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IMPROVING EFL LEARNERS' LISTENING SKILLS THROUGH DIGITAL STORYTELLING WITH VICA STRATEGIES

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Abstract

EFL learners often struggle to develop listening skills in English language contexts. Educators are exploring innovative methods such as digital storytelling and ViCA (Visualization, Collaboration, and Action) strategies to enhance interactive learning experiences. This research aims to analyze learners' experiences and challenges in using digital storytelling with ViCA strategies to improve listening skills, offer valuable insights for learners, teachers, and future researchers, and advance the role of technology in language learning. The research combines a qualitative approach with case study methods. The research instruments used were observation and interviews. Participants in this research were 5 EFL learners in class 11C, Islamic Senior High School of Mathlaul Anwar Pameuntasan. Data were analyzed using the interaction model of Miles and Huberman (1994). This research found that experience in digital storytelling with ViCA strategies benefits EFL learners, improving their listening skills and overall engagement in the learning process. By fostering collaborative exploration, active participation, and the utilization of visualization tools, learners experience improvements in understanding, critical thinking, and communication. Despite facing obstacles such as unfamiliar vocabulary and technical problems, learners thrive in a collaborative environment, demonstrating high enthusiasm and focus.

Keywords: EFL learners, digital storytelling, ViCA strategies, listening skills

INTRODUCTION

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners often have difficulty developing their listening skills, as this requires understanding spoken English in different contexts, accents, and speeds. To overcome these challenges, educators have begun to explore innovative approaches to improve EFL learners' listening skills. EFL learners can improve their listening abilities interestingly and interactively by utilizing digital storytelling combined with the ViCA (Visualization, Collaboration, and Action) strategies. According to Solak (2016), listening is a process that involves active involvement and interaction, where listeners seek to interpret spoken words by taking in spoken sounds. Renukadevi (2014) asserts that listening is a fundamental receptive skill that involves several cognitive processes, including understanding, predicting, inferring, assessing, and interpreting the speakers' intended meaning. Smeda et al. (2014) stated that good listeners are more likely to be successful communicators than poor listeners. However, many EFL learners struggle with listening comprehension due to a lack of focus or inadequate teaching methods. Learners' performance will not be outstanding if they do not focus entirely during listening practice (Kutlu & Aslanoğlu, 2009). Hence, there is a requirement for a creative and efficient method to improve the listening skills of EFL learners.

According to Brown (2006), there are three indicators of listening: listening for the main idea, listening for details, listening, and making inferences. First, when listening actively, the listener must identify the main ideas conveyed in the conversation. Second, listeners must focus on extracting specific and complex details from the dialogue to gain a comprehensive

understanding. Lastly, making inferences requires the listener to interpret the meaning implied in the conversation.

The use of digital storytelling is an interesting method and has the potential to improve EFL learners' listening skills. Digital storytelling is short, technology-based stories accompanied by text, pictures, audio, and video displayed for several minutes (Robin, 2016). In education and language learning studies, using digital stories in educational settings is beneficial for classroom teaching (Khasanah et al., 2023). According to Wang & Zhan (2010), digital storytelling helps learners to develop their imagination, creativity, critical thinking, and communication skills. It also provides opportunities for learners to practice listening in authentic contexts. ViCA (Visualization, Collaboration, and Action) is a learning strategy that can be utilized to improve the listening skills of EFL learners using digital storytelling. According to Zulfa & Putri (2023), there are several benefits associated with the ViCA strategy, including improved listening focus among learners, the ability to make the most of their listening activities, more engaging and exciting classes, more active and critical thinking among learners, and the ability to assess learners' levels of achievement of learning objectives. According to Taylor et al. (2018), incorporating visualizations into digital storytelling improves learners' comprehension of spoken English, leading to more efficient material acquisition. Visualization can help motivate learners and foster an engaging learning environment in the classroom (Fatemipour & Hashemi, 2016). Moreover, collaborative learning is a component of the ViCA strategies, where learners work together to solve challenges through discussion. In collaborative learning, learners work in small groups to tackle obstacles and consider solutions (Kolodner & Nagel, 1999). According to Wiersma (2000), collaborative learning is an approach that emphasizes teamwork, building, learning, and improvement. The final stage, "action," refers to the actions that learners take, such as completing worksheets provided by the teacher (Zulfa & Putri, 2023).

In this regard, this research aims to investigate further how digital storytelling with ViCA strategies might help EFL learners become more proficient listeners. This research is significant because listening comprehension is a fundamental component of language learning, and many EFL learners struggle with spoken language (Slimani & Moubtassim, 2023). Activities, including digital storytelling, are designed to meet predetermined learning objectives, improve listening comprehension, and provoke thought (Datko, 2014).

This research argues that using digital storytelling as an alternative can help learners become better listeners in dealing with this situation. ViCA strategies are used to assist learning. The researcher is interested in conducting research titled "Improving EFL Learners' Listening Skills through Digital Storytelling with ViCA strategies." The findings of this research can be beneficial to EFL learners and English language teachers in improving instruction and listening activities in EFL settings. Aside from that, this research can further our comprehension of how technology is used for language acquisition.

METHOD

In this qualitative case study, interviews and observations served as the primary data sources, directly obtained from EFL learners engaged in digital storytelling activities (Ajayi, 2023). During the sessions incorporating ViCA strategies, the researcher documented categories and variables observed (Baker, 2006). Interviews provided in-depth insights into participants' experiences and perspectives on digital storytelling's impact on their listening skills (deMarrais, K., & Lapan, S. D., 2004), utilizing open-ended questions to encourage them to share their thoughts, challenges, and benefits (Hoffmann, 2007).

This research was carried out in the Islamic Senior High School of Mathlaul Anwar Pameuntasan, where English is taught in schools as a foreign language but is not frequently used in daily communication. The participants in this research were 5 learners from class 11C

at the Islamic Senior High School of Mathlaul Anwar Pameuntasan. According to Creswell (2016), the typical participant count in qualitative research is between 5 and 10 persons. If data saturation has not been reached, participants might be added until they resubmit their information. Techniques for random sampling were used to choose these subjects. To achieve more precise and dependable results, random sampling is utilized to ensure that every member of the population has an equal chance of being chosen as a sample.

The data analysis process using Miles & Huberman's (1994) interaction model consists of four steps: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusions. In the data collection phase, researchers document information from interviews and observations in field notes, which include both descriptive notes (objective experiences) and reflective notes (subjective interpretations). Data reduction involves selecting relevant information, summarizing it, and organizing it for clarity. The data display step presents this information in formats like narratives or graphs to facilitate understanding and decision-making. Finally, the conclusions draw insights by analyzing patterns and relationships in the data, with validity enhanced through revisiting field notes and engaging in further discussions.

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

In this section, the research discusses the findings. The discussion referred to the following research purposes: (1) To find out the experiences of EFL learners regarding the use of digital storytelling with ViCA strategies as a means to improve their listening skills. (2) To find out the challenges of EFL learners regarding the use of digital storytelling with ViCA strategies as a means to improve their listening skills.

The Experiences of EFL Learners Regarding the Use of Digital Storytelling with ViCA Strategies as a Means to Improve Their Listening Skills

Data from Observation

The observations made in this study provide good experiences for EFL learners utilizing digital storytelling with ViCA strategies to improve their listening skills. Through these observations, it was evident that this innovative method had a beneficial impact on learners' ability to engage with and comprehend spoken language.

The observations from this study demonstrated that digital storytelling with ViCA strategies had a positive impact on EFL learners' listening skills. Engagement and comprehension were enhanced through the integration of visual and narrative elements, which captured learners' attention and encouraged active participation. Learners demonstrated their understanding by identifying different types of stories, providing examples, and asking questions about the narrative, which indicated a deep level of focus and engagement with the material.

Additionally, critical thinking and communication skills improved through collaborative learning environments, where learners worked in small groups and participated in discussions. During presentations, learners confidently shared their insights, demonstrating their ability to listen attentively and process information. Teacher-facilitated reflection sessions further supported this by providing opportunities for learners to share thoughts, refine ideas, and actively engage with their peers' perspectives.

Lastly, active participation and creativity were key components of the learning experience. Learners engaged in creating digital stories using tools like Microsoft Photo Story 3, which required careful listening to understand instructions and collaborating effectively during story editing. This process not only enhanced their listening skills but also fostered creativity, teamwork, and analytical thinking as they refined story drafts, participated in competitive analysis sessions, and reflected on their learning journey.

Data from the Interview

This research involved interviews exploring the experiences of EFL learners in class 11C who used digital storytelling with ViCA strategies to improve their listening skills. This interview involved 5 participants. It aimed to gather in-depth insights and experiences from five participants on how digital storytelling helped them understand and retain spoken English.

Before Using Digital Storytelling with ViCA Strategies, EFL Learners Expressed a Lack of Interest. EFL learners expressed a lack of interest in learning, including a lack of focus, boredom, and understanding, before using digital storytelling with ViCA strategies. This disinterest often resulted in a lack of focus during learning sessions, leading to increased susceptibility to distraction and reduced retention of information (Unsworth & McMillan, 2017). Additionally, learners experienced boredom, indicating a disconnect between the content and their personal interests or level of cognitive engagement. Furthermore, a lack of comprehension confirmed this deficiency, suggesting that learners had difficulty understanding the material presented, hindering their ability to engage effectively in the learning process.

After using digital storytelling with ViCA strategies, EFL learners' experience was categorized into learner interests and perceptions. Learner interest included learners' enthusiasm towards the learning process and their ability to maintain focus during listening sessions. Enthusiasm for learning and a focused emphasis on active listening were essential indicators of engagement and motivation in educational contexts (Martin, 2009). On the other hand, Perception refers to learners' improved understanding of the subject matter caused by the visual and auditory aids incorporated into the digital storytelling process. The utilization of visual elements and audio aids served to facilitate a more immersive and engaging learning environment, allowing learners to understand complex concepts more effectively and improving their overall learning outcomes (Lu & Hanim, 2024).

The use of visualization strategies in the realm of digital storytelling provided valuable insights into the perception category. The perception that emerged from this experience was that visualization played an important role in facilitating a deeper and more accessible understanding of the content presented. According to Abdulrahaman et al. (2020), combining visual elements such as images and multimedia components made learners interact with the material more, thereby increasing understanding. This highlighted the importance of visualization in explaining complex concepts and developing more effective learning environments in the context of digital storytelling.

Collaboration exploration revealed three distinct categories of experience: awareness, perception, and meaning. Awareness maintained an individual's increased awareness and recognition of the importance of respecting and valuing the opinions of others during collaborative efforts. On the other hand, perception encapsulated the development of self-confidence and a willingness to express one's point of view in a collaborative setting. Lastly, the meaning explored an understanding of how active listening skills could be honed and improved through attentively engaging with and discussing various opinions and perspectives expressed by other individuals. These categories collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of collaboration as a mechanism for fostering mutual respect, confidence, and skill development in a collaborative learning environment (Yang, 2023).

The Challenges of EFL Learners Regarding the Use of Digital Storytelling with ViCA Strategies as a Means to Improve Their Listening Skills

This research involved interviews to explore the challenges of EFL learners who use digital storytelling with ViCA strategies to improve their listening skills. To gather in-depth insights, interviews were conducted with five participants, each providing a perspective regarding learning challenges.

Data from the Interview

EFL learners faced several challenges when they used digital storytelling with ViCA strategies to improve their listening skills. In the realm of listening challenges through digital storytelling with ViCA strategies, the two main categories that emerged were ability and audio. Regarding ability, obstacles arose due to unfamiliar vocabulary, which hindered comprehension, and distractions that impeded sustained focus (Willis, 2008). To address these issues, learners often resorted to using dictionaries and Google Translate to overcome the lack of vocabulary, ensuring they could better grasp the content presented.

On the audio front, additional challenges surfaced, particularly concerning audibility. Learners seated at the back found it difficult to clearly understand the narrative, diminishing their grasp of the presented content. These dual challenges underscore the diverse barriers in digital storytelling and emphasize the importance of addressing linguistic and technical aspects to enhance audience engagement and comprehension. To overcome hearing problems, educators employ strategies such as using amplification devices to ensure optimal speaker placement. These steps aim to improve the clarity of audio content and ensure that all students can access and engage effectively with the narrative presented.

Participants in digital storytelling faced challenges in three main areas: devices, networks, and time. According to Mbabazi et al. (2018), device issues encompass normal functionality disruptions that negatively affect usability or performance. Device challenges stemmed from hardware limitations, such as slow laptop performance during editing due to insufficient specifications. To address these challenges, upgrading hardware or using cloud-based editing tools that require less local processing power could be effective solutions.

Network challenges arose from limited internet connectivity, which hindered access to online resources essential for storytelling, such as critical images (Yu, 2002). To mitigate these issues, ensuring access to stable and high-speed internet or providing offline resources and materials could help storytellers maintain the quality and completeness of their digital narratives.

Time constraints arose when synchronizing photos and audio recordings, requiring careful coordination to ensure a coherent and engaging narrative. Time constraints surfaced while synchronizing pictures and audio recordings, necessitating meticulous coordination to provide a cohesive and engaging narrative. Each obstacle presented unique hurdles that storytellers had to overcome to convey their messages through digital media effectively. To overcome this obstacle, implementing more efficient workflow management strategies and using software tools to streamline the synchronization process could help storytellers manage their time more effectively, creating more polished and engaging digital stories.

In ViCA strategies, four main categories of challenges emerged: diverse interest, disjuncture, time, and meaning. Learners frequently encountered varying interests, which sometimes led to unnecessary discussions diverting attention from the primary storytelling task. To overcome this, the teacher gave the task of creating digital storytelling with different types for each group, such as personal, historical, and mythical stories.

Disjuncture refers to conflicts arising from navigating between different viewpoints, often hindering cohesive decision-making. Addressing these issues could have been facilitated by implementing structured decision-making processes. Techniques such as voting or consensus-building could have streamlined discussions, enabling the integration of diverse perspectives more effectively and fostering a collaborative environment where disagreements could be resolved constructively.

Time encompassed the dynamics of engagement and interaction with tasks and events over time, highlighting the temporal factors impacting strategy implementation. Setting specific deadlines and creating a detailed schedule for each task was essential to enhance time

management. This approach enabled learners to prioritize effectively, allocate resources efficiently, and maintain a steady pace of progress throughout the project.

Meaning described potential disagreements stemming from differing interpretations of tasks or goals, which occasionally impeded collaborative efforts due to conflicting understandings (Van Boxtel et al., 2000). Clarifying expectations and providing explicit instructions at the project's outset can reduce misunderstandings. Additionally, regular check-ins and feedback sessions can ensure that all participants share a common understanding of the objectives and methods.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions, the conclusion comprised two points. The first point was the experiences of EFL learners regarding the use of digital storytelling with ViCA strategies as a means to improve their listening skills. The second point was EFL learners' challenges regarding digital storytelling with ViCA strategies to improve their listening skills. The use of digital storytelling with ViCA strategies positively impacted EFL learners' listening skills. They demonstrated the ability to identify various story types, engage actively with the content, and participate vigorously in discussions. Collaborative learning environments enhanced their listening, critical thinking, and communication skills.

Digital story creation and collaborative editing significantly improved their listening and teamwork abilities. Digital storytelling with ViCA strategies helped overcome learners' lack of interest and comprehension, fostering enthusiasm, focus, and enhanced understanding. The integration of visual and auditory aids in digital storytelling enhanced learners' perception and comprehension of lesson materials. Visualization strategies were crucial in facilitating a deeper understanding of complex concepts. Collaborative exploration increased awareness, perception, and meaning, fostering mutual respect, self-confidence, and skill development. Action strategies helped learners increase their consciousness. Overall, digital storytelling with ViCA strategies improved EFL learners' listening skills and engagement in the learning process.

EFL learners who utilized digital storytelling with ViCA strategies encountered challenges in listening related to ability and audio. Ability issues stemmed from unfamiliar vocabulary and distractions, while audio challenges included difficulties in hearing, particularly for those seated far from the sound source. Participants faced challenges such as device limitations, network issues, and time constraints in digital storytelling. Challenges related to ViCA strategies encompass diverse interests, disjuncture, time management, and differing interpretations, highlighting the importance of cohesive decision-making, temporal awareness, and shared understanding among participants.

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