

An Experimental Study on Teaching English Language through Digital Short Stories

¹Ms. V. Anuradha, ²Dr. M. Rengaraj

¹Research Scholar, Dr .M.G.R. Educational and Research Institute, University
Maduravoyal, Chennai- 600 095. Email ID:anu18uma@gmail.com

²Director, Former Principal, Faculty of Education, Dr .M.G.R. Educational and Research Institute,
University, Maduravoyal, Chennai- 600 095. Email ID:rengarajmuniyandi@gmail.com

Article Info

Volume 81

Page Number: 3839 - 3847

Publication Issue:

November-December 2019

Abstract:

The present study is an Experimental design in identifying the effectiveness of narration approach for learning English in ELT classroom among first year engineering students in enhancing their English language through digital short stories. It is a data- based research that comes up with a conclusion that is capable of being verified by observation and experiment. The research design is 'Two- group pretest- posttest design'. In this experimental hypothesis testing research a group which is exposed to usual conditions is termed as 'control group' where no novel teaching interventions will be undertaken whereas the group that is exposed to some novel ideas or special conditions is termed as 'experimental group' where narration approach is adopted. This study was carried out among two sections of first year B. Tech. engineering students during second semester of 2017-2018 batch at Dr.MGR Educational and Research Institute. Both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques were designed. For quantitative the data management and analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) via paired samples t-test to statistically conclude the impact on the method adopted. And the qualitative data collection was done through questionnaires. To find the influence of the method adopted towards Technical English - II the model examination marks of both the groups was analyzed. The implication of the research was clear that digital short stories through narrative approach have enhanced the communication skills such as Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW). It made the learners to master grammar automatically without grammar tables and boring drills. And it also build fluency such as slang and expressions with fun, fast and easy without any difficulties just as one masters their mother tongue which enhances all the four LSRW skills of communication. The major development in experimental group was in their oral competency. They were fluent in expressing easily and articulating smoothly though not accurately when comparing to the controlled group.

Article History

Article Received: 5 March 2019

Revised: 18 May 2019

Accepted: 24 September 2019

Publication: 19 December 2019

Keywords: Experimental study, narration approach, digital short stories, ELT Classroom

1. Introduction

English was introduced in India almost at the same time as it was taught in England and implementing the teaching- learning theories adopted abroad. The approach that was followed in India for years had led to structural competencies rather than to communicative competencies where the learners find it difficult in communication which is an important tool for placement. In spite of learning English for more than 12 years through traditional lecture method where the teacher's domination is prominent and the students were passive listeners they lose confidence and they hesitate to speak and write. At this juncture there came shift from teacher-centered approach to learned- centered approach which is considered to be successful. English language teaching has undergone different shifts over the years and that is why there is a shift from teacher- centered curriculum to learner- centered curriculum. As engineering students, creativity is essential in their innovations and in applications. Engineering is a field where data is often presented with the context. The data is difficult to be understood at first glance and it requires explanation closest to the data. Narrative approach allows the students to experience situations closer to real world working environments. Outside the classroom, engineers come across more number of data generated projects. Arranging the data through narrative into layers of context can aid in comprehension of project data and also bridge communication gaps between multiple engineering disciplines. The impact of digital short stories in inculcating the narrative skills among first year engineering students is discussed in this paper.

2. Literature Review

Carol (2019) categorizes the language learning abilities of all the babies into three basic stages of whatever language their parents speak.

Stage one: Learning Sounds

Babies are born with the ability to recognize and produce the sounds of the language they are exposed to which is termed as 'phonemic awareness' which help them to learn reading skills.

Stage two: Learning words

At this stage babies learn how the sounds in a language go together to make meaning and they should also recognize where one word ends and another one begins which is termed as 'word boundaries'. They are not learning words exactly but morphemes which is a sound that has a meaning and they associate that meaning with other words when the sound is added.

Stage three: Learning sentences

During this stage they learn the difference between grammatical correctness and meaning. But the language develops at different rates in different children. Most of the children follow a familiar pattern.

It has also been proved that children who exposed to two languages from birth typically become the native speakers of both the languages while adults struggle with the second language learning and they rarely attain native speaker like fluency. Moreover children do acquire language quickly, easily and without effort or formal teaching automatically through interaction with their parents and other adults and also with other children.

The students were already familiar with all the three stages mentioned above that is the theoretical knowledge of the language, so the students were exposed to communicative knowledge of the language. Through this narrative approach the students were exposed to the native speaker's narration of short stories, where they tend to learn the correct pronunciation, sentence structure and the body language and they repeat the same.

From the perspective of Benny's (2014) language learning tips, one learns a language at a more rapid pace, it has to be valued by fluency over accuracy which is the most difficult but powerful

concepts that has to be comprehended. Fluency is expressing easily and articulating smoothly whereas accuracy is the ability in expressing correctly and precisely. The researcher has adopted narrating the Story as a strategy for learning, where language learning, serves as major language 'input' for learners and enables them, through experience, learn and acquire the language naturally. Languages learners can benefit from storytelling by helping them develop the ability to understand the spoken language and engage in thinking. Hadija (2016) findings revealed that the students were not able to complete the listening task due to the lack of practice, limited vocabulary, native speakers' accent, pronunciation and uninteresting learning materials. This was the reason to choose the digital stories to make the learners get exposed to the native speakers in order to create interest towards the language. Castro (2002) states on a study carried out in Colombia and insist that listening to stories develops listening and concentration skills and the ability to receive and understand information expressed in words. Besides, watching the stories children develop learning strategies like listening for general meaning, predicting, assuming meaning and hypothesizing.

3. Research Question

- In spite of learning English for more than 12 years why the students hesitate to speak and write in English?
- Why is it necessary to master English Communication Skills?

Research Problem

- Students are passive Listeners; they were given less opportunities to speak during school days.
- The purpose of getting a degree is to get placed in a reputed Institution, and the placement is purely based on the communication skills. Students with good

marks with poor communication skills get less placement opportunity whereas the students with poor marks with good communication skills get more placement opportunity.

Aim

The present study examines the effects of narration approach. Narrative Method (NM) integrates the learning of language through short stories and digital short stories. It helps the students in the acquisition of language skills just as a child learns a language perfectly even before it goes to a school that is by listening, imitating and repeating. The use of short stories and digital short stories in language enhancement is creative, amusing and motivational. This research is an experimental one in identifying the effectiveness of narration approach for teaching and learning English in ELT class room.

Objective

- to enhance the students creative thinking.
- to enrich their narration skill.

Assumptions

The experimental research is based on the following assumptions.

1. The students of UG courses are aware of the importance of academic, professional and social needs for learning English, but the teaching and learning of English does not meet their requirements.
2. At the first year engineering level, the listening component is neglected; listening is taught and tested as a separate skills.
3. Teaching listening comprehension and its components would result in academic excellence and professional success.

Hypothesis

- Significant enhancement in creative thinking.
- Significant enrichment in their narration skills.

Tools

S.No.	Source	Author
1.	9 Digital short stories	Learn English (UK)&(US) with subtitles - Story for Children BookBox.com
2.	Story telling based learning (SBL) organizing questions with response themes as small stories.	Karanian.B, Kress.G, Sadler.J (2009)

The tools used for collecting data from the two groups were under three stages.

Stage I: Before Treatment

1. Pre- test before the treatment for both the groups in narration.

Stage II: After Treatment

1. Post- test after the treatment for both the groups in narration.

Stage III

1. Intervention of model examination marks was used to compare the two groups' performance in their subject Technical English II.

Description of the tools

3.1 Digital Short Stories

1. The Elves and the Shoemaker Learn English (UK) with subtitles - Story for Children BookBox.com
2. The Flying Elephant Learn English (US) with subtitles - Story for Children BookBox.com
3. The Four Friends Learn English (US) with subtitles- Story for Children BookBox.com
4. The Kings Secret Learn English (US) with subtitles - Story for Children BookBox.com

5. The Princess Farmer Learn English (US) with subtitles - Story for Children BookBox.com
6. The Whispering Palms Learn English (UK) with subtitles - Story for Children BookBox.com
7. The Wind and the Sun Learn English (US) with subtitles- Story for Children BookBox.com
8. Too Many Bananas Learn English (UK) with subtitles - Story for Children BookBox.com
9. Too Much Noise Learn English (US) with subtitles- Story for Children BookBox.com

4. SBL Organizing Questions

The students were encouraged by the prompts of Storytelling Based Learning (SBL) Organizing Questions with response themes developed by Karanian.B, Kress.G, Sadler.J. (2009). these prompts helped them reflect on the ideas and to develop the story they narrated.

SBL Organizing Questions

Responses Facilitate Small Stories

1. Image the title, recollect the story you watched and narrate in your own words.	1. Excel at work and ready for transition.
2. What is the difference in the audience to the narrative vs. their response to the storytelling?	2. Be capable of finding strength in their unique approach and ways of knowing and showing their story.
3. Where does the heart of your story lies?	3. Develop other than template ways to live, formulate, and tell their story.
4. Is there any conflict in your story and where did you create that conflict?	4. Seek a strategic understanding of the plot points along the way of your story.

Storytelling based Learning (SBL) Organizing Questions with Response Themes as small Stories.

Q.No.1. Image the title, recollect the story you watched and narrate in your own words. This created an opportunity to reflect on what they cared about in their personal lives to create something new and to recollect their memories. The 10th grade self prompt offered an opportunity to jump through time with a focus in delivering a story.

Q.No.2. What is the difference in the audience to the narrative vs. their response to the storytelling?

This was an opportunity to see the story as a narrative and in the point of audience. They learnt that it is necessary to lead the audience or the reader by effective engagement.

Q.No.3. Where does the heart of your story lies?

This question helped them to be open in digging deep into the heart of the story.

Q.No.4. Where is the conflict in your story and when did you create that conflict?

This created clarity in framing the story without confusing with something else and focusing on the twist in the story.

The Sample

S.No.	Group	Strength	Sex		Age	Academic Year	Semester
			Boys	Girls			
1	Experimental	60	42	18	18-20	I Year	II Semester
2	Control	60	46	14	18-20	I Year	II Semester

The target population in the present research work was the first year engineering students of Dr.M.G.R Educational and Research Institution, Maduravoyal, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India during the academic year 2017-2018. This research is an empirical one where it relies on data alone and not depending on the system and theory. This is a data – based research that comes up with conclusions that are capable of being verified by observation and experiments.

This study was carried out among B.Tech engineering students of First Year second-semester from Dr.MGR Educational and Research Institute. Two sections A and B of 60 students in each section of 2017-2018 batch was considered. Section ‘A’ was considered as ‘control group’ and section ‘B’ as ‘experimental group’.

5. The Research Design

Two-Group Pre-test – Post-test Design using a Control Group

The research design is of experimental and control group. In this experimental hypothesis- testing research, a group which is exposed to usual conditions of lecture method is termed as ‘control group’ where no novel teaching interventions was

done, whereas the group that is exposed to some novel ideas or special conditions is termed as ‘experimental group’ where Narrative approach is adopted.

Distribution of the work Carried

- First week and second week Pre- test on Narration was administered for both experimental and control group.
- Digital Short Stories Intervention was exposed to the students for nine weeks where the students listened, imitated and repeated and they also related the story with their personal experiences.
- And in the last two weeks Post-test to formulate the language competency on narration was administered for both the groups.

Teaching Process

Based on the marks obtained in the Pre-Test on narration the students were categorized as high, average and limited English proficient. They were grouped into ten comprising of six in a group containing all the categories equally distributed in all the groups. The proficient student in all the six

groups took the responsibility of their group members in all the task execution. During preparatory period the researcher initiated the brain storming session by questioning the children on the stories while watching the digital short stories. Owocki (2003), insists on questioning as an important strategy that helps children move deeply into a text and can think more about what was read and organize their thought frame the pursuit of new understanding, locate specific information, by applying this strategy, students were given the opportunity to integrate what they knew not only about the stories but also about the language with the new knowledge presented in the stories and then build comprehension of them. In this way, predicting helps readers connect what they read with what they know already and brings meaning to the text in order to get meaning from it. Background knowledge used for predicting comes not only from the reader's previous experience but also from meaning that is built during the reading. Throughout the text, readers continually generate new predictions on the unstated ideas such as themes, author goals and intents, and underlying on vocabulary and the chunks adopted in the digital stories. The procedure of narration approach followed four steps:

- One- Listening to the digital short stories.
 - Two- Writing the stories they listened in their own words. / Corrected by the researcher.
 - Three- Practicing narration within their team.
 - Four- Performing in front of their classmates.
- The team leader will record their group performance in that particular students' mobile and the researcher instructed the students to listen to their own performance and to improve themselves before they perform in front of their classmates. This recording helped the learners to be conscious about their error they have to rectify and they developed confidence while performing in front of their classmates.

Assessment Procedures

Assessment focused on the language forms and communicative skills. The Parameters measured was based on the Narrative Aspects Assessment protocol and the skills observed were:

1. Topic maintenance with use of correct simple sentences.
2. Event sequencing chronologically.
3. Informativeness with use of proper lexical items.
4. Use of connectives.
5. Fluency with error free sentences.

And the assessment was graded as Appropriate- 2 points, Variable- 1 point, Inappropriate- 0

6. Result and Discussion

Intervention of Stage I: Before Treatment & Stage II: After Treatment

2. Pre- test before the treatment for both the groups in narration.
2. Post- test after the treatment for both the groups in narration.

Table 1. The paired samples t-test to show the differences between pre-test and post-test results of the Controlled Group

Measurement	N	Mean
Pre-Test	60	60.07
Post-Test	60	61.47

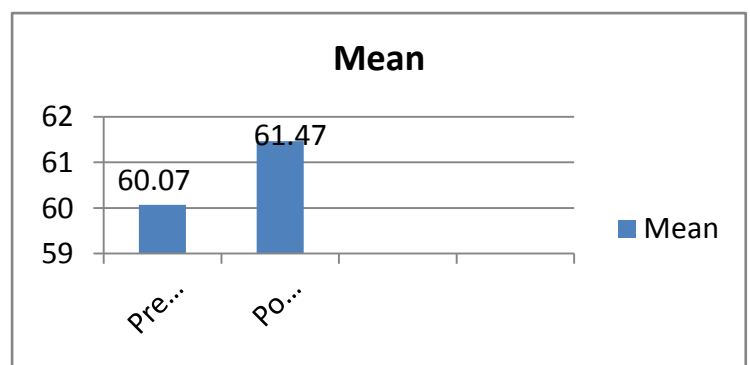


Fig 1. Control Group Mean Difference between Pre-test and post-Test =1.396

The above table reveals that there are significant differences between the pre-test and post-test among the students of controlled group. The pre-test mean is 60.07 and the post-test mean is 61.47. The control group means difference between pre-test and post-test is 1.396 which indicates some improvement.

Table 2. The paired samples t-test to show the differences between pre-test and post-test results of the Experimental Group

Measurement	N	Mean
Pre-Test	60	52.87
Post-Test	60	60.33

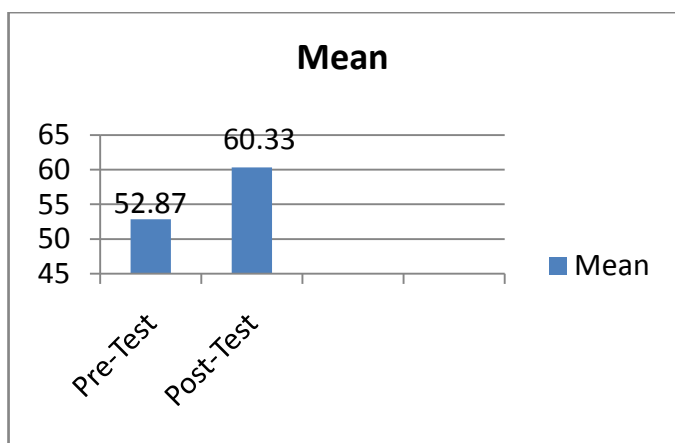


Fig 2. Experimental Group Mean Difference between Pre-test and post-Test = 7.464

The above table reveals that there are significant differences between the pre-test and post-test among the students of experimental group. The pre-test mean is 52.866 and the post-test mean is 60.33. The experimental group mean difference between pre-test and post-test is 7.464 which indicate an increase in improvement when

comparing to the controlled group which is a positive result of the study on narrative approach.

Stage III:

1. Intervention of model examination marks was used to compare the two groups' performance in their subject Technical English II during second semester.

Table 3. The unpaired samples t-test to show the differences between mean of Model Exam Marks of the Controlled Group & Experimental Group

Measurement	N	Mean
Control group Model Examination Marks	60	71.85
Experimental group Model Examination Marks	60	76.73

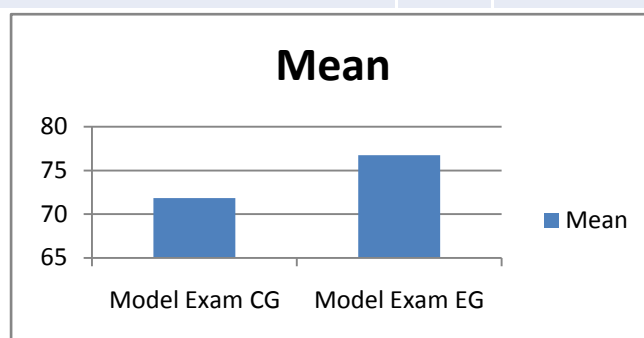


Fig 3. Mean difference of Model Examination marks of Control Group and Experimental Group =4.88

The above table depicts the mean of Model Examination marks of both the Control Group as 71.85 and the Experimental Group as 76.73 and the difference is 4.88 which indicate an increase in improvement among the Experimental Group.

Qualitative Analysis

In order to draft the feedback on the narrative approach implemented five questions with five likert scale was given to the students and the data collected was tabulated, interpreted and analyzed.

S. No.	Questions on Narration Approach	Total Strength	Students' perception	No. of Students	Percentage
1.	Do you believe the incorporation of narration helped you in learning the course material of this semester?	60	Strongly Disagree	5	8%
			Disagree	6	10%
			Neutral	3	5%
			Agree	34	57%
			Strongly Agree	12	20%
2.	Do you feel narration provided useful background for your lab/project report?	60	Strongly Disagree	1	2%
			Disagree	2	3%
			Neutral	1	2%
			Agree	42	70%
			Strongly Agree	14	23%
3.	Are you comfortable in participating in narration during class?	60	Strongly Disagree	0%	0%
			Disagree	5	8%
			Neutral	4	7%
			Agree	23	38%
			Strongly Agree	28	47%
4.	Do you feel narration increased your confidence in supporting your studies?	60	Strongly Disagree	0%	0%
			Disagree	2	3%
			Neutral	3	5%
			Agree	45	75%
			Strongly Agree	10	17%
5.	Do you agree that listening to another student's narration in the class improved your learning?	60	Strongly Disagree	0%	0%
			Disagree	1	2%
			Neutral	1	2%
			Agree	47	78%
			Strongly Agree	11	18%

To obtain the qualitative analysis five questions on narration approach was given to the sixty participants for which, the students responded from their perspective. The description on each questions response is:

Question no.1

1. Do you believe the incorporation of narration helped you in learning the course material of this semester?

From the above table it is clear that 5 students (8%) strongly disagreed, 6 students (10%) disagreed, 3 students (5%) remained neutral, 34 students (57%) agreed, and 12 students (20%) strongly agreed with the opinion that it helped them in learning the course material of that semester.

Question no.2

2. Do you feel narration provided useful background for your lab/project report?

It is evident from the table that 1 student (2%) strongly disagreed, 2 students (3%) disagreed, 1 student (2%) remained neutral, 42 students (70%) agreed, and 14 students (23%) strongly agreed with the idea that narration provided useful background for the lab and project report.

Question no.3

3. Are you comfortable in participating in narration during class?

The table depicts that no one strongly disagreed that they are not comfortable in narration during class 5students (8%) disagreed, 4 students (7%) were of the opinion that they were neutral, 23 students (38%) agreed and 28 students (47%) strongly agreed with the idea that they are comfortable in participating in narration during class.

Question no.4

4. Do you feel narration increased your confidence in supporting your studies?

From the above table it is clear that no one strongly disagreed with the opinion that narration has increased their confidence in supporting their studies 2 students (3%) disagreed, 3 students (5%) stayed neutral, 45 students (75%) agreed, and 10 students (17%) strongly agreed with the idea that narration has increased their confidence in supporting their studies.

Question no.5

5. Do you agree that listening to another student's narration in the class improved your learning?

It is obvious from the table that 0% strongly disagreed, 1 student (2%) disagreed, 1 student (2%) stayed neutral, 47 students (78) agreed and 11 students (18%) strongly agreed with the idea that listening to another student's narration in the class has improved their learning.

7. Findings and Conclusion

The use of narration in the L2 classroom creates a good learning environment and provides meaningful and comprehensible input. Through stories, the language acquisition is activated and it is easy for children to induce the language elements from the data provided through stories (Krashen, 1981). The implications of the research was clear that short stories and digital short stories through narration approach have enhanced the communication skills such as LSRW like a child learning the language perfectly even before going to school. It made the learners to master grammar automatically without grammar tables and boring drills and build fluency such as slang and expressions with fun, fast and easy without any difficulties just as one masters their mother tongue which enhances all the four LSRW skills of communication. Ellis & Brewster (2002), noted

that many stories have natural repetition of key vocabulary of the story and structures that helps children remember details and learn to anticipate what is about to happen next scene in the story. Thus it helped the learners in vocabulary enhancement and showed improvement in developing the story. The participants shed their fear, anxiety and had overcome their shyness to speak in the targeted language. The major development in experimental group was in their oral competency. They were fluent in expressing easily and articulating smoothly though not accurately when comparing to the controlled group.

References

- [1] Benny, L. (2014). *Fluent in 3 Months*, London Bridge Street, Collins.
- [2] Castro, M. (2002). The magic world of storytelling: Some points for reflection. *PROFILE, Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 3, 52-54.
- [3] Ellis, G., & Brewster, J. (2002). *Tell it again: The new storytelling handbook for primary teachers*. United Kingdom: Pearson Education.
- [4] Hadijah, D. (2016) A Study on Listening Skills and Perspective to First Year Students at English Department of Academic Year 2015/2016 *J-SHMIC*, vol.3, no.2
- [5] Krashen, S. D. (1981). *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- [6] Owocki, G. (2003). *Comprehension "Strategic Instruction for K-3 students"*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.
- [7] <http://storytellinginstitute.org/33.jpg>
- [8] Carol, B. (2019) *How Do Children Learn Language?* <https://www.verywellfamily.com/how-do-children-learn-language-1449116>
- [9] [https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/resource-support/net/NETworking%20Short%20Stories%20\(Aug%202012\).pdf](https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/resource-support/net/NETworking%20Short%20Stories%20(Aug%202012).pdf)- 8.7.2018-11.07 (History of the short story)-Introduction
- [10] <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042816312599/pdf?>- 8.7.2018-11.07 (using short stories in reading skills class)
- [11] https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=%23MagicBoxEnglishStories