developing both conventional English language abilities and broader multimodal communication skills deserves greater pedagogical consideration.

Existing studies also vary considerably in their educational contexts, learner groups, task designs, technological environments and assessment procedures. Consequently, digital storytelling should not be treated as a uniform instructional method. Its effectiveness is likely to depend on how it is integrated into the curriculum and how language objectives are connected to creative production. A more integrated conceptual framework is therefore useful for understanding digital storytelling as a process of language development, creativity, communication and digital meaning-making.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Digital storytelling is compatible with several influential theories of learning and language education. These perspectives help explain why storytelling activities can create meaningful opportunities for English language development.

CONSTRUCTIVISM AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

Constructivist approaches view learning as an active process in which learners construct knowledge through interaction with their environment and through engagement with meaningful tasks. Digital storytelling reflects this principle because learners do not simply receive information. They construct a story, make decisions, connect ideas and produce a final digital artefact.

The social dimension of constructivism is equally important. Vygotsky emphasises the role of social interaction in learning. Digital storytelling can create opportunities for learners to work in pairs or groups, discuss ideas, negotiate meaning, exchange feedback and jointly solve problems. When learners discuss the sequence of a story or decide how to express an idea in English, language becomes a tool for meaningful interaction rather than merely an object of study.

MULTILITERACIES AND MULTIMODALITY

The concept of multiliteracies proposed by the New London Group provides an important theoretical foundation for digital storytelling. Contemporary communication involves multiple modes, including linguistic, visual, audio, spatial and digital forms. Language learning therefore needs to address not only the ability to read and write conventional texts but also the ability to interpret and produce multimodal communication.

Digital storytelling naturally embodies this principle. A learner may write a script, select an image, record narration, add background music, arrange visual elements and combine them into a coherent narrative. Each mode contributes to meaning. The learner therefore develops awareness that communication involves choices about language as well as visual and auditory representation.

TECHNOLOGICAL PEDAGOGICAL CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

The TPACK framework developed by Mishra and Koehler provides another useful perspective. It emphasizes the relationship between technological knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge. Digital storytelling becomes educationally meaningful when technology is connected to a clear language-learning purpose.

For example, a teacher may ask learners to create a digital story about a personal experience. The content objective may involve narrative writing and vocabulary development, the pedagogical objective may involve process writing and peer feedback and the technological dimension may involve a digital story-authoring platform. The three dimensions work together rather than functioning independently.

EXPERIENTIAL AND PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Digital storytelling is also closely connected with experiential and project-based learning. Learners engage in a sequence of activities that may include selecting a topic, researching, planning, writing, designing, recording, editing, presenting and reflecting. Learning occurs through the process of creating a meaningful product.

This process gives language a practical purpose. Instead of completing isolated sentences merely to practice grammar, learners use grammar to communicate ideas in a story. Instead of memorizing vocabulary independently, they select words that contribute to the meaning and atmosphere of their narrative. Language becomes part of purposeful action.

DIGITAL STORYTELLING AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

The relationship between digital storytelling and English language development can be understood through the complete storytelling process rather than through a single language skill. A well-designed digital storytelling task can involve listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, discourse organization and interaction.

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Story creation provides a meaningful context for vocabulary learning. Learners need words to describe characters, settings, emotions, actions, relationships and events. Vocabulary encountered in such contexts can be connected to a meaningful narrative rather than learned as isolated lists.

Teachers can also encourage learners to make deliberate vocabulary choices. A learner writing a story about a difficult journey, for example, may need vocabulary related to movement, emotions, weather, conflict or decision-making. The need to communicate a specific meaning creates a genuine reason for learning and using new vocabulary.

GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT

Digital storytelling can also provide opportunities for purposeful grammar practice. Narrative writing naturally requires learners to use different tenses, conjunctions, pronouns, prepositions, descriptive structures and complex sentences.

The teacher can design tasks around specific grammatical objectives without reducing the activity to grammar drills. A story about a past experience may encourage appropriate use of past-tense forms while a future-oriented story may require expressions of prediction, possibility or intention. Grammar is consequently learned and practiced as part of communication.

WRITING DEVELOPMENT

Writing is central to many digital storytelling activities because learners generally prepare a script before recording the story. The script-writing stage can support several aspects of the writing process, including planning, drafting, organization, cohesion, revision and editing.

Digital storytelling is particularly compatible with process writing. Learners can begin with a simple idea, develop it into a sequence of events, draft a script, receive peer or teacher feedback, revise the language and prepare the final narration. This process encourages learners to see writing as an activity involving development and revision rather than as a one-time classroom exercise.

SPEAKING AND PRONUNCIATION

The narration component of digital storytelling provides a meaningful opportunity for speaking practice. Learners have to read or deliver their scripts

clearly and appropriately. They can practice pronunciation, stress, rhythm, intonation, fluency and expression.

The possibility of recording and re-recording can reduce some of the pressure associated with immediate classroom speaking. Learners can listen to their own recordings, identify problems, make improvements and record again. This creates a form of self-monitoring that can contribute to greater awareness of oral language.

LISTENING DEVELOPMENT

Listening can be incorporated at several stages. Learners may listen to model stories before creating their own, listen to classmates' stories during presentation, or review their own recordings during editing.

Teachers can also use digital stories as listening texts by asking learners to identify the main idea, sequence events, infer meanings, recognize emotions or respond critically to the content. Thus, the digital story can function both as a product created by learners and as an instructional text used for language comprehension.

READING AND COMPREHENSION

Reading can be integrated into digital storytelling when learners research a topic, read model stories, examine source materials or read one another's scripts. Reading authentic or semi-authentic materials before creating a story can provide learners with vocabulary, expressions, narrative structures and background information.

Digital storytelling can therefore create a productive relationship between reading and writing. Learners read to gather information and language resources and then transform what they have learned into a new narrative.

DISCOURSE AND COMMUNICATION

One of the significant advantages of storytelling is its emphasis on connected discourse. Learners need to organize individual sentences into a coherent sequence. They must establish relationships between events, maintain continuity, use appropriate transitions and create a meaningful beginning, development, and conclusion.

This encourages learners to move beyond sentence-level accuracy towards broader communicative competence. They learn that effective communication depends not only on individual sentences but also on organization, coherence, cohesion, audience awareness, and purpose.

DIGITAL STORYTELLING AS A MEANS OF FOSTERING CREATIVITY

Creativity is one of the central dimensions of digital storytelling. Learners are not simply reproducing information supplied by the teacher. They are expected to make choices and construct something of their own.

Creativity begins with idea generation. Learners may create stories from photographs, personal experiences, short prompts, quotations, objects, historical events, fictional situations, poems or social issues. A single prompt can produce multiple narratives because learners interpret it differently.

The next stage involves narrative creativity. Learners decide who the characters are, where the

story takes place, what happens, what conflicts emerge and how the story ends. They may choose realistic or imaginative situations and experiment with different narrative perspectives.

Linguistic creativity is also involved. Learners search for appropriate expressions, descriptive vocabulary, dialogue, figurative language and sentence structures. They learn that language can be used not only to provide information but also to create atmosphere, emotion, humour, suspense and meaning.

Digital design further expands creative possibilities. Learners decide which images should accompany particular sections, how long an image should remain on screen, where narration should occur and whether music or sound effects contribute to the intended mood. These choices require learners to think about the relationship between different modes of communication.

Revision is another important component of creativity. Learners may discover that an image does not match the narration, that a section of the story is unclear or that the ending does not effectively communicate the intended message. They must reconsider their choices and modify the product. Therefore, creativity becomes an iterative process rather than a single moment of inspiration.

DIGITAL STORYTELLING, LEARNER ENGAGEMENT AND AUTONOMY

Digital storytelling can create a greater sense of learner involvement because learners have meaningful choices within the task. They may select the topic, develop the narrative, choose images, determine the presentation style and decide how to communicate their message.

Such choices can contribute to learner autonomy. Learners gradually become responsible for planning, monitoring, evaluating and improving their own work. They can search for vocabulary, consult digital resources, review model stories, listen to their recordings and revise their scripts.

The teacher remains important in this process but the teacher's role changes from being the sole source of information to that of facilitator, guide, language adviser and feedback provider. Learners assume greater responsibility for constructing the final product.

COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION

Digital storytelling can also function as a collaborative learning activity. Groups can distribute responsibilities according to the requirements of a particular project. One learner may develop the script, another may work on visual materials, another may record narration and others may contribute to editing and presentation.

However, collaboration should not simply mean dividing the work into separate individual tasks. Meaningful collaboration requires learners to discuss decisions, negotiate alternatives, explain their choices and reach agreement. Such interaction creates opportunities for authentic language use.

Peer feedback is particularly useful. Learners can review each other's stories and comment on clarity, organization, vocabulary, pronunciation, creativity and the relationship between language and visual elements. Feedback should be constructive and

focused on improvement rather than merely identifying errors.

DIGITAL STORYTELLING AND 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

Digital storytelling can support several competencies associated with contemporary education. Creativity is developed through idea generation and multimodal composition. Communication is developed through narration and presentation. Collaboration is encouraged through group projects and peer feedback. Critical thinking emerges when learners select information, evaluate sources, make design decisions and consider audience needs.

Digital literacy is another important dimension. Learners need to understand how digital resources can be located, selected, adapted, organized and communicated responsibly. They also need to develop awareness of copyright, attribution, privacy and responsible online behaviour.

Thus, digital storytelling can connect English language learning with broader educational objectives without treating technology as an end in itself.

A PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR DIGITAL STORYTELLING

A digital storytelling activity can be organized as a sequence of manageable stages.

The first stage is **story selection and idea development.** The teacher provides a topic, theme, image, quotation, situation or open-ended prompt. Learners brainstorm possible ideas and select a story that they can realistically develop.

The second stage is **story planning**. Learners identify the characters, setting, central problem, important events and conclusion. A simple story map can help learners organize their ideas before writing.

The third stage is **script writing**. Learners transform their ideas into an English-language script. At this stage, the teacher can support vocabulary, grammar, sentence construction, cohesion and organization.

The fourth stage is **peer review and revision**. Learners exchange scripts and provide feedback. The teacher can also identify common language problems and provide short language-support sessions.

The fifth stage is **multimodal design**. Learners select or create appropriate images, illustrations, sound, music, or other digital elements. The emphasis should remain on meaning. Digital elements should support the story rather than simply decorate it.

The sixth stage is **narration and recording**. Learners practice their pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation before recording the narration. Multiple attempts can be encouraged so that learners have opportunities to monitor and improve their oral performance.

The seventh stage is **editing and integration**. The written script, narration, images and other elements are brought together into a coherent digital story.

The final stage is **presentation and reflection**. Learners share their stories with classmates or an appropriate audience. They then reflect on what they learned, what difficulties they encountered, and how they would improve their story in the future.

This sequence makes digital storytelling a process of learning rather than merely a final multimedia presentation.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

The teacher plays a crucial role in ensuring that digital storytelling remains an English language learning activity. Technology should not dominate the lesson at the expense of language objectives.

Before beginning a project, the teacher needs to establish clear learning outcomes. For example, a task may focus on narrative writing, past-tense usage, vocabulary development, oral fluency, pronunciation or multimodal communication.

Teachers should also provide models. A short sample digital story can help learners understand the expected relationship between narration, text, images, and sound. However, models should serve as guidance rather than templates that learners simply reproduce.

Scaffolding is equally important. Learners may need story maps, vocabulary lists, sentence starters, planning questions, pronunciation support or technical demonstrations. Such support can gradually be reduced as learners gain confidence.

Assessment should consider both language and the quality of the communication process. Relevant criteria may include content, organization, language accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, creativity, effective use of multimodal elements, collaboration and reflection. The emphasis should be on learning and improvement rather than on technical sophistication alone.

DIGITAL STORYTELLING AND RESPONSIBLE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Digital storytelling requires learners to use digital resources responsibly. Images, music, videos and other materials available online may not automatically be free to use. Teachers should introduce learners to basic principles of copyright, attribution, privacy and ethical digital participation.

Learners should also be encouraged to distinguish between reliable and unreliable digital information when their stories involve factual content. If research is required, source evaluation becomes part of the learning process.

Emerging artificial intelligence tools can also be incorporated cautiously into digital storytelling activities. They may assist with brainstorming, vocabulary exploration, language feedback, or generating alternative ideas. However, the learner's own voice, decisions, interpretation and creativity should remain central. AI-generated material should not replace the learner's authorship or critical engagement with the task.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Despite its pedagogical possibilities, digital storytelling presents several challenges. The first is technological access. Learners may have different levels of access to devices, software, internet connectivity and digital resources. Therefore, activities should be designed so that technological requirements remain manageable.

Digital competence also varies among learners. Some learners may be comfortable with editing tools while others may require considerable support.

Therefore, teachers should avoid allowing technical complexity to become the main focus of the activity.

Another challenge is cognitive overload. When learners are simultaneously managing language, narrative structure, images, sound, recording and editing, the task can become overwhelming. The teacher should therefore divide the project into clearly defined stages.

Time is another consideration. A complete digital story requires planning, writing, revision, recording, editing and presentation. Teachers need to allocate sufficient time or use smaller storytelling tasks when classroom time is limited.

Assessment can also be challenging. A technically impressive story does not necessarily demonstrate strong English language development. Therefore, assessment should distinguish between language achievement and technical production and should give appropriate weight to linguistic and communicative objectives.

Finally, digital storytelling should not be treated as automatically effective simply because technology is involved. Its educational value depends on thoughtful pedagogical design, clear language objectives, meaningful learner participation and appropriate teacher support.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Digital storytelling can be adapted to different proficiency levels and areas of the English curriculum. Beginners can create short stories using simple sentences, familiar vocabulary and a limited number of images. Intermediate learners can develop longer narratives involving dialogue, description, and more complex grammatical structures. Advanced learners can create argumentative, reflective, literary or socially oriented digital narratives.

Teachers can connect digital storytelling with literature by asking learners to retell a literary episode from another character's perspective. They can connect it with grammar by designing stories around particular tense forms or structures. Vocabulary lessons can involve creating stories using a selected set of new words. Speaking lessons can focus on narration and oral performance while writing lessons can emphasize script development and revision.

Digital storytelling can also be used for personal narratives, autobiographical experiences, fictional stories, biographies, historical narratives, environmental themes, social issues, advertisements, public-awareness messages and adaptations of traditional stories.

The important principle is that the digital component should serve the communicative purpose. The objective is not to create the most technically complex video but to create a meaningful and well-constructed story through English.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future scholarship can explore digital storytelling from several perspectives. More attention can be given to long-term language development rather than short classroom interventions. Further work can also investigate how creativity can be assessed through transparent and context-sensitive criteria.

There is also scope for examining digital storytelling across different proficiency levels, age groups, educational settings and modes of classroom organization. Comparative attention to individual and

collaborative storytelling may provide further understanding of how interaction influences the learning process.

Another important area is multimodal literacy. As communication increasingly involves combinations of language, images, audio, video and digital design, English language education needs to consider how learners can become effective producers as well as interpreters of multimodal texts.

The growing availability of generative artificial intelligence also creates new questions concerning authorship, originality, language learning, creativity and assessment. Future pedagogical work can therefore explore how AI-supported tools can be used responsibly while preserving learner agency and authentic language production.

CONCLUSION

Digital storytelling represents a meaningful convergence of language, creativity, technology, and communication. Unlike activities that separate language skills into isolated exercises, digital storytelling provides a context in which learners can read, write, listen, speak, interact, revise and reflect while creating a meaningful narrative.

Its contribution to creativity is particularly significant. Learners generate ideas, construct narratives, make linguistic choices, select visual and auditory resources, solve problems, revise their work and communicate their individual perspectives. These processes make creativity an integral part of language learning rather than an additional classroom activity.

Digital storytelling also supports the development of English through purposeful language use. Vocabulary is used within meaningful contexts, grammar contributes to communication, writing becomes a process of composition and revision, speaking becomes purposeful narration and listening becomes part of both production and reception. At the same time, learners develop broader competencies such as collaboration, digital literacy, communication, critical thinking and learner autonomy.

From a pedagogical perspective, the greatest value of digital storytelling does not lie in the technology itself. Its significance lies in what learners do with language through technology. When carefully planned, appropriately scaffolded and connected to clear learning objectives, digital storytelling can transform the English language classroom into a space where learners are not merely consumers of language but active creators of meaning.

Therefore, digital storytelling can be considered a valuable innovative approach for contemporary English language education. It provides a flexible framework through which language development and creativity can be brought together in an engaging, learner-centered and multimodal learning environment.

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