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The Effectiveness of Teaching Digital Stories in Developing EFL Primary Pupils' Speaking Skill

A Thesis Submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master Degree in Education
(Department of Curriculum & Instruction)

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Abstract

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Abstract: This study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of digital stories in developing the EFL speaking skills of the fifth year primary pupils. For such purpose, criteria of choosing the digital stories, pre-post EFL speaking test, table of specification, teacher reflection, and pupils' feedback questionnaire were used together with eleven digital stories. The sample of the study was forty primary pupils of the fifth grade in a governmental school. The results of the study proved the effectiveness of the digital stories in developing and enhancing the EFL speaking skills. It was recommended that curriculum designers should keep in mind the great positive effect that Multimedia has in education makes it a must to apply it in language learning especially to enhance the speaking skill. It is important also to be aware of the digital world students live in when designing learning experiences to cultivate basic communication skills. Thus digital tools can be used effectively in developing EFL Communication situations.

Key words: **Speaking skills, digital stories, primary pupils**

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM

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1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching of English as a foreign language has become of a great importance in the schools, especially primary ones. The implementation of English in this stage has brought along the need to change from traditional Education settings to E-settings, which is very essential to make teaching and learning two effective processes.

It must be said that, EFL teachers have to join in this new wave of change and set-up E-learning opportunities for their students.

Educational environments must be adapted to meet the demands of the 21st century skills (CEO Forum on Education and Technology, 2001).

These twenty first century skills include: digital literacy, inventive thinking, effective communication and high productivity (Jakes, 2006).

Educational technology can provide EFL teachers with valuable tools and develop the 21st century skills, which is a primary reason why integration of technology in Education has become a major area of interest over the last decade.

It can be observed that growth in Egyptian technological support that facilitates educational advances is very slow. That the

use of computer software and hardware has not been fully understood or used, and the integration of technology into the Egyptian education system is still needed.

The gap between technology presence in schools and its effective use is too wide. Many teachers believe that technology integration is a difficult, time-consuming and resource-intensive endeavor and is more trouble than it is worth (Sheingold and Hadley 1990). The under-utilization of technology is probably a result of a lack of vision of technology's potential for improving teaching and learning (Office of Technology Assessment 1995).

Meaningful technology integration is defined as curricula utilizing authentic tasks that intentionally and actively help learners to construct their own meanings from thinking about experiences and allows for more interdisciplinary project-based instruction (Jonassen et al. 1999).

Storytelling is a simple but powerful method to help students to make sense of the complex and unordered world of experience by crafting story lines (Bruner 1990; Gils 2005). Although storytelling is not new, the idea of digital storytelling is new (Meadows, 2003). Within the last 10 years, digital cameras, editing software, and electronic media outlets have encouraged teachers to utilize many more approaches and tools than ever before to help students to construct their own knowledge and ideas to present and share them more effectively (Standley 2003). One

of these powerful approaches to multimedia production is digital storytelling.

Digital stories are technology application that is well-positioned to help teachers overcome some of the obstacles during the teaching process in their classrooms. It takes the same steps of the traditional process of storytelling from selecting a topic, conducting some research, writing a script, and developing an interesting story. This material is then combined with various types of multimedia, including computer-based graphics, recorded audio, computer-generated text, video clips, and music so that it can be played on a computer, uploaded on a web site, or burned on a DVD.

The combination of powerful, yet affordable, technology hardware and software meshes perfectly with the needs of many of today's classrooms, where the focus is on providing students with the skills they will need to "thrive in increasingly media-varied environments" (Riesland, 2005).

As an instructional tool, teachers have the option of showing previously-created digital stories to their students, to introduce content and capture students' attention when presenting new ideas. or to create their own digital stories to find that they can be particularly helpful not only in engaging students in the content but also in facilitating discussion about the topics presented in a story and helping make abstract or conceptual content more understandable. A multimedia-rich digital story can capture the

attention of students and increase their interest in exploring new ideas.

Teacher-created digital stories may also be used to enhance current lessons within a larger unit, and as a way to make abstract or conceptual content more understandable (Robin, 2008).

Using the digital storytelling can help in developing the following

- Digital literacy — the ability to communicate with an ever-expanding community to discuss issues, gather information, and seek help;
- Global literacy — the capacity to read, interpret, respond, and contextualize messages from a global perspective
- Technology literacy — the ability to use computers and other technology to improve learning, productivity, and performance;
- Visual literacy — the ability to understand, produce, and communicate through visual images
- Information literacy — The ability to find, evaluate, and synthesize information.

Even though few research studies on the effectiveness of digital storytelling have been conducted, numerous findings have been reported on the benefits of multimedia projects in which

students have shown an increase in research skills, increased organizational skills, and a greater interest in the content being taught (Paull, 2002; Salpeter, 2005).

Many teachers involved in multimedia projects with students may agree that some of the most significant gains pertain to higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills, including synthesizing, analyzing, evaluating, and presenting information. When students use technology such as digital storytelling, they learn to "convert data into information and transform information into knowledge" (Cradler, McNabb, Freeman, & Burchett, 2002).

It is worth asking what the findings might have been if digital stories had been used by teachers and students in the classrooms. it is clear to many that content integration, supported by powerful computer technologies, is needed, and the impact that computer technology can have on students is much more meaningful when it involves an impact on higher order thinking skills, not just test scores.

Speaking is the aspect of oral language. It is a skill that can only be acquired through practice. It is well known that, speaking skill plays a key role in foreign language teaching, especially with young learners (Brewester, 1994) . Human beings in general are usually involved in spoken activities most of their every day time to the extent of estimating that approximately 75% of language activity of most people involves speaking or listening.