

# DIGITAL STORYTELLING IN MALAYSIA: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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## ABSTRACT

Digital storytelling (DST), which utilizes digital media to craft narratives, has garnered significant attention as a promising educational tool. Despite the growing interest in its use, there is lack of systematic examination of how DST can be utilized as a pedagogical strategy in Malaysia education context. To address this gap, this systematic review undertakes a comprehensive analysis of current studies on the topic. Using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, 14 relevant articles were reviewed, drawn from three major electronic databases: Scopus, ProQuest (Education Collection), and Google Scholar. The study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the potential of DST in Malaysia education by examining current trends, implementation strategies and challenges associated with its integration. The analysis indicates growing interest in DST as a pedagogical tool across different level of education throughout the years. DST has been applied in various ways, from student-created digital stories to ready-made digital narratives. However, challenges such as limited time, inadequate digital skills, insufficient infrastructure, and a lack of content knowledge in digital video production have restricted its full potential. This review underscores the importance of addressing these barriers to facilitate broader and more effective implementation of DST in Malaysia education.

**Keyword(s):** *Digital Storytelling, Malaysia Education, Systematic Literature Review, Digital Learning*

## INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, the integration of technology in education has significantly transformed teaching and learning processes across the globe, offering numerous benefits for both educators and learners (Adickalam & Yunus, 2022). The advancement of technology has prompted educators to explore and implement innovative pedagogical strategies to enhance learning. One such emerging and impactful approach is Digital Storytelling (DST), which represents a modern adaptation of the traditional practice of oral storytelling (Smeda et al., 2010). DST integrates storytelling with digital tools, providing educators with a dynamic method to cultivate 21st-century skills among students (Dalim et al., 2019; Robin, 2008). This approach has been incorporated

into a wide range of subjects across all educational levels for its various benefits in cognitive, affective and social aspects (Nasir et al., 2024).

Despite the growing interest in DST, there is lack of systematic examination of how DST can be utilized as a pedagogical strategy in Malaysia education context. The existing studies focus on the role of DST in learning within specific context of study. To address the gap, a comprehensive systematic review on the use of DST in Malaysian education is conducted in this studies. Gaining such an overview is paramount to inform educators on the current trends, implementation strategies and challenges, thereby maximizing the educational benefits in learning. By exploring the experiences of both educators and students, it will provide critical insights into the practical application of DST in educational settings. The findings will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on technology-enhanced learning and lay the groundwork for future research and practical applications in this field.

This study seeks to offer a comprehensive review of the implementation of DST in the Malaysian education system. To achieve this, the following research questions have been formulated.

1. What are the current trends in the use of DST within the Malaysian education context?
2. How is DST being implemented across various educational levels in Malaysia?
3. What are associated challenges with the implementation of DST in the Malaysian education system?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Digital Storytelling***

Digital Storytelling (DST) is a modern educational tool that merges traditional storytelling with various forms of digital media, including images, audio, video, and interactive elements to convey a specific message or theme. It is a combination of the art of telling stories and multimedia elements such as text, pictures, recorded audio narration, music and video to portray a story with a particular theme (Digital Storytelling Association, 2021; Robin, 2016). DST has emerged as a powerful and versatile communication tool across diverse sectors such as in education, business, and community centers. In education, DST allows learners to create narratives using digital tools, enabling a deeper connection with the subject matter through personal expression and creativity (Robin, 2008). The use of technology not only enhances the presentation of stories but also transforms the learning experience, making it more dynamic and accessible.

The application of DST in educational settings offers numerous benefits, significantly in enhancing the learning experience. Incorporating DST promotes interactive learning by encouraging students' collaboration and interaction (Rajendran & Md Yunus, 2021; Setyawati, 2024). Research has demonstrated that DST is able to improve students' communication skills, allowing them to express complex ideas in more relatable and accessible ways (Elyani et al., 2022; Precintha Rubini A/P P. James et al., 2019; Ramalingam et al., 2022). In addition, DST bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application by integrating students' experiences to make abstract concepts more concrete (Elenein, 2019). Sahril et al. (2023) highlight that DST not only aids students in better understanding the material but also boosts their confidence in classroom interactions, fostering a more enjoyable learning environment. Finally, DST engages students by increasing their motivation, curiosity, and confidence in speaking English (Aljaraideh, 2019; Nair & Md Yunus, 2022). Overall, the integration of DST in

education not only enhances students' understanding and engagement but also fosters essential skills, making it a valuable tool for modern, interactive, and effective learning environments.

### ***Digital Learning in Malaysia***

Malaysia, like many other countries, is embracing digital learning as a key component of its educational reforms. The Malaysian government has launched various initiatives to integrate technology into classrooms, including the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025, which emphasizes the need to enhance digital literacy among students and educators (Ministry of Education, 2023). Digital tools are increasingly used to promote active learning, improve accessibility, and support personalized learning pathways through the Digital Educational Learning Initiative Malaysia (DELIMa) platform. Aligning with initiatives under the '*7 Teras KPM*', the Education Digital Policy was launched in November 2023, by Minister YB Fadhlina Sidek, with the aim of cultivating digitally literate generations as well as to encourage educators to integrate technology continuously into their teaching (The Star, 2023). These concerted efforts aim to establish a robust digital education ecosystem throughout Malaysia in which utilizing technology in the classroom present an auspicious approach.

Previous studies revealed that challenges in integrating technology into education in Malaysia still persist. Key barriers to ICT integration include insufficient system support, teachers' reluctance to incorporate technology into lessons, teachers' lack of training in using available computers and software, limited time to prepare lessons due to administrative duties, insufficient time to master new technologies and the varying ability of parents to support technology use in learning, all of which complicate the effective integration of ICT in Malaysian classrooms (Had & Rashid, 2019; Ng & Yunus, 2021; Undi & Hashim, 2021). These challenges highlight the need for more robust support systems, infrastructure improvements, and comprehensive training programs to ensure the effective integration of technology in Malaysia's education system.

## **METHODS AND SAMPLING**

This study adopted a comparative approach, specifically descriptive comparison, to analyze the selected literatures related to DST in the Malaysian education system. This review will critically examine the trends including research methodologies and the implementation processes as well as uncover the challenges encountered in the implementation of DST in Malaysia education context. A systematic literature review was conducted using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 checklist. This framework, comprising 27 criteria, promotes transparency and accuracy in the reporting process to facilitate evidence based decision making (Page et al., 2021). The articles were drawn from the three databases: Scopus, ProQuest (Education Collection), and Google Scholar. A four-phase process guided the literature analysis: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

### ***Phase I: Identification Phase***

The initial stage of the systematic review involved identifying relevant literature. Primary databases utilized for this study included Scopus, ProQuest (Education Collection), and Google Scholar. To ensure reproducibility and replicability, specific keywords were employed in database searches, as outlined in Table 1. These keywords were carefully selected to ensure that the literature retrieved is relevant to the application of DST within the Malaysian education context. Following the keyword search, the total number of retrieved articles was filtered based on publication year (2019-July 2024), document type (article format), and language (English). This

filtering process was crucial to ensure that the selected articles were aligned with the research questions and reflected the most recent findings, thereby maintaining the relevance and preventing outdated information.

**Table 1.** Total number of articles found based on the keywords search

Database	Keywords	Total	Filter by year, type and language	Total
Scopus	( TITLE-ABS-KEY ( "digital storytelling" ) AND ALL ( "Malaysia" ) )	95	37	140
ProQuest (Education Collection)	noft(Digital Storytelling) AND Malaysia	30	13	
Google Scholar	"Digital storytelling" in "Malaysia education"	126	90	

### ***Phase 2: Screening Phase***

After identifying suitable papers in the selected databases, duplicate entries and unretrievable articles were removed. The remaining articles were then thoroughly re-evaluated to ensure they met the specific requirements of the study.

### ***Phase 3: Eligibility Phase***

In the third phase, the collected papers were assessed for eligibility, ensuring they met the inclusion criteria specified in Table 2. This step was crucial to ensure that the data synthesized in this study were both high in quality and reliable.

**Table 2.** Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Studies were conducted in Malaysia.</li> <li>• Participants were from education background.</li> <li>• Provided empirical proof which supports the implementation of digital storytelling in the Malaysia education context.</li> <li>• The purpose, method, participants, and findings expressed clearly, and intelligibly in the research.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research was not conducted in Malaysia.</li> <li>• Participants were not from education background.</li> <li>• Articles were not related to the implementation of digital storytelling in the Malaysia education context.</li> <li>• The articles were review articles, book chapter, book reviews, conference papers or conceptual paper.</li> </ul>

### ***Phase 4: Exclusion Phase***

In this phase, certain articles were excluded from the systematic literature review. The criteria for exclusion are detailed in Table 2. This exclusion process was essential for upholding the quality and reliability of the collected data. A total of 14 articles were identified that provided insights into the implementation of DST within the Malaysian education context as outlines in Table 3.

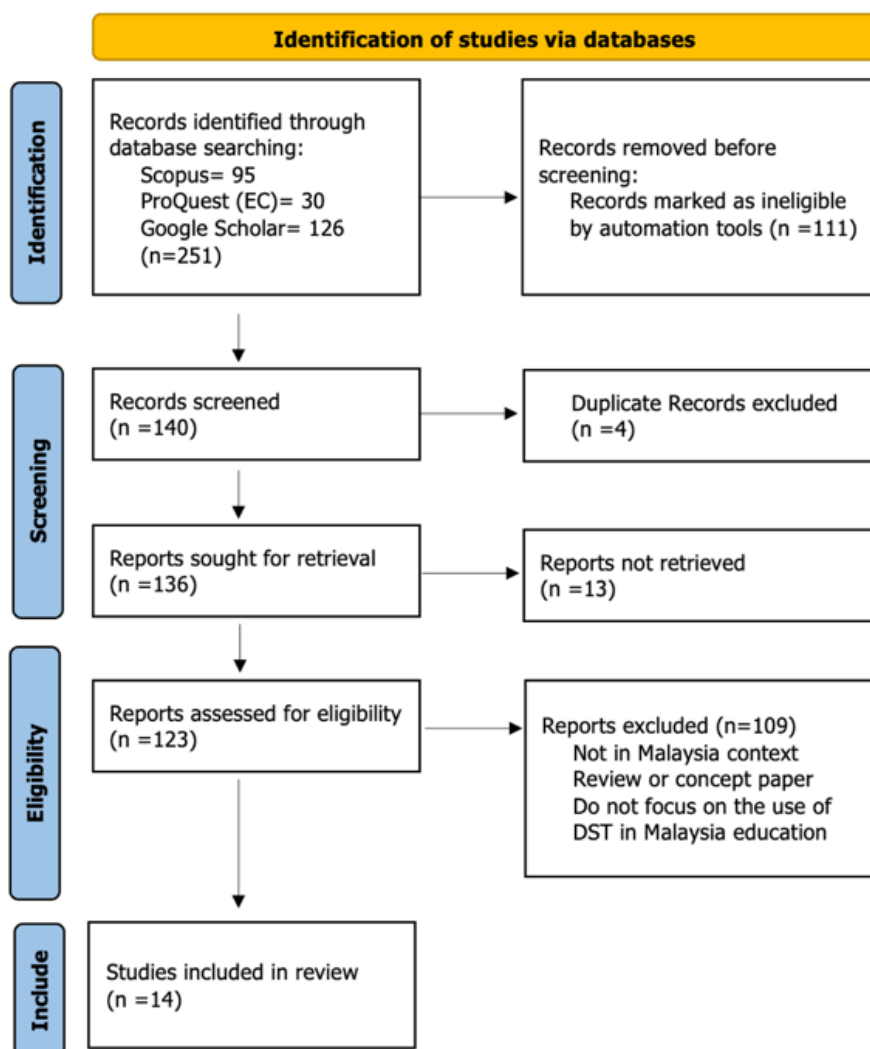
**Table 3.** Overview of the selected studies

Author	Study Context	Participants	Method
(Wan Mohd Nasir et al., 2024)	Science	Secondary	Quan
(Ramalingam & Jiar, 2023)	Tamil Language	Primary	Quan
(Said, 2023)	English Language	Primary	Qual
(Nair & Md Yunus, 2022)	English Language	Primary	Quan
(Ramalingam et al., 2022)	Tamil Language	Primary	Mix

(Zain et al. 2022)	Digital Illustration Concept course	Tertiary	Quan
(Mokhtar & Othman, 2022)	Corporate Storytelling course	Tertiary	Quan
(Khalid & El-Maliki, 2020)	Resource and Information Technology	Tertiary	Qual
(Pandian et al., 2020)	Digital Media Literacy	Secondary	Mix
(Har et al., 2019b)	English Language	Primary	Qual
(Har et al., 2019a)	English Language	Primary	Qual
(Rosli, 2019)	English Language	Secondary	Qual
(Dalim et al., 2019)	21st century skills	Tertiary	Quan
(Rong & Noor, 2019)	English Language	Secondary	Quan

Note on abbreviations: Quan = Quantitative, Qual = Qualitative, Mix = Mixed-Methods,

Figure 1 provides a comprehensive visual overview of the four-phase process used in this systematic literature review, aligning with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 checklist. This visual representation enhances comprehension of the step-by-step methodology, from the initial identification to the final inclusion of relevant studies.



**Figure 1.** Overview of the four-phase process using PRISMA

## FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

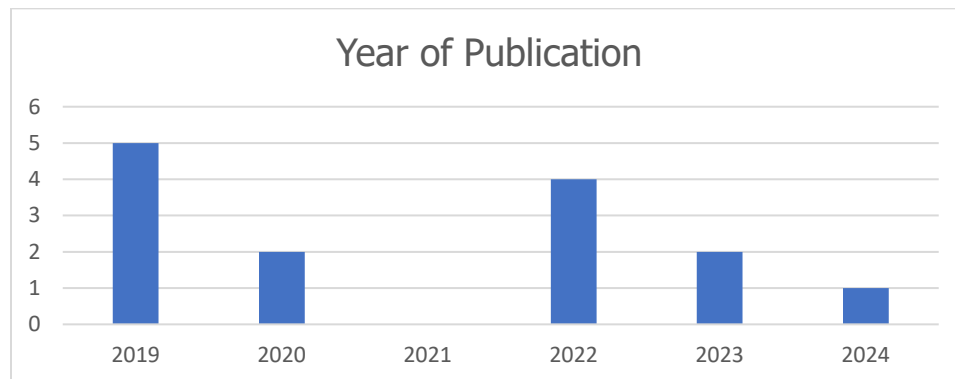
This review contributes to the field by offering a comprehensive picture of how DST is being implemented in Malaysia and how DST can be leveraged to support learning in Malaysia. The finding of the study will be discussed based on research questions.

***RQ1: What are the current trends in the use of DST within the Malaysian education context?***

This research questions will look into the years of publication, the database of article, study context, participants, and research method employed in the studies.

### 1. Year of Publication

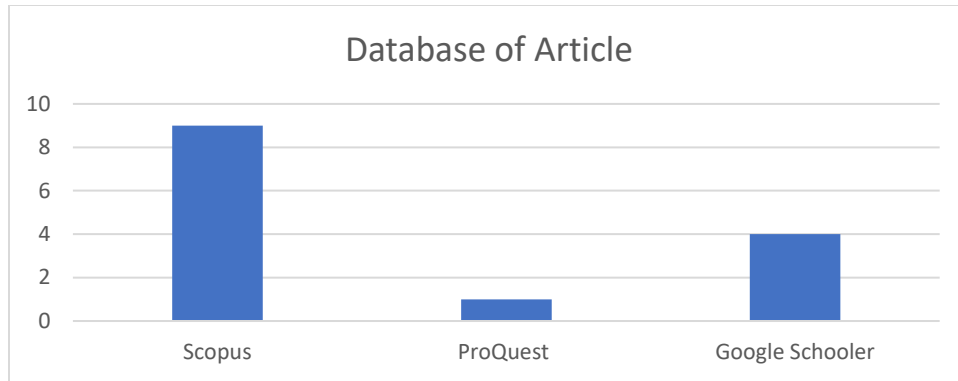
A total of 14 publications were identified over the six-year period, highlighting fluctuating research activity. The data revealed a surge of interest in DST within the Malaysian education context in 2019, followed by a notable decline in 2020 and 2021, possibly influenced by disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. A surge number of publication found in 2022 reflecting strong periods of interest in DST, likely driven by increasing recognition of the benefits of digital tools in education and by the need to innovate during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Though the number of outputs in 2023 is lower than the previous year, it shows that there are still interests on DST studies in the Malaysian education context. In 2024, the search is confined to articles up to July, which may restrict the scope of articles available for the entire year.



**Bar Chart 1.** Year of Publication

### 2. Database of Article

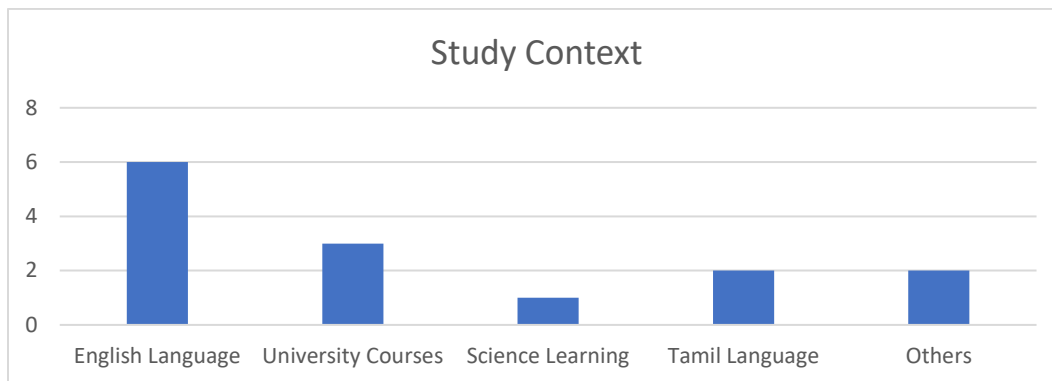
The bar chart illustrates the distribution of the articles across three databases. Scopus database has the highest number of articles, followed by Google scholar, and finally ProQuest (Education Collection). The dominance of Scopus in this systematic review implies that the research is largely of high quality, as Scopus-indexed journals are known for their rigorous peer-review processes and academic standards. The inclusion of articles from Google Scholar and ProQuest adds a broader perspective, offering unique insights particularly on study which are not in Scopus.



**Bar Chart 2.** Database of Article

### 3. Study Context

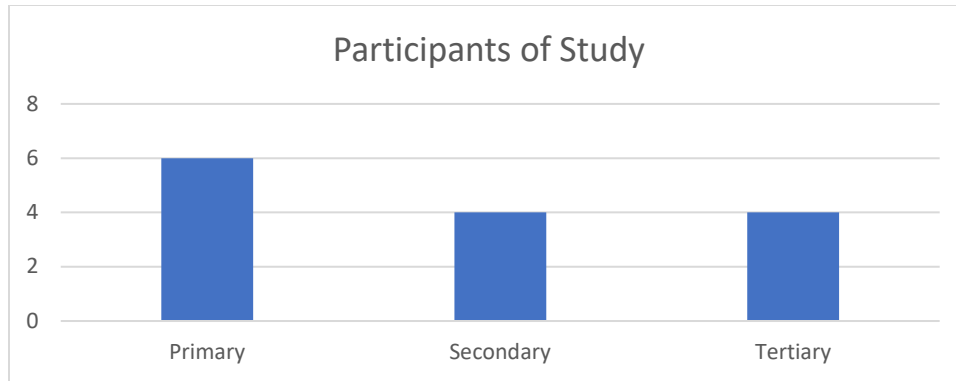
The use of DST in Malaysia education context appears to be distributed across various academic fields as shown in the Bar Chart 3. The highest usage of DST is in the English Language, suggesting that DST is commonly used in English classroom, specifically for enhancing speaking skill (Nair & Md Yunus, 2022), writing skill (Rong & Noor, 2019), vocabulary (Har et al., 2019a) and learning motivation (Said, 2023). Three studies in university courses indicates moderate use, potentially as part of innovative teaching methods or to present complex concepts (Khalid & El-Maliki, 2020; Zain et al., 2022). With 2 instances, DST was employed in Tamil language to improve learners' speaking skill and motivation (Ramalingam et al., 2022; Ramalingam & Jiar, 2023). Finally, DST was also implemented to improve scientific skills (Wan Mohd Nasir et al., 2024) as well as enhance understanding on digital media literacy (Pandian et al., 2020) and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning (Dalim et al., 2019). This implies that while not widely dominant in certain areas, it is being explored in a range of other disciplines. Overall, DST in Malaysia education seems to have its strongest application in language-related fields, especially English and Tamil.



**Bar Chart 3.** Study Context

### 4. Participants of Study

DST is widely applied across all levels of education in Malaysia, with a particular emphasis on primary school learners. DST is most heavily utilized at the Primary level indicating its prominence in engaging younger learners. The use of DST at the Secondary and Tertiary level shows a moderate presence, suggesting its support to the development of digital literacy skills that are increasingly important in the modern workforce. In sums, this suggests that it is seen as an effective tool for engaging younger learners, while its consistent application at the secondary and tertiary levels highlights its adaptability and potential for fostering critical thinking, creativity, and digital literacy as students advance through their education.



**Bar Chart 4.** Participants of Study

## 5. Research Methods

The quantitative research method is the most frequently used in studies related to DST suggesting that researchers prefer to rely on measurable data, statistical analysis, and objective evaluation to assess the impact of digital storytelling. Quantitative methods had utilized survey (Dalim et al., 2019; Mokhtar & Othman, 2022; Zain et al., 2022) and quasi-experimental designs (Nair & Md Yunus, 2022; Ramalingam & Jiar, 2023; Wan Mohd Nasir et al., 2024) to gather the data. The use of qualitative research methods indicates that researchers also explore the subjective, experiential, and contextual aspects of DST in Malaysia education. All the studies had employed a case study design (Har et al., 2019a, 2019b; Khalid & El-Maliki, 2020; Rosli, 2019; Said, 2023) to gain insights into how students and teachers perceive the value of digital storytelling. The use of mixed-method approach implies that only a small proportion of studies (Pandian et al., 2020; Ramalingam et al., 2022) combine both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Mixed methods can provide a comprehensive understanding of digital storytelling by integrating the statistical rigor of quantitative analysis with the detailed insights from qualitative research. The preference for quantitative methods suggests that researchers are focused on determining the measurable impact of digital storytelling, possibly driven by the need for empirical evidence to support educational policy decisions or curriculum changes. While this provides valuable evidence on its effectiveness, there is room for more qualitative and mixed-method studies that explore the deeper, contextualized experiences of both educators and learners. Expanding the use of these methodologies could lead to a more holistic understanding of how digital storytelling functions across various educational levels in Malaysia.



**Bar Chart 5.** Research Method



## *RQ2: How is DST being implemented across various educational levels in Malaysia?*

### **1. Duration of the study**

Studies with specified durations tend to range between 4 and 14 weeks. The shortest duration (4 weeks) was a pilot study (Ramalingam et al., 2022) while the longest duration (14 weeks) was conducted in one of the university courses (Mokhtar & Othman, 2022). The 8 to 10 weeks studies' duration are more commonly used in DST research in Malaysia. This duration is likely sufficient to observe more concrete learning outcomes, such as in enhancing speaking skill (Nair & Md Yunus, 2022; Ramalingam & Jiar, 2023) and vocabulary (Har et al., 2019a). Some of the studies focus on gathering perceptions (Dalim et al., 2019; Zain et al., 2022) which suggests a strong interest in understanding participants' subjective experiences with DST. Gathering participants' perceptions from different level of educations is crucial to ensure that DST remains responsive to the needs and preferences of learners and educators.

### **2. Implementation process of the study**

DST activities in Malaysian education were implemented for multiple purposes. The studies demonstrate various approaches to incorporating DST, from active participation in video creation to the use of pre-developed digital content for skill improvement.

A substantial portion of the studies aims to investigate the effectiveness of DST as an intervention in learning by directly involving participants in the story creation process. Studies by Wan Mohd Nasir et al. (2024) and Said (2023) centre on the video creation process, which required the participants to actively involved in the process of planning and creating video-making. Another study by Nair & Md Yunus (2022) utilized Toontastic 3D, a digital story application. The research participants would discuss in groups via a break-up room (Google Meet) and create 6 digital stories individually. Studies by Khalid & El-Maliki (2020) and Pandian et al. (2020) further emphasize the development of technical skills by having participants use various video editor software such as Powtoon, Pixtoon, and Plotagon to create their stories.

In contrast to the active creation of digital stories, some studies use ready-made or self-developed digital stories for participants to engage with. Studies like those by Ramalingam & Jiar (2023) used the KaniMani Storytelling Mobile Application to improve speaking skills by listening to pre-developed stories. Similarly, Har et al. (2019) used a tablet-based application featuring pre-developed digital stories to help participants improve their vocabulary. Some of the studies were carried out to find the perceptions of the participants on the effectiveness of DST as part of teaching and learning activities for 21st century learning (Dalim et al., 2019) and to enhance understanding on selected topics in the Digital Illustration course (Zain et al., 2022).

The implementation of DST in Malaysian education is diverse and multi-purpose, aiming to improve language acquisition, communication skills, digital literacy, and creative thinking. While the majority of studies emphasize its role as an intervention in active learning, where participants are directly involved in the creation process, some studies focus on the passive use of digital stories. The combination of active and passive approaches ensures that DST remains a flexible and versatile tool in education, adaptable to different learning goals and contexts.

### ***RQ3: What are associated challenges with the implementation of DST in the Malaysian education system?***

The implementation of DST in Malaysian education faces several significant challenges, including time constraints, insufficient digital skills, limited technical infrastructure, and inadequate content knowledge related to digital video production.

One of the most significant challenges is time constraint. The short intervention within the formal school syllabus restricted the depth and richness of the storytelling process (Wan Mohd Nasir et al., 2024). Participants often lack sufficient time for discussions, brainstorming, and in-depth content development, leading to simpler or less creative story content. Many educators perceive DST as time-consuming and unsuitable for their students due to the complexity of managing both content and technical aspects (Said, 2023). Given that DST relies heavily on detailed narratives and multimedia integration, yet often limited by a packed school curriculum.

A recurring challenge is the lack of digital skills among teachers. Some teachers and students prefer traditional methods, such as using a dictionary, over DST due to limited technological proficiency (Har et al., 2019a). Teachers without sufficient technical expertise in video editing software and multimedia tools struggle to guide students effectively through the storytelling process (Dalim et al., 2019; Rong & Noor, 2019). This lack of technological fluency creates a significant barrier to the successful integration of DST, which requires both narrative and technical skills to be effective.

Insufficient technological infrastructure is another significant barrier. Many schools lack the necessary tools, such as projectors, laptops, tablets, and video editing software, which are crucial for implementing DST (Har et al., 2019b; Said, 2023). In addition, internet connectivity issues disrupt the smooth execution of digital storytelling activities, particularly when they rely on online platforms or applications (Ramalingam et al., 2022). This lack of resources forces schools to rely on limited or outdated technology, preventing from fully realizing the potential of DST.

Some participants were not knowledgeable in the content of the digital video which caused them to do extensive research on the topic before creating the video (Khalid & El-Maliki, 2020). Participants also struggled with evaluating the relevance and usefulness of information for their digital stories, as well as expressing their ideas through different modes of visual communication (Pandian et al., 2020).

In conclusion, the successful implementation of digital storytelling (DST) in Malaysian education is hindered by a range of significant challenges, including time constraints, inadequate digital skills, limited technological infrastructure, and insufficient content knowledge related to digital video production. Overcoming these barriers is crucial to unlocking the full potential of DST as a dynamic and transformative educational approach in Malaysia education.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study set out to examine three key aspects of DST in the Malaysian education context: its trends, implementation, and challenges associated. The analysis of DST trends in Malaysia reveals a growing interest in using DST as a pedagogical tool across various educational levels. The implementation of DST in Malaysia's education system varies widely in terms of approach and purpose. In many cases, DST is used as an intervention tool, where students are actively engaged in creating digital stories while in other instances, educators utilize pre-developed digital stories to enhance learning. Despite its potential, the implementation of DST in Malaysia faces several significant challenges such as time constraints, insufficient digital skills, limited technical infrastructure, and inadequate content knowledge related to digital video production.

In conclusion, while DST shows immense promise as a pedagogical tool in Malaysia, its full potential remains constrained by significant challenges. Addressing these barriers, ranging from time limitations and insufficient digital skills to technical infrastructure and content knowledge, will be critical in unlocking the transformative power of DST in education. By overcoming these hurdles, Malaysia can harness DST to foster deeper learning, creativity, and engagement across its educational landscape.

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