

Investigating EFL Students' Perception on The Use of Digital Storytelling (DST) In Learning to Speak English

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Abstract

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The aim of this study was to investigate how EFL students saw the application of Digital Storytelling (DST) as a means to support their English. The aims are to establish the advantages of the application of Digital Storytelling (DST) at school and to examine how the students view DST as a way of supporting their speaking. The study is conducted at SMAN 1 Sindang, Indramayu, involving 44 senior high school participants. For the sake of obtaining overall data, a mixed method was utilized through the use of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The results indicated that students have positive attitudes towards DST, demonstrating how DST makes them more motivated, creative, and confident in delivering their messages in English. In addition to encouraging learners to become active in studying, DST is a great avenue for fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary practice. However, it was also mentioned that some of the issues were quoted, such as a lack of technical knowledge and a shortage of resources. The significance of the findings is the potential of DST as an effective pedagogical instrument that integrates technology application and language learning. The implication of the study is that DST is effective in developing student engagement and speaking skills. Further research is recommended to investigate its long-term impact and explore its application in other language skills and educational environments.

Kata Kunci:

Digital Storytelling,

Kemampuan

berbicara,

Persepsi siswa

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki persepsi siswa EFL (Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing) tentang penggunaan Digital Storytelling (DST) dalam pembelajaran berbicara bahasa Inggris. Tujuannya adalah untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana siswa memandang Digital Storytelling (DST) dalam meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara mereka dan untuk mengidentifikasi manfaat penerapannya di kelas. Penelitian ini dilakukan di SMAN 1 Sindang, Indramayu, dengan 44 siswa sekolah

menengah atas sebagai partisipan. Pendekatan metode campuran digunakan, memanfaatkan kuesioner dan wawancara semi-terstruktur untuk mengumpulkan data yang komprehensif. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa siswa umumnya memiliki persepsi positif terhadap DST, yang menyoroti perannya dalam meningkatkan motivasi, kreativitas, dan kepercayaan diri mereka saat berlatih berbicara bahasa Inggris. DST juga menyediakan platform yang mendukung untuk meningkatkan kosakata, pengucapan, dan kelancaran, sekaligus memotivasi siswa untuk lebih aktif atau lebih terlibat dalam proses pembelajaran. Namun, beberapa tantangan seperti keterampilan teknis dan keterbatasan akses ke sumber daya juga dilaporkan. Signifikansi hasil penelitian terletak pada potensi DST sebagai alat pedagogis yang efektif yang mengintegrasikan teknologi dengan pembelajaran bahasa. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa DST bermanfaat dalam meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa dan kemahiran berbicara. Penelitian lebih lanjut direkomendasikan untuk mengeksplorasi dampak jangka panjangnya dan menyelidiki penerapannya dalam keterampilan bahasa lain dan konteks pendidikan.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is widely accepted as one of the most basic skills in learning a foreign language, along with listening, reading, and writing. Among the four fundamental skills, speaking is the most challenging because it requires not only linguistic capacity but also psychological preparedness to express ideas confidently in real-time interaction. Speaking is an important aspect of language learning as it enables learners to express their opinions, communicate messages, and share information in social and learning contexts (Angelianawati et al., 2022). Speaking is the organization of advanced skills such as fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, in contrast to receptive skills such as reading and listening (Abrar et al., 2018). English speaking continues to be challenging for the majority of EFL learners, especially those from Indonesia, since it requires confidence to express one's own messages, cultural awareness, and spontaneous speech production.

The problems of EFL learners in developing speaking ability are not only linguistic but also affective and psychological problems. The learners become nervous, insecure, or shy to talk during class discussion or interaction with

classmates because of low self-esteem, lack of adequate vocabulary, and fear of making mistakes, as Pitura (2022) has indicated. Inadequate teaching methods and uninteresting study materials are usually blamed for such issues since they do not stimulate students' interest or dispel their anxiety. Thus, the development of speaking skills not only needs constant practice but also new teaching methods that have the potential to create a setting in which students can speak freely without any fear of judgment.

In this case, with the fast development of technology, there are increasingly more opportunities to apply digital media to language learning. Traditional teaching in the classroom has been substituted with multimodal learning environments by adopting interactive software, mobile phones, and internet connections in education (Visa Alvionita et al., 2022). Digital Storytelling (DST) is an instructional method that combines story-crafting with multimedia like text, images, animation, videos, and audio. It is among the most innovative technologies springing out of this trend. Digital storytelling, argue Zarifsanaiey et al. (2022), is a fusion of technology and imagination, in which students are supported to construct knowledge proactively and increase their enthusiasm and engagement. DST transforms the process of learning by putting the students central, thus transforming them from passive recipients of facts into constructors of meaning. This is contrary to traditional rote-learning methods.

The application of digital storytelling in language learning has been questioned in some research studies. For instance, Hashim et al. (2022) examined the application of Toontastic 3D, a mobile learning tool that employs digital storytelling, in the development of students' speaking skills.

Their results demonstrated the effectiveness of the application in stimulating oral fluency and creativity, as it enabled children to produce stories interactively with very little technical drawbacks. Their test was only done on a single application, though, so it is guessed whether the same advantages could be experienced under diverse circumstances or using other types of DST. Another study by Tanrikulu (2020) centered on how DST affected the writing ability of students. The study indicated that digital storytelling heavily contributed to

improving students' organization of ideas, paragraphs, and adaptation to an audience in writing. While these findings supported the favorable influence of DST in literacy development, speaking skills were not well addressed because writing continued to be the focus. Hava (2019) also analyzed the effects of DST on the self-esteem and overall language learning satisfaction among EFL learners in a different study. While speaking performance was improved marginally compared to other areas like vocabulary and writing, the results showed enhanced motivation and interest among the students. The research revealed that while DST would enhance oral communication, there was a need for more research to determine the exact speaking skills DST best supports.

There are, however, a few inconsistencies, even though past research as a whole is compatible with DST's suitability for language instruction. First, most of the literature that has been published to date is more oriented to writing than to speaking. Writing fluency and structure are improved by DST, as Tanrikulu (2020) and others discovered; however, there is less solid evidence regarding the effect on speech production. Second, although studies (Hashim et al., 2022) have attested to the value of particular apps such as Toontastic 3D, such results might not be directly applicable to wide-scale DST applications on other platforms and software. Third, opinions on how much DST affects affective factors like motivation, anxiety reduction, and confidence are divided. Hava (2019), for instance, noted notable increases in confidence but only slight increases in speaking ability.

Furthermore, there is debate regarding DST's applicability and accessibility in a variety of educational settings. Critics argue that not all schools possess the necessary infrastructure, such as reliable internet connections, updated devices, or technical training for teachers to implement DST effectively (Maureen, 2014). Without addressing these challenges, DST may risk widening the gap between resource-rich and resource-poor institutions. Thus, the need arises for research that explores not only the perceived benefits of DST but also the challenges that accompany its implementation in real classroom contexts.

The study was conducted at SMAN 1 Sindang, Indramayu, West Java, one of the leading senior high schools in the region. The participants comprised 44 tenth-grade students who had prior exposure to digital storytelling activities in their English classes. By focusing on this context, the study provides insights into how DST can be utilized effectively in secondary education, particularly within the Indonesian EFL setting.

This study makes several important contributions. Theoretically, it enriches the body of knowledge on technology-enhanced language learning by focusing on the relatively underexplored area of students' perceptions of DST in developing speaking skills. It provides empirical evidence from the Indonesian context, thereby contributing to cross-cultural perspectives on DST implementation. Practically, the findings can inform teachers and policymakers about how DST can be integrated into the curriculum to foster speaking competence. The study also offers guidance on how to address potential challenges, such as limited resources or technical skills, ensuring that DST can be applied more inclusively and effectively.

Speaking remains an important but challenging skill for EFL students, particularly in Indonesia. Computer-based digital storytelling as a technology-supported pedagogic approach provides possible mechanisms for enhancing speaking ability through the use of creativity, multimedia, and learner interaction. Although previous research has heralded its potential benefits, inconsistencies and lacunae remain as to its clear-cut impact on speaking ability and student attitude. Therefore, the current study seeks to redress such lacunae by investigating how Indonesian high school students perceive the implementation of DST in their English-speaking practice, the benefits they derive, and the challenges that confront them. The findings are expected to be both theoretically and practically useful to the field of language education, with insights into the integration of DST as a powerful and innovative means for promoting communicative competence in EFL classrooms.

METHOD

This study utilized a mixed-method approach in exploring students' perceptions of learning how to speak English through Digital Storytelling (DST). The participants in this study were 44 tenth-grade students of SMAN 1 Sindang Indramayu in the 2025 academic year. The sample was a whole class that was chosen with the use of the purposive sampling technique, taking into account the fact that this class had been dealing with DST throughout English lessons. The tenth-grade respondents were selected with sufficient experience with their English and their actual experience of project-based learning. The sample was representative in presenting a balanced split of learners' perspectives and involving female and male students of varying levels of proficiency.

A semi-structured interview and questionnaire were two data collection tools employed. The questionnaire adapted by Asmawati (2023) was designed to capture the students' feelings in employing and benefiting from DST in speaking practice. It had three categories: (1) the attitudes of students toward the practice of DST, (2) the attitudes of students toward its advantages, and (3) the attitudes of students toward its disadvantages. A five-point Likert scale where "Strongly Agree" (5) and "Strongly Disagree" (1) were indicated as the extremes was utilized for response collection.

The second tool employed to obtain further specific information and to confirm the result of the questionnaires was the semi-structured interview. Six students were interviewed based on teacher recommendations, categorized into three achievement categories: two high, two average, and two low achievers. The students' ideas, emotions, and experiences in applying DST to their speaking practice were the main concerns of the interview protocol. The study took place in West Java, Indonesia, in SMAN 1 Sindang Indramayu.

The questionnaire was initially given to each of the forty-four participants. Afterward, interviews were conducted with the selected six students. All the interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy and later transcribed verbatim for analysis. The use of both instruments provided data triangulation and strengthened the validity of findings.

The questionnaire responses were analyzed quantitatively using percentage scoring. Following Chambliss and Schutt (2019), the percentage for each response category was calculated to determine the overall perception levels. Students who chose “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” were interpreted as having positive perceptions, while “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” indicated negative perceptions. Neutral responses reflected uncertainty. The percentage levels were further classified using Ridwan Darmawan’s (2008) criteria, ranging from “Very Low” to “Very High.”

The interview data were analyzed qualitatively through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), as suggested by Creswell (2012). The analysis followed several steps: (1) managing and organizing data, (2) reading transcripts and memoing, (3) coding and categorizing into themes, (4) describing and interpreting findings, and (5) representing the results in narrative form.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The questionnaire was administered to 44 students of tenth-grade senior high schools to investigate the students' perception of the use of digital storytelling as a medium in learning to speak English. The students were asked to rate 12 items on a five-point Likert scale (i.e., 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree), and the formula that the researcher used was referring to Chambliss and Schutt (2019).

The questions consist of two parts: the perception of the use of Digital Storytelling media, which consists of seven questions, and the perception of the benefit of digital storytelling to speaking. Each part of the questionnaire contains five questions. The first part of the questionnaire is about students' perceptions of the use of storytelling media in learning to speak English. The questions in this section are divided into five questions. The results of the questionnaire are presented in Table 1.

Perception of the usage of Digital Storytelling media, which comprises seven questions, and the perception of the advantages of digital storytelling for speaking are the two sections of the questionnaire. There are five questions in each section of the survey. The questionnaire's first section asks students how they feel about

using Digital Storytelling media to improve their English. This section's questions are broken down into five categories. Table 1 displays the findings of the questionnaire.

Table 1. Students' Perception on the use of storytelling media.

Number	Statement	Mean	Percentage	Category
1.	I really enjoy learning English using digital storytelling media.	3.33	67%	High Level
2.	By using Digital Storytelling media, I am more motivated to learn English.	4.19	77%	High Level
3.	My English skills have improved by using digital storytelling.	4.07	81%	Very High Level
4.	Digital storytelling is one of the media that makes it easier for me to understand English lessons.	4.14	83%	Very High Level
5.	The use of digital storytelling media can support the learning activities in the classroom to be more enjoyable.	3.71	74%	High Level
6.	Digital Storytelling is a suitable learning method	3.74	75%	High Level
7.	My English teacher often uses Digital Storytelling media to improve their English-speaking skills	3.71	74%	High Level

Based on Table 1, the students' perceptions of the use of digital storytelling in learning English speaking skills are generally positive, with most items falling under the "High Level" and "Very High Level" categories. Students' responses to the first question were positive, with a percentage of 67% which is the "High Level" category. It is indicated that the student enjoys using digital storytelling tools to learn English. This was also supported by the data of the interview, which said "Yes, *I really enjoy learning English using Digital Storytelling media*". Then, for the second question, it is also followed by the "High Level" category with a percentage of 77%, it indicates that they feel motivated to learn English through this media. This was also supported by the data of the interview that said "Yes, *I feel motivated to learning English with Digital Storytelling over reading a book*". Then, for the third question got the "Very High Level" category with a percentage of 81%. It indicates that they believe that using digital storytelling has helped them become more fluent in English. This was also supported by the data of the interview that said "*I feel my speaking has improved after using Digital Storytelling, I feel easier*

to express my opinion when I make a Digital Storytelling by myself". The fourth question was also followed by the "Very High Level" category with a percentage of 83%. It is indicated that most students find it easy to understand English lessons by using digital storytelling. This was supported by the data of the interview that said "*I feel more easier to understand the English story with Digital Storytelling*". Then, for the fifth question, the students answered got "High Level" category with a percentage of 74% which means Digital storytelling has the potential to enhance the enjoyment of classroom learning activities. This was also supported by the data of the interview that said "*Yes, I enjoy the learning using Digital Storytelling media, I feel learning more interesting if using media*". Question number six is got "High Level" category with a percentage of 75%, which is most students agree that Digital storytelling is an effective teaching strategy. This was supported by the data of the interview that said "*I think this is suitable media because it can make a classroom more live*". Then, for the last question, also followed by "High Level" category with a percentage of 74% which means that most of students are agree that their teacher often uses Digital Storytelling media. This was also supported by the data of the interview that said "*Yes, my English teacher often use this media, he is usually play a film, or short story*". It can be concluded that the use of digital storytelling received a good response regarding the students' perception at SMAN 1 Sindang Indramayu.

Table 2. Perception toward the benefit of digital storytelling in Speaking

Number	Statements	Mean	Percentage	Category
8.	The use of digital storytelling makes me more confident in speaking English.	3.76	75%	High Level
9.	The use of digital storytelling help me improve my vocabulary.	4.14	83%	Very High Level
10.	The use of digital storytelling can help me improve my pronunciation when speaking English.	4.7	81%	Very High Level
11.	Digital storytelling helps me improve my grammar when I'm speaking English.	3.79	76%	High Level
12.	The use of digital storytelling help me in expressing my ideas.	3.83	77%	High Level

From Table 2 above, question number eight obtained the “High Level” category with a percentage of 75%. Based on the result, the majority of students believe that using digital storytelling increases their confidence when speaking English. This was also supported by the data of the interview, which said, “*I feel more confident in speaking English through this media*”. Then, question number nine got the “Very High Level” category with a percentage of 83%. This implies that kids' vocabulary can be enhanced through digital storytelling. This was also supported by the data of the interview, which said “*by often watching a video storytelling, I have improved my vocabulary*”. Furthermore, question number ten received the “Very High Level” category with a percentage of 81%. This means that most of the participants feel their pronunciation has improved by using digital storytelling media. This also was supported by the data of the interview, that said “*yes, my pronunciation has improved after using Digital Storytelling media*”. For the eleventh question, got the “High Level” category with a percentage of 76%. The majority of pupils believe that digital storytelling can enhance their understanding of grammar. This was supported by the data of the interview that said “*Yes, my grammar has improved because after we write a script, our teacher will give us feedback about grammatical errors, so it makes us to fix the grammar that we write in our script*”. Then, question number twelve received the “High Level” category. This result means most of the students feel helped in expressing their ideas. This was supported by the data of the interview that said “*Yes I feel more easy to express my ideas through Digital Storytelling.*”

Discussion

The first category that would be discussed was the perception of EFL students' perception on the use of Digital Storytelling. The results demonstrate that, in general, students found digital storytelling to be more thrilling and engaging than traditional teaching techniques when learning English. In addition, digital storytelling is seen as a medium that increases students' motivation to learn, particularly because it combines language practice with creative activities. This statement is supported by Setiyorini (2022) Researched Using digital storytelling to

boost enthusiasm for learning English at IAIN Palopo, and the results showed a significant increase in student learning motivation. Putri (2023) also researched EFL students' engagement with digital storytelling in Karawang, and the results showed that students felt more active, happy, and more confident in expressing themselves in English. This suggests that the use of digital storytelling in English classes not only creates a more enjoyable learning atmosphere but also has a significant impact on motivating pupils to engage fully in the learning process and maintain their motivation.

They reported that their language skills, particularly in understanding and using English, have improved through this method. This statement is supported by Wafa & Chakim (2022) found that classes that used digital storytelling showed significant improvements in speaking skills compared to classes that did not use the method. Students also expressed that digital storytelling helps them comprehend lessons more easily, since the combination of visual and auditory elements provides richer input compared to conventional approaches. Fu, Yang, & Yeh (2021) found that digital storytelling (through apps like Toontastic) improves fluency and language use. Furthermore, the visual and narrative aspects of storytelling provide richer input and support students' comprehension and expression.

The result also shows that the teacher frequently integrates digital storytelling into the learning process as a way to support students in improving their English speaking skills, this statement was supported by Harmawati et al.,(2022) that show regular implementation of Digital Storytelling, through assignments such as speaking in front of the class based on a storytelling theme, improves students' speaking fluency. Student responses in pre- and post-tests indicated that after using digital storytelling, they were more fluent in their speech. The consistent use of this media indicates that the teacher recognizes its potential to provide meaningful opportunities for students to practice speaking in a more engaging and interactive context. Through activities such as telling stories, recording videos, and presenting their work, students are encouraged to express themselves more confidently and fluently. This practice not only helps them strengthen their speaking ability but also

creates a supportive classroom environment where communication becomes more enjoyable and less intimidating.

In terms of the benefits of Digital Storytelling, first, the students reported that the use of digital storytelling positively impacts participants' confidence in speaking English. Through this media, students feel more comfortable, because the process of recording and retelling stories allows them to practice repeatedly and reduce speaking anxiety. This was supported by Mawar (2025) found that Digital Storytelling improves speaking fluency, reduces speech anxiety, and increases language awareness. This shows that digital storytelling is not only effective in improving speaking performance but also in strengthening students' self-confidence, making it a valuable strategy in English language learning has shown a positive impact on various aspects of students' English language skills.

Second, the participants stated that using digital storytelling significantly enhances their vocabulary mastery. The students' ideas, emotions, and experiences in applying DST to their speaking practice were the main concerns of the interview protocol. The study was carried out in Indonesia, West Java, at SMAN 1 Sindang Indramayu. This also corroborated the findings of Muzayyin (2020), wherein it was discovered that by using digital storytelling, students' mastery of vocabulary from cycle to cycle improved. In addition, the subtitles of the videos served as another learning medium by enabling the students to connect the spoken and written words and by making it easier for them to understand and memorize new words. Hence, digital storytelling can be considered an effective medium to provide support for vocabulary building in English language acquisition.

Third, the students indicated that digital storytelling helps them pronounce English words more correctly. Participants believed that through this tool, they were able to learn the correct pronunciation of words and practice them with more confidence. This was supported by Septiana (2024) stated that the pronunciation of participants in the experimental group improved significantly compared to before the treatment; students became more confident in pronouncing words, and their motivation to learn English increased after using digital storytelling. Repeated exposure to spoken language in storytelling videos helped them enhance their

speaking accuracy, making digital storytelling a valuable tool for pronunciation development.

Fourth, students mentioned that Digital Storytelling improves the improvement of students' grammar. Students are required to write scripts before they record their videos, which instructs them to pay closer attention to the use of the correct usage of verbs, nouns, and punctuation. Additionally, students can also edit and refine their writing whenever teachers point out grammatical mistakes in the scripts. According to Marlina (2019), this process also enhances learners' grammatical awareness and grammar accuracy. To improve their writing skills, which inherently involve grammar as part of the quality of writing, students can do so for this study by going through the digital storytelling process with storyboard creation, peer response, and revisions.

Fifth, students believed that digital storytelling makes it easy for them to communicate. Students are more relaxed and creative when they present their ideas through activities like video editing, adding elements, and inserting music. Fitri (2024) found that teachers and students both thought that digital storytelling was useful in communicating their new ideas, which fulfilled this goal. Students might be able to formulate and express their thoughts more actively and comfortably because of the narrative features, computer technology, and multimedia. This suggests that digital storytelling not only enhances language abilities but also provides an encouraging environment for students to grow in their ability to express themselves creatively and expressively in English.

Therefore, it can be stated that digital storytelling works and is highly useful learning for to increase students' speaking skills in English, as it comprehensively impacts self-confidence, mastering vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and the ability to express ideas.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this research examined the way EFL students perceived the use of digital storytelling in learning English and the way they perceived the advantages of using such a method.

Regarding the use of digital storytelling to improve English language proficiency, the findings indicated that most of the participants had positive opinions about the practice. They agreed that they enjoy using digital storytelling to learn English, that it has improved their English language skills, that it makes learning English easier, and that their teacher uses it in class. Additionally, the majority of students agreed that digital storytelling is a suitable medium for learning English. It was improving the participants' speaking skills.

In terms of the benefits of using Digital Storytelling. The result showed that most of the participants also showed a positive response. This was because most of the participants benefited from Digital Storytelling. Through Digital Storytelling, they feel more confident in speaking English, and through this media, they also feel more fluent in speaking English, their vocabulary and grammar also improved after using Digital Storytelling media, so it also increases the participants' ability in learning English, especially speaking.

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