The Role of Digital Storytelling in the Improvement of Vocabulary Acquisition

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Abstract: Digital storytelling DST is an effective combination of text, audio, and visual components. There are several techniques for teaching vocabulary: using illustrations and pictures, using expressions and gestures, and guessing from context. The combination of all these techniques is available via DST. Likewise, vocabulary is a vital skill in learning a foreign language. The acquisition of vocabulary is a critical aspect of success in using a foreign language. This research aims at investigating the role of digital storytelling in the improvement of vocabulary acquisition among students by presenting some related studies and highlighting the major results of those related studies. To achieve the research objectives, the researcher adopts the descriptive method. The results of this literature review show the effective use of digital storytelling improves vocabulary acquisition among students, enhances English language skills, supports the integration of technology, develops 21st century skills, and increases students' motivation to learn a foreign language.

Keywords: digital storytelling, vocabulary, vocabulary acquisition.

دور القصة الرقمية في تنمية اكتساب المفردات

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المستخلص: تعد القصة الرقمية مزيج فعّالًا من المكونات النصية، والصوتية، والبصرية. إن هناك عدة أساليب يمكن استخدامها في تعليم المفردات: استخدام الرسوم التوضيحية والصور، واستخدام التعابير والايماءات، والتخمين من خلال سياق الجملة. حيث إن الجمع بين كل هذه الأساليب يكون ممكنًا ومتاحًا من خلال استخدام القصة الرقمية. تعد المفردات مهارة حيوية في تعلم اللغة الأجنبية. وبالمقابل يعد اكتساب المفردات جانبًا مهمًا في نجاح استخدام هذه اللغة. وقد هدف البحث الحالي إلى التعرف على دور القصة الرقمية في تحسين اكتساب المفردات، وذلك من خلال عرض بعض الدراسات ذات الصلة وإبراز النتائج الرئيسية لتلك الدراسات. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف اتبعت الباحثتان المنهج الوصفي. وكشفت نتائج تلك الدراسات أن الاستخدام الفعّال للقصة الرقمية يمكن أن يحسّن من اكتساب المفردات لدى الطلاب، ويعزز مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية، ويدعم التكامل التكنولوجي، ويطور مهارات القرن الحادي والعشرين، ويزيد من دافعية الطلاب نحو تعلم اللغة الأجنبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القصة الرقمية، المفردات، اكتساب المفردات.

Introduction.

According to the global spread of English, English is no longer an inviolable property of English-speaking people. It is becoming a common language of different people around the world. Undoubtedly education in the 21st century and the Saudi Vision 2030 intend to provide students with the skills they

need in the new world. One of the important skills is communication. On the one hand, students can communicate easily with other people if there is a common language. They can share and exchange information with the people around them. On the other hand, vocabulary is a necessary skill in language learning. Vocabulary acquisition can be a facilitative and motivating auxiliary in language learning and successful communication.

For thousands of years, people used storytelling to exchange information, share knowledge, wisdom, and values. Storytelling is an ancient art of human expression and involves active interaction between a storyteller and listeners. Storytelling is well known as a tool used to foster listeners' imagination. Thus, storytelling can be used in education. Stories can help teachers introduce the English language in a fun way (Khaleel, 2017). When teachers select stories carefully, stories can improve students' motivation and present contexts suitably (González, 2010; Inal & Cakir, 2014).

Furthermore, in this explosion of technology, there is a modern form of stories which is digital storytelling (DST). DST is an effective combination of audio and visual components. It is a powerful tool to connect young learners to reading and writing. Through digital storytelling, students will develop many skills; communication, asking questions, expressing opinions, and technical skills. This type of storytelling leads to improvement of students' language (Al- Shrari, 2015; Malita & Martin, 2010).

However, there are several techniques for teaching vocabulary; using illustrations and pictures, using expressions and gestures, and guessing from context (Bakhodirovna, 2015; Hassan, 2012; Ozturk, 2006). The combination of all these techniques is available via DST. Also, it gives a chance to make a lesson enjoyable, motivating, and realistic by adding voice, music, and movement (Jakes & Brennan, 2006: Lambert, 2010).

Vocabulary refers to "the words we must know to communicate effectively: words in speaking (expressive vocabulary) and words in listening (receptive vocabulary)" (Neuman & Dwyer, 2009, p. 385). Al- Qahtani (2015) argues that vocabulary is a vital skill in learning a foreign language. The acquisition of vocabulary is a critical aspect of success in using a foreign language and has an essential role in full speaking and writing (Susanto & Ab Halim, 2016; Tellier, 2008). It is important in both academic life and career life (Pikulski & Templeton, 2004).

According to Krashen's theory of second language acquisition (SLA), acquisition is a subconscious process. It is more important than learning since competence is developed through it (Krashen & Terrell, 1995). Acquiring vocabulary is an integral component of the four language skills. There is a complementary relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language use. The vocabulary skill helps in language appropriately using, and vice versa. Language use directs to vocabulary knowledge increasing (Nation, 2001).

Research Problem:

Saudi Vision 2030 aims to close the gap between the outputs of education and the requirements of the job market. It works for developing education and providing students with many skills. Based on Saudi Vision 2030, the English language is an important requirement in both educational and non-educational situations (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016). The Saudi Ministry of Education (MoE) emphasizes and implements Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Elyas & Badawood, 2016). CLT can provide meaningful communication, including oral communication, reading, and writing. This communication emphasizes the use of appropriate vocabulary in appropriate situations to be satisfactory. Students need vocabulary while expressing their ideas and understanding others. Without vocabulary, nothing can be produced or received. Students with limited vocabulary are not able to perform well in language aspects (Al- Qahtani, 2015).

Through the review of research, the researcher noticed the low achievement level of many students in English language vocabulary (Al- Rabai, 2014; Salim, 2019; Othman, 2018; Hamouda, 2013). This is maybe due to the need for some strategies and techniques that can provide more meaningful communication and present the English language in an authentic and enjoyable context (Al- Rabai, 2016; Al- Rashidi & Phan, 2015; Al- Tamimi, 2019; Mezied, 2017).

Digital storytelling can be a possible solution for providing students with the required vocabulary in an enjoyable and motivating method. The researcher intends to investigate the role of DST in helping students to acquire vocabulary.

In response to this suggestion, the research attempts to answer the following major question:

Q: What is the role of digital storytelling in the improvement of vocabulary acquisition among students?

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are the following:

1- To detect how to improve students' vocabulary acquisition to master the English language.
2- To identify how to develop English language learning through meaningful communication.
3- To investigate the role of digital storytelling in improving vocabulary acquisition in the English language among students.

Research Significant

The significance of this research may be highlighted in the following points:

- Designers of the English language curriculum may benefit from this research by providing the curriculum with activities that deal with the technique of digital storytelling.
- Teachers may benefit from using the digital storytelling technique in this research in reinforcing learners' acquisition of vocabulary.

- Drawing the attention of decision- makers on the education process to the importance of using the technique of digital storytelling in English language teaching and learning.
- Adding further knowledge for educational research through this research theoretical framework, results, and recommendations.
- Providing the field of English Language Teaching with a technique that may improve vocabulary acquisition.

Research Method

The researcher adopts the descriptive method, which describes the phenomenon studied and tries to answer the "what" question.

Research Limitations

This research is limited to the role of digital storytelling in improving vocabulary acquisition in the English language among students.

Literature Review & Previous Studies

First: Review of Related Literature

Digital Storytelling

Digital storytelling combines traditional stories with images, sound, music, and videos. According to Kirikci, Cigerci, & Arikan (2020, p.97) "Digital storytelling is the form of traditional story based on written or verbal expressions, transferred to the computer environment using multi- media". There are various types of digital stories. The major types are:

- Personal narratives: stories that tell about one's life.
- Historical documentaries: stories that help to understand the past through examining events from history.
- Stories that inform or instruct like the ones teacher uses with students as an instructional material.

Advantages of Using Digital Storytelling

Allan (2019); Al- Tatri (2016); Dahlan (2016); Digital Empowerment (2012); Frazel (2011); Stom (2019), clarify that the adoption of digital storytelling has many advantages. Using digital storytelling is an active process. Digital storytelling attracts students' attention and creates a fun atmosphere, fosters the integration of technology within the curriculum, and is used for both visual and auditory students. In addition, digital storytelling can develop higher- order skills such as critical thinking and connects the school with the community as it adds a realistic atmosphere to vocabulary learning.

Vocabulary:

Decades ago, vocabulary was receiving little importance. Nowadays, it becomes the focus of interest of many specialists. According to Cambridge Online Dictionary (2021, para) vocabulary is defined as, "all the words known and used by a particular person or all the words that exist in a particular language or subject".

Nordquist (2019) mentions that "The process of learning the words of a language is referred to as vocabulary acquisition" (para.1). Vocabulary acquisition is at the center of language acquisition. The relation between vocabulary knowledge and language practice is complementary. Likewise, vocabulary acquisition supports listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Importance of Vocabulary:

Vocabulary is an essential part of language teaching and learning. Vocabulary plays a fundamental role in mastering language since vocabulary affects English language skills. A good size of vocabulary helps students to be more confident to communicate. Thus, vocabulary supports comprehension of the situation. In addition, vocabulary improves students' achievement in English tests. Furthermore, vocabulary shapes students' thinking (analyzing, inferring, evaluating, and reasoning) (Al-Qahtani, 2015; Mezied, 2017; Nation, 2001; Othman, 2018; Salim, 2019; Wafi, 2013).

Second- Previous Studies.

Digital Storytelling and Vocabulary Acquisition:

The researcher reviews the role of digital storytelling in English language learning and teaching. Furthermore, the researcher reviews the role of some strategies and techniques of vocabulary teaching and learning. These reviewed techniques are a part of digital storytelling.

- **Hamouda (2020)** This study aimed at examining the effect of digital stories on reading micro- skills of English. The researcher adopted a descriptive- analytical method using a mixed- methods design. The sample consists of 84 students from grade 4. The study <u>instruments</u> were a reading test, comprehension worksheets, teachers' field notes, and parental reports. The results revealed that the digital story could enhance students' English micro- skills of reading.

- **Radaideh (2020)** This study aimed at detecting the effect of digital storytelling on reading comprehension skills among students. The quasi- experimental design was used. The sample consisted of 35 students from grade 5. The researcher designed a reading comprehension test and a questionnaire as <u>instruments</u> in this study. The results indicated that digital storytelling had a positive effect on students' reading comprehension skills.

- **Atwan (2018)** This study was to investigate the impact of digital stories on the development of English writing mechanics skills among students and their attitudes towards English. The researcher

used the experimental method. The sample consisted of 65 students from grade 6, and they were divided into an experimental group and a control group. An experimental group consists of 33 students, and a control group consists of 32 students. The researcher designed two <u>instruments</u>: English mechanics of writing skills test and an attitude scale. The results revealed that the digital stories could develop students' English writing mechanics skills. Also, the experimental group's attitudes toward English were more positive than the control group's attitudes toward English.

- **Sweeney- Burt (2014)** The purpose of the study was to implement digital storytelling to perform technology integration. The researcher adopted the descriptive method, a case study. The sample was 27 students from grade 4. The <u>instruments</u> used in this study were interviews and classroom observation. The findings revealed that the implemented digital storytelling has a positive role in teaching children and supporting 21st century skills.

- **Garrard (2011)** The study's purpose was to evaluate the effectiveness of digital storytelling on story writing skills development. The researcher adopted the descriptive method, a case study. The sample was 22 students from grade 6. The researcher designed two <u>instruments</u>: timed observations and focus- group interviews. The study findings indicated that digital storytelling is a good method that can be used in teaching with technology and can support the objectives of the curriculum.

- **Salim (2019)** This study aimed at detecting the effectiveness of visual literacy techniques on vocabulary learning development. The experimental method was adopted. The study sample was 60 students from grade 6. The <u>instruments</u> used in this study were EFL pre/post vocabulary learning tests. The results indicated that the vocabulary of the experimental group students had developed because of using visual literacy techniques.

- **Ibrahim (2017)** This study aimed to examine the effect of animated cartoon films on vocabulary growth among students. The experimental method was used. The sample was 52 students from grade 6. It consisted of an experimental group and a control group. The study <u>instruments</u> were pre and post- tests and a questionnaire. The results indicated that animated cartoon films could enhance students' vocabulary growth.

- **Julaid (2017)** This study aimed to detect the effect of authentic songs and music on vocabulary growth. The quasi- experimental design was adopted. The study sample was 50 students from grade 5. A questionnaire and a vocabulary test were constructed as <u>instruments</u> in this study. The results indicated that using songs and music- based learning is an effective way of improving vocabulary growth.

- **Klaewharn, Yimwilai and Chaya (2017)** This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of story- based instruction on vocabulary learning enhancement. The researchers used the experimental method. The sample was 80 students from grade 6. The study used two <u>instruments</u>: an English

vocabulary test and a questionnaire. The results showed that there was a positive effect on students' vocabulary learning via using story- based instruction.

Research results

After reviewing the previous studies, some results can be drawn. The effective use of digital storytelling had:

- Improved vocabulary acquisition among students.
- Enhanced English language skills.
- Supported the integration of technology.
- Developed 21st century skills.
- Increased students' motivation to learn a foreign language.

Recommendations and Suggestions

Curriculum designers are recommended to:

- Provide the syllabus with some digital storytelling in English language lessons that could enhance teaching of English language skills.
- Increase the activities that help students to practice the English language skills in varied situations.
- Increase daily vocabulary items in the lessons that could increase the use of English language skills in authentic situations.

Supervisors are recommended to:

- Conduct training courses that highlight the significance of using digital storytelling in teaching English.
- Conduct training courses that help teachers develop their abilities in the implementation of digital storytelling in English language classes.
- Conduct training courses that enhance teachers' abilities to teach and present new vocabulary for their students.

English language teachers are recommended to:

- Enhance their ability in teaching English to be creative in applying various techniques in teaching vocabulary so that the students are interested in learning.
- Expose students to methods that address many senses to create life like situations.

Suggestions for further research:

- Examining the teachers' perception of using digital storytelling in teaching English language skills.

- Investigating new strategies and techniques adopted by English language teachers in schools to check their relevance to modern strategies of English language teaching.
- Conducting other research like the present research in different other skills of English language.

Conclusion

In this research, the researcher investigated the role of digital storytelling in the improvement of vocabulary acquisition among students. The literature review indicated that when digital storytelling DST is used in vocabulary teaching and learning, it can assist both teachers and students. DST gives a chance to make a lesson enjoyable, motivating, and realistic by adding voice, music, and movement. In addition, the literature review proved that vocabulary acquisition plays an essential role in language mastering. Since acquiring vocabulary is an integral component of the four language skills. To sum up, the results of this literature review showed the effective use of digital storytelling had improved vocabulary acquisition among students, enhanced English language skills, supported the integration of technology, developed 21st century skills, and increased students' motivation to learn a foreign language.

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