

ENHANCING RURAL STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH DIGITAL STORY VIDEO PRODUCTION AS MULTIMEDIA TECHNOLOGY-ASSISTED PROJECT-BASED LEARNING: CONCEPTUAL PAPER

Kennedy Yamil

Faculty of Psychology and Education, Universiti Malaysia Sabah
kenzy142@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

Despite English Language is taught as a subject in the Malaysian primary schools, the language however is often used only during English class and not practiced because there is no call for its use outside the classroom. Based on the perspective of teacher as a researcher, the problem occurred due to the lack of exposure and usage of English Language particularly in the rural area and communities which indirectly affected student's motivation and proficiency in communicating in the language because they have less opportunity to use the target language. Therefore, the researcher proposes a strategy to enhance students' speaking skills through a production of a digital story video project as a consequence of the application of technology and multimedia in a project-based learning task.

Keyword: Digital story, video project, project-based learning, speaking skills, rural school students

INTRODUCTION

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching and learning is getting more prominent in schools in Malaysia. The recent and still on-going Covid-19 pandemic has changed and impacted the education landscape of the country as the paradigm shifts from face-to-face teaching and learning style into remote learning via online or it is well known as the home-based learning and teaching (PdPR) among teachers in Malaysia. The use of digital technology and e-content is no longer a likely alternative as remote teaching has assimilated to become a new norm. We are in the era of digitisation of education (Embracing online teaching during the pandemic: New Straits Times, 2020). For that reason, teachers regardless of level or places of teaching must strive to learn to use and adapt technology in their teaching to enhance teaching and learning whether inside or outside of the classroom.

The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 highlighted students in schools do not only learn how to use ICT but are able to leverage it effectively to enhance their learning. As we are currently in Wave 3 (2021-2025) of the implementation of the blueprint, ICT should be fully embedded throughout the pedagogy and curriculum of the education system.

Technology integration is defined as how teachers perceive and use technology to perform any teaching and learning activities more effectively and how the usage of technology can support the activity (Gilakjani, 2017). In this 21st century teaching and learning, teachers need to be flexible in improvising their teaching. They need to explore beyond the traditional and normal classroom methods and familiarize themselves with new methodologies in keeping with the present era. The use of technology will enhance classroom teaching and learning through "creating opportunities for learners to complete

assignments on the computer rather than the normal pencil and paper” (Ahmadi, 2018, p. 117). It will help to trigger and encourage students’ critical and creative learning thus attaining a meaningful and holistic learning.

In this 21st century teaching and learning, the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching and learning is no longer an option, but it is a must regardless the demography of the schools be it urban, rural or remote rural. Students’ use of ICT is believed to have a positive impact in their learning as “it helps student in enhancing their collaborative learning skills as well as developing transversal skills that stimulates social skills, problem solving, self-reliance, responsibility and the capacity for reflection and initiative” (Ghavifekr & Rosdy, 2014, p. 5).

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Rural primary schools have less exposure of the language because of their environment where the usage of English Language is not prominent. Due to that, English Language may even fall into third language within the rural community. English is not considered as a second language and is not used communicatively due to the frequent use of their native ancestral language in the rural community in Sabah (Ameirul, Suyansah & Sheikh Badrul, 2019). The only exposure these rural students have are only 300 minutes a week of English class at school (Ameirul & Suyansah, 2017). This will indirectly demotivate the students to learn the language (Zein, 2017).

In a rural school in Kudat, Sabah, through an observation and interview, the researcher found out that his students are not interested to speak in the language because there is no one to speak with other than the teacher. The medium of instruction in the village is only their mother tongue and the Malay Language. Therefore, English Language is only seen as a subject taught in school that they need to pass in the written examination. These students are not able to see the usage of the target language outside their classroom hours and this indirectly leads them to not well verse with the usage of the target language in real life situation or tasks. This affected the student’s achievement in the Classroom Based Assessment (CBA). The achievement in the Classroom Based Assessment (CBA) of a class in that school also showed that most students performed poorly in speaking, reading and writing. English is demanding to master because students do not have many opportunities to practice what they have learned outside the classroom (Megawati, 2016)

Furthermore, challenges in education in the rural areas may involve internet and communication access (Soe, 2018). This is the exact case scenario of the researcher’s school. The lack of network coverage limits students in this community from assessing English media due to the lack of network coverage. The economic status is also a factor, where most of the family here do not own a laptop or an advanced smartphone. Technological advances have not been as significant in this area as in the city.

One of the pedagogical approaches to engage students in the rural area in utilizing ICT tools in language learning is through multimedia technology-assisted project-based learning. Multimedia technology-assisted project-based learning will not only expose these students to ICT as visioned in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025, but it would also provide them a chance to conduct and work on a hands-on project that is real life related which will encourage them to practice the target language outside their school hours.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Project Based Learning

The roots of project-based learning are reflected through Dewey (1986) philosophy where students learn through discovery and experience of through hands on approaches (Williams,

2017). Project based learning is a constructivist pedagogy that intends to bring about deep learning by allowing students to use an inquiry-based approach to engage with issues and question that are rich, real and relevant to the topic being studied (Markham, 2012). The learning is based on several theoretical ideas which are active construction, situated learning, social interactions, and cognitive tools as cited in Miller & Krajcik (2019).

In short, project-based learning integrates knowing and doing in learning (Bhagi, 2017) where students apply their knowledge to produce a meaningful project instead of just answering test papers and evaluation of their studies is only based on their marks and grades from the written tests. Furthermore, it does not only support students in gaining deeper insights on their learning but project-based learning is also acknowledged to have the capability of promoting social and emotional learning. Indirectly, project-based learning subsequently “contributes to the development of students’ creativity, internal motivation and interest, responsibility, communication skills with others, social skills, cooperation, and problem-solving ability” (Shin, 2018, p. 97).

Project Based Learning is often described as an alternative for the traditional classroom-based learning of rote learning and rote memorization (Dogara et. al., 2020) as it provokes “the needed level of thinking to apply new knowledge in a problem-solving context” (Bhagi, 2017). The comparison between traditional classroom-based learning and project-based learning approach is summarized in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

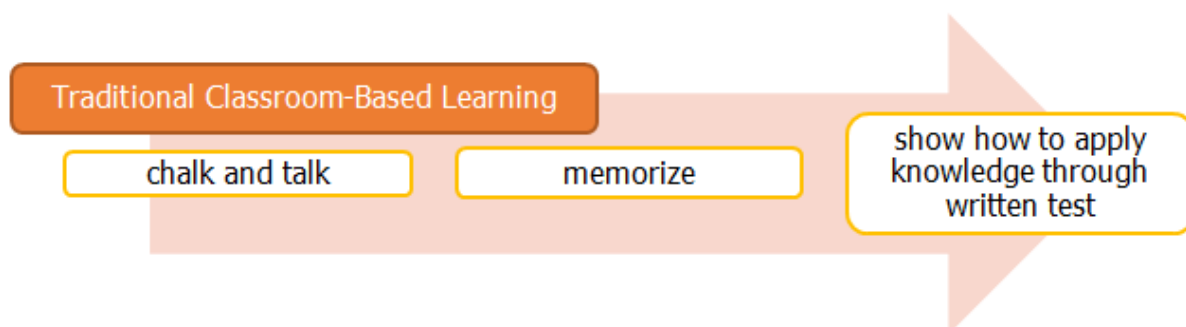


Figure 1: The traditional classroom-based learning approach

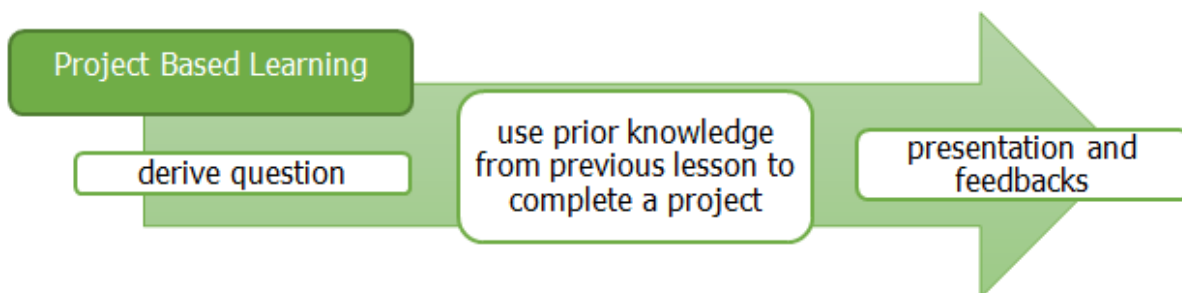


Figure 2: The project-based learning approach

In project-based learning, students are the centre of learning who are learning actively to improve their competences (Koparan & Guven, 2014). It is a method that places students at the pivot of the learning process (Nepal & Jenkins, 2011). Project-based learning focuses on training students for a successful life in a knowledge-based environment, in particular in the fields of problem-solving abilities, teamwork skills, communication skills, resource management skills and personal skills where the teacher usually present challenges in a project-based learning strategy which students need to address the issues together collaboratively in teams (Aldabbus, 2018). Students undertake a problem-solving venture via in-depth project collaboratively with their peers.

The integration of technology in project-based learning

The integration of technology in project-based learning can be categorized into two, it can whether be technology-supported or multimedia technology-assisted (Indrawan, Jalinus & Syahril, 2018). In technology-supported project-based learning, the technologies are often used as communication tools, research tools, scaffolding tools, project management tools, and telecollaboration tools whereby in a multimedia technology-assisted project-based learning, however, such technologies are often used as production tools that enable students to organize and present their research work through multimedia (Indrawan, Jalinus & Syahril, 2018). The current research aimed to implement a multimedia technology-assisted project-based learning where students utilize multimedia devices and software such as computer tablet and video editor app to create a multimedia project. By integrating technology in Malaysian Education Curriculum through project-based learning, student competencies which consist of communication, collaboration, creation and critical thinking can be enhanced (Hoe et. al., 2019).

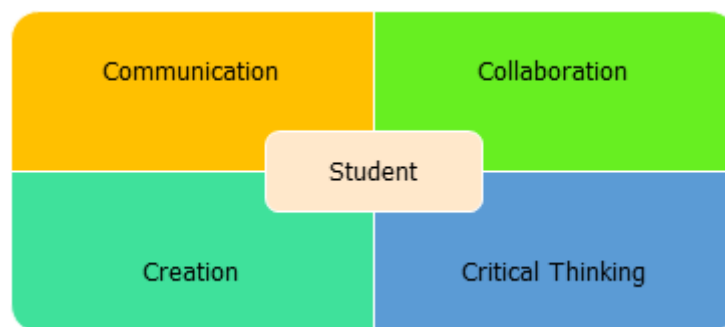


Figure 3: Technology in project-based learning will enhance students' competencies in four aspects (Hoe et. al., 2019)

The implementation of digital story video project as multimedia technology-assisted project-based learning

Digital story is telling a story using multimedia. Multimedia can be described as the combination of various digital media types, such as text, images, sound, and video, into an integrated multi-sensory interactive application or presentation to convey messages or information to the audience (Somjai, Soontornwipast, 2020). The users can combine text, audio, music, videos and pictures to create a digital story (Reinders, 2011).

Teachers can assign students to develop a digital story which can be done individually or in a small group (Robin, 2008). This will improve students' knowledge and academic skills as they would do research on the topic given, search for materials and create a digital story (Alismail, 2015). Aside from that, digital storytelling also promotes 21st century skills such as digital literacy skills, global skills, technology literacy skills, visual literacy skills and information literacy skills (Robin, 2008).

The implementation of the digital story video project as a project-based learning can be put into action based on the syntaxes in project-based learning model which is developed by Hosnan (2016) in Figure 4.

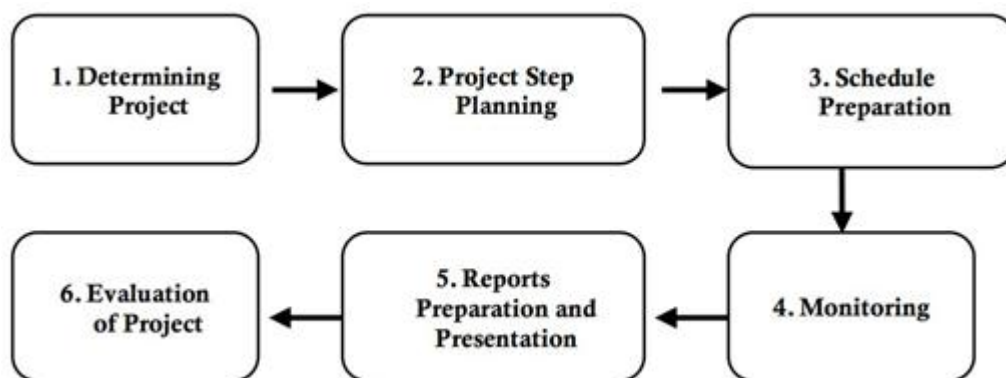


Figure 4: Syntaxes of Project Based Learning by Hosnan (2016)

The implementation of digital story video project based on the Project Based Learning Model developed by Hosnan (2016) could be implemented as the following steps:

1. Determining Project

In this step, the students, in their respective groups, determine the topic of their video project based on the tasks instructed and derived by the teacher. Teacher will first provide the essential knowledge such as the vocabulary that the students will use in their production of digital story. Examples of workable projects are food recipes and village tour hobbies.

2. Project Steps Planning

Teacher provides a video recording and editing course to the students, teaching them on how to use the multimedia tools and software.

3. Schedule Preparation

The teacher provides briefing for students on the timeline of task completion. The task could be done outside their classroom time.

4. Monitoring

Teacher will monitor and facilitate each group progress. Teacher will only act as a facilitator and guide students' whichever area that needed to be guided.

5. Reports Preparation and Presentation

The students need to present their video in the class or to the web.

6. Evaluation of Project

The teacher will evaluate each group's video. During this stage, students are given the opportunity to talk about their experience and reflections after completing the project.

Student crafted digital story video production as a project-based learning in English class

In a project-based learning, students plan, implement, reflect, and evaluate their own learning by working on authentic tasks, such as solving problem or task which is constructed based on real-world issues (Westwood, 2008). It will also elevate student's willingness in learning. A successful implementation of project-based learning can raise students' motivation in learning English by being fully involved (Childers, 2020; Hava, 2019; Shin, 2018; Clark, 2017).

Students' participation in project-based learning using technology has motivated them to learn and incorporate the use of English vocabulary and the actual language in use

when performing a team project (Shin, 2008). A study by Hava (2019) found out that there were significant improvements in students' self-confidence and personal use after the digital storytelling activity. She also found out that digital storytelling could be beneficial for facilitating speaking skills in the target language. Childers (2020) in his research found out that pronunciation would be find great benefit in the implementation of the project. He also added that teacher can benefit from listening to students' pronunciation outside of the pressures of class, and note if there are differences between in-class and out-of-class pronunciation skills.

Another research of integrating video project in a rural school by Santi, Suherdi & Mustapa (2019) also found out that students have an improvement in their English skills upon project completion. It can be noted that such project could enhance students in their language learning. Their research however also exposed limitations of conducting the project. One of the limitations was the difficulties in creating and editing the video as it was their first time in doing an ICT project. Nevertheless, the students were able to finish their video on-time. Besides that, some students also found difficulties in composing the video in the target language; therefore the researcher had to give instruction in L1 but in a little portion. Despite the limitations, students were able to practice communicating in the target language. It gave students, particularly students in the remote rural area to have a chance of utilizing the English Language outside their classroom. The implementation of students' crafted video project would create fun and effective task projects and it help students to improve their speaking skills with less stress (Childers, 2020).

The Implementation of Digital Story Video Production as a Project-Based Learning in Rural School

Since classroom time is limited, out-of-class practice that specifically focuses on speaking is the key to provide more time on the practice (Childers, 2020). Therefore, giving task such as project-based learning would give them time to practice the language even after school as the project would be done collaboratively based on students' preferred time during the completion period.

Table 1 summarizes the lesson plan for the multimedia technology-assisted project-based learning for Year 4 students. The theme and topic are adapted from their English textbook that is provided by the Ministry of Education of Malaysia, Get Smart Plus 4 (Mitchell & Malkogianni, 2019) while the module and skills are adapted from the Primary School (SK) Standard Curriculum for English Language Year 4 (Curriculum Aligned Documents) produced by the Curriculum Development Division of the Ministry of Education of Malaysia.

Table 1: Lesson plan for the multimedia technology-assisted project-based learning for Year 4 based on the textbook and Standard Curriculum for English Language Year 4

LESSON PLAN (PROJECT BASED LEARNING)	
YEAR	Year 4
SUBJECT	English Language
THEME	World of self, family and friends
TOPIC	Module 5: Eating right
MODULE	Speaking
SKILLS	Content Standard: 2.1 Communicate simple information intelligibly Learning Standard: 2.1.3 Give a longer sequence of basic instructions or directions

OBJECTIVES	At the end of the lesson, students will be able to orally give a sequence of basic instructions of a food recipe.
TEACHING MATERIALS	(9) Computer tablets equipped with video and voice recorder and <i>Google Playstore</i> video editing apps such as <i>InShot</i> , <i>Viva Video</i> , <i>Filmora Go</i> , <i>Film Make Pro</i> and <i>Power Director</i> , Get Smart Plus 4 Student's Book,
PEDAGOGY (STRETEGY/TEACHING ACTIVITIES)	<p>Project Based Learning Title: Food Recipe</p> <p>Week 1: Teacher introduces Module 5: Eating Right where students are exposed to the vocabulary intended for the lesson and for the project.</p> <p>Week 2: Teacher divides students into 9 groups and asks each group to prepare a digital story video on a food recipe of their choice based on their creativity.</p> <p>Teacher conducts a video recording and editing course to students. The students are taught how to use the computer tablet that is provided to each group and how to manage and utilize the <i>Google Playstore</i> video editing apps such as <i>InShot</i>, <i>Viva Video</i>, <i>Filmora Go</i>, <i>Film Make Pro</i> and <i>Power Director</i>.</p> <p>Week 3-6: In their respective group, students plan, record, edit and prepare their video. The activity is to be done after school during their free time so that it would not interfere with their other subjects. As these students live nearby to each other and some stayed in the school hostel, it is an advantage for them to gather and discuss. The researcher, who lives in the teacher's quarters also has a flexible time in monitoring and facilitating the students if they needed any assistance.</p> <p>Week 7: Submission and presentation of each group's videos to the class. The videos would also be uploaded in a video sharing platform in the web.</p> <p>After the presentation, teacher conducts a discussion and feedbacks session with the students. The topics of discussion are their experience crafting the digital story video, the problems and challenges that they encountered while completing the project and future improvement and perhaps suggestion on future video topic.</p>

For this project, students are to create and craft a digital story video on a food recipe of their choice. Students are allowed to choose whether to record a video or take photos and arrange them accordingly to make a reel. However, it is a compulsory for them to

include their voice narration inside the video in order for the researcher to evaluate student's speaking ability. The focus of video evaluation would be on the student's pronunciation, the suitability of word, appropriateness of the language and the execution of the video editing.

CONCLUSION

This strategy is expected to motivate rural students to speak in the target language thus enhancing and improving their speaking skills. It is expected to provide adequate information and knowledge which could enhance the teaching and learning process and also to suggest the best teaching activity in encouraging and providing a platform for these rural students to practice speaking and communicating using the target language. It is essential for them to master the language as English Language is deemed to be one of the required skills in today's workforce. The findings and outcomes can offer contribution to the study.

In addition, one of the strategic and operational shifts stated in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 is to bridge the urban-rural digital divide in the country's schools. As this strategy promotes 21st century learning skills and inculcate soft skills in using some multimedia tools and software, therefore this strategy could be one of the ways to promote the shifts mentioned. These skills should be mastered by rural students as their urban counterparts are more advanced with technologies.

Consequently, the use of technology is beneficial and advisable in language learning and teaching. If utilizing digital story project as a project-based learning could improve rural students' speaking and communication skills, then the strategy should be promoted to enhance Malaysian Primary English as a Second Language classroom.

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