



CALL RESEARCH BRIEF

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Title: Summary of hear me out! Digital storytelling to enhance speaking skills

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Rationale /Overview of the Study

With the goal of improving ESL speaking skills, this study explores the impact of digital storytelling on a sample of 20 students in their fourth year at secondary school in Malaysia. It investigated the impact of incorporating digital story-telling (DST) software, specifically "VideoScribe" (<https://www.videoscribe.co/en/>), on students' speaking skills and students' perceptions about the effectiveness of employing DST to enhance their speaking skills. The authors did not mention details about how the speaking was supported during the story creation process. Overall, the findings of the study show that the use of DST was effective in improving the majority of the participants' proficiency in spoken communication after the process of making their own VideoScribes. Moreover, the participants demonstrated a willingness to utilize DST as a means to further enhance their speaking abilities. Not only did the use of DST pique students' interest, but it also facilitated their active participation and learning. It allowed students the flexibility to convey their ideas and thoughts in multiple forms of media.

Research Methods

Approach: The researchers employed action research where they followed a four-step process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The main data-gathering tools implemented were tests and interviews.

Participants: A convenience sampling of 20 students with the same initial language proficiency level were randomly chosen from one suburban secondary school in Pahang. Twelve of the participants were males and 8 were females. The participants were classified as having a high-intermediate level of English language proficiency.

Data Collection and Analysis: A pre-and post-test was implemented to obtain oral language proficiency data for participants, whereas individual interviews were conducted with the participants following their exposure to the DST approach for gathering their perceptions.

The primary tool used for data collection was the School Based Oral Assessment (SBOA), which consists of five constructs (not detailed in the article) with each carrying a maximum mark of 6 points. The test is a valued tool among public secondary schools in Malaysia as it is designed as a component of the Malaysian education system to assess the spoken English language proficiency of students. In addition, an interview was conducted to gather the participants' perceptions towards the application of DST to develop their speaking skills.

The study extended over five weeks, during which participants were immersed in DST creation in 60-minute sessions outside of class twice a week. Initially, participants were introduced to the DST concept and taught how to use the VideoScribe app to create stories. They were then required to create their own videos to narrate personal stories. After the completion of the sessions, participants completed the post-test and individual interviews with a researcher.

To analyze the data, the researchers used a computer program called SPSS to compare the average scores of the pretest and post-test. Furthermore, the interview results were analyzed by the researchers looking for patterns in the responses of the participants.

Results

The study provides empirical evidence in favor of using digital storytelling as a method to effectively facilitate the enhancement of students' speaking abilities and skills, partly because "digital storytelling empowers each student to be a storyteller"(p. 200).

The results also affirm that the use of DST can spark students' interest and encourage them to become active learners while also improving their speaking skills. Students perceived DST use positively, as it provided them with opportunities for creativity and engagement. However, the number of participants of the study was relatively small. Therefore, the results may be limited and cannot be applicable to a general population. Additionally, the study focused on short-term implications for six weeks, as students were excited to try an innovative teaching strategy. Therefore, it is advised that more long-term research investigate the sustainability of the approach.

Practical Implications

This study holds significant value, as it centers on the development of speaking abilities, which are essential for successful communication in various settings, including personal, academic, and professional contexts. In addition, it adds to the body of research on the integration of digital technologies in education. It demonstrates the potential of digital storytelling as a creative and engaging tool for language learning, which is particularly relevant in today's digital age.

1. DST has the potential to be effective in enhancing students' spoken communication skills.
2. DST is an interactive and engaging way to promote active learning and communication skills.
3. Teachers can incorporate DST into language teaching practice to enhance students' motivation and engagement.
4. DST could lead to opportunities for creativity in language learning and teaching practice.

Recommendations for Teachers

1. Explore different DST tools and platforms. Teachers can explore various tools and platforms to find the ones which best suit their teaching objectives and students' needs.

2. Incorporate digital storytelling tools such as VideoScribe into language teaching practice to enhance students' motivation and engagement.
3. Encourage students to become active learners by providing opportunities for them to create their own stories using DST tools, which allow them to practice speaking and other language skills.

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