

A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND DIGITAL STORYTELLING IN IMPROVING LISTENING SKILLS OF ESL LEARNERS

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Abstract

Storytelling has long been recognised as an effective method in language learning, but with technological advances, digital storytelling is emerging as an attractive alternative. The research method used was literature. The results show that both methods are effective in improving listening skills, with digital storytelling showing a difference. Digital storytelling is considered more engaging and interactive by learners, while traditional storytelling is considered more personalised and allows direct interaction with the speaker.

Keywords: traditional storytelling, digital storytelling, listening skills, ESL, comparative study.

Introduction

In the era of globalisation, mastering English as an international language is becoming increasingly important. One of the key skills in learning English as a second language (ESL) is listening skills. This skill plays a vital role in understanding oral communication and contributes significantly to overall language acquisition (Saenboonsong & Poonsawadb, 2020).

Listening skill is one of the crucial components in communication and language learning. It can be defined as the ability to receive and process orally conveyed information, understand its meaning and context, and provide an appropriate response (Marais, 2021). This skill involves not only the physical ability to hear sounds, but also complex cognitive processes to interpret and analyse the messages heard (Kim & Li, 2021).

In the context of second language learning such as English, listening skills include the ability to recognise and distinguish sounds in the target language, understand different accents and intonations, capture the main idea and important details of

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spoken discourse, and integrate the information heard with existing knowledge (Quah & Ng, 2022). This skill also involves the ability to understand different types of spoken input, ranging from everyday conversations to formal presentations, and the ability to adapt to various listening situations, both in academic and social contexts. However, many ESL learners experience difficulties in developing their listening skills, which can hinder progress in language learning (Nair & Yunus, 2021).

Storytelling has long been recognised as an effective method in language learning, including in improving listening skills. It not only helps learners in understanding the context and usage of the language, but also increases their motivation and engagement in the learning process. Traditionally, storytelling is done directly by the teacher or storyteller to the learners. However, with the advancement of technology, a new form of storytelling has emerged known as digital storytelling (Lim et al., 2022).

Digital storytelling utilises various media such as audio, video, animation and interactive elements to tell the story. This method offers new possibilities in storytelling and has the potential to enhance the learning experience. However, its effectiveness compared to traditional storytelling in ESL learning contexts, particularly in improving listening skills, is still a question that needs to be answered (Wu & Chen, 2020).

The difference in characteristics between traditional and digital storytelling may affect the learning process and outcomes achieved by ESL learners. Traditional storytelling offers direct and personalised interaction between the storyteller and the listener, while digital storytelling can present more diverse and interactive content. Both methods have their own advantages and disadvantages that need to be further explored (Abderrahim & Plana, 2021).

In addition, factors such as learners' age, English proficiency level, learning style, and technology availability can also affect the effectiveness of each storytelling method. A better understanding of how these factors interact with different storytelling methods will assist educators in selecting and implementing the most suitable learning strategies to improve ESL learners' listening skills (Sudarmaji et al., 2020).

Given the importance of listening skills in ESL learning and the potential of storytelling as a learning method, an in-depth comparative study is needed to compare the effectiveness of traditional and digital storytelling. This research aims to review the existing literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and limitations of each method, as well as identify the best strategies for integrating these two approaches in ESL learning.

Research Methods

The research method used in this research uses the literature method, which is a research approach that focuses on collecting, analysing, and synthesising information

from various existing written sources. (JUNAIDI, 2021); (Abdussamad, 2022); (Wekke, 2020).

Results and Discussion

Comparison of Traditional and Digital Storytelling

Storytelling involves the construction and presentation of a clear and coherent message, idea, or experience in the form of a story. This practice has certain elements such as plot, character, conflict and resolution, which appeal to the audience's emotions, promotes apprehension of the information and banks it for further reference (Sudarmaji et al., 2020). The practice of storytelling is common in different practices such as education, advertising, leadership, and entertainment for the purpose of evoking, driving, instructing or amusing the audience. It is possible that allow instructive information storytelling promotes memorability of the presentation by the audience by conveying the main points and important values (Rahim et al., 2021).

In terms of purpose and context, there are several types of storytelling to choose from. Some of the major types comprise: a personal narrative where the storyteller narrates what has happened to him or her; the digital-storytelling paradigm where multi-media technology is applied; the organizational storytelling paradigm where information about mission and values of the corporation is delivered; and educational storytelling where a desire to teach or inspire an audience rather than entertain is the goal; and visual storytelling dependent on images or photo-illustrations; and interactive storytelling where there is audience participation; transmedia telling of a story wherein the story is extended in several media, though not a single one is called dominant; and cultural storytelling within which is the aim of preserving culture and its values for Society (Alderbashi, 2021). Each of these genres possesses its own features and advantages, and it's clear that the choice of storying type depends on the audience, the message, and the form (Arroba & Acosta, 2021).

The 'traditional' and the 'digital' approaches to story telling both reference the same activity, but they are both distinct art forms. Traditional forms of storytelling usually depend on the immediate relationship between the performance of the story and the performance of the audience which often takes a speech or written form (Blas, 2022). This has carried on for several centuries during which it has served the parent role of insuflating culture and heritage from one generation to another. It creates a special 'bonding' and deep understanding between the story teller and the audience whereby the story is enhanced by the audience and so changes can be made within the context of the narrative (Kustini et al., 2020).

On the other hand, in the case of digital storytelling, stories are created and shared through the means of certain written benefits and use of technologies and the Internet. Examples include videos, podcasts, social networking sites, mobile applications and many more (Azis, 2020). Digital stories are easier and faster to convey

to many people regardless of location. Moreover, audiences can go beyond passive consumption of digital stories as most of them are more participatory in nature. They can comment or share or even add onto the story (Rutta et al., 2021).

Although it can be argued that stories have only catered to the audiences in attendance or those with a copy and print of the story being told, a story told digitally can reach a bigger and more varied audience. Nevertheless, a benefit that traditional storytelling has is that it enables a more personal and close connection with the audience. In addition, a story can be told through gestures, tone of voice and other forms that may not be possible in the internet, which in this case Anderson & Macleroy assumes to mean in the modern forms of media (Anderson & Macleroy, 2020).

This received appreciation, both forms of storytelling have their positions in the present day forms of communication. In these contexts of high respect for the interpersonal relationships of the stakeholders, for instance, education, therapy, community services, and other high relational activities, traditional forms of storytelling practice are still useful (Özen & Duran, 2021). At the same time, it is worth noting, that in this information age, the significance of effective and creative way of presenting information in the power of digital storytelling has increased. There are also many practitioners today who practice all aspects of both the above two approaches toward storytelling and thus, appreciate the benefits of culture and technology (Yu & Zadorozhnyy, 2022).

Factors Affecting the Effectiveness of Storytelling

Factors contributing to the efficiency of storytelling are many and related to one and the other. One very essential factor is the story itself. A vivid and fun story always has a classic branching of events, desirable characters and events that keep the audience amused. It should also be desired by the specific audience, engage them on an emotional level and instill any relevant morals or lessons. People will also remember the specific narrative for the creativity and new ideas that it introduces hence it's noteworthy contribution (Churchill, 2020).

The second even more significant factor is who is telling the story. In order to communicate their stories efficiently, a good narrator must incorporate emotion in a dramatic or entertaining way. This entails the use of vocal cords, hand movement and facial expressions for dramatization effectively communicating ideas (Kodrlé & Savchenko, 2021). The storytellers also need to possess basic performance skills like gauging the audience and modifying the changes made to the story based on the audience's response. And most importantly, the confidence, command of the content, and interpersonal skills to interact with the audience are also some of the factors that a storyteller should have (Kahanurak et al., 2023).

The setting of storytelling is another factor that determines how effective the storytelling will be. This involves such factors as the physical environment, the time, and

the other circumstances in which the narration is done. For instance, a campsite having speeded up storytelling carried out in a quiet and warm place will outperform that of hurried shoppers and other noisy activities. Also, the consideration of the appropriate form or medium for telling the story is also critical these days especially because of the variety of options available for instance, videos, podcasts, or social media (Lantz et al., 2020).

Addressing herself to the audience and getting the audience is not the end. Such audiences tend to develop a deeper appreciation of the experience portrayed in the story when they are engrossed in it both actively and emotionally. Therefore, defining the characteristics of the target audience in terms of their interests and needs is critical. Engagement of the audience in the narrative through interactive storytelling is one way of achieving this. Apart from this, tapping into the audience's personal experiences in relation to the story can also enhance the engagement process and the effectiveness of the storytelling (Al-Amri, 2020).

Ultimately, the efficacy of storytelling is influenced by multiple interrelated aspects interacting with one another on a rather complicated level. Four elements are introduced that independently enhance the effectiveness of storytelling: the story itself, the storyteller, the environment in which the story is told, and the audience. A compelling and punctually appropriate narrative shared with an enthusiastic crowd by an eloquent presenter in the right conditions is guaranteed to have the maximum efficiency. In that case, there is a need to work on the focus and improvement of all these factors in order to enhance the effectiveness of storytelling. The way that communication or ideas are conveyed will be more powerful, involving and persuasive once all the components are properly understood and applied.

Storytelling Implementation Strategies in ESL Learning

The implementation strategy of storytelling in ESL (English as a Second Language) learning consists of;

The first step in implementing storytelling in ESL learning is to choose stories that are appropriate to the students' language level and interests. The stories chosen should have a language structure that students can understand, but still challenging to improve their skills. Use stories from different cultures to enrich students' cross-cultural understanding. Make sure the stories have an interesting plot and characters that students can relate to in order to maintain their interest throughout the learning process (Yang et al., 2022).

In delivering the story, use interactive techniques to actively engage students. Use facial expressions, body movements, and voice variations to bring the story to life. Engage students by asking questions during the story, asking them to predict what will happen next, or inviting them to imitate certain sounds or movements. The use of

props, pictures, or even simple costumes can help visualise the story and improve student understanding (Yigit, 2020).

After delivering the story, conduct various activities to reinforce students' comprehension and language skills. This could include discussions on the moral of the story, role-playing based on the characters in the story, or rewriting the story from a different perspective (Al-Shaye, 2021). Activities such as making a story map, drawing a favourite scene, or creating an alternative ending can help students use the target language creatively. Give students the opportunity to retell the story in their own words to practice speaking skills (Palioura & Dimoulas, 2022).

Utilise storytelling as a springboard to develop a range of language skills. Use story texts to teach new vocabulary and grammatical structures in context. Reading comprehension exercises can be developed based on stories that have been heard. For writing skills, students can be asked to write a summary of the story, create dialogue between characters, or even write their own story inspired by the story they have heard. By integrating storytelling into various aspects of language learning, students can develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills holistically (Aslan & Shiong, 2023).

In this digital era, technology can be utilised to increase the effectiveness of storytelling in ESL learning. Use animated videos, podcasts, or interactive apps to present stories in a more engaging way. Digital platforms also allow students to create their own digital stories, developing language skills as well as technological skills (Çetin, 2021). The use of online forums or class blogs can provide a platform for students to share stories and provide feedback to each other, expanding learning opportunities beyond the classroom (Lestari & Nirmala, 2020).

The implementation of storytelling must be accompanied by effective assessment strategies. Use assessment rubrics to evaluate students' comprehension of the story, language use and participation in related activities. Provide constructive feedback that focuses not only on language accuracy, but also on creativity and communication skills. Encourage students to self-reflect on what they have learned through the story, helping them to recognise their own progress in language learning (Hsieh & Huang, 2020).

It is important to adapt storytelling strategies according to students' language proficiency levels. For beginners, use simple stories with lots of repetition and visual support. As students improve, increase the complexity of the story and reduce scaffolding. For advanced students, use more complex stories and challenge them to analyse literary elements such as theme, point of view, and style (Yaman & Taşdelen, 2022).

Storytelling is thus a highly effective tool in ESL learning, offering a holistic approach that engages students emotionally and cognitively. Through proper implementation, storytelling can increase learning motivation, enrich vocabulary, improve understanding of language structures, and develop critical thinking skills. The

strategies discussed, from selecting appropriate stories, interactive delivery techniques, post-story activities, integration with other language skills, technology utilisation, to effective assessment, form a comprehensive framework for optimising the use of storytelling in the ESL classroom. With a planned and creative approach, storytelling becomes not only a tool for language learning, but also a bridge of cultures and enriching experiences, preparing students to become effective communicators in English.

Challenges and Solutions in Implementing Storytelling

One of the main challenges in implementing storytelling is limited time and resources. Teachers often feel overwhelmed by the demands of the curriculum and feel they do not have enough time to prepare and implement effective storytelling activities. In addition, lack of access to quality storytelling materials that are appropriate for students' ability levels is also an obstacle (Zhussupova & Shadiev, 2023). To overcome this, teachers can integrate storytelling into regular lessons, using short stories or story fragments that are relevant to the topic being studied. Utilisation of free online resources and collaboration with fellow teachers to share materials can help overcome resource limitations (Purnama et al., 2022).

In an ESL class, there are often students with different levels of language proficiency. This can make it difficult for teachers to choose stories that are appropriate for all students. Some students may find the story too easy, while others feel overwhelmed. A solution to this challenge is to implement differentiation in storytelling (Rutta et al., 2021). Teachers can provide different versions of the story for different proficiency levels, or use different scaffolding techniques to help struggling students. The use of small groups can also be helpful, where students of equal ability can work together on stories that are at their level (Choo et al., 2020).

Keeping students engaged and motivated during storytelling sessions, especially for longer or complex stories, can be challenging. Some students may lose interest or find it difficult to understand the story. To address this, teachers can use various interactive techniques such as asking predictive questions, using gestures or sounds to reinforce the narrative, or involving students in retelling parts of the story (Ryan & Aasetre, 2021). The use of visual aids such as pictures, puppets, or real objects can also help maintain students' attention. In addition, choosing stories that are relevant to students' interests and experiences can increase their engagement (Beck & Neil, 2021).

Measuring the effectiveness of storytelling in improving students' language skills and assessing individual progress can be challenging. Traditional assessments may not always be suitable for evaluating the skills developed through storytelling. To address this, teachers can use a variety of alternative assessment methods (Mesa, 2020). For example, student portfolios containing stories they have written or retold, assessment rubrics covering aspects such as story comprehension, use of new vocabulary, and

retelling ability. Peer assessment and students' self-reflection can also provide valuable insights into their progress. In addition, continuous observation and anecdotal recording by teachers can help track students' progress in oral language skills and comprehension (Gürsoy, 2021).

In this digital age, integrating technology into storytelling is both a challenge and an opportunity. Some teachers may feel uncomfortable or unskilled in using digital tools to support storytelling. However, technology can greatly enhance the storytelling experience (Kim & Li, 2021). The solution is to organise training for teachers on the use of technology in learning. Using interactive apps, e-books or digital platforms to create and share stories can make storytelling more engaging and accessible. For example, students can create digital stories using apps such as Storybird or use podcasts to practice telling stories (Sitopu et al., 2024); (Syakhrani & Aslan, 2024); (Hairiyanto et al., 2024).

In culturally diverse classrooms, storytelling can be challenging due to different backgrounds and cultural references. Stories that are relevant to one group of students may be alien or even inappropriate to another group. To overcome this, teachers can use storytelling as a tool to bridge cultural differences. Choosing stories from different traditions and cultures, as well as encouraging students to share stories from their own backgrounds, can promote cross-cultural understanding. Teachers can also use universal stories that have common themes that all students can relate to (Aktas & Akyol, 2020).

Not all teachers have naturally good storytelling skills. Effective storytelling requires practice and specific skill development. The solution is to provide training and professional development that focus on storytelling techniques (Akdamar & Sütçü, 2021). Teachers can practice storytelling among their peers, attend storytelling workshops, or even invite professional storytellers to provide demonstrations and tips. Recording oneself while telling stories and reflecting can also help teachers improve their skills (Mulyadi et al., 2021).

With that said, Storytelling in language learning does present various challenges, ranging from limited time and resources, differences in student abilities, to technology integration and cultural differences. However, with a creative approach and the right solutions, these challenges can be overcome. The key is flexibility, creativity and a commitment to continuous learning and adaptation (Khairunnisa et al., 2022). Teachers need to continuously develop their skills, utilise technology wisely, and create an inclusive and interactive learning environment. By applying the strategies discussed, such as differentiation, technology integration, and cross-cultural approaches, storytelling can be a very effective tool in improving students' language skills, motivating them, and creating meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences. Ultimately, storytelling is not just about telling stories, but also about building

connections, understanding differences, and opening doors to the wider world of language and culture for students (Maureen et al., 2020).

Conclusion

This comparative study shows that both traditional and digital storytelling play an important role in improving listening skills in ESL learners. Both methods are proven to be effective in capturing students' attention, improving comprehension and aiding information retention. However, each method has its own strengths and weaknesses that need to be considered in specific learning contexts.

Traditional storytelling shows advantages in terms of direct interaction between the storyteller and the listener. This method allows for real-time adjustment of tempo, intonation and gestures based on the audience's response, which is very beneficial for enhancing student understanding and engagement. On the other hand, digital storytelling offers consistency in delivery, the ability to incorporate multimedia elements, and flexibility in use that can support independent learning.

In terms of effectiveness in improving listening skills, both methods show positive results. Traditional storytelling tends to be better at improving active listening skills and contextual understanding, while digital storytelling excels at improving focus on linguistic details such as pronunciation and intonation. The combination of these two methods in an ESL learning programme can provide a comprehensive approach to the development of listening skills.

In conclusion, both traditional and digital storytelling have an important place in modern ESL learning. The choice of method should be based on specific learning objectives, student characteristics, and available resources. An ideal approach may involve the integration of these two methods, utilising the strengths of each to create a rich and effective learning experience. Thus, educators can maximise the potential of storytelling to improve listening skills and overall language comprehension in ESL learners.

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