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## Fostering Secondary School Student's Speaking Fluency through Task-Based Digital Storytelling

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### ABSTRACT

*Learning to speak fluently in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is crucial for language acquisition. This study focuses on the use of digital storytelling to enhance speaking fluency, addressing a gap in existing research. The case study details a digital storytelling project implemented in Jember Islamic Senior High School with 11th-grade students aged 16 to 17. Through classroom observations, artifact analysis, and semi-structured interviews, the research uncovered three key findings: 1) DST-mediated speaking fluency development, 2) Enhancing students' enthusiasm for acquiring speaking fluency and 3) The enjoyable learning students experience in speaking classroom. The study suggests that emotions and experiences during digital storytelling benefit students and educators, fostering creativity, joy, and enthusiasm in the learning journey, ultimately enhancing speaking skills. In conclusion, the research strongly recommends digital storytelling as an effective learning approach for students aspiring to improve their speaking fluency.*

**Keywords: Speaking Fluency, Tasks-based Strategy, Digital Storytelling**

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the realm of language learning, a primary objective is generally to attain proficiency in spoken communication. Achieving fluency involves precision in accuracy, intonation, and pronunciation. Among various language skills, speaking stands out

as a crucial aspect of communication. (Hamer, 2015) Emphasizes that fluency, in the context of effective communication, centers on the content of conversation. Translated into speaking fluency, it becomes a potent means for individuals to convey their ideas and introduce their culture to others. In the educational process known as Digital Storytelling (DST), students are grouped to facilitate material comprehension (Syafryadin, Haryani, Salniwati, & Ainur Rosyidah, 2019). In simpler terms, the development of speaking skills is closely tied to abundant interaction and communication. Therefore, speaking fluency can be cultivated through extensive practice.

The engagement of students with online platforms significantly influences language development, prompting increased research on enhancing speaking fluency, particularly in English. Achieving fluency in English necessitates teachers to establish a specific learning environment, given the various criteria such as speech breakdown, speaking speed, and repair fluency that students must fulfill. The assessment of foreign language pronunciation involves objective measures, including solving fluency, speed fluency, and remedial fluency, as detailed in (Hanzawa, 2021). By following a staged approach based on the mentioned criteria, the process of learning speaking can be structured to enhance students' speaking fluency. Ongoing research in the context of foreign language development suggests that learners can improve their verbal abilities (Hanzawa S. , 2018). To meet the set criteria, it is imperative to design effective learning strategies that aid students in enhancing their speaking fluency.

In recent times, the incorporation of modern technology into education, particularly language learning, has yielded a plethora of easily accessible resources, knowledge, and information for language learners. Among the tools available for educational purposes is digital storytelling (DST). Leveraging modern technology, students can engage in language learning,

and DST stands out as a method that encourages the integration and construction of meaning through diverse narrative modes, as articulated by (Lambert.J, 2013). This multimodal tool extends beyond the mere inclusion of images, video, or sound in text or narratives. According to (Ferdiansyah, 2017), DST presents an exciting opportunity for students to actively create and animate a story using digital tools to combine visuals, narration, special effects, and sounds. In the context of language teaching, it is essential to delineate tasks that facilitate both language acquisition and the advancement of technical skills. Moreover, the implementation of task-based DST as a medium for student learning involves various stages of activity, encompassing fully guided tasks such as lead-in activities, story creation, and subsequent activities.

Prior studies have investigated the utilization of digital storytelling for enhancing language skills, particularly in English, concentrating on specific language abilities. Nonetheless, there is a requirement for increased focus on understanding how digital storytelling can contribute to enhancing speech fluency in settings where English is learned as a foreign language (EFL). Consequently, the objective of this research is to specifically address the improvement of speaking fluency through the application of digital stories.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This study is not the pioneer in utilizing Digital Storytelling (DST) as a tool to enhance speaking skills, as there are several preceding studies exploring the same theme. Various frameworks from different experts have been employed in these studies. A summary of relevant research includes the following:

The first (Rubini, 2019): Investigated "Hear Me Out! Digital Storytelling to Enhance Speaking Skills." The study focused on assessing how DST can enhance English speaking skills and influence students' attitudes. Conducted on 20 Form 4 students in Pahang, Malaysia, the findings revealed improvements in speaking skills and positive perceptions of digital storytelling. The second

(Chen, 2019): Conducted a qualitative study titled "Digital Storytelling in Language Education," emphasizing the significance of modern technology, especially digital storytelling, in education. The study examined essential aspects, stages, and components of impactful digital storytelling, as well as its application in promoting academic success. The third (Khateeb, 2019): Undertook a qualitative study titled "Socially oriented digital storytelling among the Saudi people EFL students Impact and content analysis." The study involved 60 Saudi female EFL students and highlighted the creation of a new educational environment promoting social interaction, cultural orientation, increased competency, and motivation to share learning experiences. The fourth (Min Huang, 2020): Explored "Integrating Computational Thinking Concept into Digital Storytelling to Improve Learners' Motivation and Performance." This research aimed to investigate the benefits of integrating computational thinking into English learning, involving 52 elementary school students. The results indicated increased language learning, motivation, and performance through the use of computational thinking in digital storytelling. The fifth (Tanrikulu, 2020): Investigated "Students' perceptions about the effects of collaborative digital storytelling on writing skills" with 61 participants. The study focused on students' perceptions of the impact of Collaborative Digital Storytelling (DST) on their writing skills, revealing positive feedback on the improvement of writing structure and content. The sixth (Md Yunus, 2022): Explored "Using Digital Storytelling to Improve Pupils' Speaking Skills in the Age of COVID 19" with 35 EFL students. Employing pre- and post-tests and questionnaires, the study found that digital storytelling positively impacted students' speaking skills, fostering engagement, motivation, and confidence in speaking English.

The collective findings from previous research demonstrate a variety of focuses on language skills improvement through digital storytelling, each with its unique aspects. This current

research, however, is specifically concentrated on examining how secondary school students can enhance their speaking fluency through task-based Digital Storytelling, utilizing a case study framework within (Creswell's, 2014) qualitative research approach.

### **3. APPROACH AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study adopts a qualitative approach employing a case study research design, aiming to offer a comprehensive depiction of a singular unit. According to (Yin, Case study research and applications: Design and methods, 2018), a qualitative case study is a research method characterized by a thorough examination of a specific case or unit of analysis, emphasizing an understanding of intricate social phenomena within their real-world context. The unit of analysis may encompass an individual, group, site, class, or community, and this approach is adept at addressing both descriptive questions such as "what happened" and explanatory questions by delving into the processes underpinning the phenomenon. Consequently, case studies serve as a fitting research design for investigating particular phenomena, situations, or events through meticulous analysis and description.

Regarding data presentation, researchers opted for a qualitative descriptive technique, signifying a detailed and refined account of how the narrative unfolds. The theoretical basis for descriptive research involves studying how humans perceive the world, with narrative researchers constructing these stories through in-depth interviews and crafting narratives about these experiences, as outlined by (Gudmundsdottir, 2001), The researcher narrates the implementation of DST Task-Based Learning to enhance students' speaking fluency, offering detailed insights into the story's context, challenges, strengths, and other relevant aspects..

### **4. RESEARCH CONTEXTS AND RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

The case study took place at one of the Islamic Senior High Schools located in Jember, East Java, with the purpose of introducing diverse methods of English language instruction to students. English was a mandatory subject in the Indonesian curriculum and was taught twice a week, with each lesson lasting

for 45 minutes. The English teacher at the school had confirmed the regular time allocation for English lessons to be 45 minutes. In this case, Digital Storytelling was used to involve students in integrating creative abilities through creating stories in digital form. It was hoped that students not only improved their speaking fluency but also enhanced their creativity skills as story illustrators.

Given the pivotal role of participants in the research, the researcher made several considerations. Class XI was chosen as the participant group primarily based on the English teacher's recommendation, who suggested this class for a more in-depth English study. Thus, the decision aimed to implement the most effective strategy in a class where students were eager for a more engaging English learning experience. This choice was made with the understanding that the students, being in Class XI, sought a more dynamic and less monotonous approach to learning English. Additionally, the decision was influenced by the practical aspect of having a sufficient number of participants, as the class had more than 12 students (2 female and 10 male).

## **5. DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS**

The initial phase of data analysis involved the collection of data. Prior to the analysis, the data needed to be gathered initially. Through various methods such as interviews, observations, and questionnaires, the researcher acquired the necessary data. This process was intended to provide substantial assistance throughout the entirety of the research.

Data analysis is the process of examining and interpreting information gathered from various sources. According to (Creswell's, 2014), the objective of this process is to minimize alternative interpretations and reach precise conclusions based on the acquired facts. Data analysis encompasses four key stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

## **6. RESULT**

### ***DST-mediated speaking fluency development***

In the context of Storytelling learning, the teacher initiates the process by offering a comprehensive explanation of the concept, its practical applications, and the various types of storytelling, encompassing both fictional and non-fictional stories. To ensure clarity, the teacher supplements the explanation with pertinent examples. Specifically, the emphasis is on non-fiction storytelling, centering around the students' own life experiences. Once the foundational knowledge is established, the teacher proceeds to explore the complexities of crafting narratives and storyboards. The content is presented in-depth, covering crucial elements like plot development, character creation, setting, and themes. Students are guided on how to construct compelling and meaningful narratives that effectively convey their personal experiences. To deepen understanding and stimulate creativity, the teacher showcases examples of digital storytelling videos. One of the videos, titled "I am Introvert," is presented in English. Through observing this video, students gain insights into how storytelling can be brought to life using multimedia elements, including visuals, sound, and narration.

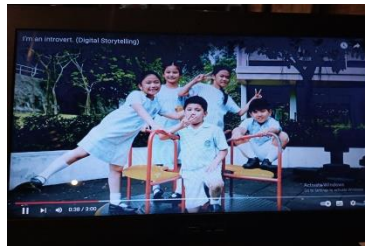


Figure 1. The example of video Digital storytelling. (Figurer1, 22 Mei 2023)

This exercise aimed to enhance students' narrative skills, oral fluency, and communication abilities by encouraging them to share personal experiences. The focus on personal themes provided a comfortable starting point, allowing students to confidently express themselves using familiar vocabulary. Students crafted narratives around their own achievements and challenges, honing storytelling techniques such as intonation and pacing.

Sharing stories with classmates in a supportive environment allowed for valuable feedback, contributing to improved clarity and attractiveness in expressing ideas. This process boosted students' confidence in speaking English, fostering increased fluency. The chosen theme not only cultivated storytelling skills but also highlighted the power of storytelling for effective communication and self-expression. Overall, the assignment nurtured creativity, linguistic proficiency, and confidence in sharing unique stories. (Figure 2 illustrates the task of creating a script for DST.)

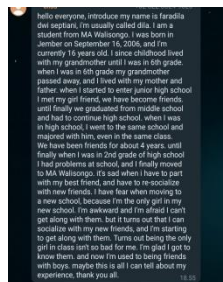


Figure 2 the task of students to create narrative stories based on their experiences or achievements in life. (Figure2, 23 Mei 2023)

### ***Enhancing students' enthusiasm for acquiring speaking fluency***

In the subsequent stage of the project, students embark on a quest to discover multiple images that align with the narrative text they create. This undertaking involves thorough research, exploration, and the application of creativity. Students are encouraged to explore various online resources, including image libraries, stock photo websites, or even capture their own photos, to gather a diverse range of visuals that aptly represent elements of their narrative. After amassing a substantial collection of images, students proceed to the editing stage. Using specialized video editing software, they meticulously arrange the images in a sequence that follows the flow of their narrative. This organization aims to construct a visually engaging and coherent storyline. In this phase, students are particularly enthusiastic as they have the



freedom to choose the pictures they like, as illustrated in (Figure 3).



Figure 3 a type of image used to illustrate text content. (Figure3, 22 Mei 2023)

The central activity comprised practice sessions for voice dubbing. Each student rehearsed narrating their self-authored story text, which was featured in the ultimate assignment. The students concentrated on enhancing their pronunciation and fluency while delivering the story for their dubbing project. The teacher provided feedback on their final performance, aiming to assess the students' proficiency in effectively reading stories. In this exercise, each student practiced individually, and the teacher offered corrections and guidance throughout the process. The main objective of this activity was to evaluate the students' storytelling skills and their effectiveness in conveying narratives through voice dubbing, as depicted in Figure 4.

The students were requested to share their thoughts and feelings about their experience participating in the DST Video-making activity. The interview was translated into English as shown below.

- Teacher : How do you feel at the rehearsal meeting?
- Student : at first, I feel *anxious and nervous* because I have difficulty speaking English fluently and reading confidently. To overcome this, I diligently practice reading first to improve my pronunciation. As a result, I can tell the story *without hesitation*.
- Teacher : So, can this activity improve your speaking fluency?

Student : a lot, because of this activity we spoke a lot of English while at the same time we were guided to pronounce the correct English vocabulary, we also trained our intonation to read our own narrative stories. (Interview student of XI IPA, at classroom, 23 Mei 2023)



Figure 4 Students' Rehearsal of dubbing a DST project. (Figure5, Students' Rehearsal of dubbing a DST project, 23 Mei 2023)

In the course of this activity, students expressed a notable improvement in their English speaking fluency. They conveyed that the experience contributed significantly to their language skills, and they were able to enhance their fluency in expressing themselves in English. Additionally, they mentioned acquiring a substantial amount of new vocabulary, indicating that the exercise not only bolstered their speaking abilities and pronunciation but also enriched their English language vocabulary.

### ***The enjoyable learning students experience in speaking classroom***

Acquiring speaking fluency through the medium of digital storytelling marked a new and innovative educational approach for eleventh-grade students. Prior to this, their educational experience primarily involved textbooks for comprehension and application. Even in developing speaking skills, the teacher's instructions often centered on creating dialogues and practicing them with peers. However, with the aim of boosting spoken fluency, the integration of digital storytelling as an instructional tool was introduced. The

students embraced this new dimension in English education, especially for the improvement of fluency.



Figure 5 Portraits of student projects (Figure5, 25 Mei 2023)

This data is collected again to get another perspective on its use digital storytelling strategy in learning fluency which is translated into English as displayed.

Teacher : What do you think about using digital storytelling in learning fluency?

Student : It is an enjoyable experience, as I can illustrate through my personal journey in my narrative, and I gained my initial exposure to English storytelling. I'm also quite content with the outcome, given that digital storytelling has played a pivotal role in advancing both my spoken fluency and vocabulary expansion. (Interview student of XI IPA, 24 Mei 2023)

Initially, some students felt perplexed and uneasy, anticipating the challenge of narrating stories using digital media and the English language. However, as subsequent sessions unfolded, their initial apprehension turned into contentment, particularly during the final stages of the project when they engaged in a friendly competition to enhance the visual appeal of their digital storytelling videos. This experience brought them joy as it allowed them to combine productivity with their learning efforts, as depicted in figure 5.

## 7. DISCUSSION

The initial findings from students' engagement in crafting Digital Storytelling projects for enhancing speaking fluency emphasize the distinctive nature of each student's learning journey through this method. (Ferdiansyah, 2019) State Compared to oral and written storytelling methods, Digital Storytelling (DST) proves to be a captivating and significant approach, offering English language learners a chance to acquire comprehensive, multi-dimensional English skills. The first finding is supported by (Souvik, 2023) DST assignments emerge as motivating tools, providing platforms for students to explore roles, apply language and creative skills, and even empower those with limited speaking abilities to communicate effectively in English.

This study highlights the impact of active engagement in digital storytelling on speaking fluency, underscoring the potential of technology and creativity to elevate language acquisition. The findings show that DST assignments motivate students, enhance their vocabulary acquisition, and improve their ability to understand and comprehend written and spoken English. This is also related to the findings from (Murray, 2019) The enthusiasm generated from structured processes, such as reading aloud self-created narratives and practicing before finalizing audio recordings, contributes significantly to the improvement of speaking fluency.

The students' dedication and attention to detail during the amalgamation of audio and visual elements in their projects reflect their commitment to the work. The study concludes that an enjoyable learning experience in speaking classrooms results from the integration of digital storytelling methods. (Wang, 2014) Revealed when students find the learning process enjoyable, it positively impacts their engagement, motivation, and overall language learning outcomes. In summary, the study suggests that digital storytelling strategies, particularly the task-based approach, not only contribute to speaking fluency development but also

foster enthusiasm and enjoyment among students in their language learning journey. Furthermore, (Richards, 2014) stipulates that in speaking classrooms, an atmosphere of fun and active engagement significantly shapes the learning experience. Students are not only recipients of information but active participants who find the process of acquiring speaking skills fun and immersive.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings, researchers determined that language learners can benefit from using task-based digital storytelling in three main aspects: 1) DST mediated to develop speaking fluency; 2) Enhancing students' enthusiasm for acquiring speaking fluency; and 3) The enjoyable learning experience students have in the speaking classroom. The results show that students find comfort and novel learning experiences in acquiring speaking fluency through digital storytelling projects, marking a shift from traditional methods. The heightened enthusiasm among students is evident in their participation in these projects, contributing not only to speaking skills but also to vocabulary and language acumen.

Additionally, the study proposes two theoretical and practical consequences for smooth learning through digital storytelling methods. The theoretical aspect emphasizes that digital storytelling enhances students' vocabulary mastery, understanding, and speaking fluency. In practical terms, the application of digital storytelling strategies supports teachers in developing pedagogical skills and achieving professional competence. The research suggests that incorporating innovative techniques like digital storytelling can transform the learning environment, making lessons more interesting and engaging for students.

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