

Investigating the Role of Digital Storytelling in Enhancing Reading Comprehension of Senior High School Students in the Philippines

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Abstract: The study focused on the Role of Digital Storytelling in Enhancing Reading Comprehension of Senior High School Students in the Philippines. This study will utilize a quasi-experimental approach using the pretest-posttest design. The respondents of this study will be the Senior High School Students of Salawagan National High School, Salawagan, Quezon, Bukidnon. Moreover, the researcher the research instrument of the study is the 60-item Reading Comprehension test adopted from the study of Rabin Joy Munsod-Fernandez (2021). Moreover, The following conclusions were drawn from the findings of the present study: (1) the digital storytelling technique was effective in enhancing reading comprehension skills; (2) there is a positive and significant influence of digital storytelling on students' reading comprehension skills; (3) the digital storytelling technique increased students' participation in classroom activities; (4) the digital storytelling technique increased the interaction between the students and the teacher; (5) the digital storytelling technique added positive, interesting, motivational atmosphere to the classroom.

Keywords: *Digital Storytelling and Reading Comprehension.*

Introduction

In an era characterized by the rapid evolution of technology and the increasing prevalence of digital media, education stands at the threshold of transformation. Digital storytelling, a powerful and engaging educational tool, has emerged as a potential catalyst for enhancing the reading comprehension skills of senior high school students. As educators and researchers grapple with the challenge of cultivating proficient readers in a digitally oriented world, it becomes imperative to investigate the multifaceted role that digital storytelling plays in the development of reading comprehension among this age group. Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill that underpins academic success and lifelong learning. Senior high school students, poised on the brink of adulthood, face the challenge of comprehending complex texts across various subjects. In this context, digital storytelling offers a promising avenue for educators to captivate students' imaginations, foster critical thinking, and deepen their understanding of textual content.

According to the Digital Storytelling Association (2002), digital storytelling is the modern

version of the traditional art of storytelling which uses digital media. For it is the modern version of storytelling using digital media, the definition of traditional storytelling and digital media needs to be addressed. Behmer (2005) explained storytelling as the sharing of our or others' ideas and experiences through words and actions to transfer meaning. Behmer emphasizes that the essential element of storytelling is the transfer of meaning. Likewise, digital storytelling is the art of telling stories with various digital multimedia, such as audio, images, and video (Robin, 2008). Digital storytelling includes characteristics such as interactivity, flexibility, community formation, and universality (Park and Seo, 2009). Digital storytelling has been marked as a distinguished strategy that helps teachers internalize lessons in a way to meet students' various needs (Figg, Gonsoulin, and McCartney, 2009). In digital storytelling, visual pictures and images with written text develop and facilitate students' comprehension (Burmark, 2004). According to Robin (2006), digital stories may help discuss the topics of the story and in making a conclusion or a summary.

Furthermore, Reading is the primary receptive skill out of the four language abilities, and it can improve overall language competency (e.g., Krashen and Brown, 2007; McDonough and Shaw, 1993; Snow, Burns, and Griffin, 1998). Reading is the act of combining visual and cognitive processes to extract meaning from written material by understanding the text, digesting information, and connecting it to prior knowledge (Millrood, 2001). Undoubtedly, reading serves purposes beyond mere amusement, primarily facilitating language development. According to Harmer (2007), reading is seen as a crucial activity for improving language abilities such as writing, grammar, and vocabulary. When reading, individuals can decipher, predict, draw comparisons, and recognize words instantly (Ehri, 1991).

Reading comprehension is achieved through three successive stages: the first stage is the pre-reading stage. In this stage, the aim is to prepare students for the reading lesson by activating their prior knowledge. The second stage is the during-reading stage. Here, students can read the text once or twice and analyze strategies that help them to deal with difficulties, to understand, and to make sense of the reading. The third stage is the post-reading stage, where students can summarize, confirm, comment, and evaluate (Goodman, 1998).

At present, the dilemma of reading comprehension both in the global and local community is still prevalent. It seemed endless even in the age of technology. In a study conducted by Hamouda (2023), it was observed that there is a significant weakness in the student's reading skills in general and their micro-skills of reading in particular. She added that during the learning process, students show little interaction and poor participation since they feel that they are trapped in an artificial atmosphere of language classes. Colonet. al. (2020) supported the drive to digitization in his study on mobile-assisted language learning which seeks to enhance the second language or foreign language (L2) reading comprehension. The authors assert that reading discussion improves reading comprehension and that all students achieved higher marks on the post-test as a result of the weekly reading practice and assignments. On the contrary, the study of Salmeron,et. al. (2022) in the United States stipulated that the more frequently students utilized digital tools in their language arts classes to complete more basic tasks, the worse they performed on tests of reading comprehension. This

finding further seeks to prove the efficiency of the digitalization of materials toward the level of reading comprehension of the current study.

In the local setting, there are studies existing that show predicaments in the student's reading comprehension. In an article written by Alerta, and Segumpan(2023), they conducted a study that aimed at creating instructional materials that could increase the level of reading comprehension of the students. There were thirty-eight learners chosen to take the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI) to assess their reading comprehension. It was found out the students fall under the frustration level. It is also important to note that Sara Duterte, the Vice President of the Philippines and at the same time the Secretary of Education of the current administration, released a statement before the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Council (2023) pointing out the negative effect of school closures due to the recent global health crisis in the country affecting the ability of the children to read and comprehend. Her statement was further supplemented by the claim of Idulog,et. al. (2023) stating that due to students' focus and attention being disrupted by cell phones and social media, they have trouble understanding what they are reading. Reading is less common among them as they spend more time on their phones. Furthermore, according to a study conducted by Mule (2014), reading difficulties were caused by a lack of quality English reading material, bad teaching practices, and poor English language development.

Meanwhile, according to recent results from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2023, Filipino students are still among the least proficient in the world in math, reading, and science. The nation's performance in 2018 did not significantly improve as measured by the most current test results. The most recent findings also coincide with the delayed recovery of the Philippine education system from the pandemic, which included a protracted period of school closures that caused learning losses and a sharp rise in the percentage of pupils unable to read. Thus, the Philippines is still among the countries with the lowest proficiency in reading.

Building on this premise, the researchers were prompted to explore the effectiveness of using digital storytelling as a strategy to aid the reading comprehension skills of the Senior High School Students in Salawagan National High School. It is a

public school located in Salawagan, Quezon, Bukidnon (Region X) with a population of 684 senior high school students. Since it is a school located in a far-flung area, no significant studies on reading comprehension have been conducted yet. Although the educators in the institution are exerting their utmost efforts in addressing the reading difficulties of the students, there is no definite strategy introduced to them that will aid them in teaching reading. Moreover, the researchers have observed that despite the combined efforts of both the teachers and the administration in eradicating illiteracy, there are still several students, including Senior High School, who belong among the frustrated readers especially when it comes to comprehension. Although the majority of the Senior High School students mastered their oral reading skills, their weakness in comprehension continues to prevail especially in all their subjects that involve the English language. This, as a result, hinders their engagement during the learning process where they exhibit poor participation and limited interaction in classes. For this reason, the researchers deemed it necessary to address the urgent need to resolve the issue of reading comprehension among the Senior High School students through utilizing an innovative approach that does not only enhance their reading abilities but is also relevant to their digitized generation – the use of digital storytelling.

The researchers strongly believe that this study will serve as a springboard for educational institutions to embrace digitization in teaching reading. This will bring a positive change for both educators and students alike as digital storytelling will not only counter the problem of reading comprehension but also open doors to more technology-driven strategies. The findings of this study will inform and inspire teachers, administrators, policymakers, and most especially the Department of Education to invest time and effort, as well as allocate a generous amount of budget for technology-aided materials that are developmentally appropriate to the students. By acknowledging the benefits of digital storytelling, schools can strengthen their learning environments, promote the engagement of their students, and, most of all, elevate the level of reading comprehension skills of Senior High School students, and even Junior High School ones. The expertise as English teachers and dedication of the researchers in making this study a success allow them to become well-positioned to conduct this research contribute

significant knowledge to the field and initiate progress in reading instruction. Ultimately, this study can raise awareness to schools to reinforce and adapt technology-driven approaches and materials in the teaching and learning process of reading.

Methods and Materials

This study will utilize a quasi-experimental approach using the pretest-posttest design. The researchers adopted this design to meet the nature of the research, which aimed at determining the effectiveness of using digital storytelling in enhancing the reading comprehension skills of senior high school students. A quasi-experimental design is used to understand the causal effect of any policy or intervention, researchers strive to establish an appropriate counterfactual, or what would have happened in the absence of the policy or intervention, to provide a baseline from which causal effects can be estimated (Gopalan, 2020).

The respondents of this study will be the Senior High School Students of Salawagan National High School, Salawagan, Quezon, Bukidnon. The respondents will be randomly selected in each section of the department. Before the experiment, a pre-test will be administered using the 60-item Reading Comprehension test adopted from the study of Rabin Joy Munsod-Fernandez (2021) on the *“Assessment of Reading Comprehension Levels Among Grade 11 Senior High School Students: Towards the Development of Proposed K-12 Context Appropriate Instructional Tool”*. It is divided into six parts, where each part has one reading selection and each reading selection has ten questions. All the reading selections in and questions in the test were based on the reading comprehension competencies of the curriculum guide of 21st Century Literature. After which, the researchers will, then, implement the digital storytelling method to the students, then, a post-test will be done afterwards. The pre and post data will be analyzed using one sample T-test to assess the effectiveness of utilizing digital stories.

Ethical Considerations

Given the nature of the study, there may be occasions when the researcher and informants' intentions are morally dubious and raise more serious concerns, according to Kirk (2007). Informed consent and confidentiality are two potential ethical issues with this study. Everyone who is directly involved in the research or in the proximity of the research must give their informed consent to the

researcher. This guideline shows a significant concern for participant respect, ensuring that they are not forced to participate and have access to pertinent information before providing consent. Regarding confidentiality, information obtained from the instrument will only be utilized for the study and will not be used against the participants' will. During the poll, respondents are free to write or not write their names. The research highlights that participants' involvement is entirely voluntary and unrestricted, and they retain the ability to withdraw or choose not to complete the questionnaires. The school administration gave the study official authorization. Finally, it is stated that the researcher is under no duty to ensure that students who participate in the study do not suffer harm or damage, Marrow (2012).

Results and Discussion

This section discussed the interpreted data analysis and presented the findings of the study. The first table will present the pretest and post-test scores using descriptive statistics. Moreover, the second table will present the comparison of the pretest and posttest scores using inferential statistics.

Table 1 the pretest Scores and the post-test scores

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pretest scores	45	18	43	29.86	6.54
Posttest scores	45	24	46	36.51	5.80

Table 1 illustrates the mean and standard deviation of the respondents during the pre-test and post-test in the assessment of their reading comprehension. It is clear from Table 1 that there is a noticeable difference between the mean scores of the pre-test and the mean scores of post-tests in favor of the post-test. Data shows that during the pre-test, the students' scores got a weighted mean of 29.87 while during the post-test, the mean was 36.51.

Utilizing digital storytelling as an instructional technique enhances teachers' pedagogical understanding. Teachers have the option to provide digital stories to their students as a way to introduce knowledge. This can be used as an anticipatory set or a hook to grab students' attention when presenting new ideas (Robin, 2008). Additionally, it aids in enhancing the comprehensibility of abstract or conceptual material (Robin, 2008). Teachers employing digital storytelling may discover that it is highly advantageous to involve their students in the discourse surrounding the narrative (Choo et. al., 2020). By engaging students in discussions about the digital story, teachers can encourage critical thinking and a deeper understanding of the content. This interactive approach allows students to actively participate in the learning process and contribute their own perspectives and interpretations, fostering a collaborative and dynamic classroom environment.

Table 2 The comparison of the Pretest score and the Post-test Scores

	Mean	SD	t	df	P-Value	Decision	Interpretation
Pretest Scores	29.86	6.54	-10.04	44	.000	Reject the null hypothesis	Significant Difference
Posttest Scores	36.51	5.80					

In comparison, as shown in Table 2, it shows that after the post-test, the scores of the students increased significantly as compared to the scores during the pre-test. As such, the digital storytelling technique enhanced student's performance in the assessment of their reading comprehension skill.

As technology continues to pave its way in the field of education, different virtual teaching strategies have been developed and improvised by educators to integrate technology in teaching (Abojon et. al., 2023; Derasin et. al., 2021; Canque et. al., 2021; Canque et. al., 2023; Ortiz et. al., 2023). As students struggle to comprehend long passages from reading materials, Bilonozhko and Syzenko (2020) in their study, highlight how intentional

technology integration combined with verbal-linguistic intelligence helps students learn the most from the digital content they consume. People differ in how they take in, process, and remember the information that they are given, as learning theorists have shown. Roughly thirty percent of people are verbal learners; they learn mostly by hearing. They dislike written homework, but they enjoy oral presentations and study groups where they may discuss the subject covered in class. The finest teaching methods for experiential learners—roughly five percent of the population—are role-playing games, clinical practice, and moot court. Experienced learners learn by doing and touching. The remaining sixty-five percent of people are visual learners, who use visual aids to help them retain information. Although they struggle to follow oral lectures, visual learners do well on written assignments and can easily recall information that they have read (Bradford, 2004).

The findings drawn from empirical studies indicated that students' absorption and retention are greatly increased when they are paired with teaching strategies that align with their preferred learning styles. By combining traditional and modern storytelling techniques, such as providing digital stories, the content could potentially reduce the reading comprehension difficulties faced by the students. Students' many senses—especially those of audiovisual learners—are catered to through the use of images, animations, narration, and music. According to Morin (2014), multimodal approaches can be quite beneficial, particularly for people who have difficulty reading. According to the whole brain

theory, reading materials having both visual and auditory effects would improve literacy skills. Moreover, digital stories supplement existing instruction by clarifying abstract or conceptual material, according to Robin (2008).

Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings of the present study: (1) the digital storytelling technique was effective in enhancing reading comprehension skills; (2) there is a positive and significant influence of digital storytelling on students' reading comprehension skills; (3) the digital storytelling technique increased students' participation in classroom activities; (4) the digital storytelling technique increased the interaction between the students and the teacher; (5) the digital storytelling technique added positive, interesting, motivational atmosphere to the classroom.

The study revealed that through digital storytelling, the students can improve their reading comprehension. The role of digital storytelling has indeed played a significant part in alleviating the poor reading performance of the students. Reading comprehension skills in the Philippines is an educational issue that must be continually addressed, especially since learners in this generation are already born at the peak of technological advancement. Thus, pedagogical approaches must also adapt to the trends and updates to meet the needs of the learners.

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