



Exploring Gender Differences in Speaking Learning with Digital Storytelling

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ABSTRACT

Digital storytelling has emerged as an innovative approach to enhance students' participation. However, how gender influences students' performance and interaction remain underexplored. This study investigates gender differences in student participation through the implementation of digital storytelling. A qualitative design was employed, with data collected from classroom observations using a structured observation sheet and samples of students' digital stories. The participants were 31 students (17 males and 14 females) from a junior high school class. The results revealed that female students consistently scored higher in areas of emotional expressiveness. They also displayed stronger collaborative behavior and more sustained interest. In contrast, male students tended to show strength in spontaneous delivery and visual creativity but were generally less consistent in task completion and emotional expression. In addition, male students are still playful at this age and tend to avoid responsibility. Engagement levels among female students remained stable and high, whereas male students' engagement fluctuated across sessions. In conclusion, gender plays a significant role in shaping how students perform and participate in Speaking learning. Teachers are advised to adopt gender-responsive strategies when implementing Digital storytelling, such as offering flexible storytelling formats and mixed-gender collaboration opportunities to accommodate varying strengths.

Keywords: Gender differences, Speaking learning, Digital Storytelling

•Introduction

Speaking is considered a difficult skill for students to learn in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Many students find challenges, including lacking vocabulary, inadequate confidence, and limited chances to engage in conversation. Teachers have been motivated to investigate alternative pedagogical strategies. It can promote more creative, student-centered contexts as well as encourage students in response to these challenges. Digital storytelling became known into a requiring technique. It employs an individual's voice, interactive components, and narrative structure to provide more engaging language learning experience. Digital storytelling has been found to help people with frequent problems in EFL learning contexts, like fear and lack of motivation (Elyani et al., 2022). In addition, digital storytelling to language learning also encourages critical thinking and motivation, which are important for both genders, but the level of benefit may differ (Phan et al., 2024). By employing this technique, students are motivated to create and convey their own narratives through digital platforms. Digital storytelling helps students become more creative, think critically, and feel more confident, all of which are important for being more fluent in speaking (Bertoli, S., Janggo, W. O., Kartini, M., & Kristiansi, 2024; Hien & Phuong, 2023) Therefore, improving students emotional and creative expression, and also their speaking fluency.

Digital storytelling offers a lot of potential in making students more motivated and better at communicating. Otherwise, we don't know about how gender affects how students use this technique. Additionally, there are still concerns about whether male and female students tell stories differently, show various levels of feelings, or work together and be creative in different ways. If these kinds of differences exist, they could have big effects on what happens in the classroom, but the current study hasn't discussed them. Most of the studies that have been investigated at digital storytelling in general, without affecting gender. This means that they ignore out on possible differences in how students experience and respond to the same teaching style. Studies demonstrate that digital storytelling can markedly enhance emotional intelligence, especially in male students, who displayed more substantial progress than female students within a nonviolent communication program(Chen & Chen, 2024).

The objective of this study is to address gender-based differences in the engagement, performance, and interaction of students during speaking activity by using digital storytelling. The study investigates the differences between male and female students regarding the emotional expressiveness, task completion, creativity, and collaborative behaviour. The study aims to collect insights gender-responsive teaching strategies by utilising classroom observations and student-produced digital narratives. This study also facilitates the advancement of pedagogical strategies that effectively integrate digital tools.

Digital storytelling is becoming popular in language classes, but there isn't much study on how it affects males and females differently. Most previous research has not looked at the social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural aspects that make boys and girls perform differently in these kinds of activities. Digital storytelling has been acknowledged for its capacity to cultivate socio-emotional abilities, including self-awareness and interpersonal skills, which are essential for whole student development (Saliuk & Shkola, 2023). If teachers don't look more closely at these relationships, they

can use a one-size-fits-all strategy that doesn't take into account important differences in how engaged students are. Digital storytelling integrates traditional storytelling with multimedia components like pictures, sound, and video to make stories that are full of meaning. The usefulness of digital storytelling, with big increases in students' speaking skills seen in experimental situations (Mila et al., 2021; Nurhikmah, 2024). In addition, Digital storytelling considerably enhanced speaking skills in secondary EFL classes, as evidenced by a significant impact value showing its efficacy (Astuti & Chakim, 2023).

Although digital storytelling possesses significant educational potential, limited research has investigated the influence of gender on learners' experiences in language activities based on digital storytelling. There aren't enough research-based instructions for how to use these kinds of techniques in digital storytelling settings, especially in junior secondary EFL settings. This emphasizes the urgent requirement for research on gender differences in digital story telling performance specifically in EFL settings. The thematic analysis showed that digital storytelling works to improve EFL speaking abilities, but it also said that more study is needed, including looking at gender (Wijaya, 2023). When teachers use digital storytelling to help students improve their speaking abilities, they also need to think about how gendered patterns of behavior, communication, and engagement could affect how well students learn.

Language proficiency and educational equity can be advanced by professionals who develop equitable environments with gender dynamics in perspective (Bakhout & Sakale, 2024; Kaissi, 2024). Gender-sensitive educational practices must be developed to ensure that digital story telling improves language abilities and creates a more equal and inclusive educational experience (Matute et al., 2023).

The study provides a new novelty by using gender at how digital storytelling might help students improve their speaking skills. It takes a different strategy than previous studies by focusing on how male and female students create stories, engage with their classmates, and make sense of things using digital media. The research gives teachers useful, real-world information that may help make language education more successful by being grounded in the classroom. The results should add to the body of research on technology-mediated EFL teaching and help with the continuing work towards making education more accessible in learning contexts that are becoming more digital. It has long been known that gender affects how people learn languages, how they feel about them, and how well they do. Knowing how gender affects behavior is still useful for designing teaching methods that are better and more responsive.

Methods

This study utilized a qualitative descriptive design to investigate gender-based differences in students' engagement and speaking performance through digital storytelling. The qualitative approach was selected to obtain valuable, contextualized insights into the behaviors, interactions, and creative outputs of students.

There were 31 students (17 males and 14 females) in a grade 8 at a junior high school. The students were between 13 and 14 years old. The school was chosen based on its previous use of digital technologies in classroom activities, and the class was selected on purpose for its balanced gender distribution and the teacher's readiness to use digital storytelling as part of speaking class.

- Data were gathered using two main instruments (1) a classroom observation sheet, and (2) sampling of students' digital storytelling outputs. The observation sheet was created to document certain signs of involvement, cooperation, creativity, emotional expression, and task fulfillment in the speaking session. Furthermore, student-generated digital stories were evaluated for narrative substance, delivery style, visual design, and emotive quality.

The study lasted four weeks and included students in a variety of speaking tasks focusing on digital storytelling. The approach included narrative development, writing, multimedia production, and oral presentation. Students worked alone and in small groups to create digital tales utilizing publicly accessible resources. The researcher used an observation sheet to monitor and record student activities during each session. After completion, all digital articles were compiled and evaluated.

The data from the observation sheets were thematically evaluated, with an emphasis on reoccurring gender-related behaviors. Student objects were evaluated qualitatively using criteria such as emotional expressiveness, narrative coherence, and innovative integration of visual and audio aspects. Male and female student outputs were compared to detect significant disparities. To improve the dependability and credibility of the results, triangulation was used, which combines observational data with artifact analysis.

Findings and Discussion

The results show that male and female interacted with and did digital storytelling activities in an EFL speaking classroom in different ways. Their digital stories showed that they were better at paying attention to tone, character emotion, and audience involvement.

Male students, on the other hand, were far better at spontaneous delivery and visual creativity. Their digital stories generally have bright images, creative plots, and interesting ways of presenting them. But these capabilities were generally canceled out by less consistent task performance and less emotional expression. stated classroom logs showed males were more readily distracted, more playful, and more prone to skip off their obligations. These results may be due to developmental qualities that are common in this age range, as well as boys' lesser ability to control themselves when doing prescribed tasks.

The significant feature was the consistency of participation. Female students remained actively engaged during the digital storytelling, particularly throughout the preparation, cooperation, and presenting phases. The study revealed that female students improved their speaking skills more than male students, suggesting that female students may connect better with the narrative and expressive parts of digital storytelling. (Khotimah & Ningrum, 2022), on the other hand, demonstrated varying levels of engagement. They were excited about the visual or performance parts of the activity. They also showed their enthusiasm diminished during scripting and discussions.

These differences between male and female show that digital storytelling needs to be used in EFL classes in a more varied and responsive way. Digital storytelling has demonstrated an enhancement of intrinsic motivation, particularly in female students, indicating that gender-specific tactics could be advantageous (Abderrahim & Navarro

▪González, 2020). From a teaching point of view, this study supports the idea that digital tools can be implemented in the different learning styles and preferences of students. In terms of the methodology, the triangulation of classroom observations and student was crucial in identifying these varied gendered behaviors. The digital story outputs served as evidence of the expressive, creative, and narrative abilities of the students, while observational data documented real-time classroom dynamics, including patterns of participation, peer interaction, and responsiveness to teacher feedback. These complementary data sources enabled a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of gender on the process and outcome of digital storytelling.

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The results are a valuable contribution to the limited but developing body of research that critically evaluates gender in technology-mediated language acquisition. Additionally, they underscore the educational significance of considering stylistic, affective, and behavioral distinctions when developing speaking exercises. In an effort to enhance the engagement of both male and female students and to better support diversity among students, future instructional models that incorporate digital narrative should contemplate the implementation of personalized feedback mechanisms, gender-balanced groupings, and flexible approaches. The use of AI tools in language acquisition highlights gender-specific moderating effects, with males indicating more pronounced correlations between autistic symptoms and views of AI tools, underscoring the necessity for individualized and responsive learning materials (Du et al., 2025).

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the use of digital storytelling as the primary instructional method significantly influences the performance and participation of students in speaking activities. Throughout the learning process, female students consistently exhibited high levels of collaboration, more sustained engagement, and stronger emotional expressiveness. In contrast, male students demonstrated strengths in visual creativity and spontaneous verbal delivery, despite their tendency to be less consistent in their completion of tasks and their engagement with the emotional aspects of storytelling. These results indicate that the manner in which males and females interact with digital storytelling may be significantly different, as it is influenced by both developmental and socio-cultural factors.

The significance of implementing gender-responsive pedagogical strategies in digital storytelling-based instruction is emphasized by the observed differences. Teachers should think about the development of activities that accommodate the diverse learning preferences and behavioral preferences of students, rather than implementing a standardized approach. For instance, providing students with the option to select between scripted or improvised narration, solo or group work, or flexible narrative formats can

- assist both male and female students in utilizing their strengths. In addition to promoting mutual learning and peer support, encouraging mixed-gender collaboration may also assist in balancing the emotive and creative aspects of the storytelling task.

Additionally, teachers are asked to give support and scaffolding that addresses gender-specific obstacles. Male students may gain from organized timelines and reflective prompts to improve focus and emotional depth, but female students may excel with increased autonomy to investigate narrative themes and articulate personal experiences. A more comprehensive and diverse approach will increase students' speaking development and promote a more equal and engaging learning environment for all.

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