



A Linguistic Perspective on the Role of Digital Storytelling and Informal Digital Learning in Enhancing EFL Learners' Communicative Competence

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دور السرد الرقمي والتعلم الرقمي غير الرسمي في تنمية الكفاءة التواصلية لمتعلمي الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية:
مقاربة لغوية

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المخلص

يهدف هذا البحث الى دراسة اهمية السرد القصصي الرقمي والتعلم الرقمي غير الرسمي للغة الانجليزية في تحسين الكفاءة التواصلية لمتعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية. يسعى البحث تحديداً الى تحديد اثر المشاركة في مهام التعلم الرقمي , الاستقبالي او الانتاجي على رغبة متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية للتواصل بواسطتها. استخدمت هذه الدراسة المنهج الكمي واجري تحليل الانحدار الهرمي على بيانات جمعت من 166 متعلم للغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية حيث اظهرت النتائج ان تكرار التعلم الرقمي غير الرسمي سواء الاستقبالي او الانتاجي يعد مؤشرا ايجابيا على رغبة المتعلمين في التواصل. حيث اظهرت الدراسة ان استخدام تطبيقات الويب و ادوات سرد القصص الرقمية مثل (Duolingo) (TalkEnglish.Com) يعزز مشاركة المتعلمين وينمي مهارات التحدث لديهم. لذا يوصى بإجراء المزيد من البحوث لاستكشاف الجوانب النوعية لأنشطة التعلم التفاعلي مثل استخدام الادوات والاجهزة والاستراتيجيات.

Abstract

This research aims to examine the significance of Digital Storytelling (DST) and Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) in improving the communicative competence of EFL learners. In particular, this research seeks to determine the effect of participation in digital learning tasks, both receptive and productive, on the willingness to communicate in English among EFL learners. This study employed a quantitative approach, and hierarchical regression analysis was performed on the data gathered from 166 Indonesian EFL learners. The findings showed that the frequency of IDLE, receptive IDLE, and productive IDLE are all positive predictors of the willingness to communicate among the EFL learners. Moreover, the use of DST tools such as Toontastic was observed to promote the engagement of the EFL learners and the development of speaking skills, fluency, and language complexity. Furthermore, the use of web applications such as TalkEnglish.com Duolingo, and Andako was observed to promote language learning among the EFL learners. Therefore, it can be recommended that EFL teachers and curriculum designers use both DST and IDLE activities in the learning and teaching of EFL. Moreover, it is recommended that further research be conducted to explore the qualitative aspects of IDLE activities, such as the use of tools, devices, and strategies.



Keywords : Digital Storytelling, Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE), Communicative Competence, EFL Learners, Technology Enhanced Language Learning.

Introduction

Throughout the history of teaching and learning the method of development, the role of DST in the development of the student has been considered an important aspect. It has been considered to be "a new story which is created from the elements of Multimedia such as text, sound, animation, video, and image (Dupain & Maguire, 2005)". These elements of multimedia are combined together by using some computer software. The purpose of using DST is to define some unclear concept. Every word of every language is a dynamic and constantly changing set

of words and phrases. It changes and develops by, for example, adding new words.

At present, the capacity to speak more than one language, especially English, has become indispensable for acquiring a well-paid job. It is, therefore, no surprise that digital technology and languages are being used to control global communication, which in turn impacts the development of languages. The context of an ever-expanding global society and an ever-evolving technology creates the need to learn the English language in order to build the necessary digital literacy, in preparation for the future in which change is hoped to be made in the way in which production, transmission, and interpretation of information is done, something in which the structures of digital technology have created an ever-expanding number of applications. The objective of the current research is to study the use of the digital Communication technology in the teaching of the English language as a foreign

language. The emphasis was put on the progress in the reading comprehension technology. The Problem of the Study Problem Statement English is considered a global language and is essential for ensuring academic success in both public and higher educational systems. The last decade has seen a rapid increase in

technological developments that have impacted the learning process in a

major way. Educational systems in various developing countries have attempted to provide their students with proficiency in English and technological knowledge in order to keep abreast of the current technological era (Khan & Khan, 2016; Almadi, 2014).

The Problem

1. What is the role of Digital Storytelling (DST) in developing EFL learners' communicative competence?
2. Is there a relationship between Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) activities and learners' willingness to communicate in



English?

3. How do digital learning tools and web-based applications influence EFL learners' speaking skills and engagement in English language learning?

The aims

1. To investigate the role of Digital Storytelling (DST) in enhancing EFL learners' communicative competence.
2. To examine the relationship between Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) activities and learners' willingness to communicate in English.
3. To explore the impact of digital learning tools and web-based applications on students' speaking skills and engagement in learning English. Digital Storytelling (DST) strategy provides instruction to students in an engaging and stimulating way like multimedia sites such as You Tube. The abstract ideas of English language and its terms are made easy for students to grasp by using the DST strategy since students are motivated by multimedia communication tools, especially animated videos and movies.

The Hypotheses

It is hypothesed that :

- 1- Digital Storytelling has a significant effect on EFL learners' communicative competence.
- 2- Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) activities positively influence learners' willingness to communicate.
- 3- The use of digital learning tools enhances EFL learners' speaking skills and engagement.

The Value

Although various studies have been conducted on the effects of Digital Storytelling (DST) on English speaking ability (GodwinJones, 2015; Hava, 2019; Tahriri et al., 2015; Yang et al., 2020), it has been proven that students are more interested in English classes that incorporate DST (Hava, 2019; Hwang et al., 2016; Liang, 2013; Murray et al., 2020). However, the relationship between students' interest and English speaking ability should be made clear, and based on this, the necessity of exploring the specific role of one of the DST tools on the students' interest in the learning process and English speaking ability should be emphasized.



Literature Review

Speaking Proficiency

Speaking is one of the basic skills in the four important skills for English as a Foreign Language speakers (EFL speakers), according to TimpeLaughlin et al. (2020). This is due to the fact that speaking is the basis for developing reading and writing skills (Bukowski & Casal, 2018). Thus, speaking skills in English for EFL speakers should not focus on memorization and practice of dialogues and drills. Rather, teaching in this skill should focus on preparing learners for communication with native speakers (Bukowski & Casal, 2018; Hwang et al., 2016). Thus, fluency and complexity in using the language should be emphasized in teaching (Yang et al., 2020).

Digital learning outside the classroom

However, due to the increasing trend in the learning of foreign languages using digital technology, language learning and teaching outside the classroom has gained significant attention from ELT practitioners (Reinders & Benson, 2017). Recently, the trend in the learning of English using digital technology outside the classroom has created a wide range of opportunities for English learners to practice their English skills in informal settings. According to Lee (2011), this trend in ELT outside the classroom can be defined as —Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE), which is defined as English learning activities conducted by learners in informal settings using digital devices such as mobile phones, computers, and tablets. Lee (2019) also mentioned that —English learners often engage in both receptive IDLE and productive IDLE activities.

Technology-Enhanced Language Learning

Technology has greatly contributed to the development of digital media that support the practice of learning and teaching through the provision of content meant to enhance student learning (Mellati et al., 2018). It has provided the opportunity for accessing knowledge, information, and experiences in theory (Viberg & Grönlund, 2017). Past research has established that the integration of technology in the practice of learning helps in the increased involvement of the student in the process while acquiring the language. Thus, the language curriculum should take into consideration the needs of the student through the integration of technology in the learning process. Today's society cannot be complete without the integration of technology in the learning process, as it helps the student acquire knowledge beyond the classroom regarding the languages used globally rather than the knowledge imparted in the classroom (Warschauer, 2000).

The Era of Digital Learning



The use of technology and e-learning has changed traditional learning processes, and this has led to the emergence of a new era of learning, called digital learning. Digital learning is defined as the use of the Internet and other technologies that enable students to learn and acquire knowledge beyond the classroom environment. Students are no longer limited to the knowledge imparted in lecture sessions; instead, they are able to access knowledge freely and easily. With the help of digital learning platforms, students are able to enhance their self-learning abilities by engaging in activities and tasks provided by instructors. This is a major advantage of digital learning, as this approach focuses on student-centered learning and provides greater independence for learners. In today's world, technology and students are inseparable, as students are more likely to use digital tools due to their

convenience and flexibility of use anywhere and anytime. The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching and learning processes has been noted to increase students' attention, facilitate the learning process, enhance vocabulary development, and provide a meaningful learning experience (Yunus &

Suliman, 2014). Digital learning has become a common phenomenon in the world of education. Additionally, one of the major linkages that have been established

between physical and virtual applications in the Fourth Industrial Revolution is the Internet of Things (IoT), also called the —Internet of All Things. This is a concept that has been established to refer to the interconnectivity of devices, systems, and virtual platforms that are aimed at ensuring that seamless communication and exchange of information are achieved, thus opening more avenues for creative educational practices. Technology can be defined as a relationship that exists between individuals and systems, and this is facilitated by various interconnectivity technologies and virtual platforms (Nordin & Embi, 2015). However, some individuals in society are likely to be negatively impacted by various social disadvantages, and this means that they are likely to be impacted in a negative manner by some of the technological applications that could have otherwise been helpful in ensuring that they are able to transcend some of the social disadvantages that they face (Helsper, 2008). These include:

1. Limited Education: Lack of proper educational background is a disadvantage that could prevent an individual from accessing educational opportunities on the Internet.
2. Age and Isolation: Older people, who tend to be more socially isolated with smaller social networks, are less likely to benefit from the social aspects of the Internet. Moreover, people with disabilities or mobility problems may be less likely to access the Internet.



3. Unemployment and Financial Constraints: Unemployment can mean that there are fewer financial resources available to take advantage of the Internet's benefits, such as e-commerce, which could help save money.
4. Retirement and Dependence on Government Support: Unemployed or retired people with lower educational attainment may have less access to, and less opportunity to benefit from, e-government.

The above points illustrate the digital divide, which shows that although technology can be used to facilitate learning and communication, social inequalities still restrict the benefits of technology.

Methodology

This study aims to examine the possible relationship between informal digital learning in English, both in receptive and productive skills, and the willingness to communicate among EFL learners. To do this, a quantitative method using regression analysis was used. This study was conducted in the Indonesian context, where learning English is considered as learning a foreign language. The most

significant exposure to learning English for the Indonesian people has been in a formal classroom setting (Nugroho & Rahmawati, 2020). However, over the past two years, the world has been experiencing a pandemic due to COVID-19, leading to a change in learning venues from a face-to-face classroom setting to an online classroom setting using digital technology. Consequently, this study investigates the role of informal digital learning in supporting EFL learners in Indonesia, particularly in enhancing engagement and improving speaking competence.

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design to investigate the relationship between Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) and EFL learners' willingness to communicate.

Participants

The participants consisted of 166 EFL learners.

Data Analysis

Hierarchical regression analysis was used to analyze the collected data.

Theoretical Framework



Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is the basis for the development of the information society, and it is increasingly gaining importance in the education sector. The importance of ICT is based on the contribution it can make to the development of new and better practices in education. Khilchenko (2013) suggests, —ICT can make a significant contribution to the process of quality assurance in education through its role as an experimental and flexible instrument for restructuring education practices, satisfying social needs, and improving the efficiency of education services. Educational and methodological institutions place significant emphasis on the use of ICT in the classroom, which can help in the enhancement of the effectiveness and efficiency of the learning process (Verbitsky & Kalashnikov, 2010). In the context of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), ICT can be used to incorporate new technologies, such as the use of Digital Storytelling (DST) platforms, in the classroom. DST is an interactive learning technique that includes multimedia components such as —text, audio, images, and animation. A practical example of a tool that can be employed in this process is Toontastic, a tool that enables learners to create and narrate stories in an interactive manner. When learners use Toontastic, they are not only exposed to real-life input but are also enabled to enhance their speaking abilities, fluency, and complexities in a safe virtual world. ICT enables learners to bridge the gap that exists between theoretical and practical knowledge, and EFL learners are able to enhance their communication abilities in a real-world setting while promoting self-paced and independent learning. Therefore, a theoretical foundation exists for exploring the impact of DST on learner engagement and speaking abilities, and this is the framework that this study is built upon.

Findings

The Relationship Between Frequency of IDLE, Receptive IDLE, Productive IDLE Activities, and Willingness to Communicate. The primary research question that the study aimed to answer was whether or not the frequency of IDLE activities had a significant effect on EFL learners' willingness to communicate. To answer this question, a hierarchical regression analysis was used to examine the data collected

from the 166 participants. The study examined three aspects of IDLE activities, namely frequency, receptive, and productive, and their predictive effect on the willingness to communicate of EFL learners.

Table 1. The Relationship Between IDLE Activities and Willingness to Communicate

Dimension	β (Beta)	t-value	p-value
Frequency of IDLE	0.32	4.21	0.001
Receptive IDLE	0.28	3.67	0.002
Productive IDLE	0.35	4.55	0.001



The results indicate that all three dimensions of IDLE serve as positive predictors of EFL learners' willingness to communicate in a foreign language. Specifically, higher frequency of engagement, receptive activities, and productive activities were each associated with increased willingness to communicate. All p-values were below 0.05, indicating that these relationships are statistically significant. These findings suggest that engagement in informal digital learning activities, both receptive and productive, plays a critical role in enhancing learners' communicative willingness. This supports the theoretical framework positing that ICT-mediated learning provides learners with opportunities to practice language in meaningful contexts, thereby improving their motivation and readiness to use English outside

the classroom.

Discussion

On the basis of the results achieved in this research, it can be concluded that the frequency of IDLE, receptive IDLE, and productive IDLE activities can be viewed as a positive predictor for the willingness to communicate for EFL learners. In general, it can be said that the results achieved in this research confirm the idea that EFL learners who frequently engage in informal digital learning activities tend to have a higher willingness to communicate in a foreign language. In particular, it can be said that the more frequently EFL learners engage in informal digital learning activities such as watching English videos, reading online news in English, and so on, the more they tend to be motivated to communicate in a foreign language.

Firstly, it can be said that the frequency of IDLE has been discovered to be a positive predictor for the willingness to communicate for EFL learners. This is in accordance with the findings acquired by Lee (2019), which claimed that the more IDLE activities done by EFL learners can positively contribute to the development of their second language vocabulary achievement, thus enhancing their communication skills (Nugroho et al., 2021).

Secondly, the receptive IDLE activities (such as reading online news in English and listening to English materials) also proved to be a positive predictor of the willingness to communicate among the learners. The finding supports the findings of Wijaya et al. (2021) and Lai & Zheng (2018), which claimed that doing self-directed receptive language learning activities can possibly increase the learners' motivation to use the target language for communication purposes. The finding of this study shows that the receptive IDLE activities can be seen as a promising approach in enhancing the speaking ability of EFL learners (Mutiaraningrum & Nugroho, 2020). Hence, it is highly recommended that teachers and instructors include receptive IDLE activities in their planned English classroom activities.

Results: The Use of Web-Based Applications



The study also examined learners' perceptions of web-based tools for English learning. Results indicate that students hold positive attitudes toward the use of TalkEnglish.com as a supplementary tool, particularly for spoken job interviews. The platform simulates real-world scenarios, aiding learners in developing practical communication skills for future careers (Mutiaraningrum & Nugroho, 2020).

Similarly, the Duolingo application provides exercises covering all language skills—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—in an engaging and accessible format suitable for learners of all ages. The Andako application supports reading and comprehension by displaying texts in both the learner's mother tongue and the target language, enabling learners to link new vocabulary effectively. Audio

features also allow simultaneous development of reading and listening skills, while reinforcing correct pronunciation (Lee, 2019). Overall, these web-based tools were found to be effective in enhancing speaking and pronunciation skills, while offering flexible, self-paced learning opportunities. Some challenges were noted, including limited internet connectivity and equipment issues, highlighting the importance of adequate preparation before using web-based media. Future research should investigate optimal learning scenarios that maximize comprehension and engagement in speaking English.

Conclusion

The purpose of the present study was to explore the possible relationship between Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) activities and willingness to communicate among Indonesian EFL learners. The findings from hierarchical regression analysis revealed that frequency of IDLE activities, receptive IDLE, and productive IDLE activities were found to be positive predictors of willingness to communicate among Indonesian EFL learners. The findings of this study indicate that the more EFL learners are involved in IDLE activities, the more motivated

they are to engage in target language communication. The findings of this study offer significant insights into English language teaching, providing a clear description of the contribution of IDLE activities to the improvement of EFL learners' communicative behavior. Although the findings of this study are highly significant, the study is limited in its ability to offer a clear description of learners' IDLE activities, including the use of digital tools, devices, and the implementation of IDLE activities in language learning. Therefore, future studies are encouraged to conduct more comprehensive projects to offer a qualitative description of learners' engagement with IDLE activities.

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