

# **IMPROVING INTEGRATED LANGUAGE SKILLS THROUGH DIGITAL STORYTELLING: A REVIEW OF PAPERS FROM THE SCOPUS DATABASE PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH FOR THE PERIOD OF 1996-2023**

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## **Abstract**

Technology is frequently used in a variety of ways by educational systems to make English language classroom lessons enjoyable and meaningful. Digital storytelling (DS) has developed into a useful instructional tool for improving learners' integrated language skills that can be used in the teaching and learning process for both students and teachers. We conducted a systematic analysis in this paper to validate the research trends of technology enhanced digital storytelling (DS) in education published between 1996 and 2023. In the current study we attempted to gather all Scopus-based 1856 publications for 27 years involving digital storytelling and integrated language skills as keywords. This paper mainly used bibliometric analysis which bibliometric methods are mainly utilized to assess the productivity of scientific outputs quantitatively. This research investigated the most cited articles in DS-related journals, countries, publishing authors, common keywords, research methods, and application domains in the field. The VOSviewer software was used to examine the relationship between keywords in this paper. The scientometric analysis demonstrated that computerized narrating can be utilized as a valuable device by teachers in working on integrated language skills of learners from different degrees of schooling. The majority of these research papers' authors provided empirical evidence to support the benefits of using digital storytelling in the classroom to improve students' all four skills.

**Keywords:** Digital learning, digital storytelling, integrated language skills, technology, citations, journals, Scopus.

## Introduction

Stories have passed down through the older generations to future generations for centuries [1]. Humanity have mastered real life lessons through the personal life experiences of others in stories [2]. Thus, by means of national stories, moral dimensions of any society can be efficiently upheld. Storytelling is one of the earliest and most desirable teaching methods utilized to give details of previous events happened in the past days [3]. The process of creating, performing, and disseminating stories using different digital tools and technology is called “digital storytelling” [4]. The phrase “digital storytelling” intends that these digital stories consist of a combination of computer-based images, texts, recorded voice narrations, and video clips [5]. Most of the digital stories are quite short, they usually last approximately between 3 to 10 minutes [6]. These video tracks perform personal narratives, historical documentaries, and stories that directed for a specific purpose. Besides digital storytelling includes a wide range of fields: education, psychology, media studies, social sciences, art and design, computer science and others [7]. In fact, digital storytelling is the most preferred method thanks to its opportunity to appeal to multiple senses by using of a multimedia environment [8]. As it deals with both “text-based” and “audio-based” components, digital storytelling can be a proper technique to improve linguistic skills [9]. Moreover, digital storytelling is a multi-stage learning process that can develop students’ creativity in various ways [10]. Learners' writing abilities can facilitate them as they are creating the construction of a story's text, which is the initial stage of digital storytelling. In turn, students' listening comprehension can be activated during the following step in which the story is presented, and learners' oratory abilities can be engaged during the final stage while the shared story is analyzed [11]. In the present times, digital storytelling is being experienced in a number of places, and the most significant of them is elaborating speaking abilities in the educational settings [12]. Digital storytelling mainly depends on computer technology but it is not just a new notion [13]. The origin of digital storytelling dates back to the 1980s [14]. Initially, it was performed by the members of the theatre in order to tell a fairy tale [15]. A digital

story put forward through social media platforms ,about the life of a former slave or a Nazi Holocaust victim can be an example of such retellings [16]. Almost 30 years ago,a central organization of Digital Storytelling was organized by Jo Lambert, later a well-known pioneer of storytelling and educator Daniel Meadow made a significant contribution to developing personal narratives [17]. In the present days, many individuals are creating their various stories through electronic platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, blog [18]. Bibliometric method is mainly utilized to assess the productivity of scientific outputs quantitatively [19]. This technique quantifies scientific resource related to specific area. The main objective of the bibliometric review is not to mention about the quality of study or to clarify specific terms, but to emphasize deeply on a broad comprehension of the literature [6]. Plus, this type of analysis supplies scientists and educators with a view of the “underlying dynamics” of a research area in a way that other systematic reviews unable [20]. Shortly, bibliometric analysis is a bridge between the past and current state of academic literature [21]. Although the topic of digital storytelling proceeds growing popularity, it demands more and more comprehensive bibliometric analysis due to the current state of research [22]. A number of scientific reviews have been published on digital storytelling in educational settings so far but an empirical study requires strictly complete overview of essential topics, trends and issues in this field [23]. The aim of this analysis is to study all the features of digital storytelling thoroughly by analyzing the most influential journals, top authors, top-cited papers, top countries on this issue as well as do researches on this topic as an innovative method in educational settings.

The following research questions have been investigated:

1. Which documents, authors, institutions, and countries are most influential in terms of citation counts?
2. What are the most frequent keywords in terms of digital storytelling in education?

The bibliometric analysis provides researchers with a view of the “underlying dynamics” of a social science field of study in a way that other literature reviews cannot. The purpose of the bibliometric review is not to comment on quality of research or the definition of specific terms, but to provide a broad understanding of the literature [20].

## 2. Materials and Methods

This study investigates research articles on technology that apply digital storytelling (DS) in the education process and a broader research field that were obtained from the Scopus database for the period of 1996-2023 for all countries. The search date was 16 May 2023. The research refers to qualitative literature which supports the bibliometric method. All publications have been examined and reviewed using digital storytelling and integrated language skills as the keywords. As a result, 1856 articles were reviewed. Plus, the database includes the year of publication, the proper names of journals, authors, countries, the type of publication, the number of citations per paper, the number of citations per journal and the percentage of publications by the topic cluster name. The type of publication are based on only research articles. This approach requires some tools (Excel, VOSviewer) to be functioned properly.

Research base	Scopus database
Selected years	From 1996 to 2023
Language	English
Subject area	Sciences of Linguistics, Methodology, Pedagogy and Digital Education
Key words	“Digital storytelling and integrated language skills”
Statistical analysis	Microsoft Excel Document types, years, authors, countries, sources, subject areas, funding sponsors and affiliations of published papers
	VOSviewer Co-author countries, keywords

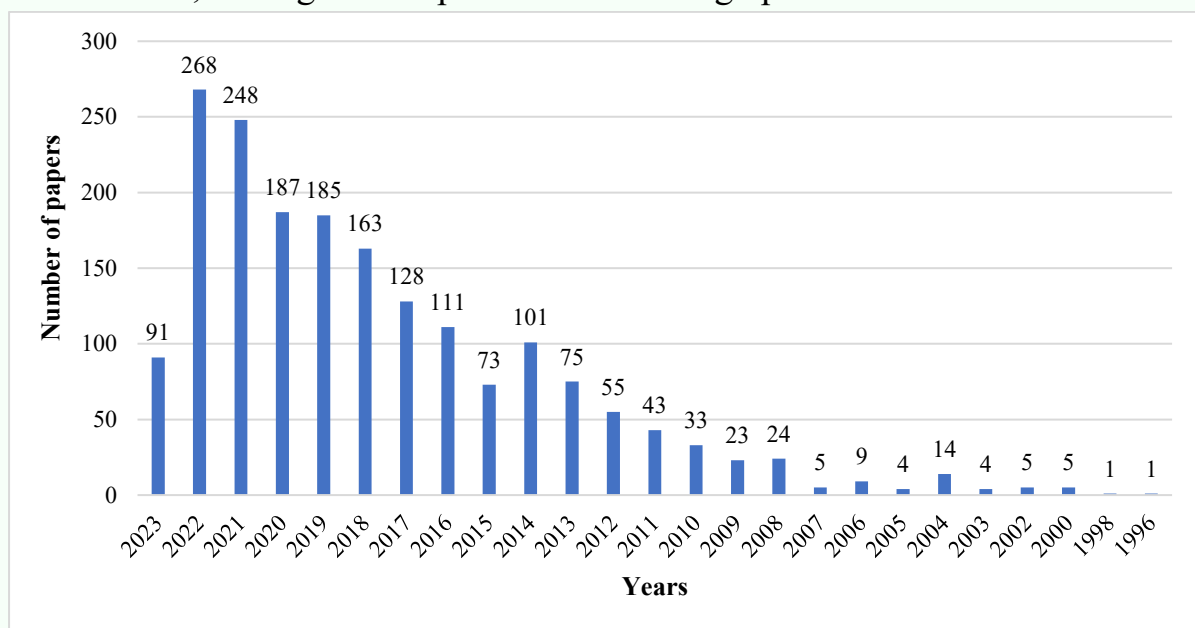
**Figure1.**Methodology flowchart for the research

## 3. Results and discussion

### 3.1. Published articles on digital storytelling

If there is a great demand for a particular topic in the scientific world, it will never lose its value even though several decades pass. The rising rank of DS

publications shows the importance of this issue for world countries. Figure 2 reveals the publications of DS articles from 1996 to 2023. Fewer than 200 DS articles were published each year in the period of 1996-2020. This figure rose sharply in 2022. As it can be illustrated in Figure 2, owing to the development of information technology and the advancement of digital technologies, mobile devices and other gadgets, the digital curriculum and a number of educational activities such as Digital Storytelling were widely introduced in 2020. Furthermore, this figure still proceeds increasing up to 2023.

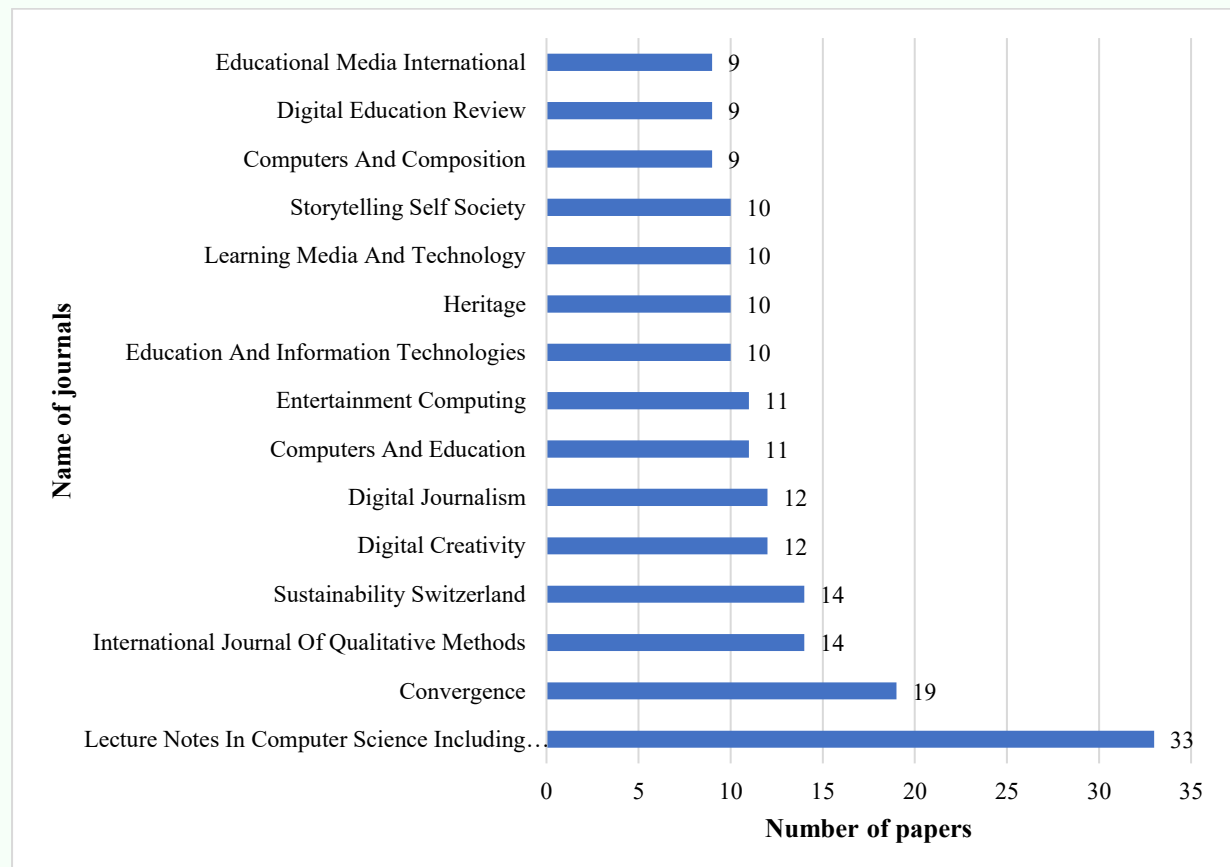


**Figure2.**Number of papers on digital storytelling by the year of publication in all countries.

### 3.2 Journals on digital storytelling

It is vital to approach to appropriate journal in the publication process. So, Figure 3 lists Scopus database journals which have been published more than thousand articles on the topic of digital storytelling and integrated language skills in the period of 1996-2023. According to the outcomes of Figure 3, Lecture notes in Computer published 33 DS articles that is the peak number of all the journal publications. Moreover, International and Sustainability Switzerland journals performed the same amount of journals (fourteen articles each) in the distribution. Moreover, the other influential journals such as: Digital Creativity and Digital Education Review presented nearly 10 articles each. Among the top rankings in the educational research Lecture Notes In Computer Science

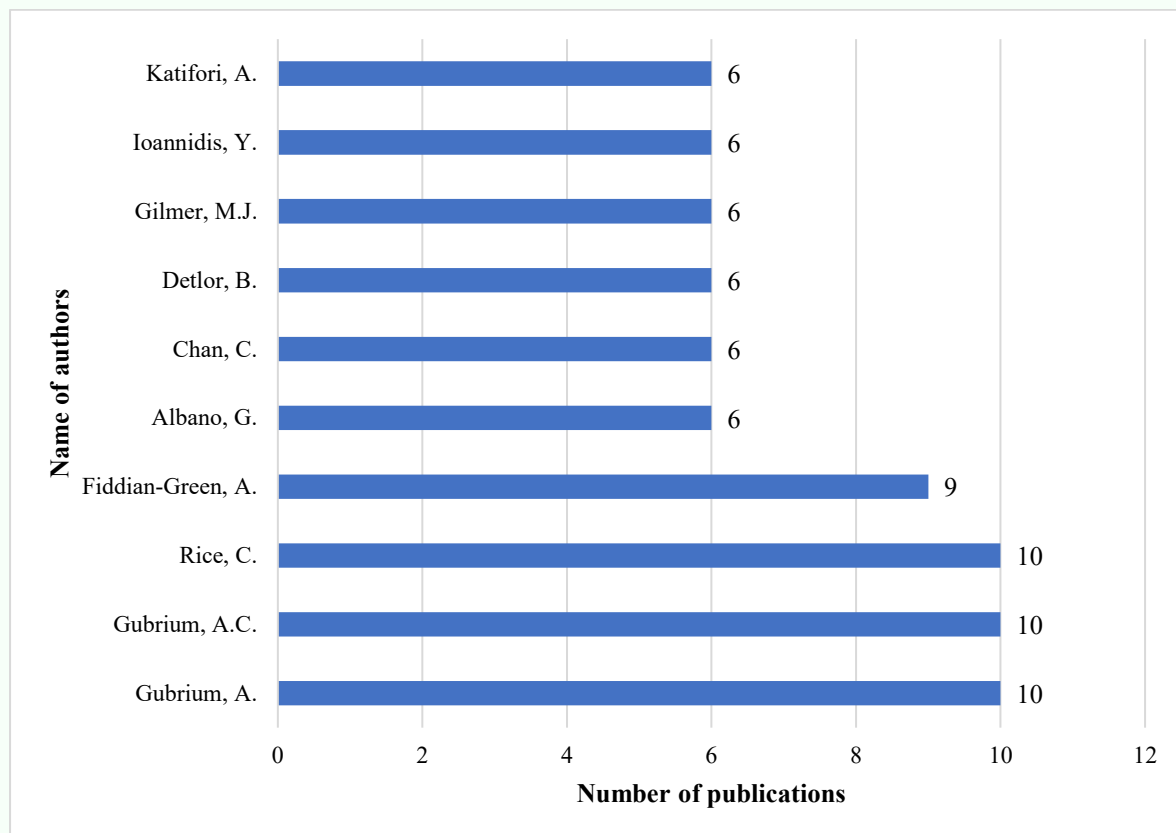
(including Subseries Lecture Notes In Artificial Intelligence And Lecture Notes In Bioinformatics) is the only educational the scope of which includes language learning and technology applications which has potential influence to academic development.



**Figure3.** List of the journals on digital storytelling in countries

### 3.3. Top authors on digital storytelling

As it is commonly known, authors play a crucial role in a development of the particular field of research in any area. Figure 4 shows the authors who published the most DS articles from 1996 to 2023 .The top five authors are A, C Gubrium , C.Rice whose DS articles number is ten each. In the distribution figure, those D.Sauthors are followed by A. Fiddlan Green who is the author of nine DS articles. Plus, Albano, Chan, Detlor, Gilmer, Loannidis, Katifori, Lenette and Pierri made a contribution to the research field with 6 articles each.

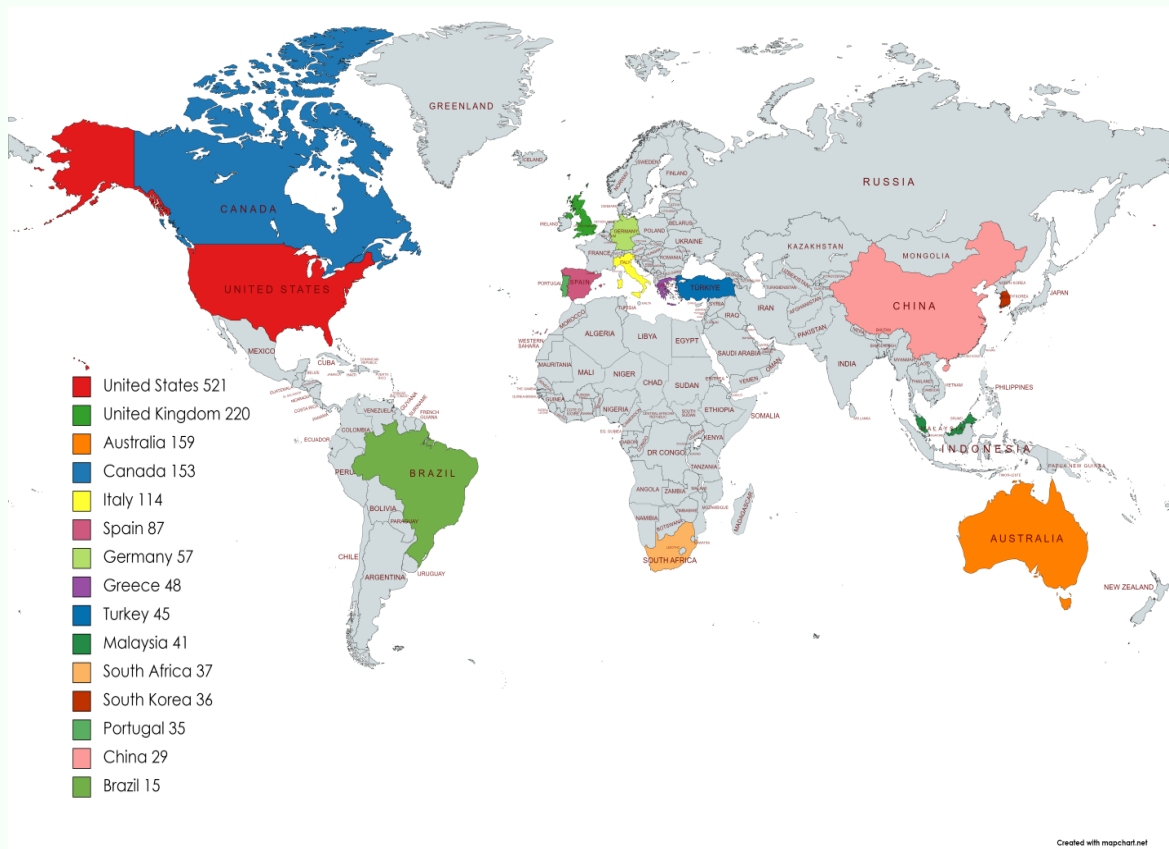


**Figure4.**List of top authors published on digital storytelling issue in all countries.

### 3.4 Top countries on digital storytelling

There are a lot of countries where the researchers have contributed to developing DS publications. The mapchart shows which countries have published the most DS articles based on particular scientific data from 1996 to 2023. The survey outcomes demonstrate that a number of authors from various countries have created DS articles so far. Due to the research activities of selected countries such as: the United States made a top result by presenting 521 articles, followed by United Kingdom (220), Australia (159), Canada (153), Italy (114), Spain (87), Germany (57), Turkey (45) in the data distribution.



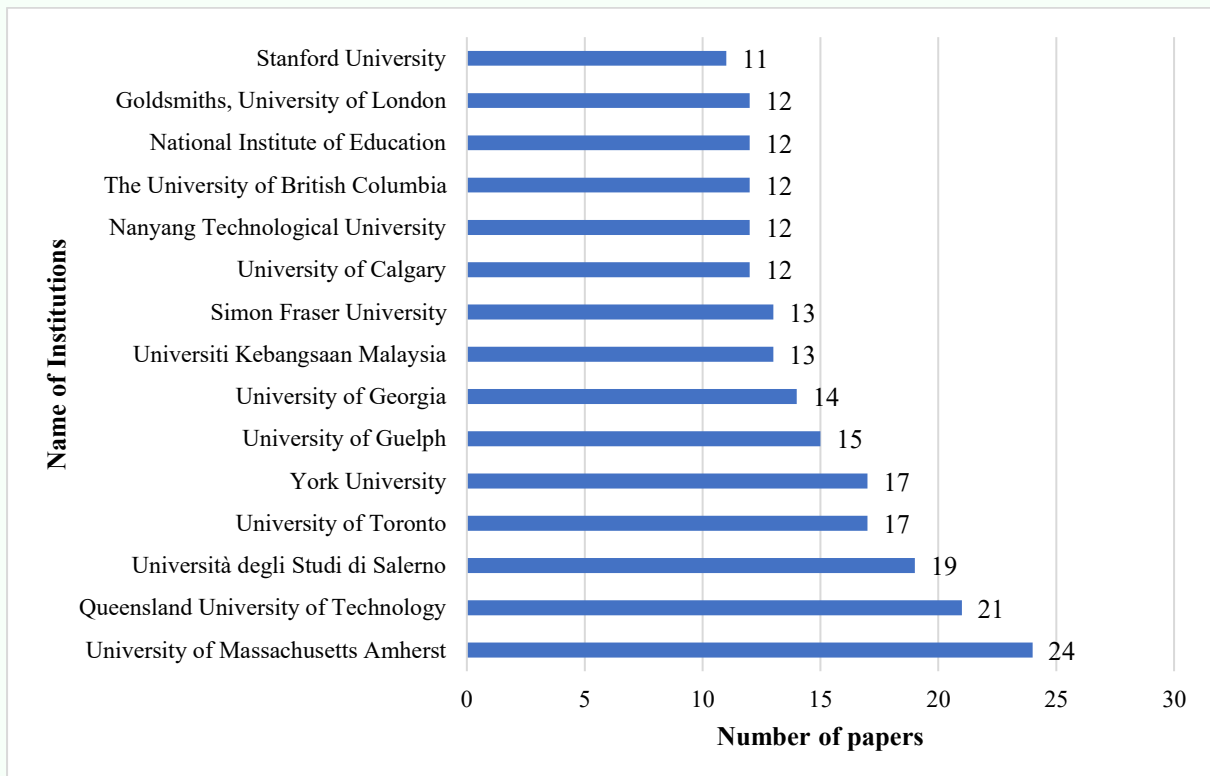


**Figure5.**List of top countries on digital storytelling issue in all countries.

### 3.5 Top institutions on digital storytelling

The papers published by the researchers of the listed institutions have been ranked in terms of the quality of the papers. One hundred sixty different institutions collaborated to publish 1856 papers on digital storytelling for the period of 1996-2023. Top of institutions shown in Figure 6, among them, University of the Massachusetts Amherst first position in record rank (24 records), followed by Queensland University of Technology (21 records) and Università degli Studi di Salerno (19 records).

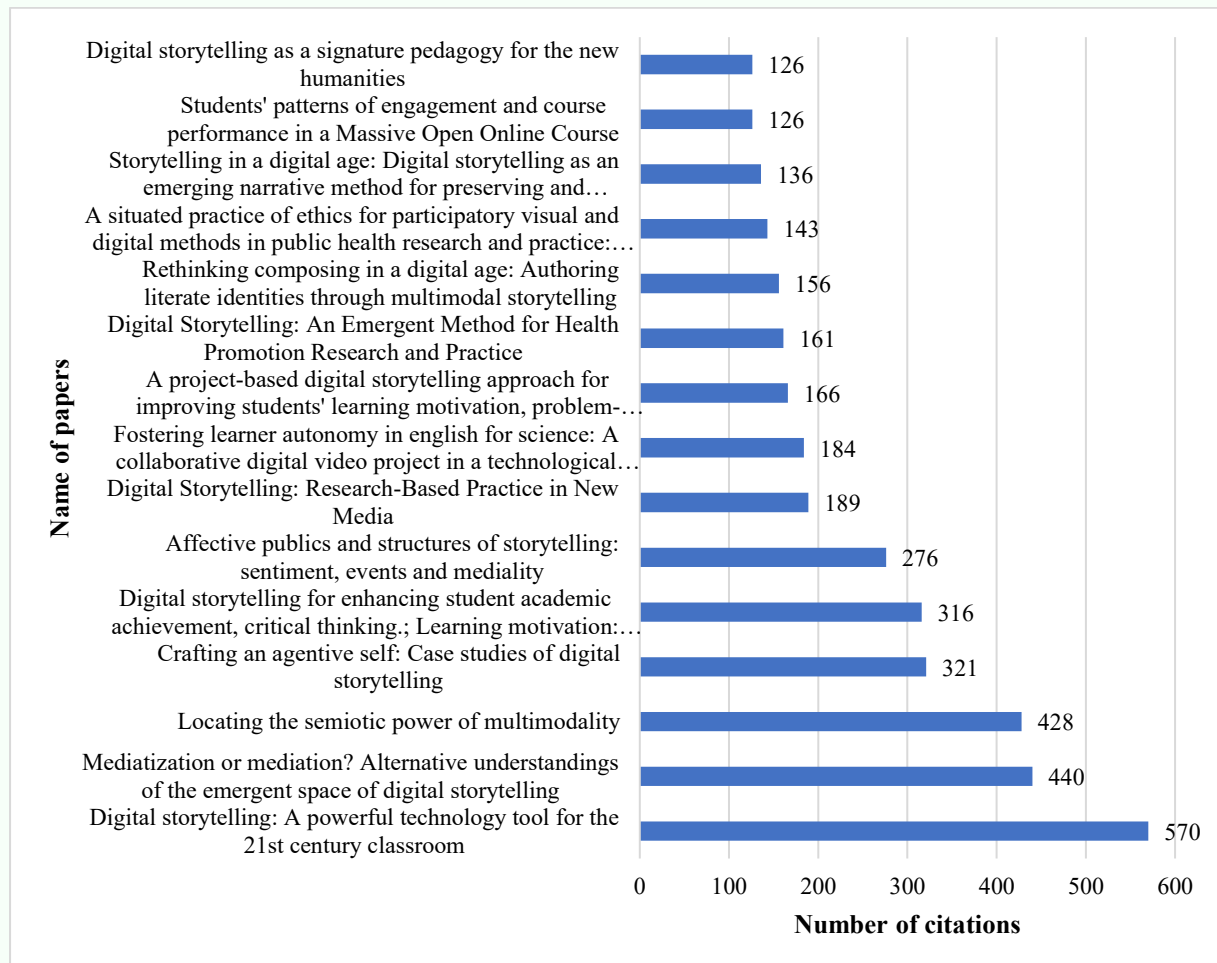




**Figure6.**List of top institutions on digital storytelling issue in all countries.

### 3.6 Top cited papers on digital storytelling

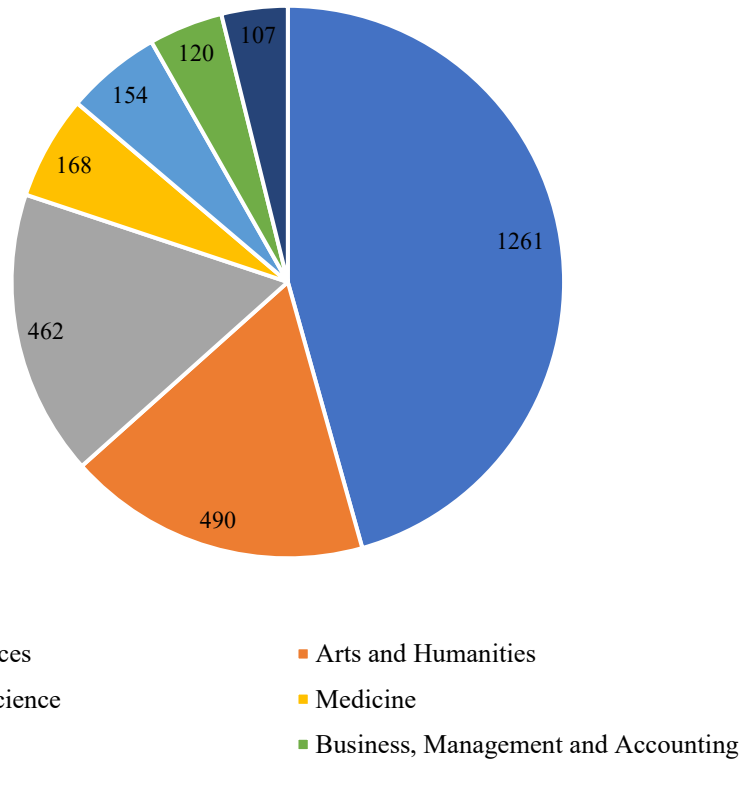
It is well known that the quality and novelty of the chosen topic is determined by the number of citations. Figure 7 includes fifteen mostly cited papers on digital storytelling. Total of 21611 citations given to 1486 publications on digital storytelling in the world countries for the given period. Among the top cited publications ,Digital storytelling: A powerful technology tool for the 21st century classroom, was cited for 570 times ,followed by Mediatization or mediation? Alternative understandings of the emergent space of digital storytelling (440),Locating the semiotic power of multimodality(428),Crafting an agentic self: Case studies of digital storytelling(321),Digital storytelling for enhancing student academic achievement, critical thinking(316); Learning motivation: A year-long experimental study(276) in the distribution.



**Figure7.**List of top cited journals on digital storytelling in all countries.

### 3.7 Publications by the topic cluster name on digital storytelling

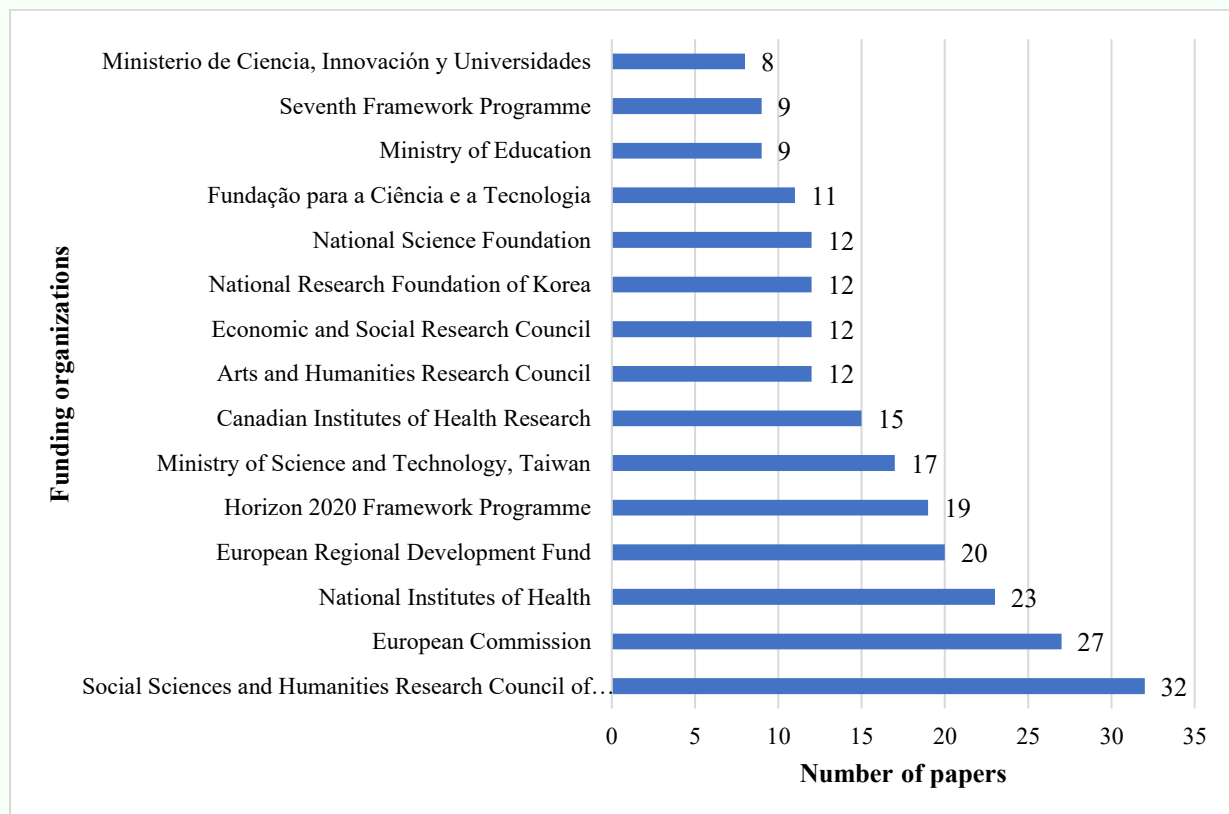
There are different topic cluster names available for the subject areas given in Scopus database. Most of the papers published on digital storytelling all countries belong to 7 different topic cluster names in Figure 8. Social Sciences cluster name covers 1261 total publications, while Art and Humanities 490 works, Computer Science 462 articles, Medicine 168 publications, Engineering 154 total publications, Business ,Management and Accounting 120 articles and Psychology 107 total papers.



**Figure8.**Top topic cluster name on digital storytelling in all countries.

### 3.8 Top funding sponsors on digital storytelling

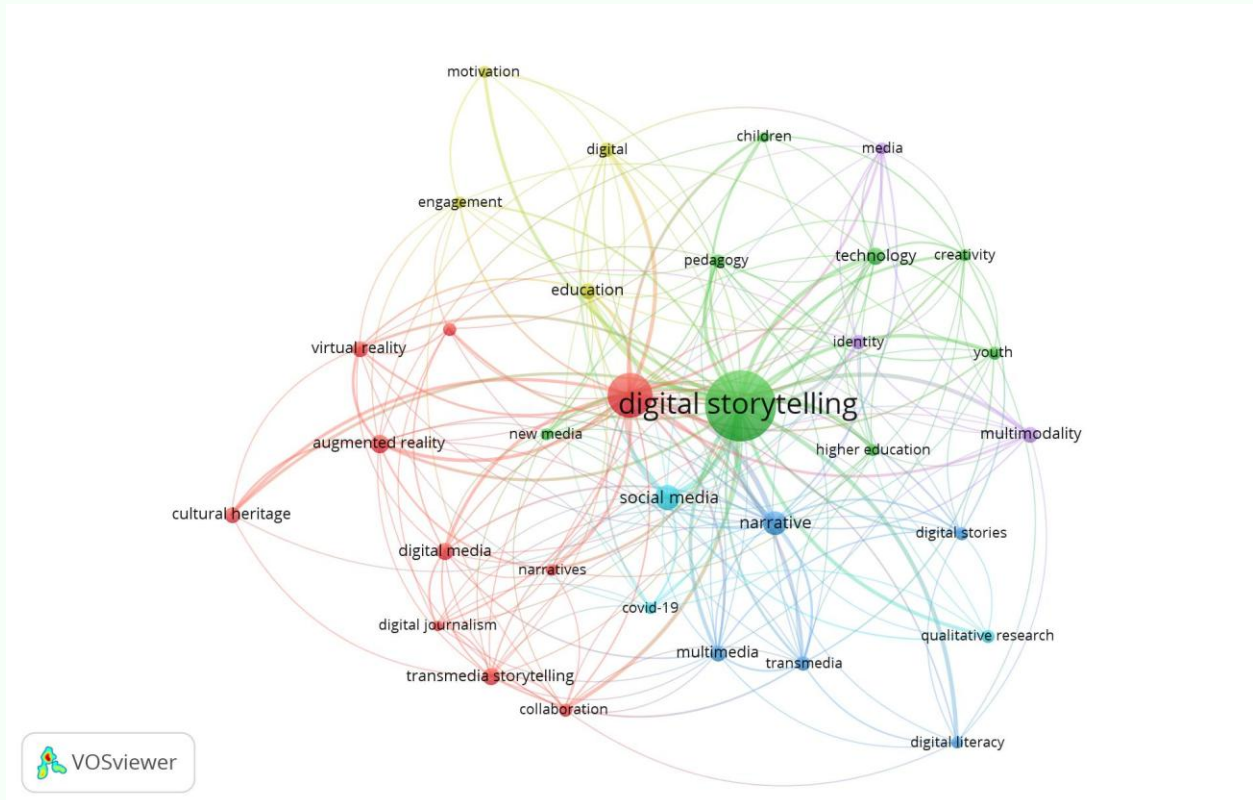
There is a link between prevalence of affiliated regions and funding of large scientific researches and programs. Based on our analysis of the top 15 funding sponsors publications on digital storytelling. Figure 9 demonstrates the distribution of the most influential and productive sponsor organizations which fund as well as support the process of experiment in the period of 1996-2023. Among the sponsor committees Social Sciences and Humanities Research of Council of Canada supported 32 DS works, followed by European Commission (27), National Institutes of Health (23), European Regional Development Fund (20), Horizon 2020 Framework Programme (19).



**Figure9.**Funding sponsors on digital storytelling in all countries.

### 3.9 Top keywords on digital storytelling

The keywords , the most commonly used by scholars , have been selected in order to explore international trends of the topic digital storytelling. By means of VOSviewer software system the minimum number of occurrences of a keyword has been underlined fifteen and the quantity of selected keywords has been automatically expressed as 33. As can be shown in Figure 10 ,the outcome of the dissemination of the co-occurrence keywords have been properly presented. Due to the number of occurrences , the most popular clue words are digital storytelling 594,education 33, technology 34 and digital literacy 19.The available data indicates that digital storytelling and DS in education are associated with the most important as well as scientific productions.



**Figure10.** Network map of top keywords based on the total link strength

### 3. Discussion

Over last few years, owing to the developing of information technology, teaching methods and resources have varied. The particular use of DS design and mobile devices for lesson process has provided innovative teaching opportunities. This research analyzed the most cited papers on DS in the Scopus database to determine essential articles, journals, authors, countries, top institutions, sponsors ,keywords and fields. It is supposed that the active using of DS in teaching activities to support students organize and follow effective learning in education.

According to the bibliometric analysis, published papers on DS over 27 years have the peak results ( from 248 to 268 ) between 2021 and 2022. The analyses on the topic of DS reveal that United States is leading among top of institutions, top of journals and top of authors. Meanwhile, Canada is the leading funding sponsor in the period of 1996-2023. In Canada more universities and research centers are willing to invest in DS publications in order to increase their impact. In terms of the most cited publications, Digital storytelling: A powerful

technology tool for the 21st century classroom (570 citations) ranked the highest position because in this article the author presented a powerful technology tool related to DS for modern classroom. Besides, most frequently occurring keywords can assist researchers in finding appropriate resources in the database. As it was found that the main authors keywords directed on four basic spheres: DS, narrative, social media , and education.

Our century witnesses to progressing of technology which is an indispensable resource for a number of activities. Almost every day, an innovative app or device is launched in the marketing industry that contributes to enrich our daily life in some way and creates quite better living conditions, as well as to develop professional career in any branches of society [24]. This leads to increasing the demand for technology. In turn, technology is a vital tool in education, which frequently employs technological equipment to make lessons in an English Language classroom fun and meaningful. For example , for both students and instructors, digital storytelling has become into a useful instructional tool especially for communicating more effectively [13]. Besides, it can be predicted that future education researchers may design their analyses with DS research from multiple perspectives.

Nowadays, digital storytelling has suddenly become a global phenomenon [25]. Because it provides adequate efficiency in educational setting. Badia (2015) mentioned that the usage of technologies in the educational process is extremely effective in supporting learners in comprehending and data acquisition that they are being taught [26]. In practice, digital storytelling is defined as the skill of narrating by using digital media, such as texts, images, recorded audio narrations, music and video [27]. Digital storytelling a very serious interconnection between context and content, and this is very essential in facilitating better integrated skills on the part of the learner [28]. Plus, this digital technology is an active teaching tool as it enhances ESL learners' speaking skills by improving their enthusiasm and competence in a stimulating educational setting, as well as raising their engagement [24]. In addition , it would be reasonable to mention about the impact of digital storytelling on students' grammatical knowledge, listening abilities, reading skills and enlarging their vocabulary [29]. The Earth Planet has undergone several unexpected disasters, diseases and wars so far. It involves humankind being ready for any kind unpleasant situations. Since The Covid-19 broke out in 2020, the educators approached to virtual classes with learners such as: Google



Classroom, Google Teams, Zoom Meeting, Skype, and Hangouts despite having various challenges [24]. The period of Quarantine became one of the main factors for boosting distance learning and conducting virtual classes with the help of various software tools and innovative technologies. Among them digital storytelling became significant in facilitating the improvement of online learners' speaking skills [30]. At present, educators are shifting to rapidly changing technology by utilizing digital tools to create highly modified and adaptable learning opportunities for learners as well as DS is being practiced in all world countries, particularly in educational institutions [31]. In other words, teachers and learners from primary school to higher education keep producing digital stories on a variety of themes, including arts, science and many content areas in the educational context [32]. As it is commonly known, attracting the attention, motivation of students and making learning meaningful is one of the main request of current teaching. Digital storytelling can be the suitable technique to involve students in their own learning process [33].

#### Strengths and Limitations

The main contribution of this research was a bibliometric analysis of DS research in scientific field utilizing VOSviewer to deal with common keywords. This study focused on certain DS trends and their main peculiarities. Nonetheless, there are some limitations that can not be ignored. Firstly, this research approached to the outcomes obtained from a single database. Perhaps, utilizing the same method with various databases may perform different results. Secondly, this scientific work concentrated on 1856 best-quality articles from only databases of Scopus. It would be proper to address to the publications from Google Scholar and ERIC in order to include more perspectives from other academics for the sake of more outcomes.

#### 4. Conclusion

This systematic review of the literature analyzed 1856 high quality articles on the influence of digital storytelling in enhancing speaking and integrated skills, and it was highlighted that digital storytelling has a variety of properties and benefits that have an aspiring role in improving learners integrated abilities. Moreover, the research shows that the empirical benefits of DS can be applied to a wide range of issues, and this study details covered outlined topics. A number of researchers were reviewed in this study. In turn, these scientist shave carried



out researches referring to different methodologies in order to emphasize the value of digital storytelling as being an update teaching methodology for students from a variety of levels of education. That is to say, digital storytelling facilitates the world students to comprehend the significance of story and audio-visual media as well as promote integrated language skills and talents. Based on the perspective of a lot of researchers, it is safe to say that the usage of digital storytelling can contribute perceptibly to satisfactory speaking skills and other integrated abilities among students of all ages and from all walks of life. It can be proposed that further studies should focus on not only the positive effect of DS on language learners but also the specific changes in learners' behavior in multidisciplinary training.

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