



Regular Article

The Effect of Using Interactive Digital Storytelling on Enhancing Secondary Stage Students' EFL Speaking Skills

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Abstract

This research investigated the effect of using interactive digital storytelling on enhancing secondary stage students' English speaking skills. The participants of the research included (20) first year secondary stage students from El-Sayda Aisha secondary school for girls, Beni-Suef city. The participants randomly assigned to form one group. The quasi-experimental method with the experimental design was used in the research. Data were collected using a speaking test. The results showed that the participants achieved a significantly higher and better performance in English speaking skill than in the EFL speaking pretest. The research results also revealed that there was a strong positive change in the participants' speaking skills and this change appeared in their posttest marks. In the light of these results, it was concluded that interactive digital storytelling strategy was effective in enhancing and developing secondary stage students' EFL speaking skills. The research presented some recommendations for (learners, teachers and curriculum developers) and suggestions for future research.

Keywords: Interactive Digital Storytelling, speaking skills, secondary stage students

Introduction

English language plays a vital role all over the world as it helps in communication. The importance of English language cannot be denied since it is the most commonly spoken language in the world. When two people from different countries wish to communicate, they use English to convey their ideas, emotions, and feelings. Also, it appears that the majority of people want to study English and develop their language skills. Nowadays, English is regarded a vital language in Egypt. English has four skills which people eager to master listening, speaking, reading and writing. The main goal of learning English as a foreign language is using it as a means of communication and that depends obviously on the speaking skill.

In Today's global world, learning a foreign language and being able to speak it fluently has become a necessity. Al Hosni (2014) pointed out that speaking is a process of combining verbal and non- verbal symbols to build and share meaning. Speaking is regarded as one of the most important English skills that students and instructors must master through utilizing it (Sosas, 2021). In line with that, (Al Hosni,2014) states that people who know a language are considered the speakers of that language, and this declares that practicing and using the language is much more essential than simply knowing about it. The teaching of speaking skill becomes a must in teaching English since a large number of students want to be able to use English for communicative purposes (Iman, 2017). According to Hamad (2019), Speaking is considered 'oral communication' a process between the speaker and the

Listener involves both productive skill (speaking) and receptive (listening). In most cases, proficiency in a language is measured by the ability of the speaker to interact and communicate with the other users of this language by producing this language (Arroba & Acosta, 2021).

There are many studies that emphasize the importance of developing and mastering speaking in order to communicate as it is regarded the main and the primary basis to learn English for example the study of Sarhan (2022) used computer edutainment activities to develop speaking skills of prep stage pupils as EFL learners. The study's findings revealed

that using computer edutainment activities has a positive effect on improving speaking skills as a speaking test was conducted before and after the treatment. In addition, El-Mistkawy (2020) conducted a study to develop EFL speaking skills for prep school students via a program based on synchronous computer mediated communication. The results showed that a program based on (SCMC) had a great impact on enhancing students' speaking skills and their motivation towards speaking English which illustrated a statistically difference between the mean scores of the group of the study in pre – post administration in favor of post- administration.

It is obviously clear that in oral language acquisition input is essential, it is insufficient if not followed by output and interaction (the language produced by learner) (Zhang, 2009 & Al Hosni, 2014). In modern teaching, English teachers give more interest to the spoken language production unlike earlier times when mastery of grammar and written language production was valued more than spoken production (Fares, 2021). Yeganehpour (2016) explained that knowing vocabulary and grammar of language is not sufficient to be able to speak a language, also oral language acquisition will not be possible if learners have no interaction in a class environment.

Speaking is regarded as one of the most significant and hardest English language skills to master as it is a means of oral communication. Speaking difficulty is caused by some factors. Nuraini (2016) showed that the speaking skills of EFL learners are influenced by both internal and external factors that lead to speaking incapacity. For internal factors which relates to the learner (lack of vocabulary, age of the learner, lack of Motivation, mother tongue use), and for the external factors (English language teachers limited skills, teaching strategies, the curriculum that limits students' practice, learning context or the environment) (Al Nakhlah,2016; Al Hosni,2014; Manurung & Izar, 2019).

It has been noticed that students struggle to master speaking, and that reflects that teaching English using traditional methods is not worthy, it has become a need to use new technology while teaching speaking. Using technology in speaking sessions brings a benefit in improving students' fluency and interaction, grammar range and accuracy, pronunciation and lexical resource (Anumula & Mallampalli, 2020).

As an implication of technology in teaching, digital storytelling is considered as a means of using computer-based technologies to tell a story. Digital storytelling has become a global phenomenon that EFL teachers aim at using it as a way to integrate technology into classrooms through the process of learning, particularly when it comes to speaking English (Anderson & Chung & Macloray, 2018). Digital stories are much more alike with traditional storytelling. However, the term “digital storytelling” refers to these digital stories as a combination of computer based texts, graphics, recordings of voice narration, and video clips (Robin & McNeil, 2019). Digital storytelling is one of the modern teaching methodologies that is widely employed in education nowadays, it also has been applied in many sectors starting from preschool to adult education as it has emerged as one of the key strategies for fusing the digital world in education (Gocen & Duman, 2021). As Vivistou (2018) indicated that digital technologies have enabled the creations of digital storytelling through utilizing web 3.0 tools, through that digital storytelling involves various methods of expression through language, other means of presentation and symbols.

According to Robin (2006), digital storytelling is classified into three types: personal narratives, historical documentaries and stories that instruct the viewers on a specific practice or concept. The use of digital storytelling in language learning is effective because it encourages students to become active learners who create their own knowledge via the use of multimedia, and through this process students are not aware that they acquire the language because digital storytelling can motivate students to accomplish tasks by utilizing their knowledge (Robin, 2016). Abd-El Khalek (2018) illustrated the impact of using a program based on digital storytelling on the development of preparatory students’ critical reading skills. The study’s findings revealed that there is a statistically difference between the experimental and control group in the posttest at (0.5) in critical reading in favor of experimental group after implementing a program based on DST. That means that DST has a great impact on developing students’ critical reading skills.

Gimeno (2015) asserts that digital storytelling is a helpful strategy to give the chance to students to speak effectively and confidently. Furthermore, Ohler (2008) asserts that digital storytelling which combines writing, listening, and speaking, offers a great deal of potential

to assist learners in learning a language and may lead to oral competency enhancing as it uses a spoken narrative.

In this research, the researcher thinks that the implementation of digital storytelling based on some web3 tools may help students to develop their speaking skills.

Statement of the Problem

Based on the researcher's experience as an English teacher, literature review and the results of the pilot study, the problem of the current study is represented in the low proficiency of the secondary stage students' in their EFL speaking skill.

Questions of the Research:

In this research the researcher is going to answer this question:

“What is the effect of using interactive digital storytelling on enhancing secondary stage students' speaking skills?”

Aim of the Research

-Investigating the effect of using digital storytelling on enhancing secondary stage students' speaking skill.

Significance of the Research

The importance of this research lies on that the implementation of digital storytelling strategy would help in improving EFL secondary stage students' speaking skill. It is hoped that the current research results may contribute especially in the field of teaching English according to the researcher's point of view as follows:

- 1) Cope with the new trend of integrating technology in Education especially in learning a foreign language to prepare secondary school students for the university.
- 2) Providing an active learning based on digital storytelling for teaching English for secondary stage students may help the teachers develop students' speaking skill.
- 3) Enriching EFL learners' oral performance through digital storytelling strategy.
- 4) Providing curriculum designers with a strategy based on digital storytelling that may overcome students' oral performance obstacles.

5) Improving learners' communicative competence.

Hypothesis of the Research

This research seeks to test the validity of the following hypothesis:

There is a statistically significant difference in the research participants between the mean scores in the speaking pre-posttest in favor of the post- test.

Delimitations of the Research:

In this research, the researcher will restrict to:

- 1) A sample of (20) students enrolled in first year secondary stage in El-Sayida Aisha school for girls, Beni-Suef Governorate.
- 2) A checklist of speaking sub skills for the first year secondary stage students. It includes (pronunciation – fluency - vocabulary – grammar – interaction).
- 3) The treatment was implemented in the second term in 2024

Definitions of Terms

A) Speaking skill

- 1) Sharma (2018) identified speaking as, “Speaking is an interactive process that comprises producing, receiving and processing information in the presence of both the speaker and the listener to convey feelings, thoughts and opinions”
- 2) Rahmawti (2022) identified speaking as, “Speaking is one of the most significant abilities in a language as well as the first way to communicate and engage with others orally, as well as develop specific points of language and understand how to use linguistic competence”

Operational Definition of Speaking Skill

It is a productive and interactive process that is necessary for the first secondary stage students to communicate with others in which students express themselves orally, fluently and meaningfully by employing some sub-skills (such as using proper grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and fluency).

B) Digital storytelling

- 1) Robin (2016) identified digital storytelling as, “digital storytelling combines the art of telling stories with a mixture of digital media, including text, pictures, recorded audio narration, music and video. These multimedia elements are blended together using computer software, to tell a story that usually revolves around a specific theme or topic and often contains a particular point of view”.
- 2) Lanszki & Kunos (2021) identified digital storytelling as a narrated filmmaking technique which created by Lambert and Atchely, San Francisco in the middle of the 1190s. It integrates the most recent technologies and multimedia tools with self-reflective story writing. People are able to share their unique narratives from different perspectives with the help of sound, moving or static images and the narrative voice.

Operational Definition of Interactive Digital Storytelling

DST is an effective strategy based on active learning that enables the active participation of the first secondary stage students who construct their own learning through the usage of multimedia elements including audio, visuals, video, animation and text to create personal narratives, retold for the purpose of enhancing speaking skills, which makes learning fruitfully enjoyable and brings a direct experience.

Method

The current research adopted the experimental design where 20 pupils of the first year secondary stage students from El-Sayida Aisha school for girls, Beni-Suef Governorate were randomly selected.

Participants

The participants of the research were randomly selected during the second semester of the academic year 2023-2024. The (20) participants were considered the experimental one-group students, and they were taught by using interactive digital storytelling.

Instruments and Materials of the Research

To achieve the purposes of the research, these instruments and materials were developed and implemented:

1. A pre-post English speaking skills test with a rubric for scoring.
2. Teachers' manual based on Interactive digital storytelling.
3. Student's Activity Book

The Pre-Post English Speaking Test

The General Aim of The Test

The general aim of the test was to measure the impact of applying an interactive digital storytelling strategy on teaching English speaking to first-year secondary school students and how this would enhance their speaking ability.

Constructing the Pre-Post English Speaking Test

To construct the test, the researcher referred to the directives of the Ministry of Education particularly English speaking of secondary stage and reviewed literature and related studies regarding English speaking improvement.

Validity of The Pre-post English Speaking Test

To confirm that English speaking Test measures what it is mainly designed to measure, it was evaluated by a panel of experts in educational studies and EFL specialists. Their recommendations and feedback were carefully considered. Test questions were reformed according to their suggestions. For estimating the validity of the test, it was submitted to a panel of jurors (N=6), six faculty members in TEFL. The validity of the test was established according to the following criteria:

- a- The test items reflect the objectives.
- b- Linguistic stating of the items
- c- There is coherence between the test items and the table of specifications.
- d- The layout is acceptable.
- e- The time assigned is enough to answer all questions.

Reliability of the pre-post English Speaking Test

To prove the reliability of the test, a pilot study was conducted, with a group of 20 students from El- Sayida Aisha secondary school who were excluded from the sample, to check the reliability for both the pre-test and post-tests. In order to prove that the exam was reliable, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated and it was 0.89, which indicated that the questions were highly reliable. The correlation coefficients ranged between the score of each question and the total score of the scale from 0.46 to 0.79 which they are all high and function at 0.01.

Duration of the Pre/Post English Speaking Test

The researcher specified the time needed for answering the test items during piloting the pre-post English speaking test on a randomly 20 students from El- Sayida Aisha secondary school. The researcher calculated the time of the test of each student and divided the total time by their number and the average time to be 120 minutes.

Administration of the Pre\ Post Speaking Test

After modifying the test according to the feedback of the jury members, the final form of the test which included (5) questions was pre-administered to the group on 10 Feb.2024, namely, three days prior to the treatment, before teaching by using interactive digital storytelling strategy. Test time was (120) minutes. The students were given an idea about the purpose of the test that it had nothing to do with their academic evaluation.

The post/test was administered to the group two days after the treatment which ended on 25 April, 2024. Post/test conditions were relatively the same as those of the pre-test in terms of place and time.

Test Specifications Table

	skill	Ques tions	Perce ntage s	Task Required	S c o r e	N o t e

	pronunciation	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	33.34 %	Pronounce correctly	20	4 marks for each question
	Vocabulary	1,3, 4	20%	Use words and expressions appropriately	12	4 marks for each question
	Grammar	2, 3	13.33 %	Respond the questions using correct sentence structure	8	4 marks for each question
	Fluency	1, 3, 4	20%	Speak fluently	12	4 marks for

						reach question
	Interaction	4, 5	13.33 %	Discussion: give clear ideas and keep the conversation going	8	4 marks for each question
	5	5 items	100%	5 Tasks	60	

The Aim of the Test specification Table

The researcher designed this table to determine the types of questions and the items which she wanted to measure by these questions as well as deciding on the objectives of each question and its relative weight as shown in appendix (D).

Constructing the Test Specification Table

To construct the table, the researcher determined the types of questions which she would utilize in the English speaking test. She determined the topics of the lessons which

she tried to measure. She constructed five types of questions as mentioned before in the description of the test.

Results of The Research

Testing the hypothesis

"There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores in the speaking pre-posttest in favor of the post- test."

Table: (1) Presents t- test results of the English speaking post –test

	N	Me an	S.D	t- test	Sig Lev el	Effe ct size
Pretes t	2 0	18.2 5	9.03 7	11. 56	0.0 00	0.87
Postte st	2 0	29.2 0	10.8 56			

Table: (1) shows results concerning the hypothesis which addressed the differences between the mean scores in the administration of the pre-post speaking test. T-test was utilized to compare the mean scores of the application of the pre-post speaking test for the group. Table (1) proves that there was a significant difference between the results of the pre-posttest. Concluding that, there is a significant difference in enhancing speaking after applying digital storytelling in favor of the post-test. Moreover, in order to make sure that the results obtained from t-test are reliable and to measure the effect of interactive digital storytelling strategy on enhancing student’s speaking skill, the effect size of this technique on enhancing student’s speaking skill was calculated according to the following Formula suggested by Dunlap (1994)

$$d = \frac{2t}{\sqrt{d.f}}$$

Where d = the calculated effect size, t = the estimated t value and $\sqrt{dd. ff}$ = the square root of degrees of freedom. The referential framework for identifying the effect size of t -values is as follows:-

Table 2 The referential framework for identifying the effect size of t -values

Effect size (d value)	Degree
From 0.2 till less than 0.5	Small
From 0.5 till less than 0.8	Medium
0.8 or more	Large

As shown in table (1) the calculated effect size value of the instructional strategy on students learning was (0.87). Therefore, it can be inferred that the interactive digital storytelling strategy had a large effect on the enhancing students' speaking skill on the post-test as compared to the pre-test before the treatment.

Discussion of the Results

Based on the findings of this research, the results revealed that using interactive digital storytelling had a significant impact on enhancing the students' speaking skill. Results also revealed that using digital storytelling creates a positive atmosphere in which students are encouraged to learn positively and effectively. Consequently, some findings and their interpretation can be summarized as follows:

1. Using digital storytelling is fruitful because it includes speaking activities that addressed the needs and interests of those students. Moreover, these activities provided them with good opportunities to express themselves freely. They represented an urgent need for such students who were eager to express an outlet to

- show their opinions and reflect their personalities during speaking sessions. This fact might have contributed to enhance students' speaking self-confidence.
2. Using some techniques such as brainstorming, discussion and group work contributed to enhancing students' speaking skills. Using small-group presentation and discussion as one of the activities in the practice stage to identify the suitable reply to a specific question that student-teachers were asked to do, discuss the topic of the story, give opportunities to them to discuss and decide the most appropriate answer. These techniques influence the participants to speak freely.
 3. Brainstorming allowed students to freely propose ideas. Another benefit of having a brainstorming session was to get out of a normal routine. Each session had at least one person writing ideas down so no idea was lost. One of the best parts of leaving a brainstorming session was the list of ideas students can take with them and build on them in the future. The list of ideas helped them to think creatively for months after the actual session took place.
 4. During speaking activities, students were encouraged to use extra resources that would help them get better understanding and background about the topic they were supposed to speak about through using role-play activity that gives them opportunities to propose additional explanations about the characters of the story.
 5. Most students in the sessions enjoyed picture game which helped them to relax and start thinking about their own stories about what they see in the pictures. It leads them to recreate their own version of information through using the largest possible number of vocabulary items and grammatical structure related to the session's topic.
 6. The interactive digital storytelling strategy considered the individual differences among students with its various activities and techniques. Thus, it was suitable for all types of learners such as, visual, auditory, and tactile learners.
 7. Enhancing speaking skills helped greatly the students to enhance their speaking self-confidence. Therefore, the researcher had encouraged students through setting a positive emotional climate and creating warm, safe, and supportive environment

before he started the lesson to enhance attention and activate students' speaking skills.

8. Using digital storytelling proved to be a fertile teaching learning strategy that enhanced both conscious and subconscious enhancement of speaking skills. Explicit learning was represented in the explicit performing and preparing for acting the roles. Indirect acquisition of speaking skills resulted from practicing in the various steps of achieving the digital storytelling used to develop speaking skills achievement.
9. The interactive digital storytelling technique facilitated collaborative learning for students. It employs interactive teaching technologies that enable students to communicate and learn constructively. Activities such as role play, conversations, and presentations prompted students to engage, act, and respond positively to the exercises.
10. Using digital storytelling as a teaching method helped students speak English confidently and effectively in many contexts, taking into consideration individual characteristics and learning styles.

Conclusion

Within the delimitations of the study and on the basis of the study results, the following conclusions have been drawn:

1. Interactive digital storytelling may provide a means to foster language performance among students as it provides an enjoyable chance to instruct speaking to EFL learners.
2. Interactive digital storytelling increases the students' success and remembrance by the help of its properties such as attracting attention, good presentation of information and having more enjoyable learning atmosphere.
3. Interactive digital storytelling strategy has significance in shaping the cognitive structure and building meaningful learning. This strategy is usable for every branch of education.
4. Interactive digital storytelling is effective in developing students' speaking skills and fostering self-confidence.

5. Interactive digital storytelling appears to enhance the learners' confidence in learning English.

Recommendations of the Research

Based upon the findings of the study and the above mentioned conclusions, the following recommendations are suggested:

1- Learners of English Language:

1. EFL learners should be encouraged to utilize digital storytelling to enhance their speaking skills and self-confidence.
- 2- Learners' centered learning should be emphasized and activities (before, during and after learning) should be maximized.
3. Learners should become the center of the learning process and should share more responsibilities. Hence, more opportunities should be given to self-evaluate the speaking performance.
4. Learners should be motivated to freely communicate and interact with each other to practice the speaking activities and foster self-confidence in good way.
5. Learners should play their roles in enhancing speaking skills. They have to participate actively in different activities in the classroom to use the language in real life situations.

2--Teachers of English are recommended to

1. Follow the current trends and research in teaching English to recognize solutions to the teaching problems and its implementations.
2. Think about the usage of digital storytelling and its use in teaching English for their importance in achieving the teaching intended goals and outcomes.
3. Have an idea of digital storytelling variations to take individual differences, subject matter, student abilities, and teaching learning context into consideration.
4. Take care of planning and time organization in applying digital storytelling as it has to be limited with the time that students need to learn in order not to waste their time.

5. Start digital storytelling teaching with short video that shows students how to use it and how to learn by using it.
- 6- Encourage group work and pair work during the process of speaking.
- 7- Give immediate feedback after each activity to enhance students' learning.
- 8- Evaluate speaking during the whole year regularly to help students be accustomed to such a skill and overcome their fear and problems.
- 9- Use more active learning strategies and activities during the process of learning in general and in teaching speaking in particular.
- 10- Change traditional roles from being just as a carrier of knowledge to a facilitator, a guide, an adviser, a manager and an encourager for the educational process.
- 11- Organize special training for the low-achievers to give them the opportunities to participate and correct their mistakes.
- 12- Develop students' speaking skills by giving them enough time to interact with each other freely.
- 13- Enroll in training courses for self-development to be able to use the modern active learning strategies.
- 14- Provide pupils with a relaxing, effective, and interactive environment that fosters interaction and helps to develop the pupils' restorative learning skills.
- 15- Exchange their ideas and experiences with other teachers of English from different countries.
- 16- Offer different opportunities for students to use the language they know by using different activities and taking into their consideration the individual differences among students'.

3- Curriculum developers

- 1- More concentration should be paid to develop curricula which develop creative thinking of pupils rather than memorizing

2-Since reading is an important skill in developing other skills, it should receive the attention it deserves, so more focus should be given to speaking especially in secondary stage.

3. Curriculum developers are advised to integrate the use of digital storytelling in the English curriculum.

4. Curriculum developers Put into consideration the new methodologies when designing the educational curricula especially those related to teaching languages.

5. Curriculum developers should design educational curricula which are related to the real-life to make the students more attractive for the studying.

6- Curriculum developers have to insert different activities in the curriculum which help students work cooperatively and give them opportunity to write more.

7. Curriculum developers should design educational curricula which depend on using active learning strategies in general and with digital storytelling in particular to develop speaking skills and give students the opportunities to practice the language freely and correctly.

Suggestions for Further Research

In the light of the results of the present research, further research may be taken into consideration as follows:

1. More studies based digital storytelling can be conducted to develop other English language skills as writing, listening, and reading.

2. The present research could be implemented using Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications for enhancing speaking skills.

3. Studies like the current research can be administered to investigate other school levels and university level.

4. Studies should be conducted to investigate the effect of digital storytelling on self-motivation and self-learning.

5. The effectiveness of using digital storytelling in students with special needs or disabilities should be investigated.

6. Further studies that investigate the effect of digital storytelling on developing students' creative thinking should be conducted.

7. Conducting a study that investigates the effectiveness of using digital storytelling strategy on the students' attitudes towards English as a foreign language.

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