

## The Use of Digital Storytelling in Fostering English Speaking Ability of Thai Secondary Students\*

การพัฒนาความสามารถในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษของนักเรียนไทยในระดับชั้นมัธยมศึกษา โดยการเล่าเรื่องผ่านสื่อดิจิทัล

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### Abstract

Among the pedagogical techniques of teaching speaking, digital storytelling is advocated to enhance not only English speaking ability but also English speaking confidence. This study, therefore, aimed to investigate whether teaching students using digital storytelling was effective. This quasi-experimental research in the design of one group pre- and post-tests was implemented for over eight weeks. The sample comprised 40 Grade 11 secondary students of Saipanya Rangsit School, selected by the purposive sampling technique. The students were assessed on English speaking ability through the *Key English Test* before and after the implementation. After the course ended, a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were administered to seek the students' perception about English speaking confidence. The quantitative data, obtained from English speaking tests and a questionnaire, were analyzed by means of descriptive statistics and a dependent *t*-test. The qualitative data obtained from a semi-structured interview were analyzed by content analysis. It was found that 1) there was a significant difference in students' mean scores on English speaking ability before and after using digital storytelling (*p* value < 0.05) and 2) students had positive perception about English speaking confidence towards the use of digital storytelling. A majority of students stated that digital storytelling fostered their English speaking ability and English speaking confidence.

**Keywords:** Digital Storytelling, English Speaking Ability, English Speaking Confidence

\* This study is conducted to investigate the effectiveness of digital storytelling in improving low-proficiency students' English speaking ability and to fulfill the requirement for Master of Arts in English, Faculty of Humanities, Srinakharinwirot University

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## บทคัดย่อ

การเล่าเรื่องผ่านสื่อดิจิทัลเป็นเทคนิคการสอนการพูดที่พัฒนาความสามารถในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษและความมั่นใจในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษ ดังนั้น งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาผลการใช้การเล่าเรื่องผ่านสื่อดิจิทัล ในรูปแบบการวิจัยกึ่งทดลองเชิงปริมาณและเชิงคุณภาพ การทดลองใช้เวลาทั้งสิ้น 8 สัปดาห์ กลุ่มตัวอย่างประกอบด้วยนักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 5 โรงเรียนสายปัญญาธารัตน์ จำนวน 40 คน โดยได้รับการคัดเลือกการสุ่มแบบเจาะจง ผู้เรียนสอบบัตรระดับความสามารถในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษโดยใช้ Key English Test ก่อนและหลังเข้าร่วมการวิจัย หลังจากสิ้นสุดการวิจัย ผู้เรียนตอบแบบสอบถามและสัมภาษณ์ความคิดเห็นที่มีต่อกำลังการเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษ หลังการเรียนโดยการเล่าเรื่องผ่านสื่อดิจิทัล ข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณที่ได้จากการทดสอบการพูดและแบบสอบถามใช้สถิติ เชิงพรรณนาและสถิติทดสอบค่าที่ สำหรับข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพที่ได้จากการสัมภาษณ์ใช้วิธีการถดคความและวิเคราะห์เนื้อหา ผลการวิจัยพบว่า 1) คะแนนเฉลี่ยความสามารถในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษก่อนและหลังการทดลองของกลุ่ม ตัวอย่างมีความแตกต่างอย่างมีนัยสำคัญที่ระดับ 0.05 2) ผู้เรียนมีความคิดเห็นเชิงบวกเกี่ยวกับความมั่นใจในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษที่มีต่อการเล่าเรื่องผ่านสื่อดิจิทัล โดยผู้เรียนส่วนใหญ่เห็นว่าการเรียนผ่านการสอนพูดโดยการเล่าเรื่องผ่านสื่อดิจิทัลนั้นน่าจะพัฒนาความสามารถในการพูดมากขึ้นแล้วยังทำให้ผู้เรียนมีความมั่นใจในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษอีกด้วย

**คำสำคัญ :** การเล่าเรื่องผ่านสื่อดิจิทัล ความสามารถในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษ ความมั่นใจในการพูดภาษาอังกฤษ

## Introduction

Of all four skills of English, speaking is the most important skill to achieve as it is considered to be an indicator of mastering a language (Ur, 2012). Speaking is fostered as a means of communication which speakers can convey their thoughts and ideas with their interlocutors (Widdowson, 1994; Fauzan, 2014). Therefore, the ability to speak English is of value to master for students who study English as a second language (ESL) or foreign language (EFL) (Hosni, 2014).

Although English speaking is an important skill, there are many students who have problems speaking English because they lack language ability in terms of vocabulary and necessary structures that make their speaking reluctant and influent (Fauzan, 2014). In addition, Al-Wossabi (2016) claims that EFL students find it difficult to make a simple question even if they have exposed to the language for several years. However, Zhang (2009) argues that low ability in English of EFL students is not related to the year of exposure, but a crucial factor affecting students' English speaking ability is an opportunity to use the language. According to Zhang (2009), it means that students' English speaking ability can improve if they have a chance to use the language as much as possible both inside and outside the classroom. Instead of an opportunity to use the language, Ur (2012) states that there are additional problems in speaking

that teachers experience when engaging the students to speak in the classroom including mother-tongue use, shyness, limited language ability, and low participation of individuals.

In Thailand, students have studied English for several years, but they have low English proficiency as they have limited opportunities to use a language, and it makes them speak English without confidence, accuracy and fluency (Somdee & Suppasetserree, 2012). This is similar to Boonkit (2010), who reveals that Thai students cannot speak English confidently because they are afraid of making mistakes. This indicates that a good command in English is also an important contributor to English speaking ability. Apart from opportunities to use a language, Maskhao (2002) and Siritanarath (2007) point out that students do not participate in speaking activities, but they focus on studying grammatical rules from the textbooks. This is similar to Harmer (2007) who claims that speaking activities should be provided for the students to improve their English speaking ability, and one of the most effective speaking activities is storytelling.

Proposed as an effective way of learning a language, storytelling is also a technique that provides students to participate in speaking activities (Somdee & Suppasetserree, 2012). According to its utility, storytelling has been adopted for several years to pass on personal knowledge and stories; moreover, it is widely used to foster students' listening and speaking abilities (Lwin, 2016). This means that the process of storytelling is the same as the process of meaning-making in which people utilize the technique of storytelling to understand their stories and share experience with their audiences. It can be said that storytelling is a fruitful technique that can be applied to various mediums, and in the age of modern technology, storytelling can be merged with multimedia and used as a modern way of telling stories in the form of digital storytelling (Razmi et al., 2014)

Digital storytelling has been utilized to enhance students' language proficiency that is speaking, listening, writing, and reading as well as encouraging collaborative learning with other students (Nishioka, 2016). In this regard, it is a pedagogical technique that students use to express their ideas about their stories in the form of students' created digital storytelling technique. Not only students but also teachers use digital storytelling in the classroom in the form of teachers' created digital storytelling technique. Both students' created digital storytelling and teachers' created digital storytelling techniques affect students' language acquisition when they write scripts, record their voices, shoot videos for their digital stories (Nazuk, 2015). Additionally, Robin (2016) asserts that digital storytelling is an effective technique in learning a language because students become active learners who construct their own learning through the use of multimedia. During the process of digital storytelling, students are not aware that they acquire the language

because digital storytelling motivates them to conduct their tasks using their knowledge. Similarly, Benmayor (2008) says that the creation of digital storytelling improves students' English speaking ability, social skills, and emotional intelligence. It means that the students learn to realize their emotion when other students critique their work.

Many researchers have ascertained the effectiveness of digital storytelling that it is suitable to improve students' English speaking ability. Gimeno-Sanz (2015) reveals that digital storytelling is a useful technique to help students to speak confidently and effectively. Furthermore, it not only helps improve English speaking ability but also motivation to learn a language. This is consistent with Razmi, Pourali, and Nozad (2014), who report that students have better English speaking ability when they use a language in authentic and meaningful contexts. In line to this point, Malita and Martin (2010) state that students' English speaking ability can develop through the process of digital storytelling which includes: creating, sharing, and critiquing stories. Finally, Rokni and Qarajeh (2014) say that the use of digital storytelling in the classroom is a modern and fruitful way of learning a language because it motivates the students to be creators of their own learning by creating stories that change passive learning to active learning. It can be said that digital storytelling is a modern pedagogical technique that can enhance students' English speaking ability, motivation, and confidence towards language learning. It can be concluded that this research would investigate digital storytelling to improve students' English speaking ability and their English speaking confidence.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To investigate the effectiveness of digital storytelling on Thai secondary students' English speaking ability
2. To investigate the effectiveness of digital storytelling on Thai secondary students' English speaking confidence

### **Research Questions**

1. To what extent does learning English through digital storytelling improve students' English speaking ability?
2. To what extent does digital storytelling foster students' English speaking confidence?

## Research Hypotheses

1. Students who learn through digital storytelling will gain higher average scores on the posttest than the pretest at the significant level of .05.
2. Students will have positive perception about confidence towards learning through digital storytelling.

## Method

### Research Design

This study was conducted in the EFL secondary context to the public speaking class students. It aimed to investigate the effectiveness of digital storytelling to enhance Thai EFL secondary students' English speaking ability and to increase their English speaking confidence. The study was a quasi-experimental research in the design of one group pre-and post-tests with both qualitative and quantitative data analyses. The experiment lasted for eight weeks. Forty participants were purposively selected and their English speaking ability was assessed before and after using digital storytelling. Moreover, 20 randomized participants were selected to express their reactions through an interview about English speaking confidence after using digital storytelling.

### Participants

This study comprised 40 participants studying at secondary school. The participants took English speaking class and they were selected via purposive sampling method. The participants were divided into two groups of 20 participants, and they were equally treated. Their ages ranged from 16 to 17 years. The participants had a pre-intermediate level of English proficiency, and they shared the similarity of language ability. The researcher kept the class size small to be easy to access the students.

### Instrumentation

#### Lesson Plans.

In this study, three lesson plans were adopted as a road map to instruct the students. One lesson plan was used for two weeks and the class met two periods per week (50 minutes per period). The lesson plans were designed based on the language functions that were related to the course objectives. Three steps were used: pre-speaking, while-speaking, and post-speaking to instruct the students in each lesson plan.

### **Pre-and Post-Speaking Tests.**

The researcher used *Key English Test* (Cambridge English preliminary for schools, 2012). The speaking test comprised two parts. The first part lasted for five to six minutes, and the second part lasted for three to four minutes. In the first part, the participants were asked to talk about their personal information, and then talk to their interlocutors based on a given situation. During the conversation, an oral performance record was administered so that it could be rated later by using scoring rubric that contained checklist of conversation performance in order to minimize the subjectivity of the raters.

### **English Speaking Confidence Questionnaire.**

The researcher used a 12-item-Likert scale questionnaire (adapted from Griffee, 1997) to investigate students' English speaking confidence. The questionnaire comprised three aspects of English speaking confidence, which were ability, assurance, and willing engagement. This questionnaire was adapted by the researcher according to these three aspects of confidence and it also fitted the research questions of this study.

### **Semi-Structured Interview.**

To investigate students' English speaking confidence through the use of digital storytelling, a semi-structured interview was administered at last. Twenty randomized students were selected to be interviewed in order to find out the effectiveness of digital storytelling on their English speaking confidence.

### **Data Collection**

The data used in this study were obtained from the students studying in English speaking class at Saipanya Rangsit School. The pretest was administered to the students one week before the digital storytelling began, and the posttest was administered one week after the course ended. Twenty randomized students were selected to complete a semi-structured interview on the same day they took the posttest. This study was conducted in the first semester of the 2017 academic year.

## Data Analysis

The quantitative data were collected through an oral performance record. Then, descriptive statistics was used to analyze the quantitative data. The dependent *t*-test was used to compare the mean scores of the pre- and post-tests. To assure if the difference between digital storytelling and English speaking ability was statistically significant, the *p* value level of .05 was used for all statistical tests. For the qualitative data, an interview of 20 randomized students was administered and recorded in order to gain in-depth information about the students' English speaking confidence towards digital storytelling, and it was transcribed into a theme.

## Results

**Research Question 1:** *To what extent does learning English through digital storytelling improve the students' English speaking ability?*

**Table 1: The Findings from Students' English Speaking Ability**

English speaking ability (Total scores = 20 points)	Pretest		Posttest		Mean Difference	<i>t</i>	Sig.
	Mean Scores	SD	Mean Scores	SD			
1. Grammar and vocabulary	2.07	0.76	3.32	0.69	1.25	-16.01	.000*
2. Pronunciation	1.52	0.50	3.55	0.55	2.03	-20.66	.000*
3. Interactive communication	2.15	1.00	3.42	0.95	1.27	-15.94	.000*
4. Global achievement	2.02	0.86	3.95	0.71	1.93	-45.64	.000*
Total mean scores	7.76	2.06	14.24	2.20	6.48	-54.55	.000*

\**p* < .05, *n* = 40, *df* = 39

As shown in Table 1, the average mean score of the pre-test was 7.76 (*SD* = 2.06) and the post-test was 14.24 (*SD* = 2.20). The findings showed that students' English speaking ability was significantly improved after using digital storytelling. The result showed that there was a significant difference between the average mean score of the pre-test and the post-test at the *p* value of .00.

**Research Question 2:** *To what extent does digital storytelling foster the students' English speaking confidence?*

**Table 2:** *Findings from Students' English Speaking Confidence Questionnaire*

Questionnaire Items	Mean	SD	Level of Confidence
1. I can be interviewed in English after learning through digital storytelling.	3.30	0.64	Average
2. I would like to study abroad or in an English speaking country after learning through digital storytelling.	2.55	1.21	Average
3. I like speaking English after learning through digital storytelling.	4.17	0.81	Above Average
4. I can discuss in English with native speakers after learning through digital storytelling.	2.77	0.76	Average
5. After learning through digital storytelling, I feel cheerful when I speak English.	3.82	0.81	Above Average
6. I can speak English easily after learning through digital storytelling.	3.42	0.93	Average
7. I can show an English speaking visitor around my school and answer questions.	3.47	0.55	Above Average
8. I say something to other people in English every day after learning through digital storytelling.	4.32	0.57	Above Average
9. I can give my opinion in English when talking to English speaking people after learning through digital storytelling.	3.47	0.87	Average
10. I look for chances to speak English after learning through digital storytelling.	4.42	0.50	Above Average
11. I am willing to speak to a group of people in English after learning through digital storytelling.	4.55	0.50	Very High
12. After learning through digital storytelling, I am relaxed when speaking English.	4.07	0.76	Above Average
Total mean scores	3.67	0.74	

**Notes:** 1. The agreement of this questionnaire was classified into five levels according to Likert 5-point scale: 5 = Very High, 4 = Above Average, 3 = Average, 2 = Below Average, and 1 = Very Low.

2. The mean scores of confidence scale were interpreted below (Paranapiti, 2014).

4.51-5.00 = Very High, 3.51-4.50 = Above Average, 2.51-3.50 = Average, 1.51-2.50 = Below Average, and 1.00-1.50 = Very Low

In Table 2, the total mean score was 3.67. This indicated that the overall mean score of students' English speaking confidence was at the above average level. Moreover, considering each questionnaire item, it showed that questionnaire item 11, *I am willing to speak to a group of people in English after learning through digital storytelling*, had the highest mean score. The questionnaire item 2, *I would like to study abroad or in an English speaking country after learning through digital storytelling*, had the lowest mean score.

To get more detailed information, the researcher constructed a semi-structured interview question to interview 20 randomized students. Four questions were employed to reveal students' perception about English speaking confidence. The findings of the interview were outlined below.

**1. How do you think that digital storytelling can help you to overcome your fear and become more confident?**

Most students (80%) said that they liked digital storytelling because they had opportunities to learn a language through the use of authentic materials. They listened to the audio which significantly enhanced their pronunciation and vocabulary. Additionally, they had opportunities to construct their own stories digitally. As such, they could practice speaking as they recorded their voices into digital stories. These students ascertained that their speaking anxiety gradually decreased because they were not worried about making mistakes or felt embarrassed. An example of the students' excerpt was presented below.

*"Digital storytelling could help to decrease anxiety about using the target language. It provided me time to prepare my script before I recorded myself. This helped me a lot when I practiced speaking."*

**2. To what extent does digital storytelling improve your English speaking confidence?**

Most students (90%) revealed that digital storytelling developed their English speaking confidence as they had a chance to learn language functions and content of the sample stories before they were asked to create their own stories digitally. Students' English speaking confidence increased according to several exposures of the target language both inside and outside the

classroom. Moreover, the stories that they created were based upon their interest. This was one of the most important factors that drove them to practice speaking because they spoke what was related to their interest, and it had an impact on their English speaking confidence. An example of the students' excerpt was presented below.

*"I had confidence when I recorded my voice to be part of digital storytelling. I was not worried about my speaking because I could replay what I was saying, and rerecorded if there were any mistakes. Furthermore, I learned the language from my own mistakes as well."*

### **3. Which parts of digital storytelling improve your English speaking confidence?**

Most students (90%) said that several parts of digital storytelling enhanced their English speaking confidence. In particular, digital storytelling comprised pictures, videos, and audios. Therefore, when they watched authentic digital storytelling from teachers. They perceived how to pronounce and how to use sentences in their conversation. The students agreed that author's audio was the most critical part in terms of improving their English speaking ability and confidence. They reasoned that they had to speak repeatedly until they were satisfied, and this made them confident when they delivered their speech or talked to their interlocutors. An example of the students' excerpt was presented below.

*"When I studied in the classroom, the teacher instructed me to use authentic digital storytelling which I saw multimedia features that helped me learn the language in the story understandably; moreover, I had ideas to create my own stories that I did not have to worry about the language usage because I had already seen the example in the classroom."*

### **4. To what extent does digital storytelling motivate you to speak the target language?**

Many students (95%) confirmed that digital storytelling changed the way that they learned the language. Reluctant students became sociable and participated a lot in creating their digital stories. In addition, students felt so proud when they presented and shared their stories with their friends. Digital storytelling encouraged them to create more stories to share for their audiences. They thought that creating digital storytelling was enjoyable. The more they created stories, the more they had a chance to speak. This indicated that digital storytelling motivated them to create more stories, and they could learn the language in the story that paved the way for their intrinsic motivation to learn the target language. An example of the students' excerpt was presented below.

*“When I created the first story, I was very appreciated of my product and wanted to create the next story for my audience in order to share experience.”*

### Conclusion and Discussion

The finding of the first research question revealed that the students' English speaking ability increased after using digital storytelling as a pedagogical technique. The finding indicated that the students' mean scores and standard deviation in the posttest were significantly higher than those of the pretest. A dependent *t*-test showed that the students' mean scores had increased from 7.76 at the beginning to 14.24 at the end of the course. The result showed that students' English speaking ability was significantly increased at the level of .05.

In summary, the finding suggested that digital storytelling had some positive effects on the students' English speaking ability which supported the first research hypothesis (Students who learn through digital storytelling will gain higher average scores on the posttest than the pretest at the significant level of .05.). This finding was in agreement with Rokni and Qarajeh's (2014) finding which also indicated that digital storytelling had a positive impact on the students' English speaking ability. In the same vein, Tahriri, Tous, and MovahedFar (2015) conducted a study about the use of digital storytelling on students' English speaking ability and motivation and similar results were achieved. The students' English speaking ability had increased after using digital storytelling. At the end of the course, they were able to deliver longer utterances.

The finding of the second research question showed that the students had positive perception about English speaking confidence after using digital storytelling. The finding from a questionnaire in terms of assurance, ability and willing engagement was at the "above average" level. In addition, the finding from an interview of 20 randomized students indicated that the use of digital storytelling significantly improved the students' English speaking confidence.

In summary, the finding suggested that digital storytelling had some positive effects on the students' English speaking confidence which supported the second research hypothesis (Students will have positive perception about confidence towards learning through digital storytelling.). This finding was in agreement with Razmi, Pourali, and Nozad's (2014) finding which also indicated that digital storytelling promoted the students' motivation to learn a language and improved their confidence. This is in line with Somdee and Suppastseree (2015), who conducted a study about the use of digital storytelling on students' English speaking ability and their opinions towards learning a language and similar results were achieved. The students' English speaking confidence had increased after using digital storytelling. The students also wished to use digital storytelling to improve their language learning after the course ended.

All in all, the students' English speaking ability increased and their English speaking confidence was positive. They strongly agreed that digital storytelling enabled them to speak English confidently and effectively. Moreover, they said that digital storytelling increased their English speaking ability and confidence because they had opportunities to practice and learn the language by themselves. Therefore, Digital storytelling enhanced students' English speaking ability in general and English speaking confidence in particular.

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