

Young ESL Learners' Perception on the Effects of Using Digital Storytelling Application in English Language Learning

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ABSTRACT

Approaches used for English language teaching and learning have been changing from time to time. Incorporation of technology into learning is believed to be able to bring positive effects to learners such as up-to-date, novelty, creative and innovative learning environment. This study aims to examine the effects of using tablet-based digital storytelling application in English language learning among young ESL learners. For this purpose, qualitative case study approach is employed to explore the effects of using the digital storytelling application on English language learning among Primary Five learners. Six Primary Five learners were selected using purposive sampling method. Interviews and observations were used to collect data from the six research participants studying in a public primary school in a state in Malaysia. Results revealed the positive effects of tablet-based digital storytelling on English language learning among the young ESL learners. Meanwhile, learners reported improvements in their English language skills such as listening, reading, speaking and writing via the use of digital storytelling application. This paper also discusses implications of the study.

Keywords: Digital storytelling application, effects on English language learning, ESL learners, tablet, mobile learning

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INTRODUCTION

English language is one of the core subjects that are being emphasised and highlighted for its importance in the education field (Ahmad & Jusoff, 2009). However, the teaching and learning of the English language has never been easy. In fact, it is very challenging for both the educators and learners. Hence, identifying suitable and

appropriate language teaching and learning approaches is pivotal in our education system as these approaches will determine the effectiveness of language teaching and learning process.

In order to cater to learners' different needs and learning styles, language teaching and learning approaches have been changing rapidly. According to Isisag (2012), the teaching and learning approaches must be up-to-date and in line with the changes in our daily lives – which include the integration of technology, to provide novelty and innovative learning experiences to the learners. From the traditional chalk-and-talk language classroom, educators and learners are now gradually shifting to the modern, or technology incorporated language, classroom (Lacina, 2004). With the integration of technology into language classrooms, the teaching and learning process will be more interactive compared to before, as the use of technology provides the opportunity for two-way interactions; learners are no longer the passive receivers of the learning process and given the opportunity to provide feedback to the educators (Jacobs, 2010). This will lead to more meaningful teaching and language approaches in the English language classrooms.

In an effort to incorporate technology into the classroom, the Ministry of Education, Malaysia, has been putting a lot of effort to design and develop technological tools in aiding classroom teaching and learning. In 2011, for instance, 1BestariNet

programme was launched by the Malaysia's Ministry of Education, with the aim to provide to all public schools in Malaysia with technological related equipment such as chrome books, internet connectivity and virtual learning environment. The incorporation of ICT in the teaching and learning classroom led to Virtual Learning Environment (VLEs), a platform where educators and learners are virtually involved in the teaching and learning process. Forums, blogs, and chatrooms were created to enable educators and learners to interact, communicate and share learning materials (Ministry of Education, 2013). Learning courseware is also a technology deployment for the teaching and learning purposes in the English language learning (Samuel & Abu Bakar, 2007; Abdullah, 2006).

In terms of customising and personalising learning, digital storytelling seems to be a great learning material that serves this purpose. This is because digital storytelling will enable learning to be customised and personalised based on the learners' age, needs, learning styles, level of learning proficiency and learning competency. According to Robin (2008), digital storytelling can be used for educational purposes and engaging learning as its narratives can be used to implicitly highlight the intended language elements to be learned. Meanwhile, Tsou, Wang, and Tzeng (2006) posited that the use of digital storytelling could improve learners' reading, writing, listening and speaking skills.

Background of the Study

In Malaysia, the English language is formally taught and learned as a core subject and the second language (L2) in all public schools, with a total of five periods of lesson per week. Despite Bahasa Malaysia being the main medium of instruction and language used in all the public schools, the government also emphasises on the status of the English language as the second language (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2001). In fact, English language is a core and compulsory subject in all primary and secondary schools in Malaysia.

However, the standard of English language among school students has been deteriorating even though the language has been taught and learned as the second language nationwide over the years. This is due to the fact that English language is not being exposed to and used enough by the learners for them to master the language (Andrew, 2006; Hanapiah, 2004). Learners seemed to have little or no opportunities to use the language in their lives. Learning and practising the language is only during the language lessons in school. The learners deem English as a foreign language as it is not their mother tongue (HamidaYamat, Fisher,& Rich, 2014). It is believed that selecting and using the appropriate strategy and learning materials can attract learners' interest to learn and practice the language in and out of the classroom (Fewell, 2010). Hence, it is important to identify one's learning strategy and learning materials that will enable them to learn language effectively. Failure, or ineffectiveness, in

using the conventional way of learning using textbooks, blackboard/whiteboard, and chalk in ESL teaching and learning may cause educators and learners to resort to alternative teaching and learning approaches which are more creative, which involve utilisation of images, songs, animations, videos, and even movies as their teaching and learning materials (McGill, 2010; Orlovo, 2003).

It is believed that the use of technology is able to make learning easier and more convenient as learning can be carried out easily, or without any hassle. Jacobs (2010) stated that technology had "the ability to be continuously connected and to share and exchange ideas and information across time and space using a wide variety of modalities".

Besides, learning will be more interactive and lively with the use of technology. This is supported by Brand, Favazza, and Dalton (2012) who indicated that technology could "facilitate the attainment of learning goals for individuals with wide differences in their abilities to see, hear, move, read, write, understand English, sustain attention, organize, engage and remember". Moreover, the use of technology exposes learners to more learning opportunities as it is made more flexible. Learning can be conducted anywhere and at learners' own convenience, as highlighted by Gainer and Lapp (2010) who exclaimed that "engaged learning can occur if their outside-of-school knowledge and interest are acknowledged, respected, and used as part of the instructional picture within the culture of the classroom".

Coherently, Smythe and Neufeld (2010) stated that technology helped in accelerating learning as in transporting the information. Hence, the use of technology provides the learners with a “sense of freedom, motivation, and encouragement they need for learning (Traore & Kyei-Blankson, 2011).

As the use of technology in the education system is popular among the educators and learners alike, researchers and language experts have been designing and developing multimedia learning courseware and applications for language learning purposes. These multimedia learning materials can be downloaded into technological devices to be used by the learners at their leisure time. In fact, multimedia learning websites, courseware and applications are widely used for English language learning purposes in and out of the classroom (Healey et al., 2008).

In order to help motivate learners to involve in their own learning, storytelling has been digitalised. The incorporation of technology into the production of stories increases interactivity of the stories, which can attract the learners’ interest in learning (Boster, Meyer, Roberto, & Inge, 2002; Hibbin & Rankin-Erikson, 2003). According to Gregori-Signs (2008) and Tsou et al. (2006), digital storytelling is a useful tool in language learning as it is able to improve learners’ language skills of reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar and vocabulary.

Digital storytelling is defined as the human narratives using recorded voice

narration, visual representations (images, graphics, and videos) and audio (background music) to tell stories (Sadik, 2008; Robin, 2008). The one major contrasting difference between traditional storytelling and digital storytelling is the use of visual (images, graphics, animations, and videos) and audio (recorded voice narration and background music) in digital storytelling (Banaszewski, 2002; Lowenthal, 2008; Ohler, 2006; Sylvester & Greenidge, 2010). Eventhough there are many different genres of digital storytelling (namely, video games, the web-based games, web-based videos, web-based narratives, interactive TV, and many more), all these digital storytelling materials are developed based on the criteria of the core elements (Handler-Miller, 2008). The ideal combination of storytelling and multimedia makes the digital storytelling very interactive and it is the interactiveness of this technology that makes the best feature of the combination (Handler-Miller, 2008).

Goodwin (2012) posited that emerging technologies using the touch screen interface had opened up new resources for learning in educational setting, allowing flexible learning among learners. Hence, the use of portable devices such as smartphones, laptops and tablets has been gaining popularity among the educators, learners and researchers (McConatha, Praul & Lynch, 2008). Tablet is one of the latest mobile devices that famous for its high portability, functionality and convenience to be used as a learning tool in aiding mobile learning.

Tablets are a more sought after mobile tools to be used as they are devices “which are smaller, lighter, more flexible and potentially more interactive than laptops” (Warschauer, 2011). This echoes Brand and Kinash (2010) who stated that the tablets provided opportunity for research “on emergent m-Learning technology and pedagogy beyond distance education and small-screen mobile devices”. Even though smartphone is also one of the latest technological tools which can be used for learning, tablet is chosen to be the technological tool in facilitating the digital storytelling application as the features of tablets are somewhere in between a smartphone and a laptop – they have internet connectivity with touch-screen interface but have larger screen like the laptop. In a survey conducted by Abilene Christian University in 2011 on learners’ preference on the use of smartphones or iPads in learning, the findings revealed that the majority of the learners preferred using iPads than smartphones in learning due to the large screen size. Hence, the tablet is a better choice to be used as the mobile device to facilitate learning via digital storytelling application in this study. Furthermore, it is believed that the use of tablet can supplement hundreds of books used in classroom as all these books can be stored in one device, considering its big storage space (Price, 2012).

Previous Related Studies

There are several studies conducted by Malaysian researchers which revealed that

the use of multimedia and technology can make language learning more effective. In a research conducted by Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi, Shoar, Cheong, and Jafre (2011), the use of electronic glossary – the multimedia annotation – was effective in learners’ vocabulary learning, in terms of retention and memorisation. The effectiveness in vocabulary retention and recalling has directly resulted in the effectiveness in vocabulary learning. In addition, a research conducted by Mustafa, Sain and Razak (2012) revealed that learners who had been exposed to the learning of vocabulary using the internet achieved tremendous improvements in their post-test scores than those who were not exposed to the use of the internet. This shows that the use of technology-internet in this research helped the learners to perform and understand better, and in this context, the learning of vocabulary.

In addition, Lin and Yang (2011) posited that the use of technology and multimedia enabled learners to learn vocabulary, spelling and sentence structures by reading the peers’ work at Wiki page. Similarly, Sharma (2009) also stressed on the significant effects of using technological tools in each language skill. In more specific, the use of technology is believed to be able to enhance and develop learners’ listening skill through the visuals and voice inputs provided. Learners’ reading skill can also be improved through technological oriented reading programmes which help them to read, pronounce, and thus increase their fluency and comprehension in reading (Ybarra & Green, 2003). In

addition, according to Kenworthy (2004), the availability of reading resources online such as newspapers, magazines, journals, libraries, and dictionaries encourages more reading opportunities among the learners as reading materials are easily accessible on the internet as “increased interaction with texts, attention to individual needs and increased independence through an ability to read texts they would not otherwise be able to read” (Case & Truscott, 1999). The use of technology also motivates learners to write as they would not have to worry about committing grammatical errors in writing because the technological tools can be used to detect grammatical errors and suggest the correct use of grammar in their writing (Ybarra & Green, 2003). Besides, the use of email also provides learners with writing opportunities by sending and replying to email messages (Singhal, 1997). Moreover, Lauren, Marge and Cynthia (2010) highlighted that the exposure to speeches, interviews and dialogues via technological devices could reinforce learners’ listening skills.

According to Koisawalia (2005), the use of digital storytelling is beneficial to language learning as the language features (vocabulary, grammar, sentence structures and linguistic elements) are presented through digital stories. It is believed that digital storytelling can generally promote learning as stories are able to engage learners through their memories, feelings and perceptions (Ramirez & Alonso, 2007). In addition, Dickinson (2001)

also expressed that stories could improve learners in their listening comprehension. This statement is supported by the research findings of Mello (2001) which revealed that there was improvement in learners’ learning comprehension, listening skills and interaction between learners-learners after they had been exposed to the use of digital storytelling in learning. Furthermore, Chung (2007) also highlighted that the use of visuals and graphics could help to enhance listening comprehension. Moreover, the use of digital storytelling is also said to be able to enhance and improve learners’ skills in writing by reading the narrations pieces of digital stories (Oakley, 2011). Hence, the use of digital storytelling can enhance learners speaking skill – pronunciation, pacing, rhythm, intonation and stress (Normann, 2011).

Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine the young ESL learners’ perception on the effects of using the digital storytelling application in language learning.

Limitations of the Study

The limitation in this study is that its findings cannot be generalised to the whole population of 11-year-old learners in Malaysian primary schools as the design of this study is a qualitative case study that involved only six learners from a public primary school.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The research approach employed in this study is qualitative case study. Researcher with the role of observer as participant is the main instrument in the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) because the researcher needs to establish a close rapport with the participants. According to Adler and Adler (1998), researcher is to “observe and interact closely enough with members to establish an insider’s identity without participating in those activities constituting the core of group’s membership”. This was to ensure that detailed and in-depth information could be obtained from the Malaysian young ESL learners. Besides, the case study approach employed in this study was used to examine “the characteristics of an individual entity (the young ESL learners) in that entity’s natural occurring situation” (Nunan & Bailey, 2009).

Participants

The research participants involved in this study were six 11-year-old ESL learners from an urban public primary school in Perak, Malaysia. As stated earlier, the purposive sampling method was employed in selecting the research participants for this study based on the learners’ age (11-year-old) and their level of English language proficiency (high, intermediate, low). Purposive sampling was chosen as this sampling method is able to deliver the most accurate results based on the in-depth and detailed opinions of the 11-year-old learners

of 3 different English language proficiency levels. Only six young ESL learners were selected to be participating in this study as this sample size is believed to be able to portray the feedback of the Primary Five students with different levels of the English language proficiency (2 with high, intermediate and low English language proficiency levels, respectively) via the use of the digital storytelling application. As posited by Gay and Airasian (2003), a huge number of participants was not required in a qualitative case study because the massive and rich information obtained from the few participants would be sufficient enough to furnish the researcher with the data needed for the research. The rationale for selecting young ESL learners as the research participants in this study is the fact that the learners of today are the pioneer generation who grow up alongside digital technology and are called as the “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001). In addition, United Nation’s Convention on the children’s rights (1989) states that there should be involvement and consultation with children about everything concerning their lives, research included. This is supported by Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick (2008) who stated that “qualitative interviews with children could yield rich, deep, trustworthy accounts and led to revelations of knowledge not commonly known by the adults”. Previous research has also indicated that research works employing qualitative studies involving the interview technique have been conducted with young ESL learners from the age of 2-16 in exploring

the young learners' experiences in using digital technologies, medical, dental and nursing research studies (Chaudron et al., 2015; Gill et al., 2008; Haddon & Vincent, 2015). In this study, the participants are referred to as S1, S2, S3, S4, S5 and S6.

Ethical Precautions

As the research participants involved in this study are minors, who have not attained the legal age for consent to take part in this study, a written consent to partake was obtained from the learners' parents. Furthermore, permission from the State's Education Department and the Headmistress of the public primary school of the learners was also sought prior to conducting the study.

The Tablet-Based Digital Storytelling Application

This tablet-based digital storytelling application was designed and developed by the researcher in aiding vocabulary learning among the Malaysian young ESL learners based on the three multimedia instructional principles of Mayer's (2001) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning. The multimedia instructional principles implemented were the multimedia principle, modality principle and signalling principle. The Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning is the theory underlining this study as it suggests that learners have two types of processing systems-visual and verbal, which are similar with the use of multimedia presented the materials in different forms such as visual and auditory. Dikilitas and

Duvenci (2009) supported this theory that claimed that "if how human mind operates is considered in designing multimedia learning environment, it is likely that the learning will become more meaningful". In addition, the three instructional principles – the multimedia principle, modality principle and signalling principle implemented are reflected by the multimedia elements – texts, visuals and auditory elements used in the application to enhance learning and the multimedia glosses presented in the application. Meanwhile, contents of the application were customised and personalised to be best suited for the vocabulary learning of the 11-year-old learners. This digital storytelling application emphasises on the use of multimedia elements such as moving and still animations, colourful graphics, voiceover narrations, songs, touch screen functionality, multimodal vocabulary glosses – equipped with pronunciation, graphics and images related to the vocabulary making vocabulary learning interactive. In determining the suitability of the vocabulary lists to be learned by the learners, the researcher had initially discussed on the list of words for vocabulary glossing with two Primary Five English language educators before surveying words that are incomprehensible to the Primary Five learners by distributing the hard copies of the digital stories to the learners. Words which possessed the highest frequency of being circled (learners' incomprehensible words) were used for as the intended vocabulary lists to be used in the application. However, as suggested by

the two educators, it would be better for the researcher to include at least two to three words that the learners have already acquired for vocabulary glossing so as to lower their affective filter in attempting the learning application. In addition, vocabulary exercises (namely the spelling exercises and matching the word with the definition exercises) are also provided for vocabulary learning and enhancement purposes.

Pilot Study

A pilot test was conducted at a public school in the state of Perak, Malaysia, using 3 Primary Five learners who were not involved in the actual study. The 3 learners were required to use the digital storytelling application on a tablet to listen and read the first two digital stories in the application for a duration of two weeks. They were interviewed at the end of the second week by the researcher. This pilot test was conducted to check the feasibility of the interview questions. Some difficult terms used in the interview questions were replaced with simpler terms which can be easily comprehended by the young learners. The pilot test was successfully carried out with the three learners.

Data Collection

This study obtained data from the six young ESL learners through interviews and observations. The study was conducted for the duration of 8 weeks (one digital story per week), and observations were conducted twice every week (at the beginning and end of the week) for a total of 16 observation

sessions at one hour per session after school hours, outside of the classroom setting. Two semi-structured interview sessions (the first interview consisted of 27 questions and the second interview consisted of 31 questions) were conducted with the research participants at the end of the 8th week to ensure that the learners' responses to all aspects of the study – issues in using the digital storytelling application, tablet and language learning– were examined thoroughly until the data obtained reached a saturation point. Gay, Geoffrey, and Peter (2009) exclaimed that when a researcher “begins to hear the same thoughts, perspectives and responses from most or all of the participants”, it indicates that the data have reached the saturation point. At the same time, this also implies that the researcher can be engaged sufficiently in collecting the data in order to ensure data validity. Responses from the research participants during the interview sessions were in a mix of English and Mandarin. The participants were allowed to respond in Mandarin as they could express their responses better and clearer in the language. For data analysis purposes, however, all the interview transcripts were translated and rewritten in English to ensure that their responses are comprehensible for all. Hence, to validate the ideas and responses expressed by the learners, the excerpts of the interview transcripts quoted in this study are the revised version of the original transcripts from the interview sessions which had been checked and validated by two English language teachers who have at least twenty

years of experience in ESL teaching. As for the data collected from the observation sessions, the researcher observed everything that happened in the observation setting, took record and wrote down notes. An adapted observation rubric from the Plan of Bryman College, San Francisco and Setting Reports Guidelines of Chew Valley School was used to look at the learners' attitudes, motivation, independent learning and responses to feedback in order to help the researcher to be more focused in what to observe during the observation sessions. The open observation was conducted twice a week for a duration of 8 weeks – at the beginning and end of the weeks. All the interview questions, observations rubrics, observations notes and learners' interview responses were checked and validated by a panel of experts comprising two field experts who have a minimum of 20 years of teaching experience in the subject matter.

Data Analysis Method

Both the qualitative data derived from the interviews and observations were analysed manually via content analysis and by using the Nvivo software. All the qualitative data were first analysed manually before they were sent for analysis using the Nvivo software. Prior to coding the data according to themes derived mostly from the literature review and emerging themes, the data were systematically organised and went through the data reduction process – a process which reduces unwanted and insignificant data. These data were also rated and examined by two human inter-raters to ensure their validity and consistency.

RESULTS

This section reports on the findings of this study. As perceived by the learners, there was one obvious and clear effect of using the digital storytelling application on tablet to learn vocabulary. It was observed that the language learning impacts on learners' listening, speaking, reading, writing skills and vocabulary competency resulted from the use of this digital storytelling application on tablet were positive.

As revealed by the learners on the effects on language learning using the digital storytelling application on tablet, the use of the digital storytelling on tablet in vocabulary did not only bring improvement to their language learning, but it also taught them grammar and moral values.

“... I will surely learn more. There are many new and old words with their meanings that I can learn. I can also listen to the stories and improve my pronunciation” (S2, II: L33-34)

“... I can learn more and also use the tablet for learning new words and improve my reading and spelling” (S5, II:L28-29)

“I listen and learn to talk to others using good English (S1, II: L75)

“...I like to learn more words for speaking and reading as well” (S3, II: L74)

“...you can listen to the pronunciation and the next time you happened to use the word you would not pronounce it wrongly” (S4, II: L87-88)

“...can help me to improve my English especially in grammar” (S5, II: L36-37)

Data collected from the observation learning sessions also yielded similar findings with the data collected from the interview sessions. The researcher observed that in most of the observation learning sessions, the learners were repeating the pronunciation of the vocabulary and memorising their spelling. Besides, the learners were also seen attempting the vocabulary exercises (which the learners deemed as tests) excitedly. The learners were also seen comparing the scores obtained from the vocabulary exercises.

“All the learners were attempting the vocabulary exercises silently. They seemed to be very focussed and careful in choosing the answers. S2 was trying to recall the spelling of a certain vocabulary in the story. S6 was mouthing the spelling of another vocabulary (trying to memorise the vocabulary learned). There were no eye contact among the learners. After a while, S1 looked happy and relieved as S1 had completed the exercises. S1 was telling the rest of the learners the scores obtained from the exercises. The researcher could hear that the learners were comparing the scores they obtained from the vocabulary exercises”. (5th observation learning session: 30/5/15)

“Every time the learners clicked on the hypermedia and vocabulary glosses,

they were seen to be repeating after the spelling and pronunciation of the vocabularies learned. Some of the learners were mouthing the spelling and pronunciation provided by the application”. (10th observation learning session: 17/6/15)

Moreover, the findings also showed that the use of the digital storytelling on tablet was able to motivate the learners to learn (i) vocabulary, (ii) speaking skill, (iii) listening skill, (iv) reading skill, and (v) writing skill. In fact, the learners claimed that they were motivated to learn due to the high interactivity of the multimedia elements integrated into the application. The learners posited that the use of animations, voiceover narration, hyperlinked vocabularies, and multimodal glosses was the main multimedia element that had motivated them to learn using the application on tablet. As posited by learners during the interview sessions,

“... it motivates me to learn more words” (S5, II, L79)

“Of course. I especially love the pop-up words. It helps me to learn words in an interesting and enjoyable way...” (S2, II: L29-30)

“Yes, because it has nice pictures and we learn new words” (S3, I2: L30)

“It motivates me... and improves my speaking... skills” (S5, II, L79)

“I listen and learn to talk to others using good English” (S1, II: L75)

“I enjoy using it for learning language skills in the classroom especially for

listening and reading” (S1, II: L95-96)

“Yes, because reading it, I will go on to read more interesting story” (S3, I2: L80)

“Yes, I personally like reading stories. Digital storytelling is better as you can listen to the stories and learn vocabulary at the same time” (S2, II: L91-92)

“Yes, because after reading the stories, we get to know the flow of the story and we will know how to write essays...” (S2, II: L100-101)

“I learn the spelling and next I use the words in writing sentences” (S4, I2: L77-78)

“Yes because I want to read the stories again and again. I like the animation, colours and the pop-up when I touch the screen. So interesting!” (S2, II: L38-19)

“Yes, I want to read more and I enjoy reading the story” (S5, I2: L32)

“Yes. It motivates me from the start and I would rate it four-and-a-half stars to five stars”(S1, I2: L31)

“Yes, it will motivate me to learn English. I can straight tap and access the information whenever I want” (S6, II: L78-79)

“Yes, I will read the stories again and again, learn and memorise meanings of more words” (S4, II: L31-32)

“Yes, if there are more stories then I will continue reading and learn the language” (S4, II: L78)

Similarly, data obtained from the observation also revealed the same scenario.

“S4 was mimicking the way the characters speak. S4 even replayed the page and kept on repeating after the voiceover narration at the part where the characters speak”. (9th observation learning session, 13/6/15)

“S5 was diligently imitating the way the voiceover narration narrates the story with great expression. Learner were seen to be repeating over and over again what is said by the voiceover narration” (11th observation learning session, 20/6/15)

“S5 was diligently copying some sentences from the digital story. When asked, S5 replied it was for writing essay purposes as the sentences is very well constructed” (8th observation learning session, 10/6/16)

From a conversation overheard by the researcher during one of the observation learning sessions, which was the 3rd observation learning session, S5 was asking S3 not to disturb her as she loved reading the digital stories. This indirectly indicated that the learners are interested in attempting the digital stories as they are willing to attempt the stories willingly (possessed high enthusiasm in reading), with their own effort,

“S3: Come, look at this, it’s so cute!

S5: No, I don’t want to look at your screen. I want to read my story.

S3: Just for awhile. Come!

S5: I love reading my story. Please do not disturb. Stop disturbing me.”

Looking at the data obtained from various sources, it can be summarised that the use of the digital storytelling on tablet has motivated the learners to learn vocabulary, speaking skill, listening skill, reading skill and writing skill. This is because the integration of multimedia elements in this application is beneficial, particularly when used as the learning material and tool.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study showed that the learners have positive perception on the effects of using digital storytelling application in their language learning that includes speaking skill, listening skill, reading skill and writing skill. Based on learners' perception, the use of the digital storytelling application on tablet is able to enhance their learning of (i) vocabulary, (ii) speaking skill, (iii) listening skill, (iv) reading skill, and (v) writing skill. Although the positive effects on vocabulary learning via the use of this learning application is the most prominent in this study (as it has the highest frequency of being mentioned by the learners), the positive effects on the other language skills must not be denied. This is coherent with Dogan and Robin (2008) who once posited that the use of digital storytelling was able to improve learners' learning performance, and high interest and eagerness to learn.

The integration of voiceover narration in the digital storytelling application enables the learners to learn and practice their speaking skill. This is supported by the Modality Principle (Mayer, 2001) which states that learners will be able to learn better with the presence of visual aids and verbal aids rather than visual aids alone. Hence, learners are able to practice their speaking skill after being exposed to the use of this application. This is because the learners are tempted to repeat after the voiceover narration in narrating the stories in different intonations of voice, punctuation, exclamation and pauses and spelling, as well as pronouncing the vocabulary learned. In fact, the learners felt that imitating, mimicking and repeating after the voiceover narration provided them with the opportunity to practise speaking and learn the right way to speak in the language. Besides, the learners also posited that learning new words has enabled them to speak the language better by learning the correct pronunciation of words and appropriate tone in speaking. This finding is supported by Ellis (1991) who stated that children were better than adults in imitating speeches.

Besides, the use of digital storytelling application on tablet enables the young learners to learn and improve their listening skill. The learners' listening comprehension can be enhanced through the use of visual representation (Chung, 2002). Besides the integration of audio elements such as the voiceover narration and background into the application, the learners were also exposed

to the use of visual representations such as moving animation and colourful graphics. Thus, the use of this digital storytelling application on tablet was able to motivate learners to learn and enhance their listening skill. Listening skill is enhanced when the learners listen to and are able to produce what they have heard. As stated by the learners, after listening to the digital stories via the application, they were able to write down the sentences heard, pronounce the words correctly and speak the language. This is agreed by Ramirez, Allonso and Chung (as cited in Sandaran & Lim, 2013) who posited that the incorporation of technology into digital storytelling made digital storytelling “interesting, attractive, interactive and reiterative” and “ideal for listening comprehension”.

In addition, the incorporation of voiceover narration in reading the digital stories and the use of multimodal glosses in the digital storytelling application can enhance reading comprehension among the young ESL learners. Based on the learners’ responses, being able to learn new words, introduced to, understand the meaning and pronounced the words learned improved their reading skill as they were able to read and understand the whole story without any distorted meaning. In the learners’ opinions, the feature of the multimedia glosses of this application helps to motivate them to read as they can understand the stories read as all words are defined and made understood to the learners. This is supported by Hague (1987) who stated that possessing the knowledge of vocabulary could motivate

learners to learn. As the integration of multimedia glosses into the application enables learners to learn vocabularies, this indirectly enables and motivates them to read the stories as well. This echoes with what is posited by Dale (1965) that one’s knowledge of the vocabulary determines how well someone is in reading as one is a better reader if he/she possesses a vast knowledge of the vocabulary.

Furthermore, the use of the digital storytelling application also enables learners to learn the writing skill. Learners were able to indulge in writing as they were exposed to the style and form of narration writing of the digital stories. As mentioned by Oakley (2011), the use of digital storytelling is able to enhance learners’ writing skill through the modelled writing of the narrations of the digital stories. Digital stories are usually grammatically correct with the correct construction of sentence structures and use of appropriate linguistic elements. Thus, these grammatically correct sentences are used as the modelled sentence structures and construction to the learners in their effort of learning to write. In this study, the learners felt that they were motivated to write as they could always seek guidance from the digital storytelling application on how to write grammatically correct sentences in their writing. Hence, this enables the learners to practise and learn the writing skill from the modelled narration writing of the digital stories. This is supported by Koisawalia (2005), and Glazer and Burke (1994) who stated that digital stories used in the digital storytelling possessed the language features

such as vocabulary, grammar, sentence structures and linguistics elements which were useful and beneficial for language learning.

In summary, the use of the digital storytelling application on tablet enables the young learners to learn English language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and vocabulary. This not only shows that digital storytelling can be used as a learning material and tool to enhance learning, but also to motivate learning among the young ESL learners. Similar studies on the use of digital storytelling in motivating learning were also reported by Neo and Neo (2010), and Koochang, Riley, Smith, and Schreurs (2009) who found that learners were motivated after attempting to learn using digital storytelling.

Implications for Teaching and Learning

The findings of the current research work have shown that the young learners were motivated to learn the English language using the digital storytelling application as the application provides interesting and fun learning tool and material to be used. Being motivated in learning is an important factor as motivated learners are more interested in learning and this will lead to more learning opportunities (Halvorsen, 2011, cited in Normann, 2011). According to Lence (2013), the use of digital storytelling in language learning enables learning to be conducted in a motivating, relaxing and conducive environment. It is believed that learners will be able to learn better in a stress-free environment when their affective

filters are lowered while learning the language through the use of this application.

In addition, this study has shown that the use of digital storytelling application on tablet is appropriate to be implemented in the primary school setting for the purpose of language learning among the young learners. Furthermore, the use of this digital storytelling application can serve as a supplementary material for language learning.

The findings of this study also portray that the use of the digital storytelling application on tablet is a suitable learning material to be used for language learning (Brown, 2001). In more specific, the findings of this study revealed that learners were motivated to learn the language using this learning application by possessing high enthusiasm in learning to read, speak, write and listen. After being introduced and exposed to the use of this learning application, the learners were more willing to learn the English language (learners were willing to carry out the digital storytelling tasks even without being prompted and asked to do so) because the interactivity of the application had heightened the learners' interest and attention to learn the language.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be summarised that the digital storytelling application designed and developed on tablet has positive effects on the young ESL learners' language learning. In other words, the use of this application on tablet has proven to be effective for the learning

of the English language among the young ESL learners.

Moreover, the use of this digital storytelling on tablet attracted learners' interest and enthusiasm in learning. The learners were motivated to learn using this application on tablet. Developing the young ESL learners' motivation in learning is as this factor determines the effectiveness and their achievement in learning.

Finally, the impact on language learning can be used as proof to highlight the possible strengths of digital storytelling on tablet in English language learning to relevant authorities.

In conclusion, the use of digital storytelling on tablet in the learning of vocabulary is effective, beneficial and motivational in English language learning. For these reason, it is suitable as both the learning material and tool for after-school-hour as well as out-of-classroom learning.

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