

## The Use of Digital Storytelling as an Innovative Tool in Developing Foreign Language Speaking Skills

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**Abstract:** *This study explores the potential of digital storytelling as an innovative pedagogical tool in developing speaking skills in foreign language education. A case study design, a qualitative research method, was employed in order to investigate the experiences and perceptions of students. The research sample consisted of 9 students enrolled in the class of the Faculty of Medical in the speciality of Public Health. The findings revealed that the integration of digital storytelling contributed positively to students' retention of knowledge, their motivation to participate actively, and their willingness to express themselves more freely compared to traditional classroom presentations. Many students reported that the use of digital stories made lessons more enjoyable, reduced speaking anxiety, and offered a more comfortable environment for self-expression. Moreover, the combination of images, music, and narration provided a multimodal learning experience that catered to different learner preferences. In addition, students highlighted that digital storytelling not only enhanced their speaking competence but also improved their self-confidence, technological skills, and preparedness for lessons. While some participants raised concerns that reliance on pre-prepared scripts could limit opportunities for improvisational speaking, the majority viewed the method as both pleasant and engaging. The study concludes that digital storytelling can serve as an effective alternative to conventional presentation methods in foreign language classes. It offers a dynamic, student-centered learning environment that fosters creativity and collaboration. Future research is recommended to expand the scope of digital storytelling applications into other language skill areas such as reading, listening, and writing, as well as to explore its impact across different age groups and educational contexts.*

**Keywords:** *digital storytelling, foreign language, self-expression, active-learning, student motivation, education*

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Received: 11 February 2026; Accepted: 7 May 2026; Published online: 22 June 2026

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# Xarici dil danışmaq bacarıqlarının inkişaf etdirilməsində innovativ vasitə kimi rəqəmsal hekayəçiliyin istifadəsi

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**Xülasə:** Bu tədqiqat rəqəmsal hekayə danışmağın xarici dil təhsilində nitq bacarıqlarının inkişaf etdirilməsində innovativ pedaqoji vasitə kimi potensialını araşdırır. Tələbələrin təcrübələrini və qavrayışlarını araşdırmaq üçün keyfiyyətli tədqiqat metodu olan bir iş araşdırması dizaynı istifadə edilmişdir. Tədqiqat nümunəsi Tibb Fakültəsinin İctimai Səhiyyə ixtisası üzrə təhsil alan 9 tələbədən ibarət idi. Nəticələr göstərir ki, rəqəmsal hekayə danışmağın inteqrasiyası tələbələrin biliklərini yadda saxlamasına, fəal iştirak etmək motivasiyasına və ənanəvi sinif təqdimatları ilə müqayisədə özlərini daha sərbəst ifadə etmək istəklərinə müsbət təsir göstərir. Bir çox tələbə rəqəmsal hekayələrin istifadəsinin dərsləri daha xoş hala gətirdiyini, danışmaq narahatlığını azaltdığını və özünüifadə üçün daha rahat bir mühit yaratdığını bildirdi. Bundan əlavə, şəkillərin, musiqinin və rəvayətin birləşməsi müxtəlif tələbə üstünlüklərinə uyğun multimodal öyrənmə təcrübəsi təmin etdi. Bundan əlavə, tələbələr rəqəmsal hekayə danışmağın yalnız onların nitq bacarıqlarını artırmaqla yanaşı, özünəinamlarını, texnoloji bacarıqlarını və dərslərə hazırlıqlarını da artırdığını vurğuladılar. Bəzi iştirakçılar əvvəlcədən hazırlanmış ssenarilərə etibar etməyin improvizasiya nitqi üçün imkanları məhdudlaşdırma biləcəyi ilə bağlı narahatlıqlarını bildirdilər də, əksəriyyəti metodu həm xoş, həm də cəlbedici hesab etdi. Tədqiqat rəqəmsal hekayə danışmağın xarici dil dərslərində ənanəvi təqdimat metodlarına təsirli alternativ kimi xidmət edə biləcəyi qənaətinə gəlir. Bu, yaradıcılığı və əməkdaşlığı inkişaf etdirən dinamik, tələbə mərkəzli bir təlim mühiti təklif edir. Rəqəmsal hekayə danışma təbiiqlərinin əhatə dairəsini oxu, dinləmə və yazı kimi digər dil bacarıqları sahələrinə genişləndirmək, eləcə də onun müxtəlif yaş qruplarına və təhsil kontekstlərinə təsirini araşdırmaq üçün gələcək tədqiqatlar tövsiyə olunur.

**Açar sözlər:** rəqəmsal hekayə danışma, xarici dil, özünüifadə, aktiv öyrənmə, tələbə motivasiyası, təhsil

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Daxil oldu: 11 Fevral 2026; Qəbul edildi: 7 May 2026; Onlayn dərc edildi: 22 İyun 2026

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## Introduction

Although digital storytelling has been widely explored in foreign language education, most previous studies have primarily focused on general language skills such as writing and overall motivation. Limited attention has been given specifically to its impact on speaking anxiety reduction and oral fluency development in B1-level learners. Moreover, many studies rely on short-term observations or quantitative designs, with fewer qualitative case studies that explore learners' lived experiences in depth. Therefore, there is still a need for context-based qualitative research that examines how digital storytelling influences students' speaking performance, emotional engagement, and classroom participation in real instructional settings. Recent studies on digital storytelling in foreign language education show a growing consensus regarding its positive impact on learners' motivation, engagement, and speaking performance. However, researchers approach the phenomenon from different perspectives. For instance, Lee et al. (2014) focus primarily on speaking accuracy and

pronunciation development, emphasizing that digital storytelling allows learners to repeatedly listen to their own output, which improves oral production. In contrast, Castañeda (2013) highlights the affective dimension of language learning, arguing that digital storytelling significantly reduces speaking anxiety and encourages learner participation. Similarly, Yang and Wu (2012) and Robin (2016) emphasize the role of digital storytelling in enhancing creativity and learner autonomy, suggesting that students become active knowledge constructors rather than passive recipients (Behmer et al., 2012). Aydın (2018), however, extends this discussion by focusing on classroom atmosphere and learner attitudes, stating that digital storytelling contributes to a more positive and supportive learning environment.

More recent studies such as Ali et al. (2025) and Sari et al. (2025) confirm these findings and further emphasize the effectiveness of digital storytelling in improving both speaking and writing skills in EFL contexts. Nevertheless, Mazlan et al. (2025) draw attention to the challenges of digital literacy and technical limitations, which may reduce the effectiveness of implementation in some classroom settings. The literature suggests a strong positive relationship between digital storytelling and foreign language learning outcomes, particularly in terms of motivation, anxiety reduction, and communicative competence (Dhini, 2025). However, there is still a need for more context-specific qualitative studies focusing on learners' lived experiences in speaking classes.

### *Strengthening individual learning*

- Individualizing the educational process
- Increasing motivation
- Facilitating cognitive learning.

It is also emphasized that integrating digital storytelling into the language learning and teaching process positively impacts students' motivation (Babasoy, 2025). It is stated that digital storytelling creates an active classroom environment, supports students' language learning, and is effective in correcting language errors and mistakes that hinder speech. According to Engin (2016), digital stories in foreign language education can support student creativity and provide opportunities for interdisciplinary study.

The digital storytelling method also increases students' interest in language learning. Mammadova and Asadova (2025) stated that teaching English through digital stories improves comprehension and reading fluency skills. In addition, students' vocabulary knowledge was also reported to increase. Holotescu (2014) examined the effects of digital stories on speaking skills and concluded that the digital story method positively impacted students' speaking skills. It was also noted that students better understood and understood grammar rules with this method (Ali, 2025). The positive aspects of the results of studies using digital stories in the literature provide guidance for further research. Considering that each student's individual and linguistic characteristics are unique, digital stories can be said to be an effective method for students. Studies are being conducted on the use of digital stories, which have applications in various fields, in foreign language education.

While previous research has largely focused on the effectiveness of digital storytelling in improving speaking performance, this study distinguishes itself by employing methodological triangulation through the integration of interviews and classroom observations. This approach allows for a deeper and more reliable understanding of students' experiences, perceptions, and classroom dynamics, thereby contributing to the existing literature with a more comprehensive and context-sensitive analysis. The study reconceptualizes digital storytelling as a structured pedagogical process that gradually transitions learners from controlled to more confident speech production (Alkamel, 2020). In this sense, digital storytelling is not treated merely as a tool, but as a pedagogical intervention targeting speaking anxiety. This research highlights a critical paradox in digital storytelling: while it

reduces anxiety and supports fluency development, it may simultaneously limit spontaneous speech production. By identifying this tension, the study contributes a more balanced and theoretically grounded understanding of digital storytelling in speaking pedagogy.

The use of digital stories in foreign language education is seen as important because it provides students with the opportunity to listen to themselves and facilitate active learning (Domalewska, 2024). Despite this, there are few studies in the literature that address the use of digital stories in foreign language speaking education. This study aimed to investigate the effects of the digital storytelling method on the speaking course of students studying in a foreign language preparatory class. For this purpose, student opinions regarding the use of digital stories in a foreign language speaking course were examined.

1. What are student opinions regarding the use of the digital storytelling method in a foreign language speaking course?
2. What are the observed outcomes of students' preparation and presentation of digital stories in a foreign language speaking course?

## Method

### 2.1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative case study design to explore students' experiences with digital storytelling in a foreign language speaking classroom. A case study approach enables an in-depth examination of real-life educational contexts and allows the researcher to investigate complex phenomena holistically. In this study, the case study design is particularly appropriate as it focuses on understanding individual experiences, small group interactions, instructional practices, and the implementation process of digital storytelling within an authentic classroom setting. By examining the phenomenon in its natural environment, the study seeks to capture students' perceptions, emotions, and reflections in a comprehensive and contextualized manner.

The qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews, self-report forms, and classroom observations were analyzed using a systematic content analysis procedure consisting of several stages. First, all interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and observation notes were organized into a coherent textual format. The researcher repeatedly read the data to achieve familiarization and to gain an overall understanding of participants' experiences.

Second, an inductive open coding process was conducted. During this stage, meaningful units of data were identified and labeled with initial codes. These codes were generated directly from the data without using any predefined coding scheme, allowing patterns and concepts to emerge naturally from participants' responses.

Third, the initial codes were reviewed and compared across the dataset using a constant comparison method. Similar codes were grouped together to form categories based on shared meanings and conceptual similarities.

Fourth, these categories were further refined and organized into broader themes that captured the main dimensions of students' experiences with digital storytelling. The themes identified in this study included *personal contributions*, *contribution to the learning environment*, and *problem situations*.

To enhance the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the analysis, the coding process was carefully documented, and expert validation was sought. Two field experts reviewed the coding scheme and thematic structure to ensure consistency and conceptual clarity. Any discrepancies were discussed and resolved through consensus.

Finally, representative excerpts from the participants' responses were selected and presented in the findings section to support each theme and to provide transparency in the interpretation process.

In addition, observation data were analyzed in parallel with interview data to ensure data triangulation. The consistency between observed behaviors and interview findings strengthened the validity of the results.

Guided by a qualitative inquiry framework, the study sought to address the following research questions:

What are students' perceptions of using digital storytelling in foreign language speaking classes?

How do students describe the influence of digital storytelling on their speaking anxiety and motivation?

What challenges do students experience during the process of preparing and presenting digital stories?

These research questions were formulated to elicit detailed descriptions of students' lived experiences and to provide a nuanced understanding of both the benefits and challenges associated with digital storytelling in speaking instruction.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed. Credibility was enhanced through data triangulation by comparing findings from semi-structured interviews, self-report forms, and classroom observations. This triangulation allowed for cross-validation of the data and strengthened the overall interpretation. Nine students were chosen on a voluntary basis to ensure rich, detailed, and manageable data. This approach is consistent with qualitative research principles, which prioritize depth over breadth. The selected participants represented diverse levels of participation, motivation, and performance in the classroom, enabling the researcher to capture a range of perspectives and experiences.

## **2.2. Participants**

The study sample consisted of 9 students from the NSU Medical faculty's students during the autumn semester of the 2025-2026 academic year.

The selection of B1-level learners was considered particularly appropriate for the purposes of this study. At this level, learners possess sufficient basic communicative competence to construct simple narratives, express personal experiences, and participate in guided speaking tasks. At the same time, they still face limitations in spontaneous speaking, which makes them more likely to benefit from structured and supportive instructional approaches such as digital storytelling.

Digital storytelling is especially suitable for B1-level learners, as it provides scaffolding through multimodal input (images, text, and audio), reduces cognitive and linguistic load, and allows students to prepare their speech in advance. This structured preparation is particularly beneficial for lower-intermediate learners who may experience speaking anxiety and limited fluency in spontaneous oral production.

Therefore, selecting B1-level participants ensured that the study captured the effectiveness of digital storytelling in supporting learners at an intermediate developmental stage, where pedagogical scaffolding plays a crucial role in improving speaking performance.

The participants' English proficiency level was determined using institutional placement procedures supported by instructor evaluation. At the beginning of the academic year, students were grouped

according to CEFR-based diagnostic assessment results and classroom performance indicators. Based on this combined evaluation, the selected participants were identified as B1-level learners.

### **2.3. Data Collection**

During the first week of the study, the researcher conducted classroom observations of the traditional speaking lessons to document the instructional methods used, student participation patterns, and classroom behaviors. These observations aimed to establish a baseline understanding of the speaking course prior to the implementation of digital storytelling.

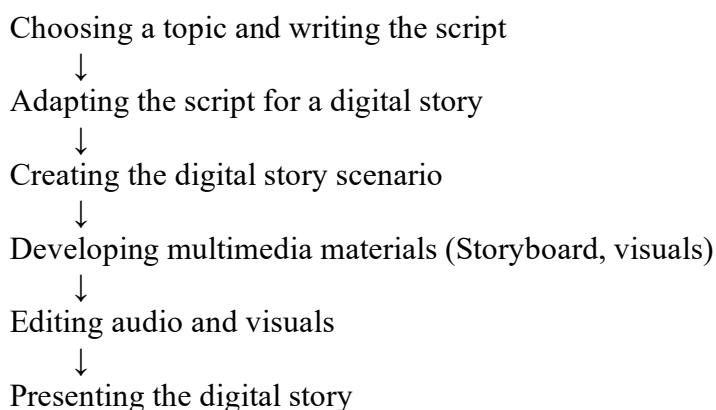
In the second week, students were introduced to the digital storytelling approach and familiarized with the Adobe Express. Adobe Express is a widely used digital storytelling tool in education due to its user-friendly interface and multimodal features. It enables students to combine images, text, narration, video, and music into a single digital story, making it highly suitable for foreign language learning contexts. Digital storytelling has been widely recognized as an effective pedagogical tool that enhances student engagement and motivation (Smeda, 2014). Recent research on Adobe Express for Education indicates that creative digital tools significantly enhance student engagement and communication skills in classroom settings.

One of its main advantages is ease of use, allowing learners to focus on language production rather than technical complexity. The platform offers ready-made templates and simple editing tools, which are especially beneficial for students with limited digital skills. In addition, its multimodal structure supports engagement and comprehension by integrating visual and auditory elements. The voice recording feature allows students to practice speaking, listen to their performance, and improve pronunciation, which contributes to reducing anxiety and increasing self-confidence. The researcher provided hands-on training sessions, including guided instruction and sample demonstrations, to ensure that students understood the basic functions of the program and the stages involved in creating a digital story.

During the third week, students selected their digital storytelling topics in collaboration with the course instructor. This stage involved brainstorming activities and preliminary planning, allowing students to choose topics that were personally meaningful and suitable for oral presentation. Students were also guided in organizing their ideas and drafting initial scripts for their digital stories. From the fourth week onward, students engaged in the digital story production process over a four-week period. During this time, they developed digital stories of approximately ten minutes in length on topics of their own choosing. The process included script writing, visual selection, voice recording, and multimedia editing using Adobe Express. Upon completion, the digital stories were presented in class, providing students with the opportunity to share their work with peers and engage in reflective discussion.

The research process began with the installation and introduction of the digital storytelling software and concluded with the classroom presentation of the completed digital stories. The overall digital storytelling process followed in this study is illustrated in Figure X, which outlines the key stages of topic selection, script development, multimedia production, and presentation.

## 1. Digital story process



## 2.4. Data Analysis

Self-report forms were used to support the qualitative data obtained in the study. In addition, semi-structured interviews constituted the primary data collection tool. The interview protocol consisted of 12 open-ended questions designed to explore students' perceptions of the usability of digital storytelling in speaking classes, its contributions to their language learning, and its influence on students' interest, motivation, and speaking anxiety. To ensure the reliability of the coding process, intercoder agreement was established. In addition to the primary researcher, a second independent coder participated in the analysis process. The second coder, Professor Alaskar Ozperchin, a guest professor at Nakhchivan State University with expertise in applied linguistics, independently reviewed and coded a selected portion of the interview data based on the predefined coding framework.

Following independent coding, the results of both coders were compared to examine the level of agreement. A high degree of consistency was observed between the coding outcomes. Any discrepancies identified during the comparison process were discussed collaboratively and resolved through consensus, which contributed to the refinement and clarification of the coding categories and themes. During the development of the interview questions, three field experts were consulted to ensure content relevance and clarity. The interview questions were subsequently piloted with three students who did not participate in the study to evaluate linguistic clarity, comprehensibility, and the time required for completion. Based on the feedback received, minor revisions were made to the interview protocol. Classroom observations were also employed to gain in-depth and contextualized insights into the instructional process. Observation is defined as a systematic process in which the researcher directly observes the learning environment to collect open-ended and descriptive data (Jones, 2019). In this study, both the pre-digital storytelling speaking lessons and the digital storytelling implementation process were observed to identify changes in student behavior, engagement, and classroom dynamics.

To record observational data, unstructured observation forms were used. During the observation process, the researcher took detailed field notes while students prepared and presented their digital stories. These notes were later reviewed and analyzed to identify recurring patterns and meaningful behaviors related to student participation, confidence, and interaction. The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using content analysis. Students' responses were initially coded, and related codes were grouped to form broader categories and themes that reflected shared experiences and perceptions. To protect anonymity, participants were assigned codes (S1, S2, S3, etc.), and the findings were supported with direct quotations from the interviews.

Observation findings were analyzed in parallel with interview data to enhance data triangulation. The observation notes were summarized under general codes, which are presented in Table 2. Although the frequency of observed behaviors was categorized as *low*, *medium*, or *high* to indicate recurrence, these categorizations were used solely for descriptive purposes and not for statistical analysis. A *high* frequency indicates that the observed behavior occurred in most of the classroom, a *medium* frequency indicates that it was observed in approximately half of the group, and a *low* frequency indicates that it occurred in a smaller portion of the participants.

## Findings

Student opinions on the application of digital storytelling were obtained through semi-structured interviews. The interview findings are presented in Table 2.

**Table 1**  
*Students' Opinions on the Use of Digital Storytelling in Speaking Lessons*

Themes	Codes	f	Sample Answers
<b>Personal Contributions</b> (f=33)	Reducing anxiety (9)		“I had the chance to hear my own voice and pronunciation thanks to the digital story.” (S7)
			“While preparing, we listened to ourselves again and noticed our mistakes. Since this speech was listened to by everyone, it reduced our anxiety.” (S4)
			“When speaking live, I get so excited that I sometimes forget what to say, but in the video I wasn't excited.” (S3)
	Reducing excitement (9)		“I think it is an opportunity for people who feel shy and cannot speak.” (S7)
			“It allows shy students to make prepared speeches instead of spontaneous ones, gradually reducing their shyness.” (S2)
	Increasing interest & motivation (7)		“Since digital storytelling includes music and visuals, my interest increased.” (S5)
	Increasing self-confidence (5)		“Sharing my work with everyone gave me confidence.” (S4)
<b>Contribution to the Learning Environment</b> (f=28)	Technology use (3)		“It helps us use technology better and benefit more from developing technology.” (S4)
	Effective learning environment (9)		“We can support our topic with pictures and music while presenting.” (S3)
			“It allows us to easily express our ideas on any topic with the help of pictures and music.” (S2)
	Coming prepared to class (7)		“In speaking lessons, we sometimes prepared during recess very spontaneously. But in digital story activities, we come prepared and after researching. I think this also affected our efficiency.” (S3)
Fun learning environment (5)			“It made the monotonous lesson more interesting.” (S2)
			“It was a nice and instructive activity, and also enjoyable to watch.” (S8)

<b>Problem Situations (f=11)</b>	Easy-to-use program (3)	“It is an easy program for preparing a short story.” (S6)
	Adaptability to other courses(4)	“In listening classes, students’ comprehension can be tested by listening to the sound without subtitles while showing only the pictures.” (S9) “I believe it can also help in writing and reading lessons, not just speaking.” (S2)
	Voice problems (6)	“I had many problems during voice recording.” (S2)
	Music adding problems (2)	“It was difficult for me to record separate voices for each picture.” (S6) “I couldn’t adjust the music.” (S3)
	Program installation problems (1)	“I had a problem installing the program.” (S1)
	Preventing improvisation (4)	“In this program, people just read the texts in front of them, maybe it’s good for reading lessons but I don’t think it contributes to improvisational speaking.” (S9) “It can definitely be useful in other lessons, but for speaking I don’t think so, because no one spoke spontaneously.” (S5)

Based on semi-structured interviews conducted with students, digital stories were evaluated under the general headings of personal contributions, contribution to the learning environment, and problem situations.

Table 1 shows that the digital story activity contributed most to students' personal development. In this dimension, students reported that the factors of anxiety and excitement that negatively affected them decreased, while their interest, motivation, and self-confidence increased, and they used technology better thanks to this activity.

Another impact of the digital storytelling process has been on the learning environment (Nuri, 2024). The view that digital stories provide a more effective learning environment with the visual and audio presentation opportunity is widely accepted by the students interviewed. There are also opinions that digital stories make the lesson more enjoyable and provide shy students with the opportunity to express themselves. Students report that digital stories help them speak more fluently and correct their pronunciation errors. They also stated that because they have the opportunity to listen to themselves repeatedly during preparation and presentation, they can more easily identify and correct their own mistakes, which allows them to come to class prepared.

The negative experiences reported regarding digital stories center around technical problems encountered during the implementation process (sound, music, and setup). Some students also described the implementation of digital stories in a speaking class as an obstacle to improvisational speaking. Therefore, they suggested implementing them in other courses (Ismayilli, 2025). Various suggestions are offered regarding the implementation process and the use of digital stories in different courses, such as writing and reading.

Findings regarding the observed situations during the preparation and presentation processes of students' digital stories in a foreign language speaking class. The findings obtained from the seven-week observation period within the scope of the study are presented under this heading.

**Table 2**

Theme	Observed Situation	Frequency of observation	
		Little/medium/a lot	
Personal Contributions	Decreased in anxiety		+
	Pre-class preparation		+
Contribution to the learning environment	fun process		+
	increase in technology use		+
	interest increase		+
Problem case	Program installation	+	
	voice problems		+

*Situations Observed During the Digital Story Implementation Process*

When Table 2 is examined, students' increased interest, increased use of technology, and an enjoyable lesson experience are frequently observed.

Before the implementation, it was observed that students were excited during the mini-drama activities, some forgot what they were going to say, and pre-class breaks were used for preparation. In the digital stories, students presented videos they created after a specific preparation process, making them more confident. It was observed that students who were shy in class found opportunities to express themselves through the applications they prepared, and their anxiety decreased. It was noted that students enjoyed the research process, the audio recordings, and the presentations. The students' choice of interesting topics (such as a wedding ceremony, interesting festivals, the university registration journey, the introduction of a famous person) and the presentations supported by images and music made the lesson more enjoyable.

Installation and audio problems observed during the implementation were evaluated within the framework of the problem situations theme. Following the program installation and introduction lesson given at the beginning of the process, students were asked to perform sample applications. Learning to use a new program, conducting online research, and recording audio and combining it with content require students to use more technology than with the current system. Hardware deficiencies, particularly audio problems, operating system problems, installation problems, and problems with synchronizing recordings and visuals were encountered throughout the process, although these were rare. Students who had little use of technology in the current system asked the researcher questions about the program's installation and use during the first two weeks of their encounter with a new program. During the implementation period, some students stated that the program was very practical and that they would continue to use it after the implementation.

## Discussion

The findings revealed that digital storytelling contributed significantly to students' personal development, particularly in reducing speaking anxiety and excitement, increasing motivation, self-confidence, and facilitating the use of technology. Students also reported that the multimodal nature of digital storytelling (integration of visuals, music, and narration) created a more supportive and engaging speaking environment.

The reduction in speaking anxiety can be explained through Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 2011), which suggests that multimodal input reduces learners' cognitive burden. In digital storytelling, students are not required to produce spontaneous speech under pressure; instead, they prepare and rehearse their output, which decreases anxiety and increases fluency. This finding is consistent with Aydın (2006) and Kartikasari et al. (2025), who highlight speaking anxiety as a major barrier in foreign language learning.

In addition, increased motivation and self-confidence can be interpreted through Constructivist Learning Theory, which emphasizes that learners become more motivated when they actively construct meaning and produce authentic content. Digital storytelling places students in an active role as creators rather than passive recipients of knowledge, which enhances ownership and engagement. This aligns with Lee (2014) and Castañeda (2013), who found that digital storytelling increases learner motivation and participation in foreign language classrooms.

The second major theme indicates that digital storytelling created a more interactive, enjoyable, and well-prepared learning environment. Students emphasized that they came to class more prepared, engaged in meaningful research, and experienced a more enjoyable classroom atmosphere compared to traditional speaking activities.

This improvement in classroom engagement can be explained through Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasizes the role of mediated learning and social interaction. Digital storytelling provides scaffolding through technology, peer collaboration, and teacher guidance, allowing students to operate within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). As a result, learners are able to perform beyond their independent speaking ability.

Furthermore, the multimodal structure of digital storytelling supports multimedia learning principles (Mayer, 2001), which state that combining visual and auditory input enhances comprehension and retention. This explains why students perceived lessons as more enjoyable and effective.

The findings are consistent with Jones (2009) and Lee (2014), who reported that digital storytelling improves communication skills, organization of ideas, and learner engagement by providing structured yet creative speaking opportunities.

Despite its positive effects, students reported several challenges, including technical issues (audio recording, music integration, software installation) and concerns about reduced improvisational speaking opportunities.

These technical difficulties reflect the importance of digital literacy competence in technology-enhanced learning environments. According to Mazlan et al. (2025), insufficient technological skills may hinder the effectiveness of digital storytelling implementation, particularly in contexts where students have limited prior experience with multimedia tools.

The concern regarding lack of improvisation is theoretically linked to the distinction between planned versus spontaneous speech production. While digital storytelling supports accuracy and fluency through preparation, it may reduce opportunities for real-time communicative spontaneity. This

concern is also noted in speaking pedagogy literature, where spontaneous interaction is considered essential for communicative competence development.

## **Conclusion**

This study investigated the use of digital storytelling as an innovative pedagogical tool for developing foreign language speaking skills. Speaking is widely recognized as one of the most challenging skills in language learning due to its cognitive and affective demands.

The findings of the study reveal that digital storytelling has a positive impact on students' speaking development. In particular, it contributes to reducing speaking anxiety and excitement, increasing motivation and self-confidence, and improving students' engagement in classroom activities. The multimodal nature of digital storytelling, combining visuals, audio, and narration, helps create a more supportive and interactive learning environment.

In addition, the study indicates that digital storytelling promotes learner autonomy and active participation. Students become more responsible for their own learning process through activities such as topic selection, script writing, and multimedia production. This process also supports the development of digital literacy skills, creativity, and collaboration among learners.

However, the findings also highlight some limitations. Technical problems such as difficulties in audio recording, software use, and synchronization issues were observed. Furthermore, some students noted that digital storytelling may limit opportunities for spontaneous speaking, as it is based on pre-prepared scripts. Therefore, it should be used as a complementary method alongside traditional speaking activities to ensure a balanced development of communicative competence.

In conclusion, digital storytelling can be considered an effective and engaging instructional approach in foreign language speaking classes. It provides both linguistic and affective benefits by enhancing students' confidence, motivation, and participation. Future research is recommended to examine its effectiveness in other language skills such as reading, writing, and listening, as well as in different proficiency levels and educational contexts.

## **Implications and Limitations**

### **Implications**

The study's findings have several important implications for foreign language teaching. First, digital storytelling can be effectively integrated into speaking classes to create a more engaging and anxiety-reducing learning environment. By allowing students to plan, record, and revise their speech before presentation, this approach supports the gradual development of speaking confidence, particularly among shy learners.

Second, the multimodal nature of digital storytelling, which combines narration, visuals, and audio, enhances students' comprehension and communicative expression. This suggests that teachers should incorporate multimedia-supported tasks to increase learner engagement and improve oral performance.

Furthermore, digital storytelling promotes creativity, learner autonomy, and classroom participation while also strengthening students' digital literacy skills. Therefore, it is recommended that foreign language instructors use digital storytelling as a supplementary instructional strategy alongside traditional speaking activities.

Finally, the integration of digital storytelling can extend beyond speaking instruction and be adapted to develop other language skills such as writing, reading, and listening, thereby contributing to a more holistic language learning process.

This study has several limitations. First, the sample was limited to 9 students from a single university, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study was conducted over a period of seven weeks, which does not allow for conclusions about the long-term effects of digital storytelling on language learning. Finally, some technical difficulties were encountered during the implementation process, particularly related to audio recording, music integration, and software installation, which may have influenced students' overall experience.

**Ethical Issues: Ethical permission for this study was attained from Nakhchivan State University's Ethical Committee on 23/10/2025 with decision number 2025-06.**

Conflict of Interest: The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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