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## THE ROLE OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING IN DEVELOPING SPEAKING FLUENCY

### Abstract

Speaking fluency remains a central yet challenging goal in second language learning across all proficiency levels, from beginner to advanced. This study explores how digital storytelling (DST) can help students improve their speaking fluency. The study is based on *task-based learning, constructivism, and the affective filter hypothesis*. A small classroom case study was carried out with 15 university students at B1 level. Data were collected through recordings, student reflections, and teacher observations over three weeks. The results show that students improved their speech flow, organization, and confidence. These improvements were mainly due to repeated practice and a low-stress learning environment. Although the study is small, it suggests that DST is a useful and motivating tool for developing speaking fluency.

**Keywords:** speaking fluency; digital storytelling; task-based learning; learner autonomy

## RƏQƏMSAL NƏQLETMƏNİN DANIŞIQ SƏLİSLİYİNİN FORMALAŞMASINDA ROLU

### Xülasə

Nitq səlisliliyi xarici dil öyrənmədə (bütün səviyyələrdə - elementardan təkmirlənmiş səviyyədə) mühüm, lakin çətin nail olunan məqsəddir. Bu tədqiqat rəqəmsal nəqletmənin (DST) tələbələrin danışiq səlisliliyini necə inkişaf etdirdiyini araşdırır. Tədqiqat *tapşırıq əsaslı öyrənmə, konstruktivizm və affektiv filtr hipotezinə* əsaslanır. Üç həftə ərzində B1 səviyyəli 15 universitet tələbəsi ilə kiçik miqyaslı sinif tədqiqatı aparılmışdır. Məlumatlar səs yazıları, tələbə refleksiyları və müəllim müşahidələri vasitəsilə toplanmışdır. Nəticələr göstərir ki, tələbələrin nitq axıcılığı, fikirlərin təşkili və özünə inamı artmışdır. Bu inkişaf əsasən təkrar məşq və az stressli öyrənmə mühiti ilə bağlıdır. Tədqiqat məhdud olsa da, DST-nin danışiq səlisliliyinin inkişafı üçün faydalı və motivasiyaedici bir vasitə olduğunu göstərir.

**Açar sözlər:** nitq səlisliliyi; rəqəmsal nəqletmə; tapşırıq əsaslı öyrənmə; öyrənmə muxtariyyəti

## РОЛЬ ЦИФРОВОГО ПОВЕСТВОВАНИЯ В ФОРМИРОВАНИИ БЕГЛОСТИ РЕЧИ

### Резюме

Беглость речи остается одной из ключевых, но трудно достижимых целей при изучении иностранного языка на всех уровнях владения — от начального до продвинутого. Данное исследование рассматривает, как цифровое повествование (DST) помогает развивать беглость речи у студентов. Работа основана на задачном подходе, конструктивизме и гипотезе аффективного фильтра. В течение трёх недель было проведено небольшое аудиторное исследование с участием 15 студентов уровня B1. Данные собирались с помощью аудиозаписей, рефлексий студентов и наблюдений преподавателя. Результаты показали улучшение беглости речи, структуры высказывания и уверенности студентов. Эти изменения связаны с повторной практикой и комфортной учебной средой. Несмотря на ограниченный масштаб, исследование показывает, что DST является эффективным и мотивирующим инструментом для развития устной речи.

**Ключевые слова:** беглость речи; цифровое повествование; задачный подход; автономия обучающегося

### 1. Introduction

For many language learners, the main goal is not only to know grammar and vocabulary, but to speak clearly, smoothly, and confidently. This ability is known as speaking fluency. Speaking fluency can be understood as the ability to speak at a natural speed with few pauses (Ellis, 2003, p. 14). However, in many classrooms, students do not have enough time to practice speaking freely.

In many traditional classrooms, speaking activities are short and controlled. Students rarely have enough time to speak freely or reflect on their performance. As a result, learners may understand the language but struggle to express their ideas.

Digital storytelling offers a practical and flexible solution that can be adapted to all proficiency levels—from beginners (A1) to advanced learners (C1). Digital storytelling (DST) offers a practical solution. It allows students to create and record their own stories. Unlike one-time speaking tasks, DST includes several steps such as *planning, recording, listening, and improving*. This process helps learners practice more and feel more comfortable. Unlike one-time speaking tasks, it provides an experiential learning process where students learn by doing, reflecting, and improving.

At lower levels, students can create very simple stories using basic vocabulary and short sentences. At higher levels, they can develop more complex narratives, opinions, and reflections. This adaptability makes digital storytelling a valuable tool across the entire language learning spectrum

### 2. Theoretical Background

The effectiveness of digital storytelling can be explained through several *key theories* in language learning.

First, ***Task-Based Language Teaching*** focuses on learning through meaningful tasks (Ellis, 2003, pp. 3–5). Creating a digital story is a clear example of such a task because it has a purpose, a process, and a final product.

Second, ***Constructivist Learning Theory*** suggests that learners actively build knowledge through (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). In DST, students create their own stories, which makes learning more personal and meaningful. In digital storytelling, students do not simply repeat language; they create meaning by telling their own stories. This personal involvement increases motivation and retention.

Third, the ***Affective Filter Hypothesis*** highlights the importance of emotional factors. Krashen (1982, p. 31) explains that emotions like anxiety can affect language learning. DST helps reduce anxiety because students can record their speech many times and work at their own pace. Lower anxiety leads to better language acquisition.

Finally, ***Repetition and Practice*** are essential for developing fluency. Repeated practice helps learners speak more easily and naturally (Nation, 2007, p. 8). DST includes repetition through multiple recordings, which supports fluency development.

**The Digital Storytelling Process.** Digital storytelling follows a clear and practical process that supports speaking development. It includes the following stages: *Planning and Scripting, Recording, Listening and Revising, Sharing*.

In the first stage the students begin by choosing a topic and writing a short script. At B1–B2 level, topics can include personal experiences, cultural traditions, or memorable events. Writing for speaking encourages learners to use simpler and more natural sentence structures.

In *Recording* phase students record their narration using simple tools such as smartphones or basic software. They usually record several versions. Each new attempt becomes smoother, with better pronunciation and fewer pauses.

Listening to their own voice is an important learning moment. So, with *Listening and Revising* students notice errors, unclear parts, or unnatural rhythm. They can then revise and re-record. This process builds self-awareness and control over speech.

In *Sharing* part, the final stories are shared with classmates or teachers. This stage provides a real audience and increases motivation. As Robin (2016) notes, sharing digital stories gives learners a sense of purpose and ownership.

As supported by [Robin, 2016] and [Yeh & Mitric, 2019], digital storytelling increases both fluency and motivation because learners see a real purpose in their work.

Now let's analyze how 'Digital Storytelling Improves Fluency'. It should be mentioned that *Digital Storytelling* supports fluency through real experience and repeated practice

First, it improves *automaticity*. When learners repeat their stories, they begin to speak more naturally and with less effort ([Nation, 2007]). This happens across all levels, though the complexity of language changes.

Second, it improves *coherence*. Even simple stories require organization. Beginners learn to connect basic ideas, while advanced learners develop more structured and logical speech.

Third, it develops *expressive speaking*. Learners at all levels become more aware of pauses, intonation, and emphasis. These features make speech clearer and more engaging.

Finally, digital storytelling builds *confidence*. Because learners control the process, they feel less pressure and more ownership. This experiential element is essential for long-term fluency development.

### **3. Methodology**

This study uses a *qualitative case study approach* to understand how DST affects speaking fluency. The participants were 15 university students learning English at B1 level.

Data were collected through: *first and final recordings, student reflections, teacher observations, peer feedback*. The project lasted three weeks and included: *choosing a topic, writing a short script (250–300 words), recording several versions, submitting a final version*

The analysis focused on: *fewer pauses, smoother speech, better organization, increased confidence*

This study has some limitations. The number of students was small, there was no control group, and the data were mostly descriptive.

### **4. Classroom Application: An Experiential Approach**

Digital storytelling is most effective when used as an *experiential learning activity*. Students do not just practice language; they actively use it to create meaningful content based on their own experiences.

For beginners (A1–A2), tasks can be very simple. Students may describe their daily routine, a favorite object, or a picture. The focus is on *basic vocabulary, simple sentence structure, and clear pronunciation*.

At intermediate levels (B1–B2), students can create short narratives about personal experiences, cultural topics, or past events. Here, the focus expands to *coherence, sequencing, and more natural speech*.

At advanced levels (B2–C1), learners can produce more *complex stories, reflections, or arguments*. They can *express opinions, analyze events, and use more expressive language*.

A typical classroom cycle may include: - choosing a topic based on personal experience - drafting a short script - recording several versions - reflecting on improvement.

This process makes learning active and personal. Students are not repeating language; they are using it to express their own ideas. This is why digital storytelling is not only a speaking activity, but also *a meaningful communicative experience*.

Teachers should guide the process but allow learners to take control. Feedback should focus on clarity, pacing, and communication rather than only correctness.

**Challenges and Solutions.** Despite its benefits, digital storytelling may present some challenges. One challenge is *access to technology*. Not all students have the same resources. Teachers can solve this by using simple tools or allowing group work.

Another challenge is *time*. Digital projects may take longer than traditional tasks. However, shorter projects, such as one-minute stories, can still be effective.

The other challenge is *shyness* of some students who may feel less enthusiastic about sharing their voice. Teachers can offer options such as private submission or small-group sharing. This helps create a supportive environment.

#### **Classroom Case Study: Digital Storytelling in Practice**

To illustrate how digital storytelling works in a real classroom, this section presents a short case study based on an English language class at intermediate level (B1), with adaptation suggestions for other levels.

*Context.* The project was implemented in a group of 15 university students studying English as a foreign language. The course focused on developing speaking skills, and students had limited opportunities for extended speaking.

*Task Design.* The teacher introduced a 3-week digital storytelling project titled: “A Moment That Changed Me.” Students were asked to create a 2–3-minute personal story.

The task included the following stages: - brainstorming ideas in pairs - writing a short script (250–300 words) - recording multiple versions - submitting a final audio story.

*Process and experience.* At the beginning, many students were hesitant. They were concerned about pronunciation and making mistakes. However, once they started recording, they became more engaged.

Students reported that recording several times helped them notice their own errors. One student commented that the second and third recordings felt “much easier and more natural.” This reflects the development of *automaticity* ([Nation, 2007, p. 10]).

Another important observation was increased confidence. Students preferred recording at home, where they felt more relaxed. This supports the idea of *lowering*

*the affective filter*. Lower anxiety also helped them speak more freely (Krashen, 1982, p. 32).

### **5. Outcomes and Key Insight**

By the end of the project, most students showed clear improvement in: - speech flow (fewer pauses) - clearer pronunciation - better organization of ideas

Peer feedback also became more focused. Students began to comment on pacing and clarity rather than only grammar.

As for adaptation for other levels, the same structure can be simplified (A1–A2) - Scripts can be made shorter (50–100 words). Topics can become more basic: daily routine, family, etc. For higher levels (B2–C1) more complex topics (opinions, social issues) and longer recordings can be chosen to serve inclusion of reflection or argumentation.

The most important result of this case study is that fluency improved not because students spoke perfectly, but because they practiced repeatedly in a meaningful and personal way. Digital storytelling created a space where learners could experiment, reflect, and gradually improve.

*Assessment of Fluency*. Assessment should focus on communicative effectiveness rather than perfection.

Teachers can evaluate clarity, pacing, and organization. For example, they can ask: Is the speech easy to understand? Are ideas connected logically? Is the pace natural?

Self-assessment is also valuable. Students can compare their first and final recordings and reflect on their progress. This develops awareness and responsibility for learning.

### **Conclusion**

Digital storytelling is not only a teaching technique but also an experiential learning approach that supports speaking development across all proficiency levels. By engaging learners in meaningful creation, it transforms speaking practice into a personal and reflective process.

Its flexibility allows it to be adapted from simple beginner tasks to complex advanced narratives. This makes it a valuable tool for diverse classrooms. The process of planning, recording, and revising helps learners gradually improve fluency while reducing anxiety.

In conclusion, digital storytelling provides a sustainable and learner-centered approach to speaking development. It shows that fluency grows not only through practice, but through meaningful experience and personal expression.

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