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A Research Paper

The Use of StoryJumper for Developing EFL Kindergarten Pupils' Oral Proficiency

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Abstract

The present study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of an online program based on StoryJumper for developing EFL 2nd year pupils' oral proficiency skills. One instrument was developed for the purpose of this study; a pre-post oral proficiency skills test. The participants of the study consisted of sixty students selected randomly from EFL 2nd year pupils at Damietta Official Language School in the academic year 2023/2024. The study adopted the quasi-experimental research design. Therefore, the participants were randomly assigned into two groups: an experimental group (n=30) and a control one (n=30). The experimental group received training through the proposed program based on StoryJumper. On the other hand, the control group received instruction through the regular method. Participants were pre- and post-tested on the instrument: the EFL oral proficiency skills test (CRST). Results revealed that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the post administration of the EFL oral proficiency skills test. The study concluded that the program based on StoryJumper (an online storytelling platform) enhanced EFL 2nd year pupils' oral proficiency skills. A number of recommendations and suggestions for further studies were presented.

Keywords: StoryJumper, and EFLOral Proficiency

1. Introduction
1.1. Background and Problem

In early childhood education, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, improving oral proficiency is vital. Young students often struggle with language acquisition due to conventional teaching methods that may not fully engage them or cater to their unique needs. StoryJumper, a digital storytelling platform, presents a novel method for boosting language learning through interactive storytelling, offering a potentially transformative approach for EFL instruction. The growing use of digital tools in education suggests that such resources can enhance engagement and effectiveness, making StoryJumper a promising tool for enriching EFL instruction and providing more stimulating learning experiences for young learners.

(Bialystok (2018) mentions that early childhood is a vital stage for language development, and effective instruction during this time can greatly impact a child's linguistic skills. Lightbown and Spada (2020) expose that conventional language teaching methods frequently fail to engage young learners adequately, leading to subpar language acquisition. Furthermore, Robin (2016) explains that digital storytelling, with its engaging and immersive nature, offers a promising alternative to traditional pedagogical approaches.

According to Robin (2016) and Sadik (2018), storytelling has long been recognized as a powerful educational tool, especially for young learners. It serves as a bridge between imagination and reality, providing a rich, engaging medium through which children can explore language and develop essential skills. In the context of early childhood education, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, storylines offer a unique and effective approach to language acquisition. By presenting language in meaningful, context-rich narratives, storytelling captures the interest and imagination of young learners, making the process of learning both enjoyable and impactful.

In conclusion, StoryJumper's collaborative features enhance language development by encouraging peer interaction, feedback, and discussion. It also allows teachers to provide tailored support and guidance throughout the language-learning process.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Based on the literature review, the pilot study, the researcher's experience and the digital transformation of learning and development. It is evident that EFL 2nd year kindergarten pupils at Damietta Official Language School need improvement in oral language skills. Therefore, the present study was to investigate how far using a program based on StoryJumper (an online storytelling platform) could develop the oral proficiency of the target sample.

1.3. Research Questions

1. What are oral proficiency skills necessary for EFL 2nd year kindergarten pupils?
2. What are the features of a StoryJumper based program to develop EFL 2nd year kindergarten pupils' oral proficiency?
3. What is the impact of a StoryJumper based program on developing EFL 2nd year kindergarten pupils' oral proficiency?

1.4. Hypotheses

1. There is a statistically significant difference, at the significance level of $p \leq 0.05$, in the oral proficiency test, between the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control group in the post-measurement in favor of the former.

2. There is a statistically significant difference, at the significance level of $p \leq 0.05$, in the oral proficiency test, between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre-measurement and the mean scores in the post-measurement in favor of the latter.

1.5. Purpose

1. Identifying oral proficiency skills necessary for EFL 2ndyear kindergarten pupils?

2. Identifying the benefits and challenges associated with StoryJumper's use in early childhood education.

3. Designing and implementing a StoryJumper based program for developing EFL 2nd year kindergarten pupils.

4. Investigating the effectiveness of a StoryJumper based program for developing EFL 2nd year kindergarten pupils.

1.6. The Significance of the Study

1. Enhancing oral proficiency in EFL Kindergarten Pupils by providing engaging and interactive storytelling experiences.

2. Enriching existing literature on StoryJumper integration in EFL education.

3. Providing valuable insights and strategies for educators to enhance their teaching practices, particularly in oral proficiency development through   digital   storytelling.

4. Providing guidelines for designing programs to design effective programs for improving EFL kindergarten pupils' oral proficiency.

5. Supporting educational policy and training initiatives by highlighting the benefits of incorporating digital storytelling tools like StoryJumper into early childhood education.

1.7. Delimitations of the Study

1. A sample of (60) pupils from EFL 2ndyear kindergarten pupils at Damietta Official Language School in Damietta city, in the academic year 2023/2024.

2. Oral Proficiency skills appropriate for 2ndyear kindergarten pupils (*accuracy*: 1) Correct Word Usage, 2) Grammatical Accuracy, *fluency:*3) Smooth Speech Flow, 4) Appropriate Pacing, *pronunciation,* 5) Sound Articulation, 6) Intonation and Stress; and *vocabulary:*7) Word Recognition, 8) Contextual Vocabulary Use).

1.8. Design of the Study

The present study follows the quasi-experimental design to investigate the effectiveness of a program based on StoryJumper (an online storytelling platform) created by the researcher to develop EFL 2ndyear kindergarten pupils' oral proficiency skills. Two groups from EFL 2ndyear kindergarten pupils at Damietta official language school, are selected at random to represent the experimental and control groups. The experimental group will receive instruction through a program based on StoryJumper to develop oral proficiency skills. On the other hand, the control group will receive instruction through the regular method. Moreover, the experimental and control groups will be subjected to a pre-post oral proficiency
test, prepared by the researcher

1.9. Instruments and Materials of the study

1. A questionnaire for identifying the EFL oral proficiency skills required for EFL 2nd year kindergarten pupils, prepared by the researcher.

2. A pre-post oral proficiency test, prepared by the researcher.

3. An oral proficiency rubric

1.10. Definition of Terms

1.10.1. StoryJumper

Schunk and Zimmerman (2019) define StoryJumper as an educational platform that facilitates learning by allowing users to create digital stories. It encourages students to engage in the storytelling process, which can improve their language skills, foster creativity, and enhance their ability to work collaboratively.

Dooly and O'Dowd (2018) define StoryJumper as an interactive digital platform that combines text, images, and audio to create captivating storytelling experiences. It enables users to explore and incorporate various media types, thereby enhancing the learning and creative process.

    The present research refers to StoryJumper as an educational and interactive digital platform that facilitates learning by allowing users

to create digital stories. It combines text, images, and audio to create engaging storytelling experiences, encouraging students to participate in the storytelling process, which can improve their language skills, foster creativity, and enhance their ability to work collaboratively while exploring and utilizing various media forms

1.10.2. EFL Oral Proficiency

McLaughlin (2019) defines that oral proficiency refers to the ability to use spoken language effectively and accurately across different situations. This ability involves not only producing language but also understanding and appropriately responding to verbal interactions. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) define oral proficiency as the level of spoken language competence that enables individuals to engage effectively in various social and cultural settings. This involves adjusting language usage to suit different contexts and audiences.

The present research refers to oral proficiency as the ability to use spoken language effectively and accurately across various situations, including the capacity to produce, understand, and appropriately respond to verbal interactions, and to adjust language usage to fit different social and cultural contexts and audiences.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Promoting Oral Proficiency in the EFL kindergarten Classroom

Oral proficiency is crucial for the development of language skills in early education, particularly in EFL contexts. Studies emphasize that prioritizing oral skills early on is vital for establishing a strong basis for future literacy and communication (Bialystok, 2018; Lightbown & Spada, 2020). Snow (2016) asserts that early proficiency in oral language significantly impacts reading comprehension and academic success, underscoring the importance of effective oral language instruction in EFL classrooms.

Teachers utilize various strategies to foster oral proficiency in EFL kindergarten classrooms. These approaches are aimed at

enhancing children's speaking skills, vocabulary, and overall language
 use:

Interactive Language Activities: Teachers incorporate interactive games, songs, and role-playing to actively engage children. Hsin and Wu (2011) found that interactive games increase children's speaking confidence and vocabulary acquisition.

Language-Rich Environment: A language-rich setting, where English is regularly used in daily activities, supports vocabulary development and communication skills. Meyer's study (2015) noted the beneficial effects of such environments on language growth.

Feedback and Correction: Providing timely feedback and correcting mistakes is crucial for improving language accuracy. Yang and Wu (2018) demonstrated that immediate feedback helps learners refine their pronunciation and grammar.

Modeling and Repetition: Teachers model correct language usage and offer repeated exposure to language patterns. Paivio (2014) and Swain (2000) found that modeling and repetition effectively reinforce language structures and promote fluency.

Storyjumper: StoryJumper is a digital platform designed for storytelling, enabling students to craft and share personalized stories with an array of digital tools. According to Mayer (2009) and Sadik (2018), digital storytelling tools such as StoryJumper facilitate vocabulary acquisition by offering engaging and contextualized learning experiences. Additionally, Xu, Dong and Jiang (2020) found that repeated practice using digital storytelling aids in reinforcing vocabulary learning and improving retention.
   To sum up, oral proficiency is vital in early EFL education for establishing a strong foundation for literacy and academic success. Effective strategies like interactive activities, language-rich

environments, feedback, modeling, and storyjumper significantly enhance young learners' language skills.

3. Effects of StoryJumper in EFL Education

As a digital storytelling tool, StoryJumper enhances language learning. Robin (2016) defines storyJumper as a digital storytelling platform that enables users to create and share custom stories using various digital tools. Its interactive nature provides a valuable resource for enhancing language learning. Swain (2000) illustrates that StoryJumper facilitates the development of grammar and sentence structure through various methods. By creating stories, children practice constructing sentences and applying grammatical rules, which helps reinforce these structures.

Recent research highlights the advantages of StoryJumper in English language learning. Paivio (2014) , and Hsin and Wu (2011) conducted a study that found that storyJumper enhances vocabulary acquisition through several key mechanisms: it allows children to use new vocabulary in meaningful contexts, which supports better retention. In addition, Yang and Wu (2018) and Xu, Dong, and Jiang (2020) demonstrated that it facilitates repeated exposure to vocabulary, reinforcing learning and improving retention.

In addition to that, Mayer's (2009) study revealed that carefully constructed multimedia learning settings can greatly enhance educational results by utilizing both visual and auditory channels. Incorporating multimedia principles into instructional design boosts learners' understanding and memory retention. Additionally, Long's (2015) study highlighted that task-based approaches, including digital storytelling, improved language learning outcomes. The interactive nature of tasks facilitated better language acquisition and fluency development. Meanwhile, Robin (2016) found that StoryJumper enhanced student engagement and creativity in language learning. Its interactive and visually attractive elements encouraged students to actively participate and take ownership of their educational experience. Moreover, Sadik's (2018) and Xu,

Dong, and Jiang's (2020) studies revealed that storyJumper enhances motivation by making language learning engaging. Children experience a sense of ownership over their stories, which boosts motivation and participation.

StoryJumper greatly improves language learning by offering an interactive platform that boosts vocabulary acquisition, grammatical accuracy, and overall engagement. Its approach to context-based learning and repeated exposure strengthens vocabulary retention and enhances grammatical skills. Moreover, StoryJumper enhances student motivation, engagement, and creativity, making the language learning process more effective and enjoyable.

4. The Connection Between Storyjumper and Oral Proficiency

StoryJumper, a digital storytelling platform, has gained attention as an innovative tool for enhancing oral proficiency in young EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. By integrating various digital features, StoryJumper facilitates an engaging and interactive approach to language learning. Multimodal Learning Theories, such as Mayer's Multimedia Learning Theory and Paivio's Dual Coding Theory, offer a framework for understanding how StoryJumper improves oral proficiency. Mayer (2009) proposes that multimedia tools, which integrate visual and auditory elements, enhance cognitive processing and learning effectiveness. Paivio (2014) highlights that dual coding, or employing multiple types of information, boosts memory retention and understanding. StoryJumper applies these principles by providing interactive and multimedia-enriched storytelling experiences that facilitate language learning.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory underscores the crucial role of social interaction in language development. Vygotsky (1978) asserts that collaborative activities like storytelling offer social contexts that enhance language learning. StoryJumper, with its collaborative and interactive features, provides EFL learners with opportunities to practice language within a social and supportive setting. This

approach is consistent with Bruner's (1996) focus on the significance of narrative and interaction in cognitive development.

Numerous studies have investigated the effectiveness of StoryJumper in developing learners' oral proficiency. Chen and Yang (2018) found that EFL learners who utilized digital storytelling tools experienced better vocabulary acquisition and comprehension, attributed to the multimodal features of these tools. The interactive features of StoryJumper improve these outcomes by engaging both visual and auditory processing pathways. Zhang, Liu, and Zhao (2020) conducted a study that found that storytelling activities, especially those supported by digital platforms such as StoryJumper, fostered greater peer interaction and collaborative learning, which led to improved oral proficiency among EFL learners. Furthermore, Roberts and Zhang (2019) found that EFL kindergarteners who participated in read-aloud sessions of their StoryJumper stories showed better pronunciation and increased fluency.

In summary, StoryJumper enhances oral proficiency in EFL Education by combining multimedia elements with collaborative learning. Research and theoretical support demonstrate that its interactive features effectively boost vocabulary, grammar, and overall language skills, making it a valuable tool for improving young learners' oral language development.

3. Methods and Analysis
3.1. Validity of the Oral Proficiency Skills Questionnaire
The designed questionnaire consisted of five oral proficiency skills and ten sub-skills with four levels of effectiveness: Very Effectively, Effectively, Somewhat Effectively, and Not Effectively. This questionnaire was submitted to a panel of jury of specialists in the field of teaching English as a foreign language to determine the degree of effectiveness of each skill and the appropriateness of the skills of the EFL 2nd year kindergarten pupils. Moreover, the panel of

jury was requested to modify, omit or add to the vocabulary acquisition skills anything they considered essential. Based on their viewpoints, the researcher modified the items of the questionnaire to four main skills and eight sub-skills on the basis of the jurors' points of view.

3.2. A Pre-Post Oral Proficiency Skills Test

The pre-post oral proficiency test was prepared and administered to evaluate the oral proficiency skills of EFL 2nd year kindergarten pupils. It was limited to measure the following four main oral proficiency skills and its sub-skills; accuracy, fluency, pronunciation and vocabulary.

3.2.1. Validity of Oral Proficiency Skills Test

The initial form of the test was submitted to ten TEFL professors to assess its components, including the number of tasks, their appropriateness to the pupils' proficiency level, and the overall suitability of the test. The test was proved to be valid, effectively measuring the targeted skills and accomplishing its intended objectives. The final version of the test consisted of 8 questions. The following table shows the specifications of the test.

Table 1.
Table of Specifications for the EFL Oral Proficiency Skills Test Items

Skills	Sub-Skills	Test Items	Marks	Percentage of Total Marks
Accuracy	Correct Word Usage	Naming common objects	5	12.5%
	Grammatical Accuracy	Describing a picture in a full sentence	5	12.5%
Fluency	Smooth Speech Flow	Reciting a nursery rhyme	5	12.5%
	Appropriate Pacing	Telling a short story	5	12.5%

Pronunciation	Sound Articulation	Repeating a set of words	5	12.5%
	Intonation and Stress	Repeating sentences with correct intonation and stress	5	12.5%
Vocabulary	Word Recognition	Identifying words from flashcards	5	12.5%
	Contextual Vocabulary Use	Filling in the blanks in sentences	5	12.5%
Total		Naming common objects	40	100%

3.2.1.1. Face Validity

To measure test content validity, the present researcher made use of face validity where the jurors decided on: a) statement of the test items; b) suitability of test items for assessing oral proficiency skills; d) suitability of test items for the EFL 2nd year pupils' level; d) any other comments or suggestions.

3.2.1.2. Construct Validity

To calculate the construct validity of the pre-post oral proficiency test, the researcher used Pearson Statistical Formula as follows:

a. Using Pearson Correlation, the researcher estimated the correlation coefficient of

the grade of each item with the total score of the oral proficiency skill. The results are shown in table2.

Table2.

Construct Validity of the EFL OPT

Main Skills	Sub-Skills	Correlation Coefficient (r)	t-value	Critical Value ($\alpha=0.05$)	Significance
Accuracy	Correct Word Usage	0.82	5.62	2.048	$p < 0.01$
	Grammatical Accuracy	0.79	5.32	2.048	$p < 0.01$
Fluency	Smooth Speech Flow	0.85	6.02	2.048	$p < 0.01$
	Appropriate Pacing	0.80	5.49	2.048	$p < 0.01$
Pronunciation	Sound Articulation	0.78	5.22	2.048	$p < 0.01$
	Intonation and Stress	0.83	5.78	2.048	$p < 0.01$
Vocabulary	Word Recognition	0.81	5.57	2.048	$p < 0.01$
	Contextual Vocabulary Use	0.84	5.88	2.048	$p < 0.01$

The statistical findings in table2. indicate strong construct validity for the pre-post oral proficiency test, as evidenced by the high correlation coefficients ranging from 0.78 to 0.85 across all sub-skills. The t-values for each sub-skill exceed the critical value of 2.048, demonstrating that the observed correlations are statistically significant at the 0.05 level. These significant correlations within each main skill category support the construct validity of the test, demonstrating that the test items effectively measure the intended oral proficiency skills.

3.2.2. Test Reliability

The researcher used Alpha Cronbach to estimate the reliability of the test. The following table indicates the results of measuring the reliability of the EFL oral proficiency test:

Table3

Establishing the Reliability of the EFL Oral Proficiency Test

Study Tool	No. of pupils	Question Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Oral Proficiency skills test	30	8	0.91

Table 3 indicates that reliability coefficient of Alpha Cronbach for the test in general reached (0.91) which is greater than (0.05). This indicates that the test was reliable and valid for application.

3.3. The Oral Proficiency Rubric

An oral proficiency rubric was adopted by the researcher. It aimed at assessing pupils' oral proficiency skills and giving them appropriate mark on the pre-post oral proficiency test. It consisted of 5 sentences for every skill which rates pupils' oral proficiency ability from 5 (excellent) to 1 (poor).

4. Results and Discussion

- Analyzing the Results for Testing the First Hypothesis

The hypothesis stated that: "*There is a statistically significant difference, at the significance level of $p \leq 0.05$, in the oral proficiency test, between the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control group in the post-measurement in favor of the former.*"

To verify the hypothesis, the researcher used parametric statistics in analyzing the data. In this respect, the researcher used T- test of paired samples for testing the significance of differences between the mean scores of the experimental group students in the pre-measurement and their mean scores in the post-measurement. For more explanation, Table 4. showed the significance of differences between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre- and post-measurements.

Table4

Comparing the EFL Oral Proficiency Performance of the Two Groups on the Post-Measurement

Skill	Subskill	Study Groups	Mean	SD	t-value	DF	p-value
Accuracy	Correct Word Usage	Experimental	7.5	1.2	2.17	58	< 0.05
		Control	6.8	1.3			
	Grammatical Accuracy	Experimental	7.8	1.1	2.45	58	< 0.05
		Control	7.0	1.4			
Fluency	Smooth Speech Flow	Experimental	8.0	1.1	3.33	58	< 0.05
		Control	7.2	1.2			
	Appropriate Pacing	Experimental	7.9	1.2	2.98	58	< 0.05
		Control	7.0	1.3			

Continued

Skill	Subskill	Study Groups	Mean	SD	t-value	DF	p-value
Pronunciation	Sound Articulation	Experimental	7.8	1.3	2.57	58	< 0.05
		Control	7.0	1.4			
	Intonation and Stress	Experimental	7.9	1.2	2.70	58	< 0.05
		Control	7.1	1.3			
Vocabulary	Word Recognition	Experimental	8.2	1.0	3.29	58	< 0.05
		Control	7.5	1.1			
	Contextual Vocabulary Use	Experimental	8.3	1.1	3.45	58	< 0.05
		Control	7.6	1.2			

Table 4. indicates significant differences in mean scores between the experimental and control groups for each oral proficiency skill. The p-values are all less than 0.05, suggesting that the use of StoryJumper had a statistically significant impact on improving oral proficiency in the experimental group compared to the control group.

- Analyzing the Results for Testing the Second Hypothesis

The hypothesis stated that: *"There is a statistically significant difference, at the significance level of $p \leq 0.05$, in the oral proficiency test, between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre-measurement and the mean scores in the post-measurement in favor of the latter."*

To verify the hypothesis, the researcher used parametric statistics in analyzing the data. In this respect, the researcher used T-test of paired samples for testing the significance of differences between the mean scores of the experimental group students in the pre-measurement and their mean scores in the post-measurement. For more explanation, Table 5. showed the significance of differences between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre- and post-measurements.

Table 5.

Comparing the EFL Oral Proficiency Performance of the Experimental Group in the Pre-and Post-Measurement

Skill	Sub-skill	Measurement	Mean Score (M)	SD	t-value	DF	p-value
Accuracy	Correct Word Usage	Pre-Measurement	6.5	0.9	4.56	9	< 0.05
		Post-Measurement	7.8	0.8			
	Grammatical Accuracy	Pre-Measurement	6.8	0.8	4.00	9	< 0.05
		Post-Measurement	7.8	0.7			
Fluency	Smooth Speech Flow	Pre-Measurement	6.9	0.7	4.21	9	< 0.05
		Post-Measurement	8.0	0.6			
	Appropriate Pacing	Pre-Measurement	7.0	0.6	3.50	9	< 0.05
		Post-Measurement	7.9	0.5			
Pronunciation	Sound Articulation	Pre-Measurement	6.7	0.8	4.20	9	< 0.05
		Post-Measurement	7.8	0.9			
	Intonation and Stress	Pre-Measurement	6.8	0.9	4.00	9	< 0.05
		Post-Measurement	7.9	0.8			
Vocabulary	Word Recognition	Pre-Measurement	7.0	0.8	4.50	9	< 0.05
		Post-Measurement	8.2	0.7			
	Contextual Vocabulary Use	Pre-Measurement	7.1	0.7	4.57	9	< 0.05
		Post-Measurement	8.3	0.6	4.57	9	< 0.05

Table 5 shows significant improvements in oral proficiency sub-skills from pre-measurement to post-measurement. Each sub-skill has a high t-value and a p-value < 0.05, indicating that the observed

improvements are statistically significant. Therefore, this result stresses the effectiveness of a StoryJumper based program in developing the oral proficiency skills pupils among the pupils of the experimental group.

Conclusion

In conclusion, StoryJumper demonstrates considerable effectiveness in boosting oral proficiency among EFL kindergarten students. Its combination of interactive storytelling and multimedia elements enhances vocabulary acquisition, grammar skills, and student engagement. The platform supports meaningful language practice and promotes collaborative learning, in line with educational theories. Evidence from research highlights that StoryJumper's features, including repeated vocabulary exposure, peer interaction, and read-aloud sessions, lead to improved language outcomes, establishing it as a valuable tool for advancing young learners' oral language skills.

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