



THE INFLUENTIAL IMPACTS OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF EFL LEARNERS' SPEAKING SKILLS

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Abstract

In this ever-changing modern age, EFL educators are still searching for more meaningful speaking learning enterprises by which second language learners are strongly encouraged to endure various L2 communication practice hurdles to transform into more proficient speakers. One of the promising ways to actualize this speaking-learning aspiration is through the use of digital storytelling. Previous researchers believed that digital storytelling could potentially promote a higher degree of speaking learning enjoyment where EFL learners' speaking competencies can thrive to the utmost potential. This present small-scale library study was initiated to exhaustively investigate the positive influences of digital storytelling on EFL learners' speaking skills improvement. To release this main study objective, the researcher conducted a thematic analysis of 25 previous digital storytelling and speaking studies to generate more relevant and comprehensible research results. Based on the thematic analysis, the constant utilization of digital storytelling was proved to transform EFL learners into more insightful L2 speakers and promote a psychologically sound speaking learning atmosphere in which their targeted L2 communicative competencies can be fostered to the fullest development. Future researchers need to include broader English language learning scopes and more reviewed digital storytelling investigations to generate more rewarding research results relevant to the applicability and feasibility of online learning platforms in modern EFL learning enterprises.

Keywords: digital storytelling, speaking skills, library study

INTRODUCTION

Since English is considered one of the most important global languages needed to be mastered by EFL learners, it is essential for second language educators to start fostering their learners' communicative competencies to enable them to survive and thrive in this ever-changing language learning enterprise. Arroba and Acosta (2021) reasoned that the English language for L2 communicative purposes should be fully mastered by modern EFL learners in order for them to be deemed proficient target language communicators. Keeping this fundamental EFL speaking learning principle in mind, second language educationalists are strongly advocated to provide their learners with more interactive, authentic, and meaningful speaking learning practices through daily-based communicative exposure. By doing so, they can gradually become more fluent L2 speakers who are confident in utilizing their communicative competencies in the presence of diverse interlocutors. This suggestion is strongly affirmed by Bikowski and Casal (2018) averring that it is extremely pivotal for worldwide EFL educationalists to constantly expose learners to more hands-on and proactive speaking skills rehearsals in which they can progressively transform into more confident L2 communicators. One of the potential solutions that can be utilized to actualize the above-mentioned speaking learning rewards is through the continual use of interesting technological platforms. It is believed that with the actual presence of appropriate technologies, EFL learners will be more attracted and encouraged to participate in specifically-assigned speaking learning activities. This laudable speaking learning attitude happened since they can hone their L2 communicative proficiency to the fullest potential with the gradual diminution of lecturing activities conducted by the second language speaking learning instructors. This belief seems to accord with the theory of technological learning adduced by Hamad et al. (2019) avowing

that while EFL educators have successfully minimized their traditional teacher-centered approaches where they share the intended knowledge predominantly to be replaced with the authentic usage of suitable technological learning platforms, better-facilitated English-speaking learning vicinities will be meritorious for the further advancement of their learners' speaking skills development.

Added to this, the viable technological learning platform worthwhile to internalize in nowadays EFL speaking learning contexts is digital storytelling. The origin of this renowned learner-oriented learning approach was originally derived from digital storytelling located in the United States. This technological learning method was soon recognized by the majority of American academicians in the early 1990s due to its feasibility, flexibility, and durability through diverse wide-ranging language-learning enterprises. Lambert (2013) highly encouraged American EFL educationalists to start incorporating digital storytelling at the commencement of their daily-based language learning enterprises to sustainably promote more pleasurable, holistic, and meaningful L2 communicative practices to all learning community members. In a similar vein, Robin (2016) theorized that under the insertion of digital storytelling, EFL learners can continuously transfigure into more collaborative, optimistic, and spirited academicians who are willing to elevate their desired target language competencies to the fullest development. By integrating all these paramount digital storytelling elements into EFL speaking learning processes endured by learners, they can become more proactive L2 speakers inculcating more robust higher-order thinking skills and lifelong learning characteristics. These coveted speaking learning behaviors can be well-coordinated within EFL learners' academic lives as they are intensively trained to organize their speaking learning contents, flows, and performances in harmony with the current speaking learning situations they are facing. It can also be stated that with the intensive assistance of digital storytelling, EFL learners have been more accustomed to creating more interactive, qualified, and appropriate speaking presentations critically. These speaking learning initiatives are closely aligned with Anderson et al. (2018) articulating that EFL learners can be more skillful in devising their creative, meaningful, and interesting speaking learning practices through the continual utilization of digital storytelling as they forge their higher-order thinking skills concurrently. Besides all these aforementioned advantageous values, digital storytelling can also enable EFL learners to create more well-organized speaking learning content in which their speaking fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation can be enunciated comprehensibly to other learning companions. As a result, EFL learners will be more comfortable while conveying their particular thoughts, ideas, and argumentations to other learning counterparts where satisfying speaking performances will be the apparent evidence for all effortful speaking learning actions they dedicate digitally. These above-elucidated conceptions are tightly interwoven with Merzifonluoglu and Gonulal (2018) highly advising globalized EFL educationalists to implement a digital storytelling strategy at the onset of speaking learning dynamics where EFL learners can deliver their specific ideas clearly to other classroom mates. Lopez et al. (2020) mentioned that with the accompaniment of digital storytelling, EFL learners can fully impart more conversational and authentic speaking learning events to simultaneously inspire other learning community members to invent a wide variety of interesting speaking learning contents before commencing the main speaking learning activities.

Another probable rewarding benefit derived from digital storytelling is the significant enhancement of EFL learners' literacy skills. As learners are required to explore a vast range of digital texts that are appropriate to their speaking learning contents and practices, they unconsciously become more avid L2 readers. Meaning to say, they are strongly determined to obtain a more exhaustive understanding of the targeted digital stories they have selected by reading these chosen stories repeatedly to create more meaningful speaking learning content. This beneficial speaking learning reward is parallel with Lambert et al. (2017) finding that a predominant number of the university EFL learners have transformed into more vibrant readers and enthusiastic speakers in the light of digital storytelling as they intensively explored and comprehended various online texts that matched with their current speaking learning contexts. In the support of digital storytelling, EFL learners can acquire varied new dictions, vocabulary, and communicative language expressions. The dramatic enhancement of these crucial target language elements is attained since learners are obliged to paraphrase the written expressions formed in their specifically chosen texts by using their words. Nurzaman (2019) acknowledged that digital storytelling can terrifically broaden EFL learners' word knowledge, communicative skills, and language expressions as they are commissioned to creatively narrate their personal story versions in line with the digital stories they have read before. Besides all the cognitive and communicative competencies benefits explicated above, digital storytelling simultaneously helps EFL learners to become more attractive L2 speakers in the presence of the general audience. It has been a consensus that more appealing storytellers can arouse the audience's interest to constantly listen to the present stories shared by them resulting in a greater enhancement of language learning quality. Kristiawan et al. (2022) likewise underscored the critical importance of digital storytelling wherein EFL learners heed their profound attention on developing their particular story contents interestingly, which in turn promotes more positive speaking learning participation among all learning community members. To reap all these aforementioned digital storytelling outcomes, Natasia and Angelianawati (2022) proposed five efficient consecutive steps to be incorporated by EFL educationalists at the beginning of speaking learning enterprises namely displaying a series

of possible stories to be picked up by EFL learners, dividing EFL learners into some groups, asking EFL learners to select the stories attracted them most, assigning EFL learners to creatively create the already-selected stories, and requesting EFL learners to share their creatively-made story versions to be commented by other learning community members.

No study has so far taken a library study approach to profoundly investigate the influential impacts of digital storytelling on the improvement of EFL learners' speaking skills in globalized English language learning dynamics. Hence, this current scale qualitative study was a tangible initiative action enacted by the researcher to address little contributions to further speaking learning quality enhancement through efficient, meaningful, and holistic digital storytelling internalization. To do so, it will be more apprehensible for the intended readers to know the major background underlying this study by observing the already-attained research outcomes produced by these five previous speaking learning investigations. The first study was run by Arini and Wahyudin (2022) discovering that a vast majority of Indonesian university EFL learners have become more active, confident, and optimistic L2 speakers due to the continual exposure to questioning techniques applied by their speaking learning instructors, which indicated that more interactive speaking learning method is crucially demanded in this modern age. Mbato (2020) strongly prompted Indonesian university EFL educationalists to assist their learners in gaining more significant awareness of their distinctive cultural values to progressively transfigure them into more competent public speakers. Moving on to the next study, Sinaga and Oktaviani (2020) revealed that through the utilization of fun fishing techniques, Indonesian university EFL learners are more highly encouraged to practice their targeted speaking skills since they already experienced a higher degree of speaking learning enjoyment. Wahyudin (2017) highly motivated Indonesian university EFL educators to initialize project-based learning strategies at the outset of speaking learning dynamics to make their learners become more strategic, mature, and creative L2 speakers. The latter study Wijaya (2021) confessed the critical determinant of self-efficacy towards the significant development of Indonesian university EFL learners' speaking proficiency in which they can gradually transform into more lifelong L2 speakers fully obtaining more satisfying speaking learning achievements. Anchored on these above-explained research results, it is worth asserting that by conducting a more exhaustive investigation of digital storytelling influences towards EFL learners' speaking competencies improvement, the subsequently-obtained research results may provide illuminations for worldwide EFL educationalists to start prioritizing the use of digital storytelling strategy in an attempt to promote more enjoyable, meaningful, and interactive speaking learning enterprises for diverse wide-ranging language learners. As a part of achieving the above-mentioned research objective, appropriate responses to this research problem were scientifically sought namely: (1) How does the utilization of digital storytelling foster worldwide EFL learners' speaking skills?

RESEARCH METHOD

This small-scale qualitative investigation was fully supported by a library study method to produce more apprehensible, contextual, and relevant research results that are contributable to the further advancement of a specifically chosen research area. Accordingly, the researcher reviewed 25 previous studies delving more exhaustively into the advantageous values of digital storytelling implementation towards worldwide EFL learners' speaking competencies development. Two major prompts motivated the researcher to initiate this current small-scale library investigation. Firstly, as a vast majority of globalized EFL educationalists tend to incorporate more traditional teacher-oriented approaches in their daily-based speaking learning activities, the subsequent research results can potentially shed new enlightenment for them to start initializing digital storytelling strategy before embarking on the main speaking learning activities since this strategy will transfigure language learners to become more proactive, critical, creative, and competent L2 speakers in the long run. Secondly, since there is an incremental demand for worldwide EFL educators to not merely turn their learners into more proficient L2 communicators but also into digital citizenships who are adaptable to withstand a wide array of taxing impediments in their prospective working places, the further internalization of digital storytelling can open up a new horizon for our educators to heed their focal point on developing EFL learners' technological competencies and affective aspects to reach the utmost life success. In the data analysis processes, the researcher made use of a thematic analysis by subcategorizing the most-appeared reviewed research results taken from the 25 digital storytelling studies into some main specific themes. By releasing this step, the upcoming research results are more likely to arouse worldwide EFL educators' collective interest to establish more solid collaborative networking with other educational experts, practitioners, and policy-makers to devise novel speaking learning regulations along with activities tightly corresponding with meaningful internalization of digital storytelling. During the data delineation stages, the researcher also integrated some relevant digital storytelling theories, findings, and arguments to ascertain the credibility of each research result.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After conducting an in-depth thematic analysis, there were two major specific themes yielded from this present small-scale library study namely: (1) digital storytelling enables EFL learners to become more well-rounded L2 speakers and (2) digital storytelling promotes a friendlier speaking learning atmosphere for EFL learners. The subsequent lines will be accompanied by overarching data delineations.

Theme 1: Digital Storytelling Enables EFL Learners to Become More Well-Rounded L2 Speaker

Theme 1	Authors
Digital Storytelling Enables EFL Learners to Become More Well-Rounded L2 Speakers	Abdelmageed and El-Naggar (2018); Amaliah et al. (2022); Arroba and Acosta (2021); Badawi et al. (2022); Elenein (2019); Febriyanti and Susanto (2017); Fu et al. (2022); Mirza (2020); Nair and Yunus (2021); Ramalingam et al. (2022); Razmi et al. (2014); Rokni (2014); Tatli et al. (2022).

A higher level of EFL learners' speaking proficiency can be attributed to the significant elevation of their motivation and self-confidence. Meaning to say, digital storytelling can be one of the major driving forces for EFL learners to gradually transform into more competent L2 speakers as they have inculcated more robust self-beliefs in creating a wide variety of interesting speaking presentations to be delivered to the targeted audience; classmates. This first strand of argumentation is closely correlated with Amaliah et al. (2022) contending that in the support of digital storytelling, EFL learners will have broader opportunities to develop their intended L2 communicative competencies to a greater extent since they channel their attention to devise more engaging speaking learning content. EFL learners' speaking readiness has also been increased after being introduced to digital storytelling in which they are continually encouraged to practice their desired speaking skills resulting in the full attainment of more fruitful speaking learning outcomes. This conception has a tight-knit relationship with the previous finding of Badawi et al. (2022) highly encouraging worldwide second language-speaking learning instructors to apply digital storytelling at the onset of their L2 communicative learning exposure to arouse EFL learners' speaking motivation, which in turn influences the significant advancement of their speaking competencies. As EFL learners have progressively become more proficient L2 speakers through digital storytelling, they can produce better pronunciation, a considerable number of meaningful language expressions, and improve their word knowledge. All these paramount speaking learning attributes are crucially important as learners can be inspirational sources for other learning counterparts to advance their speaking skills to their fullest potential. These rewarding speaking learning benefits are positively linked to Febriyanti and Susanto (2017) revealing that a great number of Indonesian university EFL learners have undergone more exponential speaking learning improvements comprising of vocabulary, pronunciation, and register, which gradually transfiguring them into more proficient L2 communicators.

After fully mastering all these fundamental speaking learning principles in the presence of digital storytelling, EFL learners can share a range of insightful ideas, thoughts, and arguments with other interlocutors. Through this speaking learning trajectory, a more holistic speaking learning outcome is successfully attained simultaneously by which EFL learners can communicate their particular notions clearly to the targeted audience. Nair and Yunus (2021) believe that with the accompaniment of digital storytelling, EFL learners will experience less-pressure speaking learning dynamics where they can share their specific paradigms comprehensively with other interlocutors. Ultimately, the utilization of digital storytelling can potentially mitigate a huge gap between more and less proficient L2 speakers. It can also be stated that the interesting texts forming in digital storytelling have significantly aroused EFL learners' proactive speaking learning behaviors wherein they are willing to establish more mutual collaborative networking with other learning community members by sharing their beneficial speaking knowledge, skills, and experiences. This useful speaking learning reward affirms the prior research result of Rokni (2014) acknowledging that it is vitally essential for globalized second language speaking learning instructors to internalize digital storytelling at the commencement of this ever-changing speaking learning enterprise to make all EFL learners become more active learning community members who are highly desirous of improving other learning counterparts' L2 communicative competencies to the utmost development.

Theme 2: Digital Storytelling Promotes Friendlier Speaking Learning Atmosphere for EFL Learners

Theme 2	Authors
Digital Storytelling Promotes Friendlier Speaking Learning Atmosphere for EFL Learners	Eissa (2019); Nair and Yunus (2022); Nampaktai (2018); Riani and Husnawadi (2021); Saenboonsong and Poonsawad (2020); Tahriri et al. (2015); Wafa and Chakim (2022); Wei et al. (2018); Yan (2019); Yang et al. (2022); Zamzam (2020); Zuana (2018).

It is worth confessing that through the proper incorporation of digital storytelling, EFL learners will constantly undergo a more conducive-friendly speaking classroom climate in which they conclusively assure themselves to elevate their weak speaking areas to gradually become more competent L2 speakers. This belief was reinforced by the previous finding of Nair and Yunus (2022) highly encouraging second language-speaking learning instructors to alleviate EFL learners' excessive foreign language speaking anxiety by constantly promoting more positively sound speaking learning vicinities where all learners are strongly eager to improve their L2 communicative proficiency to more advanced development. More importantly, the integration of digital storytelling can also be one of the accompanying strategies for second language-speaking learning instructors to arm their learners to become more persistent L2 speakers who bravely take on every speaking learning challenge outside of the formal speaking classroom settings. Put more simply, digital storytelling can potentially allow EFL learners to become the self-initiators for their speaking learning activities in which they have a higher degree of tendency to confront each single speaking learning obstruction in an attempt to transfigure into more skillful L2 speakers. The above-elucidated conceptions find support from the prior finding (Riani and Husnawadi (2021) which discovered that a vast majority of Indonesian university EFL learners have instilled a more robust tendency to sustainably proceed into the taxing speaking learning complexities they are facing both inside and outside of the speaking classroom conditions as they hold a strong belief that they can become more competent L2 speakers through this long-lengthy process.

In concord with the above-explicated digital storytelling benefits, it is well-reasoned to be emphasized that EFL learners have gradually become more inquisitive, insightful, and autonomous L2 speakers amidst the continuous integration of digital storytelling. Thus, it is becoming progressively important for second-language-speaking learning instructors to create more enjoyable and interactive online texts at the main speaking learning dynamics to extensively release satisfying speaking learning outcomes to be obtained by all learning community members. These above-explained arguments were echoed by identical research results discovered in Wafa and Chakim (2022) highly advising worldwide second language-speaking learning instructors to integrate the use of digital storytelling with more interesting story contents to continually promote more anxiety-free speaking learning climates where all learners' speaking learning curiosity, motivation, and commitment were empowered. Added to all these fundamental digital storytelling aspects, globalized second language speaking learning instructors are simultaneously recommended to invent moderately challenging and hands-on speaking learning activities upon implementing digital storytelling in their teaching-learning daily basis. By embodying this initiative, EFL learners will cast more positive perspectives toward the specifically assigned speaking learning tasks imparted by their second language speaking learning instructors. This contention concurs with the finding of Wei et al. (2018) confessing that it is of utmost importance for EFL educationalists to create more sufficiently challenging and actively engaged speaking learning activities to be integrated within digital storytelling by which all learners are extremely eager to proactively engage with the particularly imparted speaking learning tasks, even though these activities are quite complex.

The eventual and most pivotal digital storytelling aspect that needs to be cultivated is its meaningfulness. With this in mind, second language-speaking learning instructors are more liable to devise more authentic and interactive L2 communicative enterprises among diverse learning community members. While EFL learners have been intensively exposed to all these holistic speaking learning events, they will not only transform into more proficient L2 speakers but also creative thinkers since they are immensely trained to create a vast range of interesting speaking presentations with the enlightenment of their creative ideas, conceptions, and minds. This coveted speaking learning outcome also hovers in the account of Yang et al. (2022) uncovering that the consistent implementation of digital storytelling has successfully addressed apparent speaking skills and creative thinking empowerment as EFL learners can eventually fulfill the highly-demanded speaking learning expectancies by fining-tune their speaking learning presentations in accord with the audience's interests along with situations.

CONCLUSIONS

Summarizing the above-depicted data review, there are always grounds for globalized EFL educationalists to internalize digital storytelling in correspondence with their learners' speaking learning needs, preferences, interests, and contexts. This learner-oriented approach can be one of the new mainstays for EFL educators to significantly elevate language learners' L2 communicative competencies to the fullest potential as they are all trained to become more proactive learning community members, creative idea creators, and life-long target language users. Through all these means, it can be fairly ensured that EFL learners will progressively transform into more proficient, strategic, and confident L2 communicators since digital storytelling sustainably promotes more learner-oriented learning environments where all learning community members are strongly motivated to foster their targeted speaking proficiency to more advanced development. Although the specifically obtained research results potentially imparted valuable contributions for the prospective EFL-speaking learning enterprises conducted globally, some

limitations should be forthrightly confessed. Firstly, since the further integration of digital storytelling is predominantly activated in EFL speaking learning dynamics, it will be necessary for future researchers to replicate this current small-scale library investigation by profoundly exploring the criticality of this learner-centered strategy in other three major English language skills namely reading, writing, and listening to assist our learners to experience similar rewarding language learning benefits as similar as speaking. Lastly, the researcher solely reviewed minimum literature related to the positive influences addressed by digital storytelling in modern-speaking learning activities. Therefore, future researchers are invited to review a great number of digital storytelling studies implemented in distinctive second language learning contexts and at distinctive levels of second language proficiency owned by EFL learners. By so doing, renewable insights on utilizing digital storytelling can better revolutionize the whole EFL teaching-learning landscape.

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