

THEMATIC ARTICLE

# Teaching language attitudes through digital storytelling projects

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## Abstract

This article addresses the teaching and learning of language attitudes within the context of a combined graduate/undergraduate Applied Linguistics course. Throughout the course, students critically discussed academic and research articles related to language attitudes towards some of the languages spoken by the students in the course (French, Spanish and Mandarin) and participated in a guided digital storytelling workshop. This article addresses the following research questions: (1) how do students embody their language attitudes through reflective storytelling? and (2) what do students gain in terms of learning outcomes from digital storytelling projects related to language attitudes? Common themes that emerged include (1) learning from others' stories, (2) thinking creatively, (3) providing a platform for their voice, and (4) learning the connections between identity, language, and heritage. Digital storytelling can be used in other linguistics or problem-based courses as an alternative to final papers, with guidance that facilitates new understanding through collection of knowledge.

**Keywords:** digital storytelling; language attitudes; scholarship of teaching and learning; teaching linguistics

## Résumé

Cet article aborde l'enseignement et l'apprentissage des attitudes langagières dans le contexte d'un cours de linguistique appliquée ouvert aux étudiants des cycles supérieurs et de premier cycle. Tout au long du cours, les étudiants ont discuté de manière critique d'articles universitaires et de recherche liés aux attitudes linguistiques à l'égard de certaines des langues parlées par les étudiants du cours (français, espagnol et mandarin). Cet article aborde les questions de recherche suivantes : (1) comment les étudiants incarnent-ils leurs attitudes langagières à travers une narration réflexive ? et (2) quels sont les avantages pour les résultats d'apprentissage des étudiants fournis par les projets de narration numérique liés aux attitudes langagières ? Les thèmes communs qui ont émergé comprennent (1) l'apprentissage d'après les histoires des autres, (2) la pensée créative, (3) la création d'une plateforme pour leur voix et (4) comprendre les liens entre l'identité, la langue et le patrimoine. La narration numérique peut être utilisée dans d'autres cours de linguistique

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ou d'apprentissage par problèmes comme alternative aux dissertations finales, avec une orientation facilitant une nouvelle compréhension grâce à la collecte de connaissances.

**Mots-clés:** narration numérique; attitudes langagières; études pédagogiques; science de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage; pédagogie de la linguistique

## 1. Introduction

Speakers experience discrimination for a variety of reasons that can include but are not limited to their manner of speaking, the languages they are expected to speak based on their heritage, and how others preconceive how they will speak, for example due to their appearance (e.g., Zarate 2018, Orelus 2021). This is directly related to raciolinguistic ideologies which “conflate certain racialized bodies with linguistic deficiency unrelated to any objective linguistic practices” (Flores and Rosa 2015: 150). Recognizing such discrimination and discussing how it can be overcome are one of the main goals of the digital storytelling project described in this article. Many students in the study encountered similar situations when learning or speaking their languages. For example, one student wrote in their digital story about the shame they felt when unable to speak their heritage language: “I was visiting *mis abuelos* [my grandparents] and when I would speak *español* ‘Spanish’ to them, they would switch to English. *Vergüenza*. ‘Shame.’ I felt so embarrassed because to me it meant *no tengo competencia* ‘I am not proficient’ at speaking *el idioma* ‘the language’. [...] They see *mi nombre* ‘my name’, *¿porque no hablas mejor?* ‘why don’t you speak better?’” (translation by Angela George).

In this article, we describe the use of a storytelling assignment to teach graduate and undergraduate students about language attitudes and issues related to linguistic prejudice, discrimination, and injustice. While digital storytelling has been effectively used to engage students in dynamic learning experiences in the classroom (Burnett et al. 2006), its implementation in linguistics courses has been less frequent than in language learning settings (Wu and Chen 2020), where it could also benefit students. Digital storytelling involves the creation of a well-developed and closely scripted tale using multiple resources (text, voice, images, sounds). Students’ digital stories can later serve as valuable resources in the linguistics classroom, providing insight into language attitudes and identity as they relate to languages or perceptions about languages.

Topics courses in sociolinguistics encompass a diverse array of areas. One such area is language attitudes, defined as predispositions based on thoughts and beliefs, feelings, and intentions to act under specific contexts or circumstances (see Ajzen 1988, Baker 1992). This article focuses on the use of digital storytelling as an innovative authentic tool to assess the teaching and learning of language attitudes.

In the classroom, our goal when teaching about language attitudes is to create opportunities for students to make connections between their everyday experiences and the understanding that language use can trigger cognitive (thoughts and beliefs), affective (feelings), and conative (intention to act) reactions that together comprise language attitudes. The current study seeks to answer the research questions: (1) how do students embody their language attitudes through reflective storytelling? and (2) what do students gain in terms of learning outcomes from digital storytelling projects related to language attitudes? The data analyzed and presented in this article

were collected during a combined graduate/undergraduate course on languages attitudes offered during the Winter of 2020.

## 2. Background

Within the field of linguistics, there has been “a great deal of anecdotal sharing of teaching tips, etc., and [...] many publications recognize the need for the SoTL [Scholarship of Teaching and Learning] and are moving in that direction” (Witman et al. 2007: 6–7). In recognition of this need, the Linguistic Society for America added the Teaching Linguistics section to their journal *Language* in August 2012, and since then have published over 15 articles on the topic (Hiramatsu and Martinez 2021). These articles have focused on various aspects of the teaching and learning of linguistics, including but not limited to how to do a linguistic analysis in an introductory linguistics course (MacKenzie 2018), the creation of Black-centred content in an introductory linguistics course (Calhoun et al. 2021), and tips for teaching introduction to syntax courses at the graduate level (Lasnik 2013). Among these recent articles, two focus specifically on assessment: Filimonova (2020) explores problem-based learning in an introductory linguistics course, and Zuraw et al. (2019) describe a skills-based grading system for an introductory phonetics and phonology undergraduate level linguistics course. In the current study, we describe an innovative assessment.

Digital storytelling can be employed as an *authentic* assessment, defined as “the assessment of learning that is conducted through ‘real world’ tasks requiring students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in meaningful contexts” (Swaffield 2011: 434). Such assessment often leads to increased student engagement, ultimately resulting in students meeting or exceeding the learning outcomes set for the course (Jopp 2019). Authentic learning is a pedagogical model involving authentic tasks and assessments as well as reflection (Herrington 2015). As part of this model, “Ideally, a whole semester of work should contribute to the investigation of a single significant problem” (Herrington 2015: 63). The digital storytelling project described in this article represents authentic learning. Howell et al. (2017) found that students were more engaged with digital multimodal writing assignments, as compared to traditional ones.

Digital storytelling is a method that combines personal narratives with multimedia elements, such as images, audio, and video, to create compelling short films (Lambert, 2013). This method has been found to be beneficial for university learners, empowering them to “take a greater degree of ownership of both the process and the product, offering them the scope to be more creative in how they constructed and represented knowledge to others, resulting in increased self-understanding and self-confidence along with the increased ability to consider various perspectives, and increased confidence to navigate challenges at the limits of their skills and knowledge” (Schrum et al. 2021: 12).

To determine the outcomes of educational digital storytelling, Wu and Chen (2020) conducted a comprehensive review of digital storytelling in schools and educational settings and noted a continuous interest in the topic, finding that most studies were conducted in the USA, mainly in humanities or social sciences courses. They found that while some courses used digital storytelling as a stand-alone pedagogy, others included it as a component of the course. In the studies focused on higher

education, digital storytelling allowed students to understand concepts through the creation and production of their stories by appropriating concepts, reflecting on their experiences, critically reconstructing concepts, and developing their identities. In addition, the researchers identified various orientations of digital storytelling (e.g., reflective, reconstructive, and reflexive), and multiple outcomes including increased comprehension of concepts, increased language skills, improved collaborative skills, and an increased ability to think critically and creatively.

In university language classrooms, digital storytelling has been used to engage students at the intermediate French level (Hedderman 2019), to develop cultural knowledge in ESL students (Vinogradova 2017), to develop narrative writing proficiency in ESL students (Balaman 2018), and to tell stories about relevant contemporary cultural topics (Osokoz and Elola 2014). In the USA, they have been used in university Spanish classrooms to explore identity and self-representation during the uncertain time of the COVID-19 pandemic (Prada 2022a), to focus on what it means to be bilingual primarily in Spanish and English (Prada 2022b), and to meet the course objectives for the course project in intermediate Spanish (Ruiz Pérez 2022). Because digital storytelling has been quite successful in a variety of university courses, we believed that using this creative and multimedia approach to tell stories in a linguistics course could be equally successful for engaging students in an interactive authentic assessment and investigating how language attitudes can be expressed and could possibly change through the process of digital storytelling.

### 3. Methodology

The data presented in this article originate from a short online survey and follow-up interviews conducted with students who created digital stories during a 14-week semester course on Language Attitudes at the University of Calgary, a large public university in Western Canada, as well as from the students' stories themselves. Author Angela George, the lead instructor of the course, identifies as a second language speaker of Spanish and a first language speaker of English who first learned Spanish in the classroom. After this, as an adult she participated in multiple immersion experiences in the USA (with first language Spanish speakers who had migrated to the USA from Latin America) and Spain. Author Hortensia Barrios, the teaching assistant who was responsible for crafting and facilitating the digital storytelling workshop in accordance with the needs of the course, identifies as a first language speaker of Spanish from South America who had multiple English immersion experiences in the USA and later Canada. Both authors immigrated to Canada as adults. Angela George has taught and learned from heritage speakers in various US states, and Hortensia Barrios has worked with heritage speakers in Texas. Both authors have taught and worked with heritage speakers and immigrants in Canada.

The course consisted of 21 undergraduate and three graduate students. Just over half of the undergraduate students (62%) were heritage speakers of Spanish from the following countries:

- 3 from Guatemala
- 2 from Colombia
- 2 from El Salvador

- 2 from Mexico
- 1 from Venezuela
- 1 from Puerto Rico
- 1 from Argentina
- 1 from Cuba

The remaining 38% were second-language learners, and two of these learners spoke another non-Spanish heritage language at home. The three graduate students were studying Applied Linguistics at the MA and PhD level and consisted of one heritage speaker of Spanish, and two international students whose first languages were French/Ewe and Mandarin, respectively. Given the varied background of the students in the course (raised in immigrant families or international students), we acknowledge that they may have derived greater benefits from a digital storytelling assignment than other students without their previous life experiences and potentially elevated meta-linguistic knowledge would have. In addition, the course was optional and was chosen by students to fulfill the number of upper-level courses needed to major or minor in Spanish or to fulfill coursework required for graduate degrees.

Though 24 students completed the course, the data presented in this article originates from eight students who granted permission to use their survey responses and stories for research. Permission from the institutional ethics review board to collect and disseminate the data was received prior to collecting the data.

The course was originally planned to be fully face-to-face. The course met for 145 minutes once per week, with students interacting with the instructors and each other on a regular basis. Classes were held in person initially, but later continued online, with changes made to fit the needs created by a global pandemic.

The course consisted of several components. Students completed weekly assignments on digital discussion forums based on assigned readings. Graduate students were often assigned additional or different readings to engage them in more detail on the topics. In the forums, students each took the lead once throughout the semester by posting a question for their classmates to answer based on an assigned reading. In the classroom, additional pair and group discussions were held to review material and discuss the concepts assigned each week. Additionally, graduate students were responsible for planning one class each based on a list of selected readings that dealt with issues connected to language attitudes toward some of the languages spoken by the students in the course. Undergraduate students completed a take-home test to assess their knowledge of the terms and concepts covered, as well as a video or audio-taped presentation in Spanish of an academic article on language attitudes written in Spanish. Both groups of students wrote a short critical analysis paper in which they interpreted a text through the lens of one or more of the assigned readings. This variety of course components was chosen to allow students to fulfill the course objectives and outcomes in a variety of ways. A detailed list of the assigned readings and course components will be found in the appendix.

Once the main concepts and theories had been covered, Hortensia Barrios took the lead at different stages of the course to work with the students, first by introducing digital storytelling and her own research project on Living Migration, which deals with sociolinguistic aspects of migration through digital storytelling with immigrants

in Canada. She then delivered a digital storytelling workshop to the students. Details on both the research project and workshop are shared below and described in Barrios Gomez (2021). Students worked simultaneously with both authors on the workshop and on problem/case-based reading assignments. The course closed with a final reflection that focused on their feelings about the entire course, including their experience using digital storytelling, the theories learned during our classes and learning in challenging times.

### *3.1 Living Migration: Digital Storytelling in Sociolinguistics*

Hortensia Barrios, a research fellow at the Language Research Centre, and her co-research fellow, PhD candidate Karina Hincapie, visited one of the classes to present and discuss the use of digital storytelling in sociolinguistics and for the Living Migration project. Their goal was to introduce digital storytelling as a broad concept and later focus on its use in sociolinguistics, exploring how this method can uncover students' language experiences and address language-based issues in a community of practice, which Wenger (2011: 1) defines as a "[group] of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly this".

Having research fellows closer to the students' age and life experiences appeared to spark more interest in the assignment. Students demonstrated interest in learning about the method and the overall process involved with digital storytelling. However, a few challenges are worth noting. First, some students were overly concerned with the assignment itself rather than embracing the opportunity to employ the knowledge acquired throughout the course and enjoy learning through an unfamiliar method. In addition, there was some initial apprehension around technology and writing stories. For example, some students were worried about how to format the stories and how they were going to be evaluated. This was an expected behaviour given that students are often preconditioned to colonial forms of knowledge and learning. The lead instructor addressed these concerns by providing students with a comprehensive description of the project and clarifying the expectations associated with it. They were explicitly told that at this stage, they only needed to focus on learning what digital storytelling was and how the digital stories presented were used to talk about experiences and language-based issues. They were also told that they would participate in a digital storytelling workshop during class time in which they would be taught how to make a digital story themselves and would receive training in using web-based video-editing software to create their own stories, and that they would receive postproduction support to edit their stories as needed.

The transition from theoretical understanding to practical application of the method in the field of linguistics sparked interest among the students and questions arose regarding the use of digital storytelling in their own fields of study and volunteer work. Students expressed curiosity about the applicability of digital storytelling beyond the classroom setting. Additionally, they were interested in how the researchers themselves had learned to use this method. After the lecture, students attended the digital storytelling festival, at which the stories of 20 participants from the local community were presented as part of the Living Migration project. Having the students attend the festival was planned prior to the course, not only as a model for students,

but also to teach about issues related to interactions based on language-related issues and/or language attitudes. During this festival, students viewed digital stories created by immigrants in Calgary, most of which were about the struggles they faced when moving to Canada. In most cases, students could make direct connections between previous course readings and the stories presented. (When attending such a festival is not possible, students can view similar stories available online, for example on the following websites:

- <https://victoriancollections.net.au/stories/digital-stories-of-immigration>
- <https://dwlibrary.maclester.edu/digitalstorytelling/overview/samples/>
- [https://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/example\\_stories.cfm](https://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/example_stories.cfm).)

### 3.2 Digital Storytelling Workshop

Although multiple assessment methods were used during the course, this article focuses on the use of the digital storytelling in the classroom and how the project aligns with the rest of the course. Components of the course outlines are provided in the appendix to show how the graduate course differed from the undergraduate course.

Digital storytelling consists of the creation of a well-developed and closely scripted tale using multiple resources in the setting of a workshop. Students were invited to write first-person narratives connected to the themes discussed in class, and later crafted their digital stories using text, voice, images, and sounds (Garrety 2008). This was done in a supportive setting of classmates and facilitators. The participatory nature of this method creates a safe space that allows students to engage in conversations about and reflect upon the meaning of their lived experiences. Risks are also involved with sharing personal stories, especially those of minoritized students. Therefore, it was made clear to students that their final stories would be shared with the class, which may ultimately have influenced what they chose to write about.

Digital storytelling workshops traditionally take place over three to five full days, during which a small group of six to eight participants fully focus on the crafting of their approximately 300-word stories while building a community of practice that enables them to explore the meaning of their experiences together and think creatively about ways of conveying meaning in their stories.<sup>1</sup> However, time constrains and course goals mean that adjustments are often necessary when digital storytelling is used in the classroom. In the case of the course that served as data for this article, additional changes had to be incorporated as we rapidly shifted to virtual learning. Table 1 details how the workshop was organized and highlights the modifications implemented due to a global pandemic.

It is worth noting the privacy and confidentiality risks associated with posting videos to course websites, especially when they feature minoritized students sharing videographic representations of themselves. These risks are particularly significant if the videos were to be downloaded and distributed beyond the course website. Therefore, it is recommended to inform students of the risks associated with posting videos. Moreover, students should not be obligated to post their videos so that other

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<sup>1</sup>The length of 300 words aligns with the 2–3-minute video recommended by Lambert (2013) in his book on digital storytelling.

**Table 1.** Digital storytelling classroom schedule

Week	Activity
9	<p>Introduction to digital storytelling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students viewed a few purposefully selected stories, and then debriefed them within their small groups, typically consisting of 4–5 students per group.</li> <li>• Students commented on not only the stories' aesthetics but also their meaning, as well as how they themselves felt, and how they identified with the stories presented.</li> <li>• Students started to make connections between the theories studied at the beginning of the semester, the digital stories, and their own experiences.</li> <li>• At the end of the session, the groups brainstormed ideas for their own story related to languages, language attitudes and/or experiences related to the languages they spoke.</li> <li>• The instructions were as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ What did you know before digital storytelling?</li> <li>◦ Did you attend the event titled Digital Storytelling Living Migration Film Festival? What did you learn during this event?</li> <li>◦ What did you learn during the final project?</li> <li>◦ You can describe the process of creating your story, the audio and the video and mention what you learned and/or your opinion from each stage of the project.</li> <li>◦ Would you repeat this project in the future?</li> <li>◦ What attitude or ideology can you identify within your story?</li> <li>◦ How did this project help you see linguistic attitudes?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• After class, students emailed a brief description of their idea to the course instructor. Both authors reviewed these and provided feedback. Once approved, students were told they could write a script of their story using approximately 300 words. Students might start with more words, but later engaged multiple times in editing and redacting to focus on the heart of the issue they were exploring through critical thinking and the use of precise language for powerful communication.</li> </ul>
10	<p>Story circles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students would originally have shared their stories with their classmates to develop a revised draft and establish community among the participants of the activity.</li> <li>• Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all classes were moved to a virtual setting at the end of week 10. Instead of sharing their stories in a group setting, students shared their scripts with both authors, who provided feedback regarding their stories. In future, with a less abrupt shift to virtual education, group sharing of stories could be facilitated in a virtual setting.</li> </ul>
11	<p>Workshop for learning digital tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both authors facilitated a workshop via Zoom on how to create a video with photos, audio and moving images. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Students were introduced to video (WeVideo) and audio (Audacity) software and received basic training on how to record their voices.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Students were given another week to work on their scripts.</li> </ul>
12	<p>Collaborating with students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The authors continued working closely with the students via email and Zoom.</li> <li>• Once the final version had been reviewed and discussed by the authors and students, they started recording their voiceover and continued working on their videos.</li> <li>• Students were given two weeks to finish their stories.</li> </ul>

*(Continued)*

Table 1. (Continued.)

Week	Activity
14	<p>Film screening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All stories were screened via Zoom for the class and other interested parties at the university who were invited to attend.</li> <li>• Students also posted their videos to the course website, so their classmates could view and comment on them even if they could not attend the film festival or did not want their video to be shown in the festival.</li> <li>• After the screening, students submitted a final reflection of 250 words to the course website.</li> </ul>

students can see them, but rather submit them privately to the instructor on the course website and subsequently grant permission for the video to be posted exclusively for the class's viewing. If permission is not granted, then the video would not be shared with anyone except the instructor and teaching assistant.

The data collected from the open-ended responses to the survey and follow-up interviews was analyzed to identify prominent themes, using Saldaña's (2013) descriptive coding method. Five main themes were identified and will be discussed in the next section.

#### 4. Findings

The stories students told related to various themes surrounding language attitudes and were written in Spanish, English, or a combination of both languages. They included stories about identity and often centred around a specific event. Some of these stories are briefly described in Table 2 to understand the types of stories students told and to demonstrate how they relate to the content taught in the course related to language attitudes. The stories in the last three rows were written by the graduate students.

Common themes identified in the students' written reflections in response to an open-ended survey question include (1) learning from stories of others, (2) thinking creatively, (3) providing a platform for their voice, (4) learning the connections between identity, language, and heritage, and (5) learning about language attitudes. Each of the themes will be discussed in more detail next.

##### 4.1 Learning from stories of others

One of the most intriguing themes found in students' reflections about the digital storytelling project was the insight they gained from watching their classmates' stories. Students benefit not only from writing their own stories, but also from experiencing other students develop their own stories and videos. One student wrote, "I learned a lot about my peers and their own stories of prosperity and growth, along with struggles and disadvantages, they have faced due to their cultural backgrounds and relationships with their languages." This demonstrates the universality of attitudes towards languages and the experiences surrounding language use as portrayed by the students in their stories.

**Table 2.** Story titles and descriptions

Story Title	Explanation
<i>¿Dónde pertenczo?</i> 'Where do I belong?'	Written in Spanish, this story described fitting into two worlds, one in Canada and one in Colombia, using examples of experiences that displayed language attitudes towards the heritage language of Spanish.
<i>Vergüenza</i> 'Shame'	Written in alternating codes of Spanish and English, this story is about how listeners perceive a speaker's ability to speak Spanish based on their name and the shame that not being fluent in Spanish brings to a heritage speaker of Spanish.
<i>Lady on the plane</i>	Written in English, this story is about how preconceived notions and stereotypes about the languages someone speaks based on their appearance are not always true and can be damaging to the speaker.
<i>Identidad</i> 'Identity'	Written in Spanish, this story is about the privilege of having standard accents in both English and Spanish and learning to embrace the identity of one's heritage even if it does not appear to match stereotypical physical appearances.
<i>Mi llegada a Canadá y mi experiencia aprendiendo francés como segunda lengua</i> 'My arrival to Canada and my experience learning French as a second language'	Written in Spanish, this story details an interaction about accents and language comprehension that occurred in a primary school classroom with French-speaking classmates shortly after arriving in Canada from Mexico at age 12.
<i>Siga-siga</i> 'Little by little'	Written mainly in English with some Spanish phrases, this story is about experiencing a country's language and culture for the first time.
<i>Language attitudes as a peace builder</i>	Written in English, this story is about coming to Canada for the first time as an adult graduate student and being embraced by warm and friendly people.
<i>Standard English</i>	Written in English, this story is about learning a standard accent in English in China and struggling to understand other accents when travelling to a new place with a variety of English accents.
<i>El español es un juego de ajedrez</i> 'Spanish is a game of chess'	Written in Spanish, this story details experiences of a heritage learner of Spanish learning two second dialects while studying abroad in two different Spanish-speaking countries and eventually embracing linguistic diversity.

Another student reflected on the process by stating that it was difficult to come up with her own idea after seeing her classmates' very moving ideas about language attitudes and the difficulties they faced as heritage speakers of the language. She was eventually able to do so after thinking about her own experiences learning languages.

Related to this, one student commented on the usefulness of learning about the various perceptions “people have about language varieties and how they overcome their challenges”. Likewise, another student remarked that watching other stories reminded her of how important it is to learn additional languages and all that one learns when doing so, in addition to the language itself. Furthermore, one student mentioned that her experiences were similar to what she saw in the stories of other students in terms of insecurity surrounding their accent in their heritage or second language but accepting that accents represent identity and connections to the heritage culture. Linguistic insecurity is especially common among heritage speakers, and learning about this phenomenon within a course tailored for heritage speakers or designed to address their needs can result in a form of linguistic healing (Sánchez-Muñoz 2016).

#### **4.2 Thinking creatively**

Another theme found in the students’ reflections involves the process of thinking creatively while drafting their stories in both written and visual form. This assignment was not like more traditional ones, where students would answer exam questions or write a term paper. One student wrote, “First, I thought it was something complex that I could not do, but with the help of the course instructor coupled with my little perseverance, I can also say today that I am an author of 3 min digital story.” This demonstrates that initially students may be resistant, but with the proper guidance they can proudly create and produce their own digital stories. Delving a little more deeply into the creative process, another student commented that “Through writing and creating my digital story I had to exercise my creativity and think deeply about how to meaningfully present my words in video and photo format.” This shows that the students are learning how to represent their stories multimodally, whereas a traditional assignment would likely involve only one mode. It also aligns with Wu and Chen (2020), who found various studies where digital storytelling resulted in the improved ability to think creatively. Another student made a similar comment, writing that “All of the creative process from the beginning to the end created connections between my time learning Spanish, my trips around the world and the many relationships that I was lucky to have formed in large part due to the languages. This was a very nostalgic process for which I am grateful” (translation by Angela George).

#### **4.3 Providing a platform for their voice**

Another theme arising from the students’ reflections on the project is the space it provides to voice the stories the students create. This space allows them to share their narratives not only with other students, but also with invited audience members. Recall that at the end of the semester the stories were shared in a mini-film festival where other language students and instructors were invited to watch the stories. One student explained, “I felt a sense of freedom, almost like a weight was lifted off my shoulders since I was able to share my struggles and experiences with others.” Similarly, another student wrote, “I enjoyed making the digital story because it allowed me to share my thoughts about a negative experience on language attitude

in a creative way.” This aspect overlaps with the previous theme and highlights that the sharing of these stories can be therapeutic, similar to the linguistic healing reported by the heritage learners in Sánchez-Muñoz (2016) who developed heightened awareness surrounding their heritage language and increased linguistic confidence after completing a course designed for heritage speakers of Spanish.

Another student wrote that this was “an opportunity for me to share my experiences with my colleagues.” Many traditional assignments are not shared with anyone beyond, at most, the instructor or the peer reviewer. The mere act of sharing the experiences with others fosters a sense of connection among the students. Another student demonstrates this idea by stating, “The most valuable aspect of this work is the message that we communicate to our readers, and how we were able to overcome the language barriers and challenges that we have encountered.”

Also within this theme, it is evident that not all students felt like they had something worthwhile and meaningful to share. One student wrote, “At first, the process of telling digital stories intimidated me because I was explicitly insecure about if I had a valid story” (translation by Angela George). However, after hearing the ideas of other students this student felt less intimidated and appreciated what they learned from other students and the platform this project provided to tell their own story.

#### *4.4 Learning the connections between identity, language, and heritage*

Another common theme not only evident in the stories themselves but also expressed by students in their reflections included the connections made between identity and language, in particular as it related to learning or speaking one’s heritage language. The majority of the students in the course were heritage speakers of Spanish. One student wrote, “this exercise made us reflect on our identity being in a country like Canada and we see that the language is an important part of our identity; the language and our accent connect us with a country and its culture” (translation by Angela George). This demonstrates an awareness of how identity is linked to language and how one’s accent is a part of one’s identity often linked both to the country of heritage and, in this case, also to Canada. Another student expressed that “For myself, I got a chance to reflect and think about my personal feelings about my identity, language, and heritage. I learned a lot about how the intersections between personal identity and the dynamics of language impact my everyday life and how I exist within the world around me and has made me feel more aware of how this also is very significant for those I interact with on an everyday basis.” This reflects a level of awareness about the effects of everyday language use and the role language plays on identity.

#### *4.5 Learning about language attitudes*

Given that the course focused on language attitudes, it is unsurprising that the final theme pertains directly to this topic. One non-heritage-speaking student linked this to also learning from peers by stating that they “learned that language attitudes, especially from peers have the strong power to shape our own language attitudes, especially towards ourselves”. Another student commented on how the project

provided the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences. They stated, “I think it is a meaningful experience, because it provided me an opportunity to reflect on my experience about the language attitudes.” This shows that the student connected the course material related to language attitudes to their own personal experiences.

Most of what students learned surrounded the diversity of language attitudes, particularly in the Spanish-speaking world. One student reflected, “[t]he most valuable aspect was” recognizing that language attitudes and beliefs exist in many different forms. This student is reflecting on the plethora of language attitudes discussed in the course. Finally, another student described that “This activity reminded me of how important it is to learn the different perspectives there is regarding language attitudes in the Latin American atmosphere.”

While many students focused their stories on overcoming negative experiences, one student commented on the positive feelings that language attitudes can evoke. They stated that “I decided not only to share my perceptions about other languages and their speakers but to show the result of a positive language attitude, which is the key to unity, peace, and self-fulfillment. It is true that we may have linguistic challenges with our L2 and its speakers; however, we must endeavor to turn the situation into joyful experiences where every culture and idea is welcomed.” This student chose to focus on the result of a positive experience surrounding language attitudes.

## 5. Discussion

The digital storytelling project used in the Language Attitudes course offered students a way to demonstrate an attitude present in their lives that related to speaking or learning a language. Each story told by the students reflected an aspect of a language attitude or linguistic discrimination. Aligning with Schrum et al. (2021), digital storytelling proved to be an effective method for gaining a comprehensive understanding of the concept of language attitudes. Students learned from each other’s stories through this authentic assessment. It may have even played a role in facilitating linguistic healing, in particular for heritage students, as also found in a course designed for heritage speakers of Spanish in Sánchez-Muñoz (2016).

In addition, due to the fact that the majority of the students were heritage speakers of Spanish or international students, this type of assignment allowed them to delve deeper into the language attitudes reflecting raciolinguistic ideologies (see Flores and Rosa 2015) that affect their daily language use and practices, allowing them to reflect on specific events in their lives and relate to others who went through similar experiences. Such societally prevalent raciolinguistic ideologies lead heritage speakers to reflect on why they believed that the way they speak Spanish (i.e., their variety or the mixing of Spanish with English) is deficient or somehow less than it should be (Flores 2019). Student reflections on the assignment also align with Prada (2022b), who noted the effectiveness of digital stories written by heritage learners of Spanish at a US university as part of a Spanish course for heritage speakers in providing them a space to tell their stories and to use or mix languages while doing so and thus challenge monolingual practices often encountered in language courses.

In addition, the interactive nature of the assignment allowed students to develop concepts related to language attitudes more fully, similar to König et al. (2015),

who elicited language ideologies about heritage language practices in Canada through sociolinguistic interviews using interviewees with similar backgrounds to the interviewees. Many of the stories told in the project described in this article demonstrate the varying language practices of heritage speakers (Valdés 2005) and attitudes towards those practices. Heritage speakers are often positioned “as speakers of prestige or nonprestige language varieties based not on what they actually do with language but, rather, how they are heard by the white listening subject” (Flores and Rosa 2015: 160). Evidence of this was found in multiple stories shared by students.

In line with Jopp (2019) and Howell et al. (2017), this authentic assessment appeared to be more effective than a traditional assessment, based on the students’ survey responses. The learning was authentic (Herrington 2015), since students studied language attitudes throughout the semester, and the digital storytelling project was a way to showcase their efforts. While this could also have been done through a more traditional essay or presentation assignment, the digital stories allowed the students the opportunity to create a multimodal text to demonstrate how an event in their lives affected their or others’ attitudes towards language(s) or their varieties and brought students closer together, in that they often commented on having gone through or witnessed similar events.

The findings of the current study demonstrate similarities to the 99 studies analyzed by Wu and Chen (2020), in that including digital storytelling as a course component allowed students not only to critically think about the concepts they were learning but also to embody those concepts by interacting with others as they created and produced their multimodal narratives while reflecting on their experiences as language users. Additionally, similar to Schrum et al. (2021), students were able to engage more creatively with the topic and increase their understanding not only of the topic but of how language attitudes have affected their classmates.

Overall, students demonstrated that they met the course outcomes by highlighting specific aspects of language attitudes in their stories, including but not limited to ideologies and beliefs about standard languages, language mixing, and cultural and linguistic identities. Students also learned these aspects by viewing and commenting on their classmates’ stories. In turn, they gained knowledge on how language attitudes affect communities and common societal issues pertaining to language attitudes, which were two of the listed outcomes of the course (see appendix for full list).

## 6. Conclusions

This article adds to previous research on digital storytelling by detailing how digital storytelling was used in a linguistics course. This pedagogical method can be used in other linguistics or problem-based courses as an alternative to final papers with guidance that facilitates new understanding through the collection of knowledge (see Duffy et al. 2012). Storytelling is useful for problem-based projects or assignments and could also be used to present certain linguistic concepts. For example, in a course on historical linguistics, students could create a story that demonstrates the evolution of a sound change over time. In a course on pragmatics, students could create a story that demonstrates a pragmatic concept, such as a speech act like a request, and explain how the intended outcome of the request was or was not achieved, and

how this can vary across cultures or languages and their varieties. In a course on phonetics or syntax, a digital story could be used to show knowledge of a specific phenomenon by using the visual and audio aspects to demonstrate the item under study.

Based on what we learned when implementing the digital storytelling project in the linguistics classroom, there are certain aspects to consider for future projects. First, it takes some time to plan the project and integrate it into the course. While the projects can be completed during in-person courses or online courses, it takes some planning to ensure that students engage in critical conversations in a remote learning setting. In either setting, time is a consistent limitation to the extent and depth of discussions. Another consideration is that existing inequalities that apply to the project must be pointed out. Not all students have access to the technology needed to create the projects if they lose access to their campus. In addition, risks are involved with sharing stories digitally and it is imperative that these be acknowledged and mitigated.

The benefits of the digital storytelling projects are that students can learn new skills. Many students were unsure how their videos would turn out, as they had never made and edited ones like this before. Others had completed similar assignments in other courses or during their secondary-level education. Another major benefit, as seen in the students' survey responses, was the exposure to other students' experiences. There are many other methods of using digital storytelling in ways that connect the community with academia, providing students with hands-on learning opportunities. Adding digital storytelling to a linguistics course could result in a variety of positive impacts and learning opportunities for students.

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## Appendix

### Weekly topics and Required Readings

#### • Week 1: Introduction to Language Attitudes

- All students:
  - Chapter 2 (The study of Language attitudes) from McKenzie, R. M. (2010). *The Social Psychology of English as a Global Language*. Springer Science Business Media
  - Chapter 5 (Ideologies and Attitudes) from Myers-Scotton, C. (2006). *Multiple voices: An introduction to bilingualism*. Blackwell Publishing
  - Optional: Chapter 2 from: Garrett, P. (2010). *Attitudes to Language*. Cambridge University Press.
  - Optional: Labov, W. (1987) How I got into linguistics, and what I got out of it. <https://www.ling.upenn.edu/~wlabov/HowIgot.html>
- Graduate course:
  - Woolard, K. & Schieffelin, B. (1994). Language Ideology. *Annual Review Anthropology*, 23, pp. 55-82.
- Undergraduate course:
  - Capítulo 5 (Términos y definiciones de actitudes) from Jimenez Lizama, P. (2017). *Actitudes Lingüísticas en la comunidad nativa Cubantia*.

#### • Week 2: Languages attitudes & variation

- All students
  - Chapter 3 (The myth of the non-accent) and Chapter 4 (The standard language myth) from: Lippi-Green, R. (2012). *English with an accent (2nd ed.)*. Routledge.
  - Optional: Dollinger, S. (in press, 2018). *English in Canada*
- Undergraduate course:
  - Sobrino Triana, R. (2018). Las variedades de español según los hispanohablantes.
  - Quesada Pacheco, M.A. (2019). *Actitudes lingüísticas de los hispanohablantes hacia su propia lengua: nuevos alcances*
- Graduate course:
  - Zhang, J. (2015). Language attitudes and identities in multilingual China: a linguistic ethnography
  - Adegbija, E. (2009). *Language attitudes in West Africa*

#### • Week 3: Languages attitudes research

- Undergraduate Course:
  - González Martínez, J. (2008). *Metodología para el estudio de las actitudes lingüísticas*.
  - Chapter 3 (El estudio de actitudes lingüísticas) from Silva-Corvalán, C. (2001). *Sociolingüística y pragmática del español*. Georgetown University Press.
- Graduate Course:
  - Liebscher, G., & Dailey-O'Cain, J. (2009). *Language attitudes in interaction*

- Pantos, A. J., & Perkins, A. W. (2013). Measuring Implicit and Explicit Attitudes Toward Foreign Accented Speech
- Chapter 3 (Relevant Language attitudes research) from McKenzie, R. (2010). *The Social Psychology of English as a Global Language*
- **Week 4: Languages attitudes & gender**
  - Undergraduate Course:
    - Kalinowski, S. (2018). *Inclusive el lenguaje. Debate sobre lengua, género y política*. Instituto de Lingüística.
  - Undergraduate Course choose one of the following articles and Graduate Course read them all:
    - Horvath, L. et al (2016). Does Gender Fair Language pay off?
    - Knisely, K. (2015). *Gendered Language Attitudes: Exploring Language as a Gendered Construct using Rasch Measurement Theory*
    - Senden, M. et al (2015). *Introducing a gender-neutral pronoun in a natural gender language: The influence of time on attitudes and behavior*
- **Week 5: Languages attitudes & social class, ethnicity and race**
  - All students:
    - Suárez Büdenbender, E. (2013). “Te conozco, bacalao”: Investigating the Influence of Social Stereotypes on Linguistic Attitudes
    - Rosa, J. & Flores, N. (2017) *Unsettling race and language: Toward a raciolinguistic perspective*
    - Carter, P., & Callesano, S. (2018). *The social meaning of Spanish in Miami: Dialect perceptions and implications for socioeconomic class, income, and employment*
    - Optional: Carter, P., & Callesano, S. (2019). *Latinx perceptions of Spanish in Miami: Dialect variation, personality attributes and language use*
  - Graduate course:
    - Lai, M. (2010). *Social Class and Language Attitudes in Hong Kong*.
    - Liu, M., & Zhao, S. (2011). *Current Language Attitudes of Mainland Chinese University Students*
- **Week 6: No university classes due to Reading Week**
- **Week 7: Languages attitudes & immigration**
  - All students:
    - Dewaele, J. & McCloskey, J (2015). *Attitudes towards foreign accents among adult multilingual language users*.
  - Undergraduate Course:
    - Sancho Pascual, M. (2016). *Ecuadorianos de Segunda generación en Madrid: percepción y actitudes lingüísticas en su proceso de integración*
    - Optional: Sancho Pascual, M. (2013). *La integración sociolingüística de la inmigración hispana en España: lengua, percepción e identidad Social*
  - Graduate Course:
    - Mady, C. (2012). *Official language bilingualism to the exclusion of multilingualism: Immigrant student perspectives on French as a second official language in ‘English-dominant’ Canada*
- **Week 8: Attend Living Migration Project of the Language Research Center**
  - No assigned readings in lieu of attending the Digital Stories Festival titled ‘Living Migration’ on campus.
- **Week 9: Languages attitudes & learning**
  - All students:
    - Barrios, H. (2018). *Digital Storytelling Prep Material*
  - Undergraduate Course:
    - Carr, J. (2015). *Hablas mejor que yo: actitudes de hablantes nativos hacia el español de hablantes no nativos avanzados*
    - Moreno-Fernandez (2017) *Variiedades del español y evaluación. Opiniones lingüísticas de los anglohablantes*
    - Optional: Carullo, J. (2006). *Las actitudes hacia las lenguas y el aprendizaje lingüístico*
    - Optional: Del Valle, J. (2014). *The Politics of Normativity and Globalization: Which Spanish in the Classroom?*

- Graduate Course:
  - Munro, M., Derwing, T., & Sato, K. (2006). Salient accents, covert attitudes: Consciousness-raising for pre-service second language teachers.
- **Week 10: Languages attitudes & technology**
  - Undergraduate Course:
    - Pano Alamán, A. (2016) Actitudes lingüísticas sobre el español en Estados Unidos en comentarios a videos de YouTube
  - Graduate Course:
    - Prada, M., et al. (2018). Motives, frequency and attitudes toward emoji and emoticon use.
- **Week 11: Languages attitudes & heritage speakers**
  - Undergraduate Course:
    - Cabal Jiménez, M. (2018). Quisiera que me explicara el subjuntivo: actitudes y percepciones de hablantes de herencia de español en el contexto de estudios en el extranjero
    - Román, D., Pastor A. & Basaraba, D. (2019) Internal linguistic discrimination: A survey of bilingual teachers' language attitudes toward their heritage students' Spanish
    - Optional: Clark McEvoy, T. (2017). My Spanish is a Jumble: An examination of Language Ideologies in Teachers with Low-Prestige Dialects
  - Graduate Course:
    - Jee, M. (2018). Heritage language proficiency in relation to attitudes, motivation, and age at immigration: A case of Korean-Australians.
    - Makarova, V., Terekhova, N., & Mousavi, A. (2019). Children's language exposure and parental language attitudes in Russian-as-a-heritage-language acquisition by bilingual and multilingual children in Canada.
- **Week 12: Languages attitudes & family language policy**
  - Undergraduate Course:
    - Vargas Blanco, E. (2017). Actitudes lingüísticas de padres y madres en familias colombianas y mexicanas en houston: un estudio cualitativo
    - Guardado, M. (2016) La pérdida de la lengua materna: Percepciones y prácticas en hogares hispanohablantes de Canadá
  - Graduate Course:
    - Adesett, M. & Morin, M. (2005). Contact and Attitudes towards Bilingualism in Canada
    - Liang, F. (2018). Parental perceptions toward and practices of heritage language maintenance: Focusing on the United States and Canada
    - Optional: Guardado, M. (2017). Heritage Language Development in Interlingual Families
- **Week 13: Languages attitudes, Power & Public Policy**
  - Undergraduate Course:
    - Achugar, M. & Pessoa, S. (2009) Power and place: Language attitudes towards Spanish in a bilingual academic community in Southwest Texas
  - Graduate Course:
    - Ricento, T. et. al. (2013). Language Policy, Ideology, and Attitudes in English-Dominant Countries

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## Selected components from the Course Outlines

**Table A1.** Components of the course at the graduate and undergraduate level

Component	Undergraduate Course	Graduate Course
Description	This course will cover the study of attitudes (beliefs, opinions, prejudices) towards languages and language varieties and how this affects speakers of those languages or varieties.	
Objectives	<p>Students will be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify concepts and issues related to language attitudes.</li> <li>• identify strengths and weaknesses of multiple methods used to measure language attitudes.</li> <li>• summarize and synthesize academic articles on language attitudes.</li> <li>• practice and improve Spanish skills by reading and discussing academic articles on language attitudes.</li> </ul>	<p>Students will be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify concepts and issues related to language attitudes.</li> <li>• identify strengths and weaknesses of multiple methods used to measure language attitudes.</li> <li>• summarize and synthesize academic articles on language attitudes.</li> <li>• lead a discussion on a topic related to language attitudes.</li> </ul>
Outcomes	<p>By the end of this course, students will increase their</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sociolinguistic knowledge, particularly as it pertains to language attitudes.</li> <li>• knowledge of language attitudes as they affect various communities of speakers throughout the world, with particular emphasis on Spanish-speaking parts of the world.</li> <li>• ability to engage with academic articles related to language attitudes.</li> <li>• knowledge on common societal issues knowledge as they pertain to language attitudes.</li> </ul>	<p>By the end of this course, students will increase their</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sociolinguistic knowledge, particularly as it pertains to language attitudes.</li> <li>• knowledge of language attitudes as they affect various communities of speakers throughout the world.</li> <li>• ability to synthesize material, particularly as it relates to language attitudes.</li> <li>• knowledge on a specific issue related to language attitudes.</li> </ul>

<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Homework (30%)</b> The first homework assignment is to write a reflection related to language attitudes. The second is to lead an online discussion to review and discuss the readings and to relate the readings to their practical applications. The third is to participate in online discussions. More details about each assignment will be announced on D2L.	<b>Homework (40%)</b> The first homework assignment is to write a reflection related to language attitudes. The second is to lead discussions on D2L about the readings. The third is to participate in discussions on D2L. The fourth is to compile an annotated bibliography related to a theme relevant to language attitudes keeping in mind the target language of interest. More details about each assignment will be announced on D2L.
	<b>Presentation (10%)</b> Each student will present to the class a scholarly article written in Spanish related to language attitudes. The professor will provide a list of approved articles and/or will assist students in finding an appropriate article to present. The presentation must be uploaded to D2L prior to presenting. The presentation must also include an interactive activity or discussion. <b>Take home exam (10%)</b> To assess comprehension of the material presented in class and discussed online, a take home exam will be completed at home and turned in via the course website.	<b>Discussion leader (10%)</b> Each graduate student will lead a discussion based on readings assigned to all students ahead of time and including at least one unassigned article/reading. After the discussion, each student will write a reflection summarizing what was covered, aspects that went well and aspects to improve upon or teach differently in the future. The discussion should include at least one interactive activity.
	<b>Participation and preparation (10%)</b> Students are expected to participate actively in the class. A grade will be assigned at the end of the semester, taking into account each class session. It is necessary to read all assigned readings prior to coming to class, so that class time is not spent on reading. Instead, class time will be spent reviewing concepts covered in the material and relating them to their practical applications.	
	<b>Critical Analysis Paper (20%)</b> Each student will choose a film, short video or piece of media (article, news, social media) related to the chosen topic and interpret it through the lens of at least one of the readings assigned in this class as well as any other scholarly sources you see fit. Each student will turn in a written essay of 750 words in length, excluding citations. Selected papers will have the opportunity to be published in a special issue of <i>Interlingua</i> , the Journal of the U of C's School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures.	<b>Critical Analysis Paper (20%)</b> Each student will choose a film, short video or piece of media (article, news, social media) related to the chosen topic and interpret it through the lens of at least one of the readings assigned in this class as well as any other scholarly sources you see fit. Each student will turn in a written essay of 1250 words in length, excluding citations. Selected papers will have the opportunity to be published in a special issue of <i>Interlingua</i> , the Journal of the U of C's School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures.

(Continued)

**Table A1.** (Continued.)

Component	Undergraduate Course	Graduate Course
	<p><b>Final project (20%)</b>                      Each student will produce a digital story that presents a critical analysis of a topic meaningfully related to the course’s content. Building on the reading and writing done in this class and on class discussions, each student will produce a digital story on a topic related to language attitudes. Each student will turn in a proposal, deliver a work-in-progress presentation, submit their final project and write a written reflection about the experience.</p> <p>This will all be completed digitally. The proposed plan is:</p> <p><b>Step 1:</b> Submit your 300 story to D2L (see Powerpoint from last class about digital storytelling if you did not attend the last class).</p> <p><b>Step 2:</b> Turn in revised story (based on feedback) and record your audio.</p> <p><b>Recording:</b> Recording of your voice should be in a quiet place, with no major background sounds if possible. Practice and record as if you were talking to someone instead of reading. You can record using your phone’s voice notes. You can also download Audacity (free) and record in there, but if you don’t know how to do this, just use your phone. Save the audio file in mp3 format.</p> <p><b>Step 3:</b> Attend a webinar on how to make the video via Zoom (in D2L). A link to join the webinar will be sent out when it gets closer. If you can’t make the webinar, you can watch the recording of it, which will be posted on D2L.</p> <p><b>Step 4:</b> Make your video. (If you have problems with this, just let me know and this part can be modified.)</p> <p><b>Step 5:</b> Submit your video (or modified product) and post it to D2L for others to see.</p> <p><b>Step 6:</b> Watch your classmates’ videos (or modified products).</p> <p><b>Step 7:</b> Write a short (0.5-1 page) reflection about your own video/assignment and your classmates’ videos.</p>	