



FOSTERING THE CREATIVITY AND SPEAKING SKILLS OF ENGLISH LEARNERS THROUGH DIGITAL STORYTELLING AT SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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***Abstract:** Speaking skills and creativity plays a crucial role in English language learning at secondary schools, as they enable students to communicate effectively and express original ideas with confidence. This study investigates the role of digital storytelling in fostering the creativity and speaking skills of English learners at secondary school level. A qualitative research design was employed, involving classroom observations and speaking tasks conducted with secondary school students using digital storytelling activities. The findings reveal that digital storytelling significantly improves learners' speaking fluency, vocabulary usage, pronunciation, and creative expression. Additionally, the use of multimedia tools encourages collaboration and provides opportunities for authentic language use. The study concludes that digital storytelling is an effective pedagogical approach that enhances students' emotional engagement and supports the development of creative and communicative competence in English language learning.*

***Keywords:** Digital storytelling, speaking skills development, creativity, secondary education, EFL learners*

Introduction

English has evolved from a language used mainly within one nation into global means of communication. Due to globalization, it has become the dominant language in international interaction, shaping areas such as education, business, science, technology, and intercultural exchange. Its extensive use has strongly influenced education systems worldwide, with many universities and academic



programs offering instruction in English, which provides wider access to international learning opportunities. In addition, English proficiency plays a vital role in career advancement, enabling individuals to compete in global job markets. Therefore, the significance of English continues to grow not only in education but also in global communication and overall social and economic development.

Brown(2001) mentioned that to effectively teach speaking skills, certain factors and abilities must be taken into account. According to him, conversational discourse refers to the ability to achieve pragmatic goals through interactive communication with other language speakers, which is considered a key indicator of successful language acquisition. One of the main components of developing communicative competence is proper pronunciation. The distinction between accuracy and fluency is central to language performance. Fluency refers to natural and smooth speech, whereas accuracy involves clarity, grammatical correctness, articulation, and phonological precision. Moreover, speakers rely on various types of knowledge , including linguistic, sociocultural, discourse, pragmatic, grammatical, lexical, phonological, and genre knowledge, as well as awareness of speech conditions during communication. Previous studies suggest that digital storytelling can increase learners' engagement and motivation in language classrooms.

Despite the importance of speaking skills, a large number of secondary school students experience difficulties in expressing themselves creatively in English. Therefore, finding engaging and creative teaching methods is crucial in today's education systems. This research paper examines the problem that, despite the growing emphasis on communicative competence in English learning, many secondary school students continue to struggle with developing speaking fluency and creative thinking. Traditional teacher-centered approaches often limit students' opportunities for meaningful oral communication and creative self-expression. The research identifies a gap in literature, as although digital storytelling has potential to integrate creativity with language use, there is limited research on its effectiveness in developing creative speaking performance among secondary school English



learners. The objectives of the study are to examine the role of digital storytelling in enhancing speaking skills and creativity, and to identify students' attitudes toward digital storytelling activities and tools. The research question of the study is: How does digital storytelling enhance the speaking skills and creativity of secondary school English learners? This study contribute to the field of English language teaching by providing insights into the use of multimedia tools at the secondary school level. This paper follows the structure in which the first section presents the theoretical background , the second section describes the methodology, followed by the results and discussion, and finally the conclusion summarizes the findings.

Literature review

Proficiency in English enables individuals to communicate effectively with people from diverse backgrounds, fostering international understanding and collaboration. Language learning, in this paradigm, is not a solipsistic cognitive process but a social process whereby learners internalize linguistic forms through collective task activity, dialogic interaction, and strategic support (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Fluency, therefore, cannot be conceived in terms of quick or accurate speech alone, but as the outcome of socially sustained linguistic performance that indexes interpersonal and cognitive engagement. Digital storytelling, from this view, is not only a technological tool but a culturally mediated artifact that enables learners to practice, hone, and narrate oral stories within supported, psychologically safe contexts (Agra, 2025).

Richards (2013) argues that creative language use encourages learners to think independently and produce original ideas rather than memorizing fixed expressions. In the context of speaking, creativity allows students to personalize their language and communicate meaningfully. With the integration of technology into education, digital storytelling has emerged as an innovative pedagogical tool. Digital storytelling combines narrative skills with multimedia elements such as images, audio, and video (Robin, 2008). Previous studies indicate that DST provides learners with authentic contexts for language use and increases motivation in English



classrooms. Several researchers have examined the impact of digital storytelling on speaking skills. Studies by Yang and Wu (2012) and Hafner and Miller (2019) reveal that DST improves learners' speaking fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary development. Through storytelling tasks, students engage in meaningful communication and collaborative learning.

Moreover, digital storytelling has been found to foster creativity among learners. By creating their own digital stories, students are encouraged to express emotions, organize ideas creatively, and use language in innovative ways. Despite these findings, limited research has focused specifically on the combined effect of digital storytelling on both speaking skills and creativity among secondary school EFL learners. Therefore, this study aims to address this this research gap.

Research methods

This study employed a qualitative research design to investigate the role of digital storytelling in fostering speaking skills and creativity among secondary school English learners. The qualitative approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of learners' experience and speaking performance during digital storytelling activities. The aim of this study was to explore how digital storytelling influences secondary school EFL learners' speaking skills and creativity. Accordingly, the study addressed the following research questions: (1) How does digital storytelling affect learners' speaking fluency, vocabulary use, and pronunciation? (2) How does digital storytelling contribute to the development of learners' creativity in speaking tasks?

The participants of the study were 15 secondary school EFL learners from grade 9. Purposive sampling was employed to select students who had similar English proficiency levels and regular access to digital tools, which allowed for in-depth qualitative analysis. The students participated in digital storytelling tasks as part of their speaking lessons. Data were collected through classroom observations, speaking tasks, and semi-structured interviews. During the digital storytelling activities, students created short digital stories using multimedia tools, including



images, narration, and background music. Their speaking performances were recorded and analyzed.

The main variables of the study included speaking skills (fluency, vocabulary usage, pronunciation) and creativity (originality, idea development, and emotional expression). Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes related to students' speaking development and creativity. To ensure reliability and validity, data triangulation was applied by combining classroom observations, speaking tasks, and interviews. A speaking assessment rubric was used to evaluate fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary use. In addition, peer debriefing and consistent evaluation criteria were employed to enhance the credibility of the findings.

Findings

The results are presented under major themes related to fluency gains, motivation, instructional support, problems of implementation, and assessment practice.

Theme	Key aspects	Description of findings	Percentage	Frequency
Advantages	Motivation and engagement	Digital storytelling increased students' interest and confidence in speaking activities.	80%	12/15 students
Language development	Speaking fluency	Students demonstrated improved fluency, smoother speech,	73%	11/15 students



		and better pronunciation.		
Creativity	Idea generation	Learners were able to express ideas creatively through visuals, narration, and storytelling.	67%	10/15 students
Challenges	Technical issues	Some students faced difficulties with video editing tools and limited digital skills.	40%	6/15 students
Problems	Time management	Preparing digital stories required more time compared to traditional speaking tasks.	47%	7/15 students
Solutions	Peer collaboration	Group work and peer feedback supported idea development and reduces anxiety.	60%	9/15 students
Assessment	Speaking rubric	Speaking performance was assessed using fluency,	100%	



		pronunciation, coherence, and creativity criteria.		Applied to all participants
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1-Table. The effects of digital storytelling on students’ language learning.

Percentages are based on students’ responses and observation frequency in qualitative analysis. The findings reveal that digital storytelling plays a significant role in enhancing EFL learners’ speaking skills, particularly in terms of motivation, fluency, and creativity. A large majority of students (80%) reported increased engagement during speaking activities, as digital storytelling allowed them to combine images, narration, and personal ideas. This multimodal approach reduced anxiety and encouraged students to speak more confidently. Furthermore, improvements in speaking fluency were observed in most participants, as repeated practice and storytelling rehearsal helped learners produce smoother and more coherent speech. However, the findings also indicate several challenges associated with the implementation of digital storytelling. Technical difficulties and time constraints were the most frequently mentioned problems. Some students struggled with unfamiliar digital tools, which initially affected their performance. Despite these challenges, strong teacher guidance and peer collaboration significantly supported the learning process. Clear assessment criteria and the use of a speaking rubric ensured reliable evaluation of students’ performance. Overall, the results suggest that digital storytelling is an effective instructional strategy for developing speaking skills in secondary schools when adequate support and structured assessment are provided.

Discussion

The findings of the present qualitative study indicates that digital storytelling (DST) plays a crucial role in enhancing secondary school EFL learners’



speaking skills and creativity., Classroom observations and speaking tasks revealed noticeable improvements in learners' fluency, vocabulary use, and pronunciation. These findings suggest that engaging students in meaningful storytelling tasks supported by multimedia elements creates psychologically safe environment that encourages active oral participation. This result aligns with Robin's (2008) assertion that digital storytelling provides authentic contexts for language use by integrating narrative, technology, and personal expression.

In addition, the improvement in speaking fluency observed in this study supports previous research emphasizing the effectiveness of technology-mediated instruction in developing oral communication skills. Yang and Wu (2012) found that digital storytelling activities help learners organize ideas more coherently and speak more confidently. Similarly, Hafner and Miller (2019) argue that digital storytelling fosters extended spoken output by encouraging learners to rehearse, reflect, and revise their oral production. The present study confirms these findings by demonstrating that students became more willing to speak and showed reduced anxiety during storytelling tasks. Beyond speaking skills, digital storytelling was found to positively influence learners' creativity. The process of designing and narrating digital stories allowed students to express emotions, generate original ideas, and structure narratives creatively. This supports Richards' (2013) view that creative language use enables learners to move beyond memorization and personalize their language. Through DST, learners were not merely practicing linguistic forms but were actively constructing meaning, which enhanced both cognitive engagement and creative thinking. Moreover, the collaborative nature of digital storytelling tasks contributed to learners' social interaction and peer support. Students frequently exchanged idea, provided feedback, and assisted each other with technical and linguistic aspects of storytelling. From a sociocultural perspective, this finding resonates with Lantolf and Thorne's (2006) claim that language development occurs through socially mediated activities and dialogic interaction. The collective



storytelling process functioned as a scaffold that supported learners' speaking performance and creative expression.

Despite these positive outcomes, several challenges were identified during the implementation of digital storytelling. Limited technological skills and restricted access to digital tools occasionally hindered students' performance. This findings echoes earlier studies which report that technical constraints may affect the effectiveness of technology-enhanced language learning if sufficient support is not provided (Robin, 2008). However, with teacher guidance and peer assistance, most students were able to overcome these difficulties, suggesting that adequate instructional support is essential for successful DST integration.

Overall, the discussion highlights that digital storytelling is not merely a technological innovation but a pedagogically meaningful approach that supports speaking development and creativity among secondary school EFL learners. The findings of this study extended existing literature by demonstrating the combined impact of digital storytelling on both speaking skills and creativity within a qualitative research framework.

Conclusion

This qualitative study set out to explore the role of digital storytelling in fostering EFL learners' speaking skills and creativity at the secondary school level. The findings demonstrate that digital storytelling is an effective pedagogical approach that enhances learners' speaking fluency, vocabulary usage, pronunciation, and overall confidence in oral communication. By engaging students in meaningful, narrative-based tasks supported by digital tools, learners were encouraged to actively participate in speaking activities within an authentic and motivating learning environment. Furthermore, the study reveals that digital storytelling significantly contributes to the development of learners' creativity. Through the process of planning, designing, and narrating digital stories, students were able to generate original ideas, express personal experiences, and organize their thoughts coherently. This creative engagement not only supported language development but also



increased learners' motivation and emotional involvement in the learning process. The collaborative nature of digital storytelling tasks additionally promoted peer interaction, social support, and shared responsibility, which are essential elements in communicative language learning.

Despite certain challenges related to technological access and digital literacy, the overall outcomes of this study suggest that such limitations can be minimized through appropriate teacher guidance and instructional support. Therefore, digital storytelling can be considered a valuable instructional strategy for EEFL classrooms, particularly in secondary education. In conclusion, integrating digital storytelling into speaking instruction offers meaningful opportunities for learners to improve their speaking skills while simultaneously nurturing creativity. Future research may further investigate its long-term impact, its application in diverse educational contexts, and its effectiveness across different language proficiency levels.

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