

Research Article

Digital Storytelling and Vlogging as Sociocultural Catalysts for EFL Speaking Proficiency, Engagement, and Multimodal Communicative Competence in the Contemporary Globalized Classroom

Farah Al Nouri ¹

¹Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina

Abstract



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The growing dominance of English as a global lingua franca has intensified the need for effective pedagogical strategies that can enhance English as a Foreign Language learners speaking proficiency, communicative confidence, and engagement within diverse sociocultural contexts. Traditional language teaching methods have often struggled to provide learners with authentic, meaningful, and socially situated opportunities to use English in ways that reflect real world communicative demands. In response to this challenge, recent scholarship has increasingly highlighted the pedagogical potential of digital storytelling and vlogging as multimodal, socially embedded, and learner centered practices capable of transforming English language learning. Grounded in sociocultural theory, constructivist learning principles, and experiential learning frameworks, this study presents an extensive theoretical and methodological investigation into how digital storytelling and vlog based pedagogies function as mediational tools that facilitate speaking development, learner engagement, and communicative competence.

Drawing exclusively on the corpus of literature provided in the reference list, this article synthesizes and extends empirical and theoretical insights from research on cooperative storytelling, digital literacies, multimodal composition, social media mediated communication, and learner engagement. It argues that digital storytelling and vlogging serve not merely as technological add ons but as deeply transformative pedagogical ecosystems in which learners co construct meaning, negotiate identity, and develop language through socially situated practice. By situating learners within their zones of proximal development through collaborative production, peer feedback, and authentic audience interaction, these approaches operationalize Vygotskian principles of scaffolding and mediation while also aligning with Piagetian constructivism and Kolbs experiential learning cycle.

Methodologically, the article proposes a qualitative dominant, mixed interpretive framework grounded in thematic analysis to explore learner narratives, spoken performances, and engagement patterns. The findings, presented through detailed descriptive analysis, indicate that digital storytelling and vlogging significantly enhance learners oral fluency, narrative coherence, pragmatic competence, willingness to communicate, and affective engagement. Moreover, these practices foster intercultural awareness, digital literacy, and learner autonomy, thereby contributing to holistic communicative competence.

The discussion situates these findings within broader debates on method and postmethod pedagogy, equitable learner centered education, and the sociopolitical dimensions of English as a global language. Limitations related to access, teacher expertise, and assessment are critically examined, and future research directions are outlined. Ultimately, the study concludes that digital storytelling and vlogging represent powerful sociocultural catalysts for reimagining EFL speaking instruction in ways that are pedagogically sound, socially relevant, and aligned with the communicative realities of the digital age.

Keywords: Marital rape, consent, intimate partner violence, gender justice, mental health, legal reform

INTRODUCTION

The unprecedented global spread of English has fundamentally reshaped the goals, practices, and sociopolitical implications of language education. English is no longer merely a foreign language taught for academic purposes; it has become a central medium for global communication, economic participation, cultural exchange, and digital interaction. Salomone and Salomone argue that the rise of English is deeply embedded in global politics and power relations, positioning English as both an opportunity and a challenge for learners across diverse contexts (Salomone and Salomone, 2022). In this environment, the ability to speak English fluently, confidently, and appropriately in a range of communicative situations has become one of the most valued competencies in education systems worldwide. Yet, despite decades of pedagogical innovation, developing speaking proficiency remains one of the most persistent challenges in English as a Foreign Language classrooms.

Traditional speaking instruction has often relied on decontextualized drills, scripted dialogues, and teacher controlled interaction patterns that offer limited opportunities for meaningful communication. Such approaches tend to prioritize accuracy over communicative effectiveness and often fail to engage learners emotionally, socially, and cognitively. Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris conceptualize engagement as a multidimensional construct encompassing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, all of which are essential for sustained learning (Fredricks et al., 2004). However, many conventional speaking activities struggle to activate these dimensions simultaneously, resulting in passive participation, anxiety, and limited language development.

Against this backdrop, digital storytelling and vlogging have emerged as powerful pedagogical practices that can address these limitations by embedding speaking within authentic, creative, and socially meaningful contexts. Digital storytelling refers to the process of creating and sharing narratives using digital tools, integrating spoken language with images, video, music, and text to produce multimodal stories (Hafner, 2014; Fu et al., 2022). Vlogging, or video blogging, involves the regular production of personal or thematic video entries shared on social media or learning platforms, providing learners with opportunities to speak for real audiences in self directed and expressive ways (Loreto, 2022; Jin, 2024).

The pedagogical significance of these practices lies not only in their technological affordances but in their alignment with key theories of learning. Vygotskys sociocultural theory emphasizes that higher mental functions develop through social interaction and mediated activity within the zone of proximal development, where learners can perform beyond their independent capabilities with appropriate support (Vygotsky, 1978; Silalahi, 2019). Digital storytelling and vlogging create precisely such mediated environments by enabling collaboration, peer feedback, and teacher scaffolding within meaningful communicative tasks. Similarly, Piagets constructivist view of learning as the active construction of knowledge through interaction with the environment finds expression in the way learners design, script, and revise their digital narratives (Piaget, 1970). Kolbs experiential learning theory further highlights how concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation form a cyclical process that digital storytelling naturally embodies (Kolb, 2014).

Empirical research increasingly supports the effectiveness of these approaches for improving speaking proficiency. Fu, Yang, and Yeh demonstrate that digital storytelling enhances learners oral fluency, pronunciation, and narrative coherence by providing repeated opportunities for meaningful spoken production (Fu et al., 2022). Huang shows that digital storytelling also increases willingness to communicate and group cohesion, suggesting that its impact extends beyond linguistic outcomes to affective and social dimensions of learning (Huang, 2023). Vlogging studies similarly indicate significant gains in conversational skills, speaking confidence, and pragmatic competence, as learners engage in sustained, self directed oral communication for real or imagined audiences (Choi and Sinwongsuwan, 2024; Jin, 2024).

Despite this growing body of research, there remains a need for a comprehensive, theoretically grounded synthesis that situates digital storytelling and vlogging within broader frameworks of language learning, engagement, and sociocultural development. Much of the existing literature focuses on specific interventions or contexts, leaving unanswered questions about how these practices function as integrated pedagogical systems. Moreover, there is a need to critically examine how digital storytelling and vlogging intersect with issues of power, identity, and global English, particularly in light of the increasing role of social media in shaping communicative norms (Meikle, 2024; Zhiri, 2024).

The present study seeks to address these gaps by developing an extensive, publication ready analysis of digital storytelling and vlogging as sociocultural catalysts for EFL speaking development. Drawing strictly on the provided references, it explores how these practices mediate learning within the zone of proximal development, foster engagement, and cultivate multimodal communicative competence. By integrating theoretical perspectives from Vygotsky, Piaget, Bruner, Kolb, and contemporary language pedagogy, the article aims to provide a holistic understanding of why and how digital storytelling and vlogging can transform EFL speaking instruction in the contemporary globalized classroom.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological framework of this study is grounded in a qualitative dominant, interpretive research paradigm that is particularly suited to investigating complex, socially situated learning phenomena such as digital storytelling and vlogging. Given that the focus of the study is on understanding how these pedagogical practices shape speaking proficiency, engagement, and communicative competence, a purely quantitative approach would be insufficient to capture the richness of learner experiences, interactional dynamics, and multimodal meaning making processes. Instead, the methodology draws on principles of thematic analysis, narrative inquiry, and sociocultural interpretation as articulated in the works of Braun and Clarke and others within qualitative research traditions (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The conceptualization of data in this framework extends beyond test scores or discrete linguistic measures to include spoken narratives, vlog recordings, learner reflections, peer interactions, and teacher observations. Digital storytelling projects and vlogs are treated as multimodal ensembles that embody learners linguistic, cognitive, emotional, and cultural resources (Hafner, 2014; Liang and Hwang, 2023). By analyzing these artifacts and the processes through which they are created, the study seeks to uncover patterns of language development, engagement, and social mediation.

The thematic analysis approach proposed by Braun and Clarke provides a flexible yet rigorous method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting recurring patterns within qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In the context of digital storytelling and vlogging, themes may emerge related to learner agency, collaborative scaffolding, narrative identity, affective engagement, and communicative risk taking. The process begins with familiarization with the data through repeated viewing and listening to digital stories and vlogs, followed by initial coding that captures meaningful features of the data. These codes are then organized into broader themes that reflect theoretically significant aspects of the learning process.

This analytical framework is explicitly informed by sociocultural theory, which emphasizes that language development is mediated by cultural tools, social interaction, and shared activity (Vygotsky, 1978). Digital technologies, narrative genres, and social media platforms are conceptualized as mediational means that shape how learners think, speak, and interact. For example, the ability to pause, rehearse, and edit a vlog provides learners with opportunities for self regulation and reflection that are not always available in spontaneous classroom interaction (Jin, 2024). Similarly, collaborative digital storytelling tasks create spaces for peer scaffolding, where more proficient learners or those with stronger digital skills can support others within their zone of proximal

development (Borthick et al., 2003; Silalahi, 2019).

The methodological design also draws on experiential learning theory, which views learning as a cyclical process of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation (Kolb, 2014). Digital storytelling projects typically involve learners in concrete experiences of planning, recording, and presenting stories, followed by reflection through peer feedback and self assessment. These reflections then inform conceptual understanding of language use and narrative structure, which is subsequently tested and refined in future storytelling or vlogging tasks. By analyzing this cycle across multiple projects, the study can trace how learners speaking proficiency and communicative strategies evolve over time.

To ensure analytic rigor and credibility, the methodology incorporates strategies such as triangulation, thick description, and reflexive interpretation. Triangulation involves comparing data from multiple sources, such as learner narratives, teacher observations, and engagement indicators, to validate emerging themes (Fredricks et al., 2004; Huang, 2023). Thick description provides detailed accounts of learning contexts and interactions, allowing readers to assess the transferability of findings to other settings. Reflexivity acknowledges the researchers interpretive role in constructing meaning from the data, aligning with contemporary qualitative research principles.

Although this article does not present new empirical data, it adopts this methodological stance to synthesize and reinterpret the findings of the referenced studies in a coherent, theoretically grounded manner. By treating the existing literature as a corpus of qualitative evidence, the study applies thematic and sociocultural analysis to generate new insights into the pedagogical dynamics of digital storytelling and vlogging.

RESULTS

The synthesis and interpretive analysis of the referenced literature reveal a rich and multifaceted set of outcomes associated with the use of digital storytelling and vlogging in EFL contexts. These outcomes extend beyond simple improvements in speaking accuracy or vocabulary acquisition to encompass broader dimensions of communicative competence, learner engagement, identity construction, and social participation. The results can be organized around several interrelated themes that emerge consistently across studies, each of which illuminates a different aspect of how these pedagogical practices function as catalysts for language development.

One of the most salient findings is the substantial enhancement of speaking proficiency in terms of fluency, coherence, pronunciation, and pragmatic appropriateness. Fu, Yang, and Yeh report that learners engaged in digital storytelling demonstrate significant gains in oral fluency and narrative organization, as the process of scripting, rehearsing, and recording stories encourages repeated, meaningful language use (Fu et al., 2022). This iterative practice allows learners to refine their spoken output, experiment with different expressions, and receive feedback from peers and teachers, leading to more accurate and confident speech. Similarly, Bordeos and colleagues show that cooperative storytelling strategies improve learners speaking proficiency by situating oral production within collaborative narrative construction, where learners negotiate meaning and support one another linguistically (Bordeos et al., 2023).

Vlogging studies further corroborate these findings by highlighting improvements in conversational skills and spontaneous speech. Choi and Sinwongsuwan demonstrate that vlogging serves as an effective alternative to traditional role play, enabling learners to engage in extended, authentic spoken interaction that mirrors real life communication (Choi and Sinwongsuwan, 2024). Jin similarly finds that vlogging enhances both speaking proficiency and affective outcomes, as learners become more comfortable expressing themselves on camera and addressing an audience (Jin, 2024). These results suggest that the multimodal and socially situated nature of vlogging reduces anxiety and increases opportunities for meaningful oral practice.

Another prominent theme is the increase in learner engagement across behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. Digital storytelling projects require learners to

actively participate in planning, creating, and presenting narratives, which naturally fosters behavioral engagement through sustained effort and task involvement (Nair and Md Yunus, 2022). Emotionally, learners often report heightened interest, enjoyment, and sense of ownership over their work, as they are able to express personal experiences, cultural identities, and creative ideas through their stories (Huang, 2023; Zhiri, 2024). Cognitively, the complex demands of integrating language, visuals, and narrative structure stimulate deeper processing and strategic thinking, aligning with Fredricks et al. conceptualization of engaged learning (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Group cohesion and social connectedness also emerge as important outcomes of digital storytelling. Huang shows that collaborative storytelling tasks enhance group cohesion by creating shared goals and mutual dependence among learners, which in turn supports willingness to communicate (Huang, 2023). Jao, Chen, and Yeh extend this insight to cross cultural digital storytelling projects, where learners from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds collaborate to produce bilingual narratives, leading to increased intercultural understanding and communicative sensitivity (Jao et al., 2024a). These social dimensions of engagement are particularly important in EFL contexts, where learners may otherwise have limited opportunities to use English for meaningful interaction.

The development of multimodal communicative competence is another significant result. Digital storytelling and vlogging require learners to coordinate spoken language with visual, textual, and auditory elements, thereby expanding their repertoire of meaning making resources (Hafner, 2014; Liang and Hwang, 2023). This multimodal competence is increasingly essential in contemporary communication, where social media, video platforms, and digital narratives dominate public discourse (Meikle, 2024). By learning to design and interpret multimodal texts, EFL learners gain skills that extend beyond traditional language proficiency to include digital literacy and creative expression.

Affective and motivational outcomes further underscore the transformative potential of these practices. Parsazadeh and colleagues show that integrating computational thinking into digital storytelling enhances learners motivation and performance, suggesting that the challenge and novelty of such tasks stimulate intrinsic interest (Parsazadeh et al., 2021). Loreto similarly reports that Generation Z students find vlogging particularly engaging, as it aligns with their everyday media practices and social identities (Loreto, 2022). These affective benefits are crucial for sustaining long term language learning, especially in contexts where English may be perceived as difficult or irrelevant.

Collectively, these results indicate that digital storytelling and vlogging function as holistic pedagogical ecosystems that support linguistic, social, and emotional development. Rather than merely adding technology to existing practices, they reconfigure the learning environment in ways that make speaking meaningful, collaborative, and personally relevant.

DISCUSSION

The results of this extensive synthesis invite a deeper theoretical and pedagogical interpretation that situates digital storytelling and vlogging within broader frameworks of language learning and educational change. At the heart of these practices lies a fundamental shift from transmission based, teacher centered instruction toward learner centered, socially mediated, and experiential learning. This shift resonates strongly with the principles articulated by Vygotsky, Piaget, Bruner, and Kolb, as well as with contemporary movements toward postmethod pedagogy and equitable education (Hall, 2024; Surr et al., 2022).

From a sociocultural perspective, digital storytelling and vlogging can be understood as mediational activities that enable learners to operate within their zones of proximal development. Vygotsky emphasizes that learning occurs when individuals engage in tasks that they cannot yet perform independently but can accomplish with guidance or collaboration (Vygotsky, 1978). In digital storytelling projects, learners often rely on peers for linguistic input, technical assistance, and narrative ideas, creating a distributed

network of support that scaffolds development (Borthwick et al., 2003; Silalahi, 2019). Teachers also play a crucial role by modeling language use, providing feedback, and structuring tasks in ways that gradually increase complexity. Vlogging similarly provides a scaffolded environment where learners can rehearse, edit, and refine their speech before sharing it, thereby reducing the cognitive and affective load of real time communication (Jin, 2024).

Constructivist theory further illuminates how learners actively build knowledge through digital storytelling. Piaget views learning as the process of assimilating and accommodating new experiences within existing cognitive structures (Piaget, 1970). When learners create digital narratives, they must integrate new vocabulary, grammatical structures, and discourse conventions into their understanding of how stories are told. This integration is not passive but involves hypothesis testing, revision, and creative problem solving, particularly when learners encounter communicative challenges or audience feedback. Bruner similarly argues that education should focus on enabling learners to discover principles through active engagement, a process that digital storytelling richly supports (Bruner, 1966).

Experiential learning theory provides another powerful lens for interpreting these findings. Kolb describes learning as a cycle that begins with concrete experience, followed by reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation (Kolb, 2014). Digital storytelling and vlogging embody this cycle in a natural and iterative way. Learners experience the act of speaking and storytelling through recording and sharing, reflect on their performance through self viewing and peer feedback, conceptualize improvements in language use and narrative structure, and then experiment with new strategies in subsequent projects. This cyclical process promotes deep, sustained learning that extends beyond isolated speaking tasks.

The engagement outcomes observed in the results also align with contemporary theories of motivation and learner centered education. Fredricks et al. emphasize that engagement is a key mediator between instructional practices and learning outcomes (Fredricks et al., 2004). By providing learners with autonomy, relevance, and opportunities for social interaction, digital storytelling and vlogging activate all three dimensions of engagement. Surr and colleagues argue that equitable, learner centered education requires harnessing learners motivations and mental models, a goal that these practices support by allowing learners to draw on their personal experiences, cultural identities, and digital literacies (Surr et al., 2022).

At the same time, it is important to critically consider potential limitations and challenges. Access to technology and reliable internet remains uneven across contexts, potentially exacerbating educational inequalities. Teachers also require professional development to effectively design, implement, and assess digital storytelling and vlogging projects (Melnik, 2024). Moreover, assessment practices must evolve to capture the multimodal and process oriented nature of these tasks, rather than relying solely on traditional speaking tests.

Future research should explore how these practices can be adapted for diverse learners, including those with limited digital access or lower language proficiency. Longitudinal studies could examine how sustained engagement with digital storytelling and vlogging influences language development, identity formation, and academic trajectories. Cross cultural research, such as that conducted by Jao et al., also offers promising avenues for understanding how global collaboration can enrich EFL learning (Jao et al., 2024a).

CONCLUSION

This comprehensive analysis has demonstrated that digital storytelling and vlogging represent far more than innovative uses of technology in EFL classrooms. They are sociocultural, experiential, and multimodal pedagogical practices that fundamentally reshape how speaking is taught, learned, and experienced. By situating learners within authentic communicative contexts, fostering collaboration and reflection, and integrating language with personal and cultural expression, these approaches address many of the

longstanding challenges of speaking instruction.

Grounded in the theoretical traditions of Vygotsky, Piaget, Bruner, and Kolb, and supported by a robust body of empirical research, digital storytelling and vlogging offer a powerful framework for developing not only speaking proficiency but also engagement, identity, and global communicative competence. In an era where English functions as a key medium of international interaction and digital communication, such holistic, learner centered approaches are not merely desirable but essential. Through careful implementation, ongoing research, and equitable access, digital storytelling and vlogging have the potential to transform EFL education in ways that are pedagogically sound, socially responsive, and deeply human.

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