

From Reluctance to Fluency: Exploring Speaking Confidence through Digital Storytelling in Low-Motivated EFL Learners

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Abstract. Speaking fluency and confidence remain a persistent challenge for Indonesian EFL learners, especially at low motivation and high language anxiety. Classroom strategies of the traditional type that pay attention to grammar accuracy can scarcely help students engage in genuine oral communication. This study investigated whether digital storytelling (DST) could be beneficial for low-motivated undergraduates in improving their speaking fluency and confidence. Defensible based on both Constructivist Learning Theory and Self-Determination Theory, the sample of the study was 19 participants of a private college in Central Java, Indonesia, who received a one-group pre-test–post-test. Across 6 weeks, students participated in DST processes such as script writing, voice recording, multimedia editing, and peer work. Data were obtained by speaking performance rubrics and a 5-point Likert scale on speaking confidence. It was found that the responses to both fluency (mean gain of 0.70) and confidence (mean gain of 1.06) were significantly improved with statistical significance ($p < 0.001$). The findings suggest that DST offers learners a safe, emotionally involving space to work on oral communication and to appropriate and internalize (subconsciously or reflexively) autonomy, emotional ownership, and motivational mechanisms. This research joins the rising volumes of work on digital pedagogy in EFL, focusing on the potential of DST for students who are hesitant to speak. Pedagogical implications for speaking, teaching, and technology use are then provided.

Keywords: digital storytelling; speaking fluency; learner confidence; low motivation; Indonesian EFL learners; creative speaking pedagogy; motivational scaffolding; technology-enhanced language learning

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is still an issue for many EFL Classrooms in Indonesia. Fluency, one of the oral communication elements, is also considered the most challenging and anxiety-evoking part for students (Dewi et al., 2021; Susanto et al., 2023). These two skills are crucial for guaranteeing clarity and flow in spoken interaction, but they are often underdeveloped due to insufficient classroom speaking practice, feedback, and exposure to authentic communication contexts (Abrar et al., 2018; Indrayadi et al., 2024; Shadiev et al., 2024; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020).

Classrooms in Indonesian higher education primarily rely on the teacher-oriented style approach, where concern for grammatical accuracy and activities stemming from textbooks take precedence over meaningful oral interaction (Sulistianingsih et al., 2022). Often, there is a gap between what students need to communicate and what they are taught in classes, especially in L2 speaking classrooms. The findings of preliminary observation (classroom action research) implemented in a private university in Central Java, Indonesia, indicated that 57% of students showed low motivation in speaking tasks, where they tended to be reluctant to perform speaking activities involving spontaneous verbal expression. The cause of their reluctance is usually fear of embarrassment, fear of making mistakes, or fear of incompetence.

With these challenges, Digital Storytelling (DST) has been identified as a potentially useful pedagogical tool that employs narrative construction along with multiple modalities to make language learning more interesting and meaningful to students. (Kim & Lee, 2018; Robin, 2008). DST deepens engagement, self-expression, and intrinsic motivation by enabling learners to script, record, and present their stories with visuals, audio, and video. Based on Constructivist Learning Theory (Bruner, 2006) and Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020) DST offers a comfortable, effective layer for low-motivated users to practice and improve fluency

through expressive speech. Students are in control of their output, can revise repeatedly, and respond to their peers, which are all ways to lower speaking anxiety and increase performance (Anderson, 2020; Mohammadi Khomjani, 2020; Saritepeci & Çakır, 2019; Sulistianingsih et al., 2025).

Studies have proven that DST effectively promotes overall speaking performance and increases motivation in the context of EFL (Du et al., 2024; Fu et al., 2021; H. D. Huang, 2023). However, most of these studies are about general student populations, and learners' motivational levels are not considered. Additionally, there has been limited empirical work on fluency gains, as opposed to speaking in general. Moreover, little research has been carried out in low-resourced Indonesian universities where the motivation and technological readiness of attending students have a wider gap than those who use the technology (Sulistianingsih & Taufiqulloh, 2025; Yusuf et al., 2024). This study addresses these gaps by exploring how DST can improve speaking fluency and build confidence among low-motivated EFL learners. The novelty of this research lies in its dual focus: first, on the *linguistic development* of fluency and second, on the *affective transformation* from reluctance to speaking confidence. This dual lens contributes to a more nuanced understanding of DST's role in addressing cognitive and emotional aspects of language learning, especially within low-engagement learner profiles.

This study explores how digital storytelling impacts learners' experiences in speaking and aims to provide insights that educators and curriculum developers can use to successfully and effectively integrate digital media into oral language teaching. This study provides an evidence-based basis for developing EFL speaking pedagogy in the Indonesian setting, which has continued to see issues of motivation and confidence among its learners. In order to investigate systematically the influence of Digital Storytelling on speaking skills development, mainly in fluency and confidence, this paper follows these research questions:

1. How does Digital Storytelling affect the fluency of low-motivated EFL learners?
2. How does Digital Storytelling contribute to their speaking confidence?

Literature Review

Motivation and Speaking Performance in EFL

Motivation is key in second language acquisition (SLA), especially in improving speaking performance. Based on Gardner's 2014 socio-educational model and Ryan and Deci's (2020) Self-Determination Theory (SDT), motivated learners are likely to take risks, persist in communicative difficulty, and perform better on speaking tasks. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021) also claim that motivation affects learners' willingness to communicate (WTC), particularly in anxiety-inducing situations, such as speaking classes. Inherent sources of motivation function based on interest and self-development, as well as are related to intrinsic goals, whereas extrinsic sources of motivation are related to performance, social recognition, and achievement goals that guide learners' behaviour in specific contexts (Bai & Xian, 2024; Noels et al., 2000).

Fluency is one of the key indicators of speaking performance; it is an important indicator of communication effectiveness and reflects a learner's capacity to speak fluently and spontaneously. Unlike the vocabulary or grammar that could be developed in silence, fluency demands regular, motivated, and confident verbal practice (Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005; Nation, 2007). When the motivation is low, learners hesitate too much, pause a lot, or use their mother tongue, all of which make their oral production less fluent and the coherence of messages less smooth. Accordingly, fluency is not built simply through exposure to the language, but also through the student's intrinsic motivation to take communicative chances and keep practicing in simulated or real situations.

Low-motivation speakers may feel disconnected, experience speech anxiety, and avoid participation in behaviors during speaking activities. These learners who manifest relatively low verbal output and limited interaction may hamper fluency development. Teacher-centred classrooms of the past, which were based on grammatical accuracy and error rectification, make for an unsafe and/or unsupported environment to promote spoken spontaneity (Al Hosni, 2014; Mujiyanto & Hartono, 2021). "As Alderman (2013) pointed out, Instructional design needs to engage, reward, and assess learners in a manner that maintains motivation for extended periods. In the teaching of speaking, this entails establishing conditions that "force" fluency or support its development in a low-threat context.

Digital Storytelling (DST) as a Pedagogical Strategy

Digital Storytelling (DST) is a teaching and learning technique that uses multimedia to incorporate oral storytelling and images, combined with sound, moving image, and music, to form complex communicative expression. While initially developed to encourage reflective and narrative thinking, DST has been developed into a robust instructional tool in today's 21st-century classrooms, particularly language learning classrooms. Robin (2016) and Chung (2021) emphasize the role of DST in promoting creativity and collaboration, critical thinking, digital literacy, and linguistic use, which is particularly pertinent to EFL learners whose needs are constantly changing in the digital context.

In EFL contexts, DST has been noted for being able to lower learners' speaking anxiety, increase oral fluency, and encourage learner autonomy and self-confidence (Fu et al., 2021; H.-T. D. Huang, 2023; Kasami, 2021). Students who may be shy to talk sometimes find context more compelling and personal with storytelling. Writing, practicing, and reciting stories help students build fluency in a risk-free setting where communication is the focus, not perfection. DST therefore creates a low-stakes and student-centered environment, particularly suitable for low-achievement learners who may avoid oral participation.

Theoretically, the basis for DST is located in the Constructivist Learning Theory, which considers learning an active, situated act of meaning-making (Bruner, 2006). This way of looking at the learning process sees students constructing their knowledge through experience, communication, and reflection. The sociocultural theory of Vygotsky, which focuses on the value of social scaffolding and the ZPD, is also central to the approach by which learners progress through guided assistance or interaction with peers or the instructor (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). Those principles in DST are acquired when students work together to create digital stories, engage in reciprocal feedback exchange, and co-construct understanding.

Empirical evidence shows that DST plays a role in providing proper oral fluency and boosting speaking confidence. Kim and Lee (2018) found that progressing to the DST, students practising relatively often improved their speech flow and expression; thus, they could speak more coherently and spontaneously. Anderson (2020) discovered that students felt emotionally invested and free to express their feelings with DST projects, allowing them to take communicative risks and not be afraid of speaking. Saritepeci and Çakır (2019) also added that DST motivated learners to increase their ownership and control over their speaking tasks and hence to reinforce internal motivation and engagement.

DST is therefore more than a digital appliance; it is a pedagogical model that fosters both the cognitive progress of fluency and the affective dimension of speaking confidence. It corresponds with contemporary second language aims and objectives of learner autonomy, emotional engagement, and communicative competence. Therefore, DST is more beneficial in satisfying low-motivated EFL learners and contributes to an inclusive technology-assisted speaking instruction program as a prominent strategy.

DST and Low-Motivated Learners

The vast majority of previous DST research has dealt with EFL learners in general, and of these studies, only a marginal interest has been paid to learners with low motivation. The DST, nonetheless, also resonates with the learning preference or habit of contemporary digital-native students and followers, as many are attracted to visual, interactive, and creative activities rather than traditional teaching (Lee, 2014; McKnight et al., 2016). Task-avoidant learners in large, whole-class speaking activities can express themselves actively through DST, focusing on functional, narrative-based autonomy and self-paced expression. The appropriateness of demand to learners' affective and cognitive capacity is one of the most important aspects of DST, making it especially effective for low-motivated students". DST creates a secure mental space for these learners to practise speaking in a safe environment for their feelings. This approach employs voiceover, images, and peer interaction to improve motivation and facilitate psychologically lowering performance anxiety. According to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, such settings reduce anxiety and facilitate the intake of language, which helps learners to develop their oral skills at a gradual pace, in a supportive and confidence-developing environment (Du et al., 2024; Yasmin et al., 2025).

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and DST Integration

Digital Storytelling is often incorporated into Project-Based Learning (PjBL), a student-driven learning strategy that prioritizes the process of learning over the resulting product. PjBL places students as active participants

who construct knowledge through inquiry, collaboration, and problem solving, which resonates harmoniously with DST's creative and reflective process. Yang et al., (2020) and Namaziandost et al., (2022) contend that integrating DST in the PjBL models improves learner engagement, autonomy, and reflexive oral performance, particularly when students have their voice and choice in both the content and configuration of their storytelling ventures.

Unlike conventional task-based models focused on accuracy and control, PjBL aims to engage students in authentic communicative activities over time. Indeed, DST is not just a technological resource but a medium for long-term oral development. It enables students to practice using spoken language as they purposefully rehearse, revise, and develop it. According Hafour (2024) and Liang and Hwang (2023) when DST is produced through PjBL, both micro-level speaking aspects (e.g., fluency and intelligibility) and macro-level competences (e.g., discourse management and thematic progression) might be favoured.

The social learning aspect of PjBL is also quite important because students learn from discussing, reflecting collectively, or giving each other feedback. This has augmented learner motivation and confidence, for example, where learners are reluctant to participate in speaking activities (Morris & Blake, 2022; Tamimi, 2024). With such practices, low-willing students can perform speaking activities that make them more fluent and confident, by hearing their voice in authentic, meaningful digital storytelling. Thus, including DST in PjBL enhances language skills and emotional and motivational development, concluding that it is a holistic and practical EFL speaking instruction.

Empirical Findings Supporting DST

In various EFL settings, studies have found Digital Storytelling (DST) to be a good pedagogical strategy for improving speaking skills and influencing motivation in the input and output activities. Tecedor (2024) and Luan et al. (2023) observed that engaging in DST can increase motivation to learn a language, because engaging with DST allows learners emotional expression, story ownership, and voice for themselves, none of which is possible in a traditional speaking task. The affective layer in DST endows learners with more involvement in speaking, less anxiety, and more willingness to communicate. Consistent with this, Wei et al. (2025) observed that DST significantly positively affected student willingness to communicate, group cohesion, and peer support, which is especially important for learners who are usually quiet and withdrawn during spoken classroom activities. These results prove that DST is a language intervention strategy and an effective bridge in transforming L2 learners from reluctant to confident.

In addition to its emotional and motivational benefits, DST contributes meaningfully to developing oral fluency. Fan (2024) and Du et al. (2024) observed that scripting, rehearsing, and recording digital stories encourage learners to take risks in language use, practice speaking repeatedly, and improve spoken flow. This repetitive yet meaningful practice allows learners to develop fluency in a psychologically safe environment over time. Moreover, Kaptan and Cakir (2024) emphasized that DST enhances language proficiency and digital literacy, equipping learners with the communicative and technological skills needed in modern classrooms. The integration of DST into language instruction supports measurable gains in speaking competence. It promotes learner autonomy and agency, key conditions for sustained oral language development, particularly among low-motivated EFL learners.

Implementation Challenges and Teacher Readiness

Further, although promising in potential, the issue of actual DST adoption in ELT environments has been challenged infra-structurally and pedagogically. Alshaye (2021), Abrar et al. (2018) and Arroba and Acosta (2021) encountered challenges such as untrained educators, restricted technical support, and limited time. Amelia et al. (2021) found that in many cases, the rigidity of curricular constraints may prohibit the inclusion of multimedia-rich, student-centered tasks. These problems are the most pronounced in low-resource settings, like rural or semi-urban Indonesian.

Gaps and Theoretical Implications

Several gaps can be found in the literature: (1) not many studies have examined low-motivated learners as a separate group, (2) little is known about how DST shapes different motivational profiles, and (3) research has

mainly been conducted in a digitally developed environment, not in low-resource contexts. This study fills this void by investigating the impact of DST on low-motivated learners in the context of an Indonesian university. Theoretically, the study is based on SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2020), Vygotsky and Cole's (1978) ZPD, and Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis. It indicates how motivation to learn, scaffolding in interacting, and emotional safety play a part in speaking development. This study illustrates how technology-supported teaching can intervene in adapting the motivational and linguistic dimensions.

Methodology

Research Design

A quantitative, one-group pre-test–post-test research design was used to investigate the impact of Digital Storytelling (DST) on speaking fluency and speaking confidence among students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The reason for selecting this design is that it enables the researcher to measure changes in the same group of participants over time, in this case between the beginning (pretreatment) and end (posttreatment) of the instructional intervention (Creswell & Guetterman, 2024; Riazi & Farsani, 2024). Although this design has no control group, it is popular in classroom-based SLA research when complete experimental control is impractical. The question was whether DST would result in significantly better oral performance and affective engagement in oral tasks.

Research Site and Participants

This research was carried out in a private university in Indonesia in 2023. The participants were thirty-four undergraduate students taking the “ICT in ELT” course in the English Education Program. All participants were also pre-tested using a motivation questionnaire to determine their initial level of motivation in speaking activities. According to these results, one subgroup of students identified as low-motivated was selected as the target population. These learners frequently appeared anxious when attempting oral communication activities. Thus, they would be well-suited to an intervention that aimed to develop fluency and confidence via DST.

Instruments and Data Collection

Data were collected following study objectives by two primary instruments:

- (1) speaking fluency pre- and post-tests, and
- (2) A questionnaire using a Likert scale to test speaking confidence.

Students had to give a short storytelling based on their preference and be recorded on the speaking fluency test, pre- and post-DST. Their oral production was recorded and analyzed using a fluency rubric adapted from Brown and Abeywickrama (2019) which observed speech rate, pausing, smoothness, and connectedness. Three raters, who had received training, independently scored the recordings, and the calibration achieved an inter-rater reliability before the scoring. The Speaking Confidence Questionnaire, which had 10 items, was rated using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Items were modified from Noels et al. (2000) and intended to include learners' self-perceived confidence in three domains: comfort, willingness to speak in public, and confidence to communicate clearly. The instrument's internal consistency was verified using Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis in the pilot study.

DST Strategy Implementation

The DST was implemented in this group over 6 weeks, divided into three phases:

- 1 Preparation: The students chose topics together and wrote scripts based on their experiences or class topics.
- 2 Production: Throughout this process, students filmed voice-overs, inserted photographs, and pieced together digital stories with video editing apps like CapCut.
- 3 Presentation: The finished stories were presented in class and discussed in groups to promote peer interaction and reflection.

During the process, the teacher scaffolded, technically supported, and created a safe psychological learning environment that valued communication and process over perfection.

Data Analysis

Paired-sample t-tests with SPSS (version 22) were conducted to test whether the differences between the pre- and post-test scores in both tests were significant. Analyses were performed independently for the speech fluency scores and the confidence questionnaires. The magnitude of the observed changes was also estimated and presented as effect sizes with Cohen's d. These findings were taken as background evidence when explaining the impacts of the DST intervention on students' speaking development.

Results

This study aimed to investigate the influence of DST on two main dimensions of speaking development, namely fluency and speaking confidence, for low-motivated EFL learners. The data were elicited from pre-test and post-test speaking tasks and a Likert-scale questionnaire. Nineteen low-motivated speaking students were chosen as the participants. The following results provide the quantitative results for both measured variables.

Speaking Fluency

Participants' speaking fluency was tested in a pre-test and a post-test oral task. As presented in Table 1, mean scores gradually increased from 3.20 to 3.90 with standard deviations of 0.51 and 0.46, respectively. A paired-sample t-test showed this change was significant ($t(18) = 6.245$, $p = 0.000$).

Table 1. Paired Sample Statistics for Speaking Fluency

Test	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Mean Difference	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test	19	3.20	0.51			
Post-test	19	3.90	0.46	0.70	6.245	0.000

Explanation:

The gain of 0.70 points means that students spoke significantly more fluently. This could be explained by DST's cyclic and iterative character, in which the intervention consisted of composing, rehearsing, recording, and reviewing spoken texts. These media activities allowed students to practice oral skills repeatedly, in a low-pressure setting. Unconstrained by the "here and now" nature of speaking tasks, DST probably enabled participants to speak free of time pressure, which could have lowered anxiety and facilitated more fluent speaking. Also, the collaborative nature of DST promoted peer modeling and feedback that, in turn, helped to strengthen naturally occurring speech pace.

Speaking Confidence

A 10-item Likert-scale questionnaire was used before and after DST implementation to assess students' speaking confidence. As presented in Table 2, the average confidence before/after the intervention was 2.88 and 3.94, significantly different with a p-value of 1.06 points, respectively ($p = 0.001$). The paired-sample t-test indicated that the gains were statistically significant ($t(18) = 5.034$, $p = 0.000$).

Table 2. Paired Sample Statistics for Speaking Confidence

Test	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Mean Difference	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test	19	2.88	0.64			
Post-test	19	3.94	0.68	1.06	5.034	0.000

The scores of speaking confidence were based on the 10-item Likert-scale question battery, in which participants rated the extent to which they agreed with confidence-related statements (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The sum of the 10 items of the total scores for each student was used to calculate an average score for each student and a group mean. The rise in the group mean from 2.88 to 3.94 implies that the students' confidence levels towards taking a speaking test increased after the DST project.

Explanation:

Significant development in speaking confidence indicates that DST effectively diminished the learners' unwillingness and fear in speaking tasks. Several aspects of DST are implicated in that outcome: (1) because students owned their writing, they were emotionally connected to their work and learned to express themselves through writing; (2) the use of multimedia made speaking tasks more enjoyable and less threatening; and (3) opportunities to rehearse and rerecord voice recordings built perceived control and mastery over the spoken text. Consequently, students increasingly gained confidence to speak in public and reported increasing self-efficacy toward oral speech.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the impact of Digital Storytelling (DST) on two important dimensions of EFL speaking performance, fluency, and speaking confidence of low-motivated Indonesian undergraduate learners. The results provide strong evidence to suggest that DST can improve learners' fluency and decrease their unwillingness to speak English through enhanced self-confidence. These findings support the theoretical underpinnings and experimental evidence shared in the intro and review of literature above.

Improvement in Speaking Fluency

The current study proved a significant increase in students' speaking fluency after the students were taught through DST, as shown by the average increase of 0.70 points from the pre-test and post-test scores. This finding is consistent with the previous studies that fluency, defined as natural pace, speaking continuity, and fluent speech, is one of the most stressful components to discuss, particularly in EFL learning in Indonesia (Abrar et al., 2018; Dewi et al., 2021). Such students commonly demonstrate hesitation and disfluency, which they attribute to a concern about making mistakes, infrequent chances to use their second language, and inflexible course structures that focus on grammar over communication flow.

DST addresses these challenges by offering learners a structured, yet flexible environment to practice and create their speech through iteration. As emphasized by Alshaye (2021), DST integrates various modes, such as visual, textual, and audio, and it amplifies multimodal engagement, which enables learners to organize and present ideas more fluently. Additionally, Fu et al. (2021) and Du et al. (2024) stress that the cyclical nature of DST in writing, recording, editing, and re-recording diminishes speaking anxiety and enables learners to develop fluency in a psychologically safe environment. These are seconded in the work of Amelia et al. (2021), who reported that Indonesian teachers of English in elementary classes witnessed more oral engagement and better language production of their students after they embraced DST.

In addition, the narrative format of DST allows learners to place their speech and practice into meaningful use. However, Kim and Lee (2018) and Robin (2008) argue that personal and thematic stories encourage more natural language acquisition, making learners more fluent and spontaneous in speech. In this study, the learners could generate authentic or imaginary events to discuss while practicing speaking through those stories, which became more credible and engaging. With this ownership over the content, learners became more motivated and more natural in their speaking (Luan et al., 2023) as per the motivational framework proposed by Ryan and Deci (2020) and expanded on by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021).

Following Arroba and Acosta (2021) and Anderson (2020), DST also resonates with the digital practices of contemporary learners accustomed to platforms such as TikTok and CapCut. Inserting known tools into the academic task allowed students to speak in a language that was familiar and fun for them to use, increasing

engagement and fluency. Additionally, as suggested by H. D. Huang (2023), DST promotes group cohesion and collaborative creativity, which positively impact spoken language in terms of rhythm and coherence. Peer interaction in this study during the planning and editing stage facilitated fluency development.

Finally, on a more pedagogical note, this discovery further propounds that DST is more than mere technological innovation, but a very learner-oriented methodology that allows students to speak more comfortably and naturally. Teacher-centered speaking drills, in contrast, DST sets a student-centered production task which promotes fluency, autonomy, affect, and communicative self-esteem (Bai & Xian, 2024; Bruner, 2006).

Enhancement of Speaking Confidence

As well as enhancing speaking fluency, the results indicated a significant gain in participants' speaking confidence, with the post-test mean score scaling from 2.88 to 3.94. This result highlights the potential of DST as a verbo-emotional tool with a pedagogical and psychological purpose of working against psychological barriers among learners. Speaking anxiety would be the most common problem to be faced in those English classes, especially for learners who are not highly motivated for learning English, as they are too afraid to talk in front of others, and make mistakes because of feeling judged for their mistakes (Abrar et al., 2018; Dewi et al., 2021; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020).

DST provides a secure and flexible environment for learners to plan, rehearse, and deliver their spoken work before public exposure. Through narration, image selection, and voice recording, learners created aural texts in their own time, which facilitated reduced anxiety and increased confidence. This also lends credence to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (Yasmin et al., 2025), which assumes that a student's emotions influence language learning. Second, according to Mohammadi Khomjani (2020) and Kim and Lee (2018), DST prompts emotional engagement, allowing students to express themselves genuinely and comfortably via narrative storytelling.

The increase in confidence in this study is also supported by the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020), which emphasizes autonomous motivation, the feeling of competence, and relatedness. DST allows learners to select their content and voice, empowering a sense of autonomy and volition. Through ongoing practice, polishing, and sharing of stories, learners gained a stronger sense of self-efficacy, as shown by Bai and Xian (2024), who showed that DST enhanced learners' confidence and competence in speaking fluency.

Additionally, this study is in line with the studies by Kasami (2021) and Mohammadi Khomjani (2020), which showed the effectiveness of DST in diminishing the learners' communication apprehension and enhancing their motivation, particularly at a low level of English proficiency and confidence. In this instance, students were both creators of digital narratives and partners. Peer feedback and group monologue aided in establishing group responsibility, improved encouragement and willingness to take risks orally, and helped to lower the affective filter as students were "less afraid to make mistakes. This mirrors Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978), in which social scaffolding heavily mediates language acquisition.

The digital media tools that learners are accustomed to using, such as CapCut and audio-enhanced slides, also helped learners to prepare emotionally. As Anderson (2020) & Alshaye (2021) reported that the author infers that using technology based on students' daily media practices creates more comfort, less intimidation, and more confidence for performative media usage. Similarly, Amelia et al. (2021) revealed that DST had built teachers' confidence in using and teaching English, which may imply a longer-term applicability of the strategy in teacher education.

To sum up, the construction of speaking confidence in this study by DST is of pedagogical, emotional, and technological significance. By removing fear, DST makes low-motivated individuals feel capable of speaking confidently. These results serve to validate the proposition that confidence, similar to fluency, could be systematically cultivated by a learner-centered, scaffolded, and digitally-enhanced approach to instruction (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021; Sulistianingsih et al., 2025).

Conclusion

The present study examined the effect of DST on two important dimensions of speaking, namely fluency and speaking confidence of low-motivated EFL speakers in an Indonesian university. The research was anchored in Constructivist Learning Theory and Self-Determination Theory and adopted a quantitative method through the pre-post tests of speaking performance and confidence scales.

The results indicated that DST effectively developed learners' fluency, including speech flow, hesitation, and coherence. Students could rehearse, edit, and share their narratives in a low-stakes, self-directed manner through the vlog, thus affording them opportunities to experiment with language in ways often inhibited in conventional knowledge-of-language (KOL) learning environments. Narrating helped them to internalize spoken forms, adjectives, and arrangements and to create a communicative rhythm.

Perhaps as significantly, DST greatly increased students' confidence in speaking. Learners grew in confidence in speaking English, with less anxiety and more readiness to talk. This development occurred due to the agency, authorship, and social support available through the DST process. The findings support the role of affective dimensions, such as self-efficacy, motivation, and anxiety reduction, in the speaking sub-skill and allurements process, especially in learners who are usually reluctant.

In sum, this research highlights the innovative impact of digital storytelling on motivating low-motivated EFL learners to produce more fluent speaking. In integrating language development and affective engagement, DST constitutes not just a methodological revolution but a pedagogy of repositioning that centers the learner's voice, creativity, and agency. As language instruction in the digital age continues to change, DST is a potentially powerful method of helping learners develop the ability to communicate and confidence.

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