IMPLEMENTING DIGITAL STORYTELLING-BASED TASKS FOR THE TEACHING OF NARRATIVE WRITING SKILLS

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Abstract

Although numerous studies documented the educational values of digital storytelling (DST) on EFL learners' language mastery, most research does not depict students' daily life tasks. This mixed-method research involving 24 EFL students explored the implementation of DST-based tasks to teach narrative writing skills to fill the void. Lied in TBLT methodology instruction of Anwar (2016) also task theory by Nunann (2004), this study aimed to examine the effect of DST-based task on students' narrative writing skills and their perceptions about its implementation. The statistical evidence indicated a significant difference in the students writing scores for the pre-test score (M=53.54, SD=10.05) and students' narrative writing post-test (M=66.21, SD=12.56). Conditions where; t (23) - 6.545, p= 0.000. The qualitative finding also uncovered students' perceptions of digital storytelling-based task implementation; it found that digital storytelling-based tasks could promote students' writing skills, learning motivations, and language development for several skills such as listening and vocabulary enhancement. Implications and recommendations for future studies are discussed.

Keywords: *DST, TBLT, EFL, ELT, Narrative Writing.*

INTRODUCTION

Writing skills have been regarded as the most complex skill to be mastered among the four basic skills (Richards & Renandya, 2002). Writing is intertwined with the other three skills of listening, speaking, and reading; it indirectly assists in their development (Saed & Al-Omari, 2014). Furthermore, because writing is an active or productive skill, students should also learn how to find and express ideas in a text. Unfortunately, the complexity of the language makes it difficult for EFL learners to produce a good writing outcome.

Meanwhile, according to the Indonesian educational curriculum (K13 curriculum), tenth-grade students generally must understand some kinds of writing texts, such as Narrative text. "Narrative writing" refers to making a story or report on events, personal experiences, or other similar incidents, whether genuine or fictional. (Baldick, 2008). Ahmed (2015) stated that narrative writing skills are considered essential that pupils have to command. Moreover, he declared that narrative writing skills are highly significant to convey an idea, culture, and everyday deeds, especially in educational settings.

However, since English is also only a foreign language in Indonesia, there are many problems in its instructional process, especially in teaching narrative writing text. The barriers mentioned above also occur at MA Miftahul Islah Tembelok. Students in the tenth grade were rarely taught how to write in English. In most schools, writing teachers remain to typical instructional models and the outdated academic style (Elola & Oskoz, 2017), including mixed-ability students, grammar-focused instruction, textbook reliance, and the absence of English use in ordinary encounters (Aziz & Husnawadi, 2020). In addition, most of the students consider that writing is complex and unrewarding. So that the product of their writing is far from the expectation; when the teacher asks them to write, they are reluctant to write even a simple text. Moreover, according to the Education First (EF) (2020)

survey, Indonesia ranks 74th out of 100 countries globally and 15th out of 24 countries in Asia in English proficiency.

Therefore, taking this into account, it has become increasingly essential to rejuvenate the instructional style by using innovative pedagogical models to engage learners in the writing process. Thus, to answer the problems above, this research argues that EFL and L2 curriculum should incorporate more comprehensive nations of literacies linked with the expansion of current digital genres. "Todays' educational environment does not want to cast aside traditional approaches to EFL and L2 writing; what it aims to do is to argue for the need to question and redefine EFL and L2 writing pedagogy for our times; that is, to call for a 21st-century reevaluation of literacy, writing genres and associated instructional practices in the EFL and L2 classrooms" (Elola & Oskoz, 2017).

One of the teachings and learning strategies that may mediate such learning purposes is Digital Storytelling. Digital storytelling can aid the constructivist approach to the teaching and learning of L2; it can also be a valuable educational tool since it combines digital media and narrative to deliver innovative education (Smeda et al. 2014). Thus, digital storytelling has emerged for this decade as a powerful tool for teaching and learning. It can also improve learners' writing skills as it lets the learners have a deeper understanding of the text. Normann (2011), moreover, stated that storytelling has served as a popular education tool from ancient times to the present. Thus, in general, storytelling is a powerful instructional approach that can improve learning outcomes.

Due to its educational potential, a myriad of studies has been documented the utilization of DST in four basic skills, such as DST on reading skills (Anggeraini & Afifah, 2017); listening skills (Tabieh, Al-Hileh, Afifa, & Abuzagha, 2020); writing skills (Sudarmaji, 2020; Riani, Husnawadi, & Syarifudin, 2021; Husnawadi & Aziz, 2020); speaking skills (Eissa, 2019; Yang, 2020). Moreover, some of the research findings also reveal the use of

DST on students learning motivations (Aziz & Husnawadi, 2020) and improving students' creative thinking (Yang et al., 2020). Nonetheless, only a few studies have documented the combination of DST and the theory of SLA, such as Communicative Language Teaching, especially task-based language teaching (TBLT). According to González (2017), the utilization of technology in language classrooms will be less effective if it is not guided by the principles of SLA. Moreover, to the researcher's best knowledge, no studies have documented the implementation of DST-based tasks on students' narrative writing skills classroom.

Therefore, drawing on the discussion above, this mixed-method study aimed to explore the impact of DST-based tasks on students' narrative writing skills and unveil their perception during the intervention. The following research question guided the whole process of the study:

1. Is there any effect of Digital Storytelling-based task use on EFL students' narrative writing skills?
2. What are students' perceptions of the use of digital storytelling-based tasks?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Teaching language with technology has been a landmark in 21st-century instruction, aiming to gain an effective and meaningful learning environment. However, the penetration of technology into language teaching will be effective if the uses are based and guided by the principles and theories of the second language (González, 2017). As the outcome of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a communicative based-approach that has gained popularity for years for its ability to maximize the learning process, which puts an overall emphasis on process, meaning. In addition, TBLT is an activity that promotes

learning to create and develop a concept and mental image into the meaning-making process.

As TBLT emphasizes meaning as primary, Bygate opines that task is an activity to encourage learners to actively participate in communicative engagement to gain objected meaning-oriented (Samuda & Bygate, 2008). This theoretical perspective reflects the intended meaning used while doing the task, followed by a reflective stage for both process and product of the approach.

While Nunan (2004) defines a task as an activity proposing three stages: pre, during, and after, which engage learners to create, manipulate the process of meaning-making. Furthermore, Nunan divides tasks into target tasks (language use outside the classroom) and pedagogical tasks (language use in the classroom).

The teaching design by task proposed by Anwar (2016) has three significant areas: pre-task, during-task, and after-task. In the pre-task stage, the learners will be given some activity before heading to the learning activity, while during-task, the learners do the authentic task or activity from the learning; in the after-task, the learners will do a reflective stage and repetitive to minimize the errors.

In doing so, the model of TBLT makes to be student-centered where they actively engage in communicative engagement to accomplish the task and attain a reflective stage for both process and product from their participation. The need to design a task approach with technology into language teaching should align with the learners' condition and situated practice where it helps instructors find appropriate teaching tools and media for the language classroom.

During DST-based tasks, classroom activities will be designed through several parts covering activities inside and beyond the schooling wall. The digital storytelling video will be taken from the YouTube platform. Subsequently, the task will be given as proposed by Anwar (2016):

a. Pre-task

In this stage, students will be informed of the material related to narrative writing skills. This stage is mainly preparatory, with several concepts employed to brainstorm students with statements, questions regarding the topic, and the upcoming task.

b. During-task

The students will be shown a sample of a digital story from the internet or YouTube. Then the students will be asked to create a story about their personal narrative experiences in their dormitory or home.

c. Post-task

The instructor will collect the product of their writing then the instructor will review the writing product before they read it to the class.

Digital Storytelling (DST)

Digital storytelling (DST) is one of the approaches used in language instruction. Over the last two decades, DST has grown in popularity as a potent teaching and learning tool that has attracted the interest of both instructors and students (Robin, 2008). Lambert (2013) described DST as telling stories or personal narratives using digital technology to build meanings. According to (Abdelmageed & El-Naggar, 2018), DST refers to the participants' capacity to combine multimedia materials such as pictures, audio, video, animation, and text to create personal tales that are retold to improve their speaking skills. Thus, the DST technique aids students in improving their language skills, and it is a valuable instrument in foreign language learning and instruction (Sudarmaji et al., 2020; Razmi et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2020).

Educators believe that DST should be included in the curriculum to assist students in acquiring both media literacy and critical thinking abilities (Kim & Lee, 2017). DST has also been implemented in the second language (L2) writing practice to help

L2 students improve their narrative skills (Kim & Lee, 2018). For example, Rubino, Barberis, and Malnati (2018) employed digital storytelling to examine writing values. Furthermore, scholars are increasingly adopting a digital story to teach English to illustrate various sorts of learning support to help students learn successfully in a classroom. However, despite being widely employed in many countries' educational contexts, DST has received scant attention from teachers (Puspitasari, 2019). Instead, DST has become a constructivist instructional method that may enhance project-based, technology-integrated, and student-centered learning experiences in the years since (Yang et al., 2020). (Barrett et al., 2006; Robin, 2016).

As the term suggests, DST distinguished itself from traditional storytelling by focusing on technology to develop digital stories, as artifacts are typically made in short films that last two to three minutes (Wu & Chen, 2020). Many experts agreed that literacy is at the heart of DST because it blends traditional literacies like reading and writing with new literacies such as technology, information, and visual literacies to build knowledge (Ohler, 2013; Robin, 2008).

Many scholars have studied digital storytelling in language learning (Sudarmaji et al., 2020). In addition, DST offers a valuable strategy for teaching visual memory and writing to students and helping them develop their visual memory capacity and writing proficiency (Sarica & Usluel, 2016). Researchers (Xu et al., 2011; Campbell, 2012; Sarica & Usluel, 2016; Yamaç & Ulusoy, 2016; Tarigan & Liana, 2018) noted that digital storytelling could be an excellent learning technique for improving students' writing skills. Abdel-Hack & Helwa (2014) also said that narrative writing and critical thinking skills were developed through digital storytelling. Similarly, according to particular academics, digital storytelling has a favorable impact on students. For example, according to Gallets (2005), narrative can help students think more critically and imaginatively.

Furthermore, learners benefit from digital storytelling in a variety of ways. Bandi-Ro & Sepp (2014) use the example of a group of ESL students who recorded and listened to their narratives as part of their digital storytelling projects. They were able to think critically and make essential adjustments to their stories due to this procedure. Similarly, when students learn how to create a film from the ground up, they may have a transformative experience that improves their literacy habits and interactions (Jamissen et al., 2017). Another study by Rahimi & Yadollahi (2017) found that English language learners (ESL) who used digital tools to create their stories significantly improved their literacy skills. Students improve their reading and writing skills during DST activities and conversational skills (Prins, 2017). Another obvious advantage of DST is that it may be done in small groups, allowing students to improve their communication skills by organizing thoughts, expressing perspectives, analyzing, and synthesizing knowledge. Digital storytellers can also share their work with their peers and learn to critique their own and their peers' work (Robin, 2008; Mirza, 2020).

Another benefit discovered by several studies has looked into the impact of DST in improving English language competency, mainly writing skills. First, in the Faculty of Education, Eman et al. (2014) conducted a study into the usefulness of using digital storytelling and Weblogs instruction to enhance EFL narrative writing and critical thinking skills among EFL majors. The findings revealed that teaching EFL narrative writing and critical thinking abilities through digital storytelling and Weblogs assist EFL majors at the Faculty of Education in improving their narrative essay and critical thinking skills. Second, Sarica and Usluel (2016) looked into the impact of digital storytelling on primary school pupils' visual memory capacity and writing skills. Then Tarigan and Liana (2018) researched how successful digital storytelling is in teaching students writing skills in higher education or university. The results demonstrated that using digital storytelling as a teaching medium increased the students'

writing skills. Furthermore, the study found that digital storytelling can help students improve their writing skills.

Previous Studies of Using DST

Prior studies have discovered the effectiveness of DST as the approach in teaching and learning, significantly improving students' English proficiency. To begin with, Aziz and Husnawadi (2020) conducted a study to examine whether a collaborative DST-based task could impact 28 students majoring in English in terms of writing skills. This action research implemented the principles of task-based language teaching (TBLT). Despite facing challenges of technological skill for orchestrating digital video and pedagogical settings during the study, however, the outcome of this study shows students writing skills was improved as the mean score of the post-test (M = 5.2) was higher than that of the pre-test (M=3.6); Students see the use of a collaborative DST-based task as a teaching strategy may support their growth, commitment, motivation and interpersonal relationships in the English language. Similiarly, Riani et al. (2021) was conducted a quasi-experimental study to examine students' narrative writing and speaking skills in an Indonesian private Islamic school. The control and experimental group in this study consisted of 42 individuals. The independent t-test formula in SPSS 20 has been used to assess the data obtained from pre-and post-writing and oral tests. T (19) -12.02, p=0.000 indicated that the experimental groups outperformed their counterparts in the control group when it came to the ability to write narrative text.

In addition, research by (Sudarmaji et al., 2020) investigated the implementation of Digital Storytelling to Improve Indonesian High School Students' Visual Memory and Writing Skill. The findings show that the students' scores of visual memories in experimental class are increased after applying digital storytelling. The post-test score was more significant than the pre-test, with 100 percent of pupils passing the KKM (Minimum Mastery Criterion) values. Furthermore, in the experimental class, students' writing

skills improved due to using digital storytelling. The post-test score was more significant than the pre-test, with 58 percent of students passing the KKM values. As a result, the KKM values' level of achievement had improved.

Furthermore, in learning the reading subject, DST is performed to help students improve their academic performance. (Anggeraini, 2017) experimental research aimed to determine the students' primary conditions on reading short story texts before using digital storytelling than how DST was developed for reading a short story to students, and how effective the developed digital storytelling used for teaching reading is. The findings of this study revealed that digital storytelling media meet the needs of students who have a variety of criteria, including the interest to learn vocabulary, reading dramatic and romantic stories by reading short stories. Appropriate media in learning to read short stories, such as online reading sources and videos including video words and clips, acknowledged students' significant progress after using digital storytelling to teach them how to read short stories. In addition, the development of materials improves students' scores and can increase their interest in reading different stories. Moreover, the effectiveness of DST in vocabulary skills examined by (Gaya 2018) aimed to determine the improvement of students' English vocabulary acquisition by using digital storytelling. Observation and documentation were utilized as data collection methods. The data were also analyzed using descriptive qualitative, and quantitative approaches. The data shows that the digital storytelling learning activities could improve the student's English vocabulary acquisition. As a result, digital storytelling can be used in the classroom to help students learn English more effectively.

DST also enhances students' listening and critical thinking. Research conducted by (Tabieh et al., 2020) The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of using digital storytelling as a method to help students learn active listening skills and creative thinking skills, such as fluency, flexibility, and originality, in the Arabic language classes in the primary third grade. The sample

consists of (200) mixed-gender students divided into two equal groups: the experimental and control groups. In the post-test of active listening skills, there were significant differences between the control and experimental groups of students in favor of the students who studied through digital storytelling. The findings also revealed that the digital storytelling method impacted the experimental group students' fluency learning, one of the three creative thinking talents.

Research by (Eissa 2019) examined the Effectiveness of Digital Storytelling in Improving Speaking Skills of Saudi EFL learners. This quantitative and qualitative study shows that students at the chosen university have trouble speaking English. Using DST as a pedagogy can help them improve their general speaking ability. In addition, these findings will help EFL teachers create a conducive environment in and out of the classroom, considerably pushing students to speak English fluently. Furthermore, research by (Yang et al., 2020) performed digital storytelling to improve students' English speaking and creative thinking. A two-group of quasi-experimental are utilizing a pre-test and post-test design to compare students learning outcomes. The findings show how DST may effectively encourage students' growth as fluent English speakers and creative thinkers by providing authentic and relevant learning opportunities. As a result, educators are encouraged to work on interdisciplinary DST initiatives in the future.

Therefore, there is some impetus for DST-based tasks in the current study. However, none of those above studies implemented DST-Based tasks as a medium of instruction, especially in Islamic boarding schools. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to address a gap in the literature by examining the impact of implementing DST-based tasks as a medium of instruction on students' English writing abilities.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study adopted the convergent mixed-method design to collect quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, blend them, and use the resulting information to comprehend the data better. (Creswell, 2018).

Data Collection and Analysis

This study drew on a convergent mixed-method design that simultaneously involved both quantitative and qualitative data collection procedures. The quantitative phase used in this study was a pre-experimental design which was one group pretest-posttest design. In contrast, the qualitative phase used interviews. The quantitative data analyzed were prerequisite and hypotheses tests. There are two parts to the prerequisite test, normality test and homogeneity test. The normality test is to uncover that the samples are in a normal distribution, while the homogeneity test is to discover that the data are homogeneous. However, this research did not conduct a homogeneity test because it only consists of one class. Both prerequisite and hypotheses then were analyzed by SPSS V.21.

Participants

The participants of this study were tenth-grade students at MA Miftahul Islah Tembelok, Lombok, Indonesia, which consisted of 29 students. They were a heterogeneous group of students with varying levels of language proficiency. The students did not take any English classes outside of their school's curriculum.

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FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

R1: The Effect of DST-based task on EFL Students' Narrative Writing Skills

The statistical evidence analyzed by SPSS documented a significant difference in students writing pre-test and post-test (see table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Tests	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Writing pre-test	24	34	74	53.54	10.035
Writing post-test	24	34	97	66.21	12.566

An additional statistical finding confirmed by the paired sample t-test indicated that the students narrative writing scored on the post-test considerably higher than the pre-test, as shown in table 2.

Table 2. Paired Sample Test

	Paired differences	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	95% confidence interval of the difference			
Pre-test – post-test score	-8.663	-6.545	23	.000

After analyzing the hypotheses test using paired sample t-test, it showed that there was a significant difference in the score of students' narrative writing pre-test (*M*=53.54, *SD*=10.05) and students' narrative writing post-test after having the treatments (*M*=66.21, *SD*=12.56), conditions were; t (23) – 6.545, p= 0.000, the statistical evidence indicated that the alternative hypothesis (Ha) was accepted as the p-value was less than 0.05, which encapsulates that the implementation of DST-base task could significantly improve students' narrative writing skills.

In this study, DST was used to convey material to students in a classroom setting. Assuming DST was not used, delivering the narrative text material would have taken more than an hour. However, with the help of DST, only an hour is needed to convey the subject. Students learned how to create a narrative text and tell a story by using DST during the intervention. The students were permitted to raise questions during the lesson based on the digital storytelling video they had just seen. Before the study concludes, they should give an example of an introductory narrative text.

The outcome of this study echoes the previous studies (e.g., Riani et al., 2021). The study found that the utilization of digital storytelling-based tasks in teaching narrative writing skills showed significant differences before and after the intervention. Therefore, students' writing skills can be improved by employing DST rather than traditional writing instruction as an instructional medium. The other studies that concur with the current study in the case of writing skills were conducted by Aziz and Husnawadi (2020) and Tajeri et al. (2017). Aziz and Husnawadi (2020) uncovered that the use of DST during the lesson was improved students writing skills significantly after the post-test compared to the pre-test. While, Sudarmaji (2020) also found that in the experimental class, students' writing skills are improved compared to the control class due to implementing DST.

R2: Students Perceptions on the Use of DST-Based Task

Overall, most of the students positively perceived the use of digital storytelling-based tasks in teaching narrative writing skills as it promotes their writing skills, language development, and learning motivation.

Table 3. Students' interview summary

Writing skills	*"This kind of study helps me a lot; it makes me easier to understand how to write narrative text and its steps."*
	"I am not really into English, but with the help of DST, my learning process is smooth; now I can write and start to tell my own story in English."
	"For me, the learning process is so interesting; I learn how to make narrative text interestingly."
Language development	*"…also, my listening skills is improved as the language used in the video is easy to hear."*
	"…my listening, also the video makes my vocabulary enhanced."
	"…I feel like my vocabulary improved, as well as my listening skills."
Learning motivation	*"I do not have any interest in English. However, when we were learning by DST, I got myself become diligent and motivated as the learning process was fun."*
	"…yes, I love doing the task. The learning process is creative and not boring, unlike the basic instruction. I suggest all teachers use the same way."
	"…I am not feeling sleepy anymore in the class; it makes me want to learn English more."

The first qualitative outcome in the present study was supported by several findings on the use of DST for promoting students writing skills (e.g., Riani et al., 2021; Aziz & Husnawadi, 2020; Sudarmaji, 2020). The digital storytelling-based task in this study helps the students to write the narrative text into a readable text and tell their spoken narrative to their counterparts. Regarding language development, other relevant studies also documented that students involved in DST instruction felt their English skills improved, especially for vocabulary enhancement and listening skills (e.g., Tabieh et al., 2020; Gaya, 2018). The improvement of students learning motivations also resonated with the previous study (i.e., Aziz & Husnawadi, 2020; Anggeraini, 2017). Aziz and Husnawadi (2020) revealed that students got highly motivated to study during the second task. At the same time, Anggeraini (2017) advocated that students' interests during the instructional process were improved.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

After analyzing and discussing both data in the quantitative and qualitative phase, statistical data showed that students' narrative writing post-test outperformed the students' narrative writing pre-test result after the treatment using the digital storytelling-based task. Furthermore, the t-test result concluded that the alternate hypothesis (Ha) is accepted, which stated: "there is an effect of the digital storytelling-based task in the teaching of narrative writing skills." Meanwhile, the qualitative data of the current study also bring a positive impact. The interview result revealed that digital storytelling-based tasks could promote students writing skills and their language development for several skills such as listening and their vocabulary, and their learning motivations. Moreover, the interview also showed that students became highly motivated during the learning process.

This research engenders two implications; practical and theoretical implications. Practically, Students should recognize the

relevance of English and technology in today's world; for example, they could employ technology to assist them while learning English, such as creating their own DST and practicing their writing. In addition, the students to where this study was undertaken still deliberate that English is a complex subject. Therefore, the teachers' role is needed to bring out new principles to reconstruct students' English beliefs. Teachers are expected to provide appropriate material to the class to acquire students' interest during the instruction and manipulate their mindset to think that English is easy and enjoyable to learn by putting technology in the class.

Theoretically writing, some pedagogical flaws exist in the current study. This study was conducted for a short amount of time; therefore, future research should focus on lengthier treatments, encouraging students to be more engaged and providing them more opportunities to practice their language skills. Second, due to a lack of student engagement, the following study will hopefully guide students to create their storytelling-based project, which will help them become more engaged in participating in the class. Moreover, more research on the effectiveness of TBLT and technology in the ELT classroom is required. As this study was conducted only for one group pre-test – post-test, future study needs to document empirical evidence, for example, pure experimental study design, to see its effectiveness compared to two or more classes. Other studies also required to provide the finding on the use of DST on the other variable such as reading, listening, speaking, students' engagement, and self-confidence.

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