

On The Possibilities Of Digital Storytelling And Reflective Reports In The Formation Of FL Teachers' Narrative Competence

Yevgeniya Pentina, Tamara Kuznetsova

The article describes an action research study on the use of digital storytelling and narrative reflective reports as tools for developing future foreign language teachers' narrative competence. The central purpose was to experiment ways of formation foreign language teachers' narrative competence in context-based teaching. The study involved 68 students of pedagogical faculty of foreign languages. Through systematic reflection and analysis, students can develop reflexive and critical awareness. In terms of developing reflective reports, authors revealed that future foreign language teachers are encouraged to examine their story-making processes productively, to create fresh accounts from different perspectives. The results provide evidence indicating that students' personal narratives guide classroom activities through the continuum of educational process. Creating narratives, students are cognitively involved, they pay attention to the crucial results, developing narrative competence. The information provided in the study will be useful for foreign language teachers, linguists, university professors, students majoring in linguistics.

Key words: narrative, narrative competence, foreign language teaching, lesson, learner, experience, knowledge, practice

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Introduction

Action research encourages to develop research skills presupposing a set of procedures. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) mention the essential feature of the method: trying out ideas in practice as a means of improvement and as a means of increasing knowledge about the curriculum, teaching and learning. This statement highlights the fact that action research represents not simply research in practice but the attitude on the part of the practitioner, an attitude in which the practitioner is engaged in critical reflection on ideas, their amplification and evaluation of the outcomes. J.C. Richards and D. Nunan (1995) consider action research as a mighty means of in-service training, providing teachers with new skills and methods of heightening self-awareness and professional skills; it is situational (context-based), collaborative, participatory, and self-evaluative. The fact that authors worked with future FL teachers is a predetermined feature: authors teach them to think and communicate about their profession using a foreign language (FL). The context of the specialty obliges to involve students in thinking, reflection and self-expression, developing FL teacher's narrative competence. The objective of FL teaching is nowadays defined in terms of the development of intercultural communicative competence, which refers to a person's ability to act in a foreign language in linguistically, socio-linguistically and pragmatically appropriate ways (Kunanbayeva, 2013). Narrative competence is the ability to create logically coherent, reasonable and communicatively oriented story (narrative), which influences the listener or reader.

FL teachers' narrative is their integral component of professional activity with its inherent characteristics as a process and as a result. Pedagogical narrative forms and functions in the educational environment of the university, which implies the creation of a certain moral and psychological environment, organization and management are different: lecture, explanation, instruction, illustration or report (Schrum et al., 2021). Narrative competence is interpreted as the ability to understand narrative texts, that is, the course of events described in the narrative and actions of the heroes. It is a specific human ability to produce and understand narrative texts accordingly to special rules (Caswell, 2019). V.P. Fedorova and I.I. Khaleeva (2004) consider narrative competence, which underlies the creation and perception of specific oral discourses in intercultural communication, the ability to speak about events that happened to the narrator himself or to someone of his acquaintances, to create personal experience stories. Narrative competence is defined as the highest level of professional ability to create narrative statements, taking into

account sociality of the partner and the socio-cultural specifics of the interlocutor's narratives, and adequately interpreting them.

Nowadays narratives are increasingly often used in education research and, specifically, in foreign language teaching (Pachler et al., 2007; Pachler and Redondo, 2014). Teachers use narrative to fulfill different intentions and functions: to explain, to report, to debate or pursue. Mankind builds its collective history and feeling of community via sharing of personal tales among different regions and cultures. The commonality of storytelling as a cultural social component made it a mighty tool for the acquisition of foreign languages. Moreover, foreign language students get greater communicative skills when focused on language interaction. Foreign language learners who share personal experiences through storytelling demonstrate both linguistic and metacognitive growth. Storytelling and learning are interconnected because the process of creating a story is also the process of making and conveying meaning. Integrating storytelling skills into foreign language teaching and the development of academic knowledge increases students' learning and participation (Ohler, 2006; Lyle, 2013; Zanchi et al., 2020).

The central purpose was to experiment ways of formation FL teachers' narrative competence in context-based teaching.

Materials and Methods

The small-scale action research for 5 weeks, included 68 students of the Pedagogical Faculty of Foreign Languages in Kazakh AblaiKhan University of International Relations and World Languages: 34 third year students who participated in research study during their teaching internship and specially designed course on narrative, and 34 first year mastery students, who were not involved into this course, but were practicing teaching at schools. In order to test the effectiveness of DS and narrative reflective reports (RR), this research was organized taking into consideration the pre-and-post interviews. Authors share the ideas of interior context and exterior context (Zalevskaya, 2018) which manage the process of cognition and education: interior context suggests personal knowledge, experience, while exterior context suggests situations and created conditions for future professional activity of students. For this, authors used different professional tasks enabling students to be more active, interactive and reflective. The tasks provide a link of theory and practice during their teaching practice into the one whole: "ideas-in-action" (Richards and Nunan, 1995; Henderson, 2000). The action research questions that guided the study are as follows:

1. How would digital storytelling and reflective reports lead to the formation of FL teachers' narrative competence?
 2. What effect would the guided reflection and reflective reports have on the development of FL teachers' narrative, its forms and skills?
 3. Would digital storytelling and reflective reports encourage students to apply their skills beyond classroom?
- To answer these questions, a special program was designed for 4 phases:
1. The students were introduced into the aim of the project and presented a pre-internship interview.
 2. Teaching narration with the help of DS and RR on the basis of professionally-oriented tasks.
 3. Post-internship interview.
 4. Discussion of the final results.

In this paper, authors would like to present and describe the power of digital storytelling and narrative reflective reports as innovative pedagogical practice in FLT and as a tool for developing FL teachers' narrative competence. First, authors describe the process of implementing digital storytelling and narrative reflective reports in the activities of future FL teachers' internship. On this step, the goal of digital storytelling was to provide teacher candidates with an opportunity to become reflective, involving, collaborative, and competent users of their theoretical knowledge in classroom activities. Adapting digital storytelling to future FL teachers' internship, authors intend to show how this innovative pedagogical practice can be successfully translated into best practices by teacher candidates in their own classrooms.

Next, authors introduced narrative reflective report technique, which offers a written record of students' practice and classroom activities, successful moments and problem situations, engaging reflection, which implies "learning through and from experience towards gaining new insights of self and practice" (Watson, 2012). The review of the literature shows that reflective practitioners' most common types of reflection are: reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action and reflection-for-action and authors concluded that students' narrative reflective reports presuppose all the three types of reflection. Future FL teachers construct new structures of knowledge/conscience that can help them develop a deeper understanding of their work through further examination, analysis and reflection. Comparing the formal records after students' internship and their narrative reflective reports, the latter are descriptive, personal, emotional and critical, which is most essential for FLT professional competence.

Results and Discussion

The data was collected through four phases: 1 – pre-internship interview, 2 – the performance of DS and narrative reflective reports, 3 – post-internship interview and 4 – final interview with the first year master students.

Pre-internship interview was conducted before the internship to find out whether the third year students had some initial knowledge or ideas about narrative and its role in FLT. The results should present state of things of the

students' knowledge about narrative competence, narrative forms used by teacher and students in the continuum of educational process. Students were also suggested to evaluate their ability to create a narrative in the context of future FL teacher's profession.

The technologies of digital storytelling and narrative reflective reports were introduced to 34 students, involved in the multimedia narrative project to provide future FL teachers with an opportunity to become reflective, engaging and collaborative, and to develop narrative competence. This multimedia narrative project was a 4 weeks-long project in which students create a narrative of their internship experience. Future FL teachers developed a digital story using video editing software, such as iMovie, Movie Maker, and Photo Story. Fortunately, creating digital stories generates copious amounts of materials which can be reviewed and assessed. The process of digital storytelling is divided into four phases: 1) pre-production; 2) production; 3) post-production; 4) distribution (Lambert and Hessler, 2018). Pre-production is further broken down into five different events: a) developing a scenario; b) gathering background information; c) script development; d) rehearsing oral storytelling; e) storyboarding and mapping.

Within these processes and phases, artifacts of learning such as scripts, storyboards, story maps and oral presentations can be immediately assessed for clarity, interest, correct structure, vocabulary and grammar. The sessions were devoted to digital storytelling, and it was helpful in equipping the students with the adequate knowledge, skills, and resources necessary in order to present their own digital stories. Students went through the following steps:

1. Brainstorming: students shared their ideas with the group mates. Peers and teacher asked questions, directing, and helping to refine their ideas. One of the ways to develop an idea was by reflecting on the weekly reflection journal or notes and finding important issues, which should be performed in narrative project. Students brainstormed on the questions concerning educational process, its planning, organization and management: How to plan a good lesson? What are the bases on which you select goals and objectives? What are the factors you take into consideration when selecting content? What is the role of materials in the language classroom? What makes a good lesson?

2. Scripting: future FL teachers wrote a 200-300 word script that would become a narrative for their digital stories. Participants had to include the analysis of their lesson: tools and methods they like, aim of the lesson, what analysis revealed about the current practices and beliefs. Students provide data on the type of students, which is reflected on the roles of teacher and learners. Sometimes students mention whether the analysis revealed anything unexpected or surprising, whether there was a problem, and what issue or question raised, which might be followed up. Analyze the lesson and say: What makes a good teacher? What is the relationship between the lesson plans and what actually happens in class? How clear and useful are explanations? What makes students active, interactive and reflective? What typical patterns of interaction are there between myself and learners? Describe the role of cooperative work at the lesson.

3. Storyboarding, recording and editing: using templates, the students showed how their scripts would synchronize with the images they planned to use in the stories. Then audio is recorded, students add images and edit their work in Photo Story. Digital stories organized as a group project make learning environment more flexible as students choose to take on different tasks based on their skills, abilities and preferences. There is a variety of engaging means as some choose to illustrate, others write or record narration, select music or scan images. Students can express their ideas by means of graphics, words or speech, music or even pacing, which may change the overall effect. Students with different interests and abilities can each find a place to have a significant impact on the result, be appropriately challenged, and be exposed to and learn from the work of the others in their group.

4. Sharing: the final step is screening for students to present and discuss their work. This was where some of the most important reflective learning takes place.

Narrative Reflective Report on peer-observation or own lesson. The task on writing a narrative report about implemented or observed lesson required a detailed description of a significant event or a specific aspect of teaching. Students record what they learn about children in different settings, describe their understandings of the topics they read and discuss in class, pose questions concerning the current issue and write about ideas that they may need help with. Participants create a meaningful, logically coherent narrative, correlating its parts (introduction, main part and conclusion) with each other, expressing the main thoughts and answer the following questions:

1. Which moment do you like most from your teaching activity? What makes you like it?
2. Did the material you chose help to teach the specific skill or strategy effectively? Why or why not?
3. How did the children respond to the visuals you prepared?
4. Did the pupils learn or extend their knowledge of the skill or strategy through your activity? What makes you think so?
5. What might you do differently if you taught this lesson again? How has this lesson expanded your knowledge about FL teaching?
6. Narrative reflective report was created in accordance with the following steps:
7. Plan your future narrative. Look back at your brainstorm and write a topic sentence. Include at least two reasons of writing your narrative.
8. Write reflective narrative. Pay attention to the use of linguistic means and grammar constructions.

9. Share narrative paragraphs with a partner. Provide feedback to your partner. Authors would like to add some ideas about sharing narrative reflective report: when future FL teachers share their reflective reports, they foster peer interaction, get different perspectives about their classroom activities and contribute to professionally-oriented competence.

By regularly engaging in reflective report writing, future FL teachers “become more aware of the teaching-learning process and see its strengths and weaknesses” (Simons, 2014). Sharing these strengths and weaknesses, students learn from each other.

Post-internship interview was conducted in the end of future teachers’ internship. It was designed to ascertain students’ changing perceptions of narrative and narrative competence, the benefits of the narrative project and narrative report and the ways of implementation of narrative approach to further teaching practice.

Final interview with the first year master students was organized to elicit information about their perceptions of narrative, narrative competence and its importance for FLT. Analyzing the results, authors could reveal the difference between the third year unexperienced students and first year master students who already work as teachers and have their beliefs and ideas about narrative in teaching context.

1st interview results. Narrative. Students were asked to define “narrative”. All trainees acknowledged narrative as a form of speech, 20 of the students recognized that logical order and communicative intentions are significant. Only 3 participants mentioned that narrative influences the listener/reader. 12 out of 34 had wrong point, insisting that narrative is not longer than a sentence.

Narrative competence and its role in teaching. Students’ definitions of narrative competence were isolated from teaching context and incomplete. 2 participants mentioned some of the skills that contribute to effective narrative creation base on their experience, but not in the context of future profession. However, 28 students mentioned that development of narrative competence of future FL teachers plays a crucial role in educational process. They agreed that there is a direct relationship between narrative creation and teaching. 24 out of 34 stated that they tried some techniques for creating narrative, organizing classroom activities. Only 1 participant did not have experience of using narrative in teaching. Probably, this student had very weak understanding of narrative. Among narrative genres, realized in educational process, participants mentioned explanation, reasoning, retelling, lecture and report (Table 1).

Table 1. First interview results of the students participated in the experiment

What is a narrative? Define narrative features	Logical order and communicative intention	58%
	Influence on the listener/reader	8%
	Unit of language not longer than a sentence	35%
Narrative competence and its role in teaching	It is necessary to develop students’ narrative competence in FLT	82%
	I tried some techniques for creating narrative, organizing classroom activities	70%
	I did not have experience of using narrative in teaching	2%

Self- evaluation of narrative competence. When students were asked to access their ability to create a narrative in the context of future profession, 17 out of 34 chose 3 (50%), 10 participants put 4 (29%) and 7 chose 5 (21%).

Results from DS. Authors discuss DS as a narrative process, encompassing many of the characteristics of narrative inquiry (Sitteret al., 2020), namely, the idea that “narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience” and that experience happens temporally and continuously within a context and authored from a particular perspective (Sunderland et al., 2021). The more engaging and memorable (according to student reflections) task that prepared students for creating their own personal narratives in digital form were the suggested videos available on the TED (technology, entertainment, design) talks – an American media organization that posts talks online. It includes talks on many scientific, cultural, political, humanitarian and academic topics. Sharing DS projects and class environment provided the students with the feeling that their thoughts, ideas and feelings were of value. In addition to the positive outcomes of their individual DS projects, each student was given a chance to learn from one another and grade each other’s work. Peer-evaluation and self-evaluation were an essential part of this project, as the students had an opportunity to practice giving each other feedback and using it to improve their work.

Results from narrative reflective reports. Analyzing students narrative reflective reports, which they shared with each other, authors came to conclusion that it is important to help students exchange thoughts and ideas, which are brilliant. Therefore, these brilliant ideas, personal contemplations, and not trivial phrases simply downloaded from Google, must be shared in groups, dialogues and collaborative debates. 30 out of 34 students emphasized that sharing reflective reports, they contributed to the creation of ideas, prompted thoughts, motivated and provoked for their expression and discussion. Creating joint narratives and sharing them allows students to express their own understanding of the issue and contributes to the development of argumentative position. Students realized that interaction is exchange of different points and showing willingness to listen to other partners, agreeing or disagreeing. 3 students mentioned. “Interaction helps teacher to understand at what stage students are in the process of their learning, which way they need to be directed, and where it is necessary just to listen to learners and treat them with great attention”. “So often we find it tough to express our own ideas as we are afraid and feel anxious of being

criticized and discouraged. Hence, participating in interactive "teacher-students" communication, we feel much comfortable to discuss our thoughts and opinions". *"Sharing our ideas, we show that we open"*.

The activity of sharing narrative reflective reports helped in building trustful relationships with students, getting closer to them. It is a natural process since students share their own thoughts and emotions, so teacher wants to support, understand, encourage, agree, and sometimes object, but feel in advance how this objection will be interpreted in order not to motivate for presenting ideas. Authors successfully organized students' joint activities for sharing reflective reports. The essence of collaborative work was realized, as a result the discussion in group work allowed the students to express their own understanding. Summarizing students' points, authors highlight that students clarify thinking and understanding, explore their beliefs and practices, become more aware of teacher's and learners' strategies, monitor classroom activities. *"I want to say that internship gave me a great experience of feeling myself in the process. I tried to understand the reasons why some techniques are useful and some of them do not work". "I was convinced of one thing that I can teach well. Children respect me very much and treat me as a teacher. This makes me happy. I conducted several lessons and noticed that learners try very hard to understand English, to read without mistakes and work on pronunciation"*.

"First lessons I was so worried and thought that learners didn't listen to me. Fortunately, they were very active and everyone helps each other. Once I organized a lesson on sports and gave the task to write an essay "My favorite sports". It turned out that nowadays many children play sport games. Everyone wanted to discuss this topic. I have so much fun with them. I realized how good it is to be a teacher". "Internship was very interesting and useful for me. What I have studied in theory, now I use it at my lessons. I am so happy with it. Before the lesson, I asked the pupils to greet each other. Learners shook each others hands, were ashamed and laughed. At that moment, I remembered my childhood when we were embarrassed to say hello and hold peers' hands". "I am learning to work with children and try different ways to make educational process more interesting and interactive. I teach elementary school learners. Their hearts are pure, kind, and they tell the truth, not hiding their thoughts. I try to use different didactic games in each lesson in order to keep the children involved in the process, so all my pupils participate. My learners are so smart. Every day they say something nice and cheer me up. I understand that being a teacher is a very responsible profession. I realized that as a teacher, we learn to work in accordance with the psychological state of every child".

Writing narrative reflective reports is a process of recording and analyzing events in a prescribed manner to foster reflective thinking. Ideas in these reflective reports are respected as observations, opinions, and facts from classroom practices. Students shared some problems and how they tried to overcome them. *"I like working with children, choosing appropriate methods, learning games and interesting activities. Today I wanted to conduct a demo lesson. My learners were ready; however the interactive whiteboard didn't function properly". "The first day of teaching practice was memorable and interesting. Before the lesson, I introduced myself to the students. For some reasons, it was difficult for the learners to pronounce my middle name. I could not explain that my middle name was different. All the time the students forgot it". "Learners have a lot of grammar mistakes, and I have to work hard to choose methods and means to manage with this problem. The greatest thing is that children love me and listen to me. Every day, they are prepared and active". "There are two pupils who find it difficult to play games, which develop communicative skills. These learners were given individual tasks, and some useful handouts"*.

Reflecting on their teaching process, students evaluate themselves and sum up the ideas. *"After three lessons I realized that material, which I chose helps me a lot. Learners participate more actively and pay more attention to tasks fulfillment". "It's a great happiness to understand that pupils progress through my strategies and activities". "Sometimes I do not have the enough time for visuals and handouts, which I prepare. I think this is because if my problems in lesson planning and I should work harder and be more attentive to time management"*. Authors analyzed the products of narrative techniques: DS, reflective report on peer-observation or own lesson after pedagogical internship. The following features were revealed: students' reflective reports are personally oriented, emotional and critical. Creating personal narratives in reflective reports throughout pedagogical internship, students become more confident, opened and eager to share their experience and feelings. Students are engaged with the educational process and professional activities, they analyze every stage and suggest the steps towards own progress and development.

Moreover, future FL teachers are cognitively involved, creating narratives about themselves; they pay attention to details, crucial moments, reasons and results. Through narrative techniques, authors realized that every single student's success depends not on language level or amount of content she/he memorized and presented, but primarily on how the student feels, how confidently she/he behaves at the moment, in this or that exact problem. That is, how comfortable a student feels, taking part in a particular activity, helping or, on the contrary, resisting the organization of educational process, his/her emotional and physical state is directly proportional to their success and success teacher. At the same time, "successfulness" or "unsuccessfulness" are also contradictory concepts. For one student, it is a huge success to express himself in English using at least a few phrases and for another success is to write 250 words essay, present a dialogue and be actively involved in the lesson.

Post-internship interview. Future FL teachers were interviewed for the second time at the end of the course.

Narrative. At this interview, 32 students were aware of the mutual relationship between the narrator and reader/listener. 28 out of 34 stated that: *"While creating narrative, we should follow the intentions, logical order and*

communicative orientation". "Structure of narrative and coherence play a huge role, as "how" you say something is more important than "what" you say". Students mentioned that stories present the basis of the educational process presupposing the development of narrative competence. Comparing the results of first interview, where students' understanding of narrative was very narrow and incomplete, authors found out that after course the answers were more embracing and detailed. 25 students stated on the role of event in narrative is highly important. Accordingly, to their ideas, an event is a basic element of narrative, but it is not a text or language object. "The event is stored at the level of meaning; in the text its embodiment is a narrative structure". Events and situations in educational process occur spontaneously and they are individually oriented. Hence, teacher-narrator should be always prepared to manage with problems, choosing the best suitable genre of narrative: didactic story, anecdote, narrative explanation, throwback retelling.

20 participants also mentioned interdisciplinary character of the narrative. "The phenomenon of narrativity is developed within the varied frameworks of the disciplines. Narrative is applied in the following disciplines: Psychology, Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy, Communication theory". Students highlighted individual features of a self-narrative. "Since every narrative is individual, we pay attention to emotional appeals, intonation and feelings, which describe narrator's experience". "Narrative presented by a teacher has pedagogical character and it serves the idea to explain, guide or give advice. It's a really unique phenomenon because its individual".

Narrative competence and its role in teaching. All participants progressed from isolated and fragmented descriptions they used for defining narrative competence at the first interview to more complete explanations. "Narrative in teaching presents a resource for the explanation of those processes that can lead to meaningful change and development for individuals and groups within a learning environment and in life learning". "Narration is an effective pedagogical tool. Every form of narrative, real, historical, scientific cases and events, can wonderfully find its place in the classroom and can be integrated in the aid of approaching knowledge". The main characteristics of teacher's narrative mentioned were: dynamic, contextual, logical order, reasonable, meaningful. "Characteristics of teachers' narratives are: liveliness, performance, spectacularity, which only the educator-narrator as a modern performer can guarantee and fulfill". "Narration should be used as a primary method of learning through the continuum of whole educational process".

The students' main attention was devoted to argumentative feature of narrative. 23 participants highlighted it: "A story-oriented argumentation will invariably appear more realistic and convincing than the presentation of purely theoretical knowledge". Students' understand narration in teaching process as a primary way of making sense of the world as telling stories is a natural ability inherent in students. 30 out of 34 participants mentioned an extremely effective learning experience requires the incorporation of narrative approaches to knowledge acquisition (Table 2).

Table 2. Final interview results of the students participated in the experiment

What is a narrative? Define narrative features	Defining narrative in teaching context	100%
	Mutual relationship between narrator and the reader/listener	94%
	Stories/narratives present the basis of the educational process	97%
	Logical order and communicative intention	95%
	Influence on the listener/reader	94%
	Interdisciplinary character of the narrative	59%
	Argumentative and individual features of a self-narrative	97%
	Narrative presented by a teacher has pedagogical character and it serves the idea to explain, guide or give advice	83%
Narrative competence and its role in teaching	It is necessary to develop students' narrative competence in FLT	100%
	I know and use narrative techniques and methods for creating narrative, organizing classroom activities	87%
	Narrative in teaching presents a resource for the explanation of those processes that can lead to meaningful change and students' development	90%
	Narration is an effective pedagogical tool. Every form of narrative can wonderfully find its place in the classroom	92%
	The main characteristics of teacher's narrative are: dynamic, contextual, logical, reasonable, meaningful	95%
	Narrative is focused in particular on the argumentative content of narrative-based learning and teaching processes	93%
	Effective learning experience requires the incorporation of narrative approaches to knowledge acquisition	88%

Self- evaluation of narrative creation. At this interview, all the students stated that there is a direct relationship between narrative competence self-evaluation and their success as FL teachers. 27 participants mentioned that FLT requires knowing and practicing a variety of narrative techniques and means. "Language in narrative is the main tool

for the narrator". *"The language and the diction employed by the teacher for narration is of utmost importance. The teacher must be master of the language to make his narration interesting and effective"*. Summing up students' ideas, to be a good narrator, a teacher should know the skilful use of language and speech. S/He should be able to use appropriate language, which should clearly depict situations and happenings. Participants evaluated themselves as better narrators comparing with the first interview. 6 out of 34 chose 3, 15 participants put 4 and 13 chose 5. 25 participants stated that they were surprised when they discovered such narrative techniques as narrative game, narrative analysis, DS, narrative modelling, narrative writing techniques. 29 out of 34 mentioned they implemented some narrative techniques in their classroom activities during and after the lessons and found them effective. They added that the course contributed to their personal development and behavior in professional context: lesson planning, organizing educational process, the way they manage activities, teacher's and learner's strategies.

22 participants mentioned the interactive nature of narrative in teaching: awareness of mutual understanding, clarifying ideas, presenting logical order of explanations and providing reflective feedback. *"Narration in teaching is more than just imparting knowledge to students"*. *"The success of narration as a technique of teaching depends upon the ability of the narrator, his use of the appropriate language and the way he makes his narration interesting and lively for learners"*. All participants stated that they became better planners of the lesson because teacher's narration should be well-prepared in advance to serve its purpose well. *"The narration should not be mere telling; it should be accompanied by activity, discussions, dialogues or dramatization. Sense- impressions may be created by vivid descriptions and presenting events"*. *"The use of proper and relevant audio-visual aids should be made to illustrate the narration. Pictures, charts, maps, etc. make the narration vivid and full of interest. Hence, preparation before the lesson is must"*. Self-evaluation of narrative competence: 17% chose 3; 44% participants put 4; and 39% chose 5

Final interview. The 1st year master students, who graduated with the diploma of FL teachers, were asked to discuss their understanding of narrative and narrative competence.

Narrative. 14 participants defined narrative as logically coherent, communicatively oriented form of speech, which influences the listener. The key words they used such as: autobiography, story, report, explanation refer to their various understanding of narrative. 5 out of 34 identified argumentative and persuasive functions of teacher's narrative. *"Narration is an art which every teacher should try to learn"*. *"Narration is a time-honoured device for oral communication of knowledge. Narration helps children learn quickly by making the subject-matter interesting and easy to grasp"*.

Narrative competence and its role in teaching. Six master students were attending speech and drama courses and seven were individually dealing with personal development. 18 participants expressed the various ways of transferring knowledge to learners. For example, to explain, to illustrate a point, to report information, to argue or persuade. Their definitions of narrative competence included the concepts they synthesized and analyzed throughout their educational and personal development process. *"Creating a clear, vivid, logically ordered narrative is very difficult. The goal of my narrative as a teacher is to make students recreate actions and live in imagination through the experience narrated by me, either as viewers or as participants"*. *"Narrative forms should change in accordance with learners' level, their involvement and understanding"*. However, their definitions of narrative competence did not have a theoretical base compared to the knowledge and interpretations of first group in the second interview. *"It gave me ideas and examples of teaching methods and techniques. I had time to try them"*.

Self-evaluation of narrative creation. All master students already gained their teaching experience and had own descriptions of narrative creation and its crucial role in teaching. Depending on their practical skills, they complained of their inappropriate way of using narrative creation in teaching context. *"Sometimes I cannot explain learners the purpose of my teaching narrative. I know that narrative without purpose irritates learners and is a waste of time"*. *"Being in front of the class is a very difficult experience for me. So often the words and phrases of my narrative are emotionless or too strict, so that pupils do not understand me and become very anxious"*. When master students were asked to access their ability to create a narrative in the context of future profession, 22 out of 34 chose 3, 8 participants put 4 and 4 chose 5. 14 participants thought that narrative competence should be developed through experience. 20 out of 34 believed in the necessity of the course adding their expectations. *"Instead of theory, we need more practice and it should be in the 3rd or 4th year of bachelor otherwise we could forget what we learned"*.

The importance of intercultural communication in modern society, which cannot develop without information technologies, plays a great role in the formation of foreign language teachers' narrative competence. This competence can hardly be imagined without different forms of narrative. The results from this action research coincide with those of Hurand Suh (2012), who claim "when students create a digital story, their roles change from passive information receivers to active knowledge developers". Using digital storytelling provokes students to analyze classroom critical situations or incidents from different angles, understand the reasons and find out why they occurred. Furthermore, these technologies prompt students to closely observe the dynamics of the classroom in action and replay particular critical incidents. The latter leads to a deeper analysis and provides evidence of what students recall from memory about their lesson organization and what they see when examining their digital stories.

Conclusions

The action research study revealed that DS and RR supplied with the professionally-oriented tasks successfully lead to the formation of FL teacher's narrative competence and authors would like to highlight the following

conclusions from research. A course on narrative competence development played a crucial role for third-year students. The skills the students learned during the course caused them to change their existing beliefs about narrative, narrative competence and its interconnection with FLT. By the end of the course, the students who took part in the action research were much more likely to easily exploit opportunities that existed for language teaching and use narrative techniques beyond the classroom than they were at the beginning. The opportunities to reflect on the teaching process, and to develop teaching and learning skills, helped students to bridge the gap between their theoretical knowledge and practical experience.

Furthermore, aside from being highly interactive and creative, digital storytelling and reflective reports are highly motivating. This motivation has been attributed to a sense of authorship and ownership. Digital story and reflective report become the products of creative and hard work of each student, so they feel confidence to defend their own views and issues presented in the end. Considering the second and final interviews of the students and master students, it should be mentioned that there is no noticeable difference between their understanding and perceptions of the narrative and narrative competence. Without special training in narrative they had low self-efficacy, using narrative in their teaching practice. It was clear that it would be beneficial if they had an opportunity of taking a specially designed course on the narrative skills.

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Author Information**Yevgeniya Pentina**

Department of Postgraduate Education
Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International
Relations and World Languages
050022, 200 Muratbayev Str., Almaty, Republic of
Kazakhstan

Tamara Kuznetsova

Department of Postgraduate Education
Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International
Relations and World Languages 050022, 200
Muratbayev Str., Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan