
A Review of the Impact of Digital Storytelling and Blended Learning on EFL Learners' Oral Proficiency and Motivation among Middle and Secondary School Students, 2016–2026

Zeinab Hassoun*

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Abstract

This paper reviews empirical studies on the impact of digital storytelling (DST) on enhancing middle and secondary school students' oral proficiency and motivation in English as a second/foreign language as well as it examines the extent to which DST has been investigated

*A Review of the Impact of Digital Storytelling and Blended Learning on EFL Learners' Oral Proficiency and Motivation among Middle and Secondary School Students, 2016–2026, Lebanese university, Department of English, Lebanon, zaynabhassoun@outlook.com



within blended learning contexts. This paper also considers Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) as a theoretical framework for implementing DST and improving oral proficiency and motivation. A thematic literature review was conducted of 40 empirical studies published between 2016 and 2026 in middle and high schools. The themes explored the topics of digital storytelling, blended learning, and experiential learning and their impact on oral proficiency and motivation. The reviewed literature indicates a positive relationship between DST and students' oral proficiency and motivation. Similarly, blended learning demonstrates effectiveness with respect to improving speaking and motivation when implemented effectively. Therefore, the findings support that when DST is integrated within a well-structured blended learning environment, it significantly contributes to enhancing both oral proficiency and motivation. The findings also suggest that ELT provides a complementary theoretical framework for explaining these effects through involving students with authentic experience, reflection, conceptualization, and active experimentation. Nevertheless, further research should employ larger sample sizes, broaden the geographical contexts, and investigate both oral proficiency and motivation within one study.

Keywords: digital storytelling, blended learning, oral proficiency, motivation, experiential learning theory

Introduction

Integrating digital tools into teaching English language has become increasingly prominent in recent years. This integration is viewed by educators as a means to improving learners' communicative competence and engagement. One educational digital tool that attracted considerable attention among educators is digital storytelling (DST). In fact, the literature on DST has shown that this digital tool can enhance language learning since it integrates narrative, technology, and creativity in ways that allow learners to construct and share personal or collaborative stories using multimedia elements such as voice, images, and sound (Meadows, 2003 as cited in Tahriri et al., 2015 and Smeda et al., 2014). Research has also shown that not only does DST support students' linguistic skills but also their higher-order thinking, collaboration, and motivation (Smeda et al., 2014; Meri-Yilan, 2020; Fitri et al., 2022).



However, implementing DST in school contexts, particularly in developing countries, can be very challenging. Schools may have limited access to technological devices and even the Internet connectivity may be unreliable or unavailable. The literature suggests that blended learning in such cases can be a potential solution to these challenges. Meri-Yilan (2020) and Nassim (2018) contended that blended learning may be helpful in this context. The researchers believed that when DST is integrated within a blended learning model, it enables students to create content that incorporates elements including planning, blended learning technology, learning activity design, and evaluation, all guided by the teacher. For this reason, teachers are able to adapt DST into low-tech or offline forms by using tools such as PowerPoint, Windows Movie Maker, or mobile phones in group settings to create a meaningful English language learning experience for students (Smeda et al., 2014).

Researching this topic is significant for various reasons. First, Tahriri et al. (2015) noted that "Even though digital storytelling has been practiced for more than two decades, a limited amount of research has been conducted on this issue" (p.145). The body of research on DST remains underexplored in contexts with limited technological resources. Second, students are likely to develop greater confidence, creativity, and ownership of their learning process when they engage in storytelling (Smeda et al., 2014). Third, the findings may help educators in similar contexts adopt innovative strategies that enhance oral proficiency and motivation despite technological limitations. It is true that there is plethora of literature on DST; however, few studies have examined its integration within blended learning. Also, there is a shortage of research that focuses on interventions conducted over an extended period, such as an academic school year. As a result, this paper seeks to investigate the implementation of DST within blended-learning context in the context of English as a second/foreign language learning among middle- and secondary-school students and its effect on students' oral proficiency and motivation.

Although there appears to be a growing body of literature that previously examined Digital Storytelling and Blended Learning in language, the majority of the reviews approached the topic from various angles other than examining oral proficiency and motivation. For instance, the studies of Lim et al. (2022) and Sabari and Hashim (2023) were excluded from this review since the studies examined the impact of DST on the four language skills: reading, writing,

speaking, and listening, rather than oral proficiency and motivation. Likewise, the study of Peng et al. (2025) was conducted to identify specific learning needs for English courses in elementary school in China and highlighted the need for including DST and Blended Learning effectively to improve students' English language. In addition, there is gap related to studying the impact of Digital storytelling and blended learning on both speaking and motivation. Most of the studies involved one of these components, either speaking or motivation; only 4 out of the 40 reviewed empirical studies examined the impact of blended learning and digital storytelling on speaking and motivation together (Rampeng et al., 2026; Shahjalal et al., 2026; Fitriana et al., 2024; Henderman, 2019).

Another gap is related to the sample of the studies. It is worth noting that many of the empirical studies were excluded since the sample focused on mainly university level. This shows that investigating the impact of Digital storytelling and blended learning on improving oral proficiency and motivation is still insufficient at school level in general, and middle and secondary school in specific.

A final gap that can be identified is related to Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). Implementing DST has been viewed mainly through the lens of sociocultural theory, rather than ELT. For instance, only 10 studies were able to be included in this review (Benites Bachón et al., 2026; Dewi et al., 2025; Kaharuddin, 2025; Latifah et al., 2025; Sylva, 2024); Talapova and Abay, 2025; Yang et al., 2025; Simatupang and Rahman, 2024; Suwarni and Natsir, 2024; Nieto Moreno de Diezmas, 2023; Millatina et al., 2020). This proves that more research should be done from this theory's perspective.

Accordingly, the main objective of this paper is to review empirical studies examining the impact of digital storytelling and blended learning on students' oral proficiency and motivation in English language learning at the middle and secondary school levels over the period of time from 2016 to 2026. This paper also considers Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), as one of the theoretical perspectives that can inform the implementation of DST and blended learning. Therefore, the paper addresses the following research questions:

1. What does the existing literature reveal about the impact of digital storytelling on enhancing middle and secondary students' oral proficiency and motivation in English as a second language?



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- 2.To what extent has existing research investigated digital storytelling within blended learning environments with respect to students' oral proficiency and motivation?
 - 3.What does the existing literature reveal about the impact of experiential learning on students' oral proficiency and motivation in learning English as a second language?
 - 4.What does the existing literature reveal about the methodological, contextual, and theoretical gaps, and what do these gaps suggest for future research on digital storytelling, blended learning, oral proficiency, and motivation among middle and secondary students learning English as a second/foreign language?

This paper contributes to research as it synthesizes the findings from previous existing empirical studies on digital storytelling and blended learning and their correlation with students' oral proficiency and motivation. This paper identifies the areas of agreement and disagreement across previous research, examines the methodologies employed and the findings reported, and highlights the gaps to be addressed in further research. Ultimately, this paper aims to clarify the extent to which existing research supports the integration of DST in order to enhance students' oral proficiency and motivation in EFL/ESL context. The review may provide a rationale for future research in EFL/ESL school contexts

1. Conceptual and Theoretical Background

1.1. Digital Storytelling (DST)

Although it is not new teaching approach, Digital Storytelling is an instructional tool that can help with promoting the 21st century skills (Henderman, 2019).

Robin (2011) defined Digital Storytelling by stating that it is:

The idea of combining the art of telling stories with a variety of digital multimedia, such as images, audio, and video. Just about all digital stories bring together some mixture of digital graphics, text, recorded audio narration, video and music to present information on a specific topic. As is the case with traditional storytelling, digital stories revolve around a chosen theme and often contain a particular viewpoint. The stories are typically just a few minutes long and have a variety of uses, including the telling of personal tales, the recounting of historical events, or as a means to inform or instruct on a particular topic. (p.1)



Robin (2011) argued that participating in digital storytelling help students to organize ideas, ask questions, express opinions, and create narratives. Therefore, digital storytelling generates students' interest and their learning motivation. In addition, participating in the creation of these stories help students who develop their oral proficiency.

Moreover, Peng et al. (2025) mentioned that integrating DST in blended learning can very advantageous. In fact, blended learning can transform the learning experience into a personal one which allows students to engage with digital content and applications at their own pace with the guidance of the teacher in class, which ultimately leads to increasing students' motivation to learn and reinforcing their oral fluency and communication.

1.2. Blended Learning (BL)

Blended learning (BL) can be defined as an educational approach that incorporates both face-to-face classroom instruction and online learning activities (Teng and Zeng, 2022; Meri-Yilan, 2020). Yang and Chano (2025) cited literature indicating that blended learning “was first developed in corporate training, and then gradually entered the field of education, becoming an important teaching method in higher education at the beginning of the 21st century” (p.83). This approach gained greater significance after the COVID-19 pandemic, when educational institutions had to reopen doors as a result of the loosening of strict health measures leading to a switch of the learning methods “from online and distanced learning to partial or full in person learning and blended learning” (Abdillah and Sueb, 2022, p.279). The aim of blended learning is to benefit from the advantages of the two teaching methods, traditional and online, in order to improve the learning experience (Yang and Chano, 2025).

Implementing blended learning effectively can be rewarding if students and teachers cooperate during the online sessions. Research has revealed that this approach creates a flexible and a conducive learning environment that can cater to students' diverse learning styles. By adopting this model, students can engage with digital content at their own pace while still benefiting from the teacher's instruction and guidance in the classroom. Therefore, BL can boost students' motivation to learn. All subjects, particularly English as a second language, can benefit from this approach since students have access to a wide range of online resources such as interactive games, video lessons, and online exercises. These studies show that blended learning can be motivating for students despite the disadvantages related mainly to communication through

online platforms. Moreover, this approach supports differentiated learning and enhances collaborative learning as students are prone to work both online and offline, which may aid in developing students' oral fluency and critical thinking skills. Thus, integrating the BL within the teaching-learning process promotes students' classroom engagement and ultimately leads to autonomous learning (Peng et al., 2025; Abdillahi and Sueb, 2022).

1.3. Oral Proficiency

Demir and Mirzaie (2023) mention that improving and assessing English speaking skills has become a requirement for advancing in education and the workplace since "English language has become the lingua franca around the globe. It means that people from all over the world use it to communicate with each other despite their mother tongue language" (p.1393)

Teng and Zeng (2022) explain, based on the cited literature, that oral English proficiency refers to the ability to utilize correct grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation to express ideas appropriately in communicative situations. The main variables used to measure the oral proficiency are complexity, accuracy, and fluency. Complexity refers to the ability of a speaker to elaborate on ideas using vocabulary and complex syntax. Accuracy refers to the production of error-free sentences. Fluency refers to the smoothness of speech, including its speed, breakdowns, and repairs. The researchers add that fluency and accuracy are the most important criteria for evaluating the learners' oral proficiency; however, accuracy does not lead to fluency, and vice versa. Similarly, Rampeng (2026) argues that speaking is a skill that requires learners to integrate their fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, confidence, and interactional strategies simultaneously.

By providing students with classroom and online material, Yang and Chano (2025) state that "existing literature shows that blended learning has significant advantages in improving language proficiency" (p.84). Moreover, research has shown that DST promotes speaking skills by requiring students to narrate stories, rehearse scripts, and present them to peers (Miao and Li, 2024). Hasanah et al. (2021) stated that telling a story can boost learners' speaking skills since it is a good strategy that may guide them to "increase their sensitivity to recognize pronunciation errors, extend vocabulary, make a good sentence in a very well-structured way, and fluent to speak in concrete content" (p.177).



1.4. Motivation

Motivation has recently gained significant attention in research as it seen as critical for all learners (Rukhsana, 2021). It is a construct that has been viewed through three major schools of thought: behavioral, cognitive, and social. Kong (2021) stated that motivation is a significant determining factor of success in education. Motivation is pivotal for students to enhance their learning and increase the value of higher education as it encourages the students' self-awareness and makes them more goal-oriented.

Motivation is a construct that includes a multiplicity of definitions. Abdillah and Sueb (2022) explain that learning motivation refers to the students' effort and their desire to learn a new language while fostering a positive cognitive, emotional, and behavioral attitude towards this language. Likewise, Lai (2011) referred to motivation as the reasons that "underlie behavior that is characterized by willingness and volition" (p.2). There are two main types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. While intrinsic motivation refers to students' personal interest and willingness to engage with learning process to pursue their goals, extrinsic motivation refers to the external stimulus, such as grades or incentives, to achieve their goals. It worth noting that these two types of motivation are complementary and help students achieve their learning goals (Abdillah and Sueb, 2022; Lai, 2011).

Motivation is at the heart of new teaching-learning approaches. For this, digital storytelling and blended learning can play a major role in motivating students to learn English (Peng et al. 2025). Blended learning is an approach that fosters motivations towards language learning. Ibrahim and Nat (2019) state that blended learning has shown a positive impact on student motivation since it requires students to engage in the learning process rather than being passive learners. Moreover, Kasami (2021) cites literature that shows how Digital storytelling has been proven to enhance motivation among students learning a foreign language.

1.5. Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)

According to Kolb and Kolb (2005), experiential learning (EL) is a student-centered approach based on a recurring cycle in which students engage in an experience, reflect on it, and develop new ideas accordingly. It is a learning approach that occurs through action, exploration, discovery, and hands-on experiences. Sylva (2024) stated that Experiential Learning theory (ELT) "moves away from the behaviorist view and the classic knowledge-transfer model of

education and instead acknowledges the relevance of learners' experience and their own reflection" (p.84).

Experiential Learning theory can help learners develop their oral proficiency. Ha (2020) stated that "experiential learning enables students to engage actively in the learning process, to learn language by using it in real settings, to explain what they are learning and how they are learning" (p. 67).

Moreover, motivation is addressed in ELT. EL is a teaching approach that facilitates active learning through providing learners with real-world experiences in which they interact with and become involved with a topic at hand. Literature has shown that EL helps learners to develop their motivation for learning as they take more responsibility for their learning, which in turn strengthens the connection between the learning and reality (Kong, 2021).

Consistent with ELT, DST can improve learners' motivation and oral proficiency. Shan et al. (2019) demonstrated that DST in language learning increases students' confidence and satisfaction, allowing them to share personal stories. Similarly, Peng et al. (2025) reported that a blended DST model increased speaking confidence and motivation in China among English learners, as DST cultivates intrinsic motivation.

2. Methodology for Study Selection

2.1. Research Design and Scope of Review

The following paper examined empirical research on the impact of digital storytelling (DST) on enhancing middle and secondary school learners' oral proficiency and motivation in learning English as a second/foreign language. In addition, the review investigated the implementation of DST within blended learning contexts. Moreover, the paper reviewed Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) as a theoretical framework for employing DST as means for improving oral proficiency and motivation among students.

The review focused on covering empirical studies that target mainly middle and secondary school students published between 2016 and 2026. This period was selected to investigate the extent of incorporating technology-enhanced learning approaches, specifically digital storytelling and blended learning, into learner-centered EFL/ESL instruction. Publications



were solely considered according to their relevance to the topic and their alignment with the inclusion criteria.

The review of the empirical studies was guided by four research questions. The first focused on investigating the impact of digital storytelling on enhancing middle and secondary students' oral proficiency and motivation in English as a second language in existing literature. The second aimed at investigating digital storytelling within blended learning environments with respect to students' oral proficiency and motivation in existing literature review. The third examined the impact of experiential learning on students' oral proficiency and motivation in learning English as a second language in existing literature review. In fact, the inclusion of experiential learning was intended to provide a broader understanding of experience-based approaches that may help motivate students and support them with developing their oral proficiency in EFL context. And, the fourth is related to the finding research and address future studies.

2.2. Search strategy and Keywords

The search strategy was developed in accordance with the first three research questions. Based on these questions, keywords were grouped into four categories: instructional approaches category, including 'digital storytelling', 'blended learning', and 'experiential learning'; language category, including 'speaking' 'oral performance', 'oral proficiency', 'oral fluency'; motivation category, including 'motivation', 'learning motivation', 'student motivation'; and population category including 'EFL learners', 'EFL students', 'middle school students', 'secondary school students', 'high school students'.

Different combinations of these keywords were used with Boolean operators such as 'and' and 'or'. Examples of search combinations are: 'digital storytelling' AND 'speaking' AND 'EFL', 'digital storytelling' AND 'motivation' AND 'EFL', 'blended learning' AND 'speaking' AND 'EFL', 'blended learning' AND 'motivation' AND 'EFL', 'Experiential learning' AND 'speaking' AND 'EFL', 'Experiential learning' AND 'speaking' AND 'EFL', 'Experiential learning' AND 'motivation' AND 'EFL'.

Therefore, studies were included in the review when they met the following criteria:

- They were published between 2016 and 2026.
- They focused on middle and secondary school.



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- They investigated English language learning.
 - They examined either digital storytelling, or blended learning, or experiential learning theory, and its impact on oral proficiency, or motivation, or both.
 - They were published in academic journal.

On the other hand, studies were excluded when they did not match with scope of the review. The studies were excluded for the following reasons:

- Studies that were published before 2016.
- Studies that focused on university students or the elementary cycle.
- Studies not related to teaching/learning English.
- Studies that didn't address any of the keywords: blended learning, blended learning, and experiential learning theory.

2.3. Databases and Sources of Literature

The literature search was conducted using academic databases, scholarly articles, and academic journals. The principal sources consulted were Google Scholar, ResearchGate, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, GARUDA (Garba Rujukan Digital), and e-Marefa. Moreover, relevant studies were located through direct searches of academic journals, including Esteem Journal, Journal of English Teaching and Learning, Journal of Educational Sciences, Journal Riset Rumpun Ilmu Bahasa, and JELITA: Education and Learning.

The use of multiple databases and scholarly platforms Google Scholar was used as a broad scholarly search engine to identify relevant academic publications across journals. ResearchGate and other databases and platforms were intended to broaden the scope of the review and to find relevant studies that included Digital Storytelling, Blended Learning, Experiential Learning Theory and their impact on oral proficiency and motivation among students learning English as a second language.

2.4. Study Identification and Analysis

The process consisted of identifying studies related to the topic and research questions through searches of selected databases and academic platforms and journals. The titles and the abstracts were then examined to identify the studies that correspond to the research questions. More than 80 articles were found on digital storytelling, blended learning, and experiential learning and their impact on oral proficiency and motivation; however, only 40 studies met the inclusion

criteria after carrying out screening, selection, and the extraction and ensuring not having duplicate articles.

The 40 studies were then organized thematically according to the following categories:

- Experiential Learning Theory and Motivation (3 studies)
- Experiential Learning Theory and Oral Fluency (8 studies)
- Blended Learning and Motivation (2 studies)
- Blended Learning and Oral Fluency (5 studies)
- Blended Learning and Oral Fluency and Motivation (1 study)
- Digital Storytelling and Oral fluency and Motivation (3 studies)
- Digital Storytelling and Oral Fluency (17 studies)
- Digital Storytelling and Motivation (1 study)

Relevant information was extracted from each selected study. These included publication year, country, participant characteristics, sample size, research design, duration of the intervention, instruments, methodology, data collection, and findings. The extracted information was then compared to identify similarities, differences, and gaps.

The selected 40 studies were finally categorized under three major themes: the impact of DST on oral fluency and motivation, the impact of blended learning on oral fluency and motivation, the impact of ELT on oral proficiency and motivation. Finally, the articles were analyzed thematically. Thematic analysis was chosen since the empirical studies differed with respect to the research design, educational context, sample size, and intervention.

3. Literature Review Organized by Themes

3.1. Experiential Learning Theory (ELT).

Learning English has become one of the essential tools or skills for being successful in this age and time. Literature supports that a second language can be acquired through Experiential Learning (EL).

Developed by Kolb in 1984, Experiential Learning (EL) is a paradigm for resolving the contradiction between gathering information and using it. This paradigm focuses on the idea that learning occurs through experience and that evaluating learners should be in line with their previous experiences as learners are engaged in all learning processes. (Kong, 2021)



Kong (2021) added that EL is a teaching method that allows learners to learn by following these steps: Do, Reflect, Think and Apply. Firstly, students are engaged in a tangible experience (Do). Then, they reflect on that experience (Reflect). Later, they develop to apply these theories to make decisions or clarify problems (Think). Finally, they become able to make assumptions or clarify problems (Apply). According to the advocates of this theory, EL is considered a strong instrument that has positive impact on learning, as learners are prone to apply what has been learned in school and transfer it to the real world. In this way, learners gain more autonomy and responsibility while being involved in the learning environment. Moreover, it helps learners become flexible, integrate all what they have learned into a full-cycle learning process, and develop skills and meta-learning abilities.

Kolb (1984) stated that experiential learning is a theory that helps integrate both behavioral and cognitive learning theories. The author states that “it is a holistic integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition, and behavior” (p.21).

Kolb (1984) believed that there are three models of experiential learning. Although each model has its own characteristics, they still share many similarities.

The first model is the Lewinian Model of Action Research and Laboratory Training. According to the advocates of this model, the learning process passes through a cycle of four stages. Firstly, learning is facilitated by an “here-and-now experience”. This stage is followed by the collection of data and observations about that experience. Later, the data are analyzed where concepts are formed. Finally, these concepts are tested in new learning experiences.

The second model is Dewey’s Model of Learning. Dewey’s model of experiential learning has many similarities with Lewin’s. Both emphasize learning as a dialectic process that integrates experience and concepts, observations, and action. Kolb (1984) stated that experience and ideas move in a process, one leading to the other. Experience boosts learners with ideas that may influence a new direction; hence, the integration of the experience and idea impulses lead to achievement.

The third model is Piaget’s Model of Learning and Cognitive Development. Similar to the learning models of Lewin and Dewey, Piaget believes that the development of the learning process takes place in a cycle of interaction between the individual and the environment. According to Piaget, learning occurs most effectively as a result of “the mutual interaction of

the process of accommodation of concepts or schemas to experience in the world and the process of assimilation of events and experiences from the world into existing concepts and schemas” (p.23).

3.2. ELT in DST within a Blended Learning

Implementing DST has been viewed through the lens of sociocultural theory. Henderman (2019) noted that digital storytelling requires a significant component, namely, the sociocultural perspective, since students are prone to work collaboratively through a sequence of stages. This notion is consistent with Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory (1978) that asserts that language is effectively acquired through communication which in turn fosters students’ critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Vygotsky believes that assimilating knowledge only from teachers does not lead to language acquisition. It is only when students collaborate in pedagogical activities that they are more likely to develop their higher-order thinking skills. That is to say as students are engaged in conversations and share ideas through meaningful discussions, they develop both their language skills as well as their cognitive skills.

While sociocultural theory is valid for implementing Digital storytelling within blended learning, Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) also provides a solid theoretical foundation, in which students learn through experience, reflection, conceptual understanding, and active application, ultimately improving students' oral proficiency and motivation.

According to Kolb (1984), the central principle of ELT is that the process of learning requires the creation of knowledge through experience. This principle fits digital storytelling well. DST is a technology-based activity that provides students with a learning experience in which they actively construct knowledge by creating, sharing, reflecting on, and revising stories. Therefore, DST helps learners become active participants in their own learning, which is consistent with Kolb (1984).

Kolb's Four-Stage Learning Cycle can serve as a foundation for implementing Digital Storytelling within blended learning during the learning process through following these steps: Do, Reflect, Think and Apply (Kong, 2021).

As for Concrete Experience (CE), which forms the first stage, students become engaged in a meaningful experience, so learning starts with doing rather than memorizing. In application,

students may participate in meaningful, authentic storytelling tasks such as: discussing personal experiences, interviewing classmates, collecting photographs, recording videos, and brainstorming story ideas. This contributes to the learners' oral proficiency as they tend to speak in real situations where they exchange ideas and use relevant vocabulary. Moreover, students will become more motivated while sharing their personal experiences (Kolb, 1984; Young et al. 2008; Shahjalal, 2026).

As for Reflective Observation (RO), which forms the second stage, students start reflecting on their experiences by examining what happened, what worked, and what improvement are needed. Reflection occurs through writing journals, having classroom discussions, evaluating their peers, and conducting self-assessment. This contributes to the learners' oral proficiency as students start noticing pronunciation mistakes, grammatical errors, and vocabulary limitations when receiving their peers and teacher's feedback. Ultimately, this will reflect positively on their motivation as students recognize their progress over time, helping them gain self-confidence (Kolb, 1984; Young et al. 2008; Gutiérrez-Colón & Alameh, 2024; Roy, 2024).

As for Abstract Conceptualization (AC), which forms the third stage, learners think of concepts and theories as they develop new understanding based on what they reflected on. In application, students learn explicit language concepts such as narrative structure, sequencing, transition words, pronunciation rules, or grammar, while teachers provide feedback based on students' communication. This contributes to the learners' oral proficiency because students begin to understand grammatical or pronunciation rules, making their speaking more accurate. This in turn increases the level of intrinsic motivation (Kolb, 1984; Young et al. 2008; Roy, 2024).

As for Active Experimentation (AE), which forms the fourth and last stage, students start applying what they have learned into new situations. In application, students revise their digital stories, create new stories, use new vocabulary after incorporating their teacher's feedback. This contributes to the students' oral proficiency since the repeated speaking opportunities improve fluency and pronunciation during communication, which eventually makes students more motivated to engage in the learning process (Kolb, 1984; Young et al. 2008; Shahjalal, 2026).

In conclusion, although Digital Storytelling (DST) has been abundantly examined from the perspective of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes the importance of social

interaction in language development, Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how DST can promote both oral proficiency and motivation within a blended learning environment.

However, experiential learning can have its own limitations. Sylva (2024) contended that these drawbacks can be related to time management, difficulty in assessing students, and most importantly, the inadequate training received by teachers for implementing their plans. Moreover, applying what has been learned in real-life situations is crucial for experiential learning, while reflecting on these experiences can be challenging for some students.

Consequently, Experiential Learning can be viewed as a solid theoretical foundation for language education since it creates a medium for language learners to connect what they have learned in the classroom with authentic experiences, reflect on how they performed, develop new understandings, and apply what has been learned in new contexts. Therefore, Kolb's (1984) theory is a holistic perspective that incorporates cognition, emotion, and action in the learning process, which ultimately contributes to the development of both learners' oral skills and motivation.

3.3. Digital storytelling (DST)

In a world characterized by modern technology that is evolving rapidly on an almost daily basis, where people, especially students, are making use of all types and forms of technology, curriculum designers and teachers must take this into consideration. It should be acknowledged that "it is important for teachers to employ technology in the classroom to engage in oracy instruction, promoting listening and speaking skills" (Tahriri et al., 2015). Digital storytelling (DST) can be an effective instructional resource due to its emergence as a new pedagogical approach that could be useful in classroom environment, especially in teaching a second language. The existing body of literature reveals that some scholars have shifted towards implementing DST into their instruction over the past decade (Fitri et al., 2022).

Digital storytelling in second-language teaching integrates narrative and multimedia, which encourage students to use language in an authentic and creative manner. Smeda et al. (2014) revealed that DST enhances literacy and engagement by having students add voice, images, and personal expression to their stories. Furthermore, Nassim (2018) highlighted that offline

tools like Microsoft Photo Story 3 can enhance students' reading and writing skills significantly, revealing that DST is feasible even in low-tech settings.

Digital storytelling is closely aligned with Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984). Hsieh and Lee (2023) mentioned that Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) prioritizes the integration of the experiential learning cycle into learning activities. This means that language learners are encouraged to learn from concrete experiences that are connected to their personal lives. Digital storytelling is one approach through which students are able to produce material related to their experience, which can make them more motivated and engaged in the learning process. The authors state that "such concrete and contextual learning is in line with Dewey's (1938) learning by doing in engaging learners with hands-on activities" (p. 1089).

Empirical studies have revealed that the use of DST language-learning classrooms has a positive impact on developing students' four language skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Moreover, DST can boost learners' critical thinking and motivation. (Fitri et al., 2022) Consistent with ELT, Robin (2016 as cited in Fitri et al., 2022) stated that implementing DST can be very rewarding for students. The application of DST means that students will be able to share their experiences and enrich their ideas as they are able to access a variety of information over the internet. As a result, students tend to build self-confidence in oral communication as they work on building their stories, which requires structuring their ideas, posing questions, and expressing their viewpoints.

By applying Kolb's (1984) four stages of learning: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation, Digital storytelling permits peers to have authentic conversations and receive feedback throughout the creation of their projects which can assist students in developing their language skills (Lankshear and Knobel, 2003 as cited in Henderman, 2019).

It is worth noting that technology has become a part and parcel of daily life and can be helpful in acquiring a second language as students move through Kolb's (1984) four stages of learning. Henderman (2019) argues that living in this modern world where technology is at its core, integrating technology pedagogically into classrooms can aid students in developing their language skills. In fact, children are using technologies, such as mobile devices and other

digital media, more frequently. Therefore, implementing digital storytelling has a strong potential on developing students' literacy and cognitive skills.

3.4. Blended Learning

The technological advancement in the 21st century has impacted the educational field enormously. Recently, Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) technologies and Learning Management Systems (LMS) have been developing rapidly as a result of all these technological advancements. However, many researchers have cautioned against the sole dependence on online learning since the online systems still lack the tools that help learners develop their cognitive and social skills on the one hand, and on the other hand, they pose a big challenge for teachers in terms of how to display the content and teach it, especially that verbal cues which are also important for the teacher-student communication are missing in online sessions (Wright, 2017). To address these limitations, shifting towards Blended Learning can help improve the learning-teaching process.

Wright (2017) stated that the term of blended learning is a newly developed teaching practice that encompasses an array of definitions. One of these definitions is that blended learning “is a combination of traditional face-to-face teaching and on-line teaching” (p.64).

Blended learning can have positive effects on the teaching-learning process. Wichadee (2017) mentions that conventional learning can be supplemented by introducing blended learning as teachers make use of learning technologies that are appropriate for students. It is stated that “the use of technologies with new teaching methodologies can create innovative learning environments that enable instructors to organize their teaching in a more efficient way” (p.139). In fact, blended learning can occur when the teacher uses the traditional classroom setting to teach the appropriate content and select technological tools to give supplementary resources or practice on the same content. Eventually, Blended learning can address the drawbacks found in both face-to-face and online learning.

Valiathan (2010) identified three models of Blended Learning. There is the skill-driven model, which is a mixture of teacher-facilitated learning through email or discussion forums and face-to-face meetings with self-paced learning. Also, there's the behavior-driven model, in which traditional classroom learning blends with online collaborative learning. In this model, collaborative learning is deemed necessary and is facilitated through face-to-face sessions by



the teacher since it requires the students to learn new behaviors in a conducive atmosphere. Finally, there is the competency-driven model, where learners, especially workers, learn from experts by observing them online and interacting with them on the job.

While all the models seem efficient, the behavior-driven model appears to fit the implementation of digital storytelling in the classroom within an Experiential Learning Theory framework, since students are required to collaborate both within the classroom and online in order to learn new behaviors and apply them to real-life situations. By following this model, students can tell their stories digitally using the steps: Do, Reflect, Think and Apply, which are consistent with ELT.

Ibrahim and Nat (2019) discussed how blended learning can help motivate the students and help them perform better. They believe that blended learning is an effective approach that helps students engage with the content outside the traditional classroom, turning the experience of learning from passive to active. The researchers state that “BL helps instructors engage students in active learning that promotes skills such as communication, information literacy, creativity and collaboration that transform into the ability to use digital technologies for different purposes” (p.2).

Yang and Chano (2025) mentioned that Blended learning has become as a significant approach to improving English proficiency in all four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing among students learning English as a second language. If applied correctly, the blended learning model effectively provides learners with a variety of opportunities that enable students to practice their language and become autonomous learners since students benefit from the instructions in the classroom along with the online resources.

3.5. Oral Proficiency

It has become widely acknowledged that speaking English is one of the 21st century skills that should be emphasized since it is a gateway to obtaining better job opportunities. Hughes (2006 as cited in Hassanah et al. 2021) contends that second-language learners have to develop their speaking skills since speaking is the most common language activity that people engage in in their daily linguistic interactions.

However, a percentage of students who come from non-English speaking countries feel anxious when using English (Rao, 2019 as cited in Fitri et al., 2022). For instance, Fitri et al. (2022)



and Colon and Alameh (2024) agreed that students in Malaysia and Lebanon respectively feel that learning English is a major obstacle. Students from non-speaking-English countries usually struggle when it comes to speaking since they have low proficiency in oral skills, though some second-language learners tend to do well on exams, which may prevent them from getting jobs. This problem result from students not using English language in real-life situations (Aziz & Kashinathan, 2021 as cited in Fitri et al., 2022). Another problem may be due to the fact that educational books used for teaching languages often focus on grammar drills. This traditional method of teaching a language emphasizes learning mechanics rather than oral communication skills (Krishan et al., 2012 as cited in Fitri et al., 2022). Moreover, Henderman (2019) stated that learning a second language can be hindered due to several factors, including the isolation of grammar from context, and the failure create authentic material that connects to students' lives, which can be highly motivating.

To improve students' speaking skill, the curriculum should be modernized by excluding the traditional methods of teaching English as a second language. In fact, teachers should create a conducive atmosphere for oral communication that helps students overcome their fear of making mistakes while speaking. This can be achieved by grouping students into small groups or pairing them together. In addition, a speaking rubric must be designed to evaluate students' progress (Fitri et al., 2022).

One method for developing students' speaking skills is through ELT. Embarek and Hacene (2024) mention that experiential learning can effectively contribute to developing students' language skills by providing them with opportunities to practice the language in real-world situations. The authors believe that ELT "enhances linguistic fluency, improves deep understanding of grammar and vocabulary, and fosters critical thinking" (P.317). In addition, ELT allows students to communicate effectively in real-life situations which strengthens the speaking ability and helps build their confidence.

ELT can be easily applied through Digital Storytelling (DST). Aligned with the four stages of ELT, DST can be an effective tool to help students improve their oral proficiency since it allows learners to use a variety of media forms, such as images, audio, and animation in order to create their personal stories and present them to their classmates (Colon and Alameh, 2024; Fitri et al., 2022). Language acquisition can be further enhanced through the Reflective Observation

stage. In this stage, students can reflect on their speaking tasks which aids in deepening their comprehension of grammar or pronunciation rules while practicing speaking in real situations. Kolb (1984) stated that through the reflective process, students internalize their language knowledge and extend it to future applications. Similarly, blended learning can help students improve their speaking skill. The growing body of literature reveals that blended learning can help students with their oral proficiency since it provides learners with various opportunities through using multiple online tools which helps them practice their language more often and gain more independence (Liu and Chano, 2025; Yang and Chano, 2025).

3.6. Motivation

Motivation has been researched abundantly due to its importance. Motivation is known to play a critical role in improving students' performance at school.

Rukhsana et al. (2021) mentioned that the experiential learning approach, unlike traditional methods of learning, may be effective in motivating students. ELT can help teachers increase motivation among students since it allows students to gain information through practice or experience. It is crucial that teachers work on enhancing students' motivation to learn in the teaching-learning process since motivation impacts the interaction between instructors and students when providing the learning materials (Hung et al., 2012 as cited in Tahriri et al., 2015).

In fact, ELT is a constructivist approach that permits students to combine their cognitive and social skills in real-world situations as they tend to participate in active and meaningful learning guided by hands-on learning. It is stated that ELT encourages learners to "create knowledge and critically reflect on their experiences, allowing them to realize how their skills and knowledge can be applied to future undertakings" (Rukhsana et al., 2021, p.85).

Young et al. (2008) showed how the experiential learning theory contributes to enhancing students' motivation through these four steps: concrete experiences, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. The writers state that "the purpose of active experimentation is to move inactive learners – possibly both physically and mentally – into more active and involved learners. Creating an encouraging learning environment that engages and motivates students, while focusing on curriculum concepts, is the essence of the four stages of Kolb's experiential learning cycle" (p.30).

Moving through the steps of Kolb's ELT and implementing it through digital storytelling, students can build their concrete experiences by engaging in in-class discussions, videos, or lectures designed to motivate students and evoke their feelings towards a topic allowing them to bridge gaps between knowledge and the real world. Likewise, abstract conceptualization can help motivate learners as they are asked to critique the models and theories which helps them to transform their experiences from the concrete to the symbolic. Moreover, reflective observation allows learners to analyze their experiences and relate them to other experiences through writing personal journals and using self-assessment techniques, which also play a key role in motivating students. Lastly, the active experimentation stage focuses on students' interaction with their environment and requires students to use the theories they have learned in practice. Ultimately, ELT through DST emphasizes learners to prepare, do, reflect and apply, which helps student be engaged in their own learning, motivating them to be more successful (Young et al., 2008).

DST can be very effective in promoting motivation among learners. There are several benefits of using DST while teaching a second language. The benefits may include: developing students' communication skills, helping students to pose questions, assisting students to express their viewpoints, and ultimately helping them with improving the language and computer skills. For these reasons, a conducive technological atmosphere should be created for students to make them more technologically literate, and better learners and thinkers (Hung et al., 2012 as cited in Tahriri et al., 2015). Likewise, motivation is also addressed in blended learning. Ibrahim and Nat (2019) stated that "BL helps instructors engage students in active learning that promotes skills such as communication, information literacy, creativity and collaboration that transform into the ability to use digital technologies for different purposes" (p.2).

4. Critical Discussion and Synthesis

The reviewed empirical studies reveal a shift towards exploring innovative pedagogical approaches that enhance students' oral proficiency and motivation in English language learning among middle and secondary school-level learners between 2016 and 2026. The selected 40 studies are categorized into 3 themes: the impact of DST on oral fluency and motivation, the impact of blended learning on oral fluency and motivation, the impact of ELT on oral fluency



and motivation. It is worth noting that the number of studies reviewed under each category varied considerably, which reflects the extent of exploring this topic in previous research. It is evident that some categories have received substantial attention, such as the impact of Digital Storytelling on speaking, whereas other themes, especially those related to motivation have received limited attention. The following section examines each theme by comparing theoretical foundations, research contexts, methodologies, instruments, and findings, while identifying areas of agreement, disagreement, methodological limitations, and opportunities for future research. Based on the synthesis from the empirical studies, it can be inferred that technology-enhanced approaches, such as DST and Blended learning, reveal a positive pattern concerning developing EFL learner's oral proficiency and motivation; however, this finding is stronger for oral proficiency since more studies are done on speaking rather than motivation. Nevertheless, these technology-enhanced approaches are not solely responsible for these positive findings since the success also depends on the teacher's intervention, instruction, and guidance along with the learners' contribution to the learning process. Moreover, this evidence is prone to vary according to research methodology employed, the outcome investigated or explored, the educational context, and the instructional approach.

4.1. The impact of Digital storytelling on students' motivation and oral fluency

The largest body of research identified in this review, comprising 21 empirical studies, examines the impact of Digital Storytelling (DST) on students' motivation and oral fluency in the EFL context. In fact, most research focused on developing students' oral fluency while fewer studies explored motivation solely or in combination with speaking. Generally speaking, the reviewed literature demonstrates that DST can create a learner-centered environment that fosters communication, creativity, engagement, and confidence among students in the EFL context.

Among the reviewed studies, the impact of Digital Storytelling (DST) on speaking represents the largest body of research with 17 empirical studies, reflecting the growing recognition of DST as an effective learner-centered approach for improving oral communication skills in EFL contexts. Despite the differences related to educational settings, research methodologies, and

intervention designs, the reviewed studies reveal that DST contributes to improvements in speaking while developing students' pronunciation, vocabulary, and communicative competence. Quantitative studies that relied on pre- and post-speaking tests to measure speaking improvement provide strong evidence on the effectiveness of DST in improving learners' speaking performance (Aman et al., 2026; Tukhtanazarova, 2026; Vera Solorzano and Villafuerte-Holguin, 2026; Azqiya, 2025; Basri et al., 2024; Kamila et al., 2021; Ullah et al., 2021). Similarly, qualitative studies that collected data from interviews, observations, and reflective journals provide evidence that digital storytelling can facilitate improvement in speaking. Dhini et al. (2025), Gilbert and Seokarno (2025), Imama and Pusparini, (2025), Sari et al. (2025), Setiyorini (2025), Solihat et al. (2025), Anita et al. (2025), Anjani et al. (2023) and Hasanah et al. (2021) found that digital stories increased students' confidence and reduced speaking anxiety. The positive results across the empirical studies concerning the positive impact of DST on oral fluency despite the variation of the methodology used strengthens the findings. Nevertheless, this evidence can be criticized. While quantitative studies provide measurable evidence of oral fluency development, the employment of relatively short interventions and the small-size sample can restrict the findings. Similarly, it is true that qualitative studies provide better insight towards exploring the topic; nonetheless, it cannot reveal that the results can be durable. In addition, not all studies measured speaking in an identical manner. Some studies focused on investigating complexity, accuracy, and fluency, while others focused on confidence and anxiety while speaking.

Three of the reviewed studies examined the impact of Digital Storytelling (DST) on both oral fluency and motivation (Shahjalal et al., 2026; Fitriana et al., 2024; Henderman, 2019). These studies consistently demonstrate that DST can positively impact both affective and linguistic dimensions during the language learning process. Nevertheless, the studies differ mainly in their research contexts, participants, and the methodologies employed. Despite these commonalities, important methodological differences exist. For instance, Henderman (2019) and Fitriana et al. (2024) adopted a qualitative approach that provided a detailed exploration of secondary-level students' perceptions, whereas Shahjalal et al. (2026) employed a quantitative design with a much larger sample in order to measure motivational and linguistic outcomes statistically among middle and secondary students.

Compared with the extensive body of research that examines the impact of Digital Storytelling on enhancing speaking and the limited studies that combine oral fluency and motivation, only one study investigated the impact of DST on students' motivation as its primary focus. Roy (2024) employed a mixed-methods research design to investigate the influence of digital storytelling on middle school students' motivation to learn English as a second language. The findings revealed that digital storytelling activities encouraged students to be more creative and led to higher levels of motivation among them. This imbalance in the literature suggests that researchers have generally viewed motivation as a complementary outcome accompanying speaking development rather than as an independent variable worthy of separate investigation. It can be highlighted that the studies conducted on motivation are considerably less extensive, which contrasts sharply with the body of DST research that addressed oral fluency. Only three studies examined motivation along with oral proficiency, whereas only one study focused merely on motivation. This reveals that motivation is probably investigated as secondary variable not as an independent one. Therefore, additional empirical research is needed to investigate how digital storytelling influences motivation among students across different educational contexts, age groups, and instructional models.

Overall, the reviewed studies reveal that Digital Storytelling improves EFL learners' oral proficiency and increases motivation. Nevertheless, most studies examine either speaking or motivation within a short period of intervention. Moreover, further research should investigate DST within a blended learning environment.

4.2. The impact of Blended Learning on oral proficiency and motivation

The eight reviewed studies investigating the contribution of blended learning to students' motivation and speaking proficiency in the EFL context demonstrate that integrating blended learning into second language learning promotes learners' motivation and improves their speaking. However, this effectiveness depends on the quality of the instructional design, the use of appropriate technological tools, and the support provided to learners. The literature review reveals a limited number of studies examining the relation between blended learning and students' motivation while there is an extensive body of research that examines blended learning and speaking skills.

The body of research that examines the impact of blended learning on students' speaking skills in the EFL context has also reported positive findings. Across the reviewed studies, there appears to be a clear consensus that blended learning enhances speaking performance among students by extending learning beyond the classroom environment which in turn promotes learner autonomy and increases opportunities for the use of authentic language (Demir and Mirzaie, 2023; Teng and Zeng, 2022; Sudarmaji and Anwar, 2021, AlKhoudayr and AlKhoudayr, 2019). However, Tohamba (2022), who conducted the study among 36 second-grade junior high school students in Indonesia using a qualitative research design, found that blended learning was unsuccessful since there was an imbalance between online and face-to-face instruction. Therefore, it can be deduced that success of blended learning depends on the integration of appropriate pedagogy, reliable technology, and teachers' facilitation.

Similarly, the two reviewed studies Zainon and Yamat (2021) and Abdillah and Sueb (2022) examining the impact of blended learning on motivation provide evidence that blended learning can enhance students' motivation as they become more likely to access more learning resources. Likewise, they demonstrate that motivation is also dependent on the quality of instructional design and the teachers' support provided to learners. Nevertheless, some differences can be identified with respect to the design employed and learning context. While Zainon and Yamat (2021) employed a quantitative method with secondary students, Abdillah and Sueb (2022) employed a qualitative method with students from the middle school.

Furthermore, there are very few studies that examined the effect of blended learning on both speaking proficiency and motivation. The reviewed study Rampeng et al. (2026), which examined Indonesian secondary school students' speaking proficiency using a mixed-methods design, revealed that improvements in motivation were positively associated with speaking proficiency.

Most reviewed studies have investigated the impact of blended learning on either speaking or motivation separately. As a result, further research is needed to explore the significance of employing blended learning particularly in promoting oral proficiency and learner motivation. Literature on blended learning suggests that students are prone to take the advantages of combining online learning and face-to-face learning, which ultimately help them in developing their oral fluency and motivation in EFL context. Nevertheless, the study conducted by

Tohamba (2022) revealed that this argument can be refuted and that blended learning should be regarded as an instructional model whose effectiveness also depends on the teacher's instructional planning and guidance, the use of appropriate digital tools, and the creation of meaningful interactions among students. This contradictory finding from this study does not necessarily weaken the assumption of the positive impact of blended learning on improving oral fluency and motivation; rather, this highlights that its effectiveness depends on its implementation.

4.3. The impact of ELT on oral proficiency and motivation

The following empirical studies examine the relationship between Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) and oral proficiency and student motivation. The theme of focusing on the impact of ELT on oral proficiency includes a larger number of studies, especially studies related to Project-Based Learning (PBL) as an experiential approach that aids in developing oral communication skills among learners. The reviewed studies on oral proficiency suggest that experiential approaches improve learners' speaking skill; however, there are differences related to variations in research designs, educational levels, and measured outcomes. Similarly, the reviewed studies on motivation highlight the significance of experience-based approaches in increasing learners' engagement in English language learning. However, the reviewed studies differ in the research method adopted and the research contexts.

Millatina et al. (2020) examined the impact of the Experiential Learning Method on improving grade 10 EFL students' speaking skill in Indonesia. Employing a quasi-experimental design, the study compared an experimental group that was exposed to experiential learning with a control group that received traditional teacher-centered instruction. The findings revealed that students who were exposed to experiential learning achieved higher speaking performance.

Under this category, many studies investigated Project-Based Learning (PBL) as a form of experiential learning. Suwarni and Natsir (2024) explored the effectiveness of project-based collaborative learning in improving the speaking skills of Grade 11 students. Similarly, Simatupang and Rahman (2024) focused on the influence of PBL on students' speaking motivation among Grade 11 students. Furthermore, Talapova and Abay (2025) investigated the effectiveness of speaking-centered projects among secondary school students in Kazakhstan. Also, Dewi et al. (2025) confirmed the effectiveness of PBL in improving speaking

performance among Grade 7 students in Indonesia. Likewise, Kaharuddin (2025) examined the role of PBL in enhancing junior high school students' confidence in spoken English. Moreover, Latifah et al. (2025) examined the impact of authentic materials embedded within meaningful classroom interventions on lower secondary students' speaking motivation and anxiety. More recently, Benites Bachón et al. (2026) investigated the impact of PBL as a communicative and experiential learning approach on enhancing speaking competence among secondary students in Ecuador.

Several common patterns emerge across the reviewed studies. Firstly, experiential learning approaches consistently outperform teacher-centered methods in developing speaking skills since these approaches provide learners with opportunities for authentic communication, collaboration, and active knowledge construction. Secondly, speaking improvement is evidently accompanied by increased motivation and reduced fear of speaking among learners. These findings support Kolb's (1984) experiential learning framework.

On the other hand, differences reveal important variations in the methodologies adopted and educational contexts. Millatina et al. (2020) and Dewi et al. (2025) employed quantitative methods that provide statistical evidence of improved speaking achievement. In contrast, Simatupang and Rahman (2024) employed a qualitative study that offer deeper insights into learners' experiences and perceptions. Additionally, many studies were conducted in Indonesia which may not allow the findings to be generalized to other educational settings.

Compared with studies focusing on the impact of ELT on oral proficiency, fewer studies focused on motivation. Sylva (2024) investigated the benefits and challenges of implementing experiential learning in EFL contexts by examining teachers' perspectives and students' attitudes. Employing a mixed-method approach, the researcher collected data from 16 EFL teachers and 130 high school students. The findings indicated that experiential learning creates opportunities for active participation and knowledge construction, which ultimately enhances students' motivation. Similarly, Nieto Moreno de Diezmas (2023) explored the motivational effects of service-learning, which is an experiential learning approach that connects academic content with authentic community engagement. Conducted with 106 secondary school students in Spain, the researcher employed a pretest-posttest control group design that was combined with quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The results revealed that the service-

learning intervention enhanced students' English learning motivation, strengthening both students' intrinsic and instrumental motivation. Furthermore, Yang et al. (2025) examined the effect of Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL), a form of experiential learning, on the learners' motivation and academic performance in English language learning in a Chinese rural junior middle school. Employing a mixed-method design over an eight-week intervention, the study found that PBLL positively influenced students' learning motivation.

The three studies reveal that experiential learning motivates students since it provides them with authentic learning experiences. However, the studies also reveal major differences in the content or the adopted models and educational contexts suggesting that motivation also depends on factors such as the authenticity of the task, the context of learners, and the preparation of teachers.

Despite strong evidence that supports the effectiveness of experiential learning approaches in developing learners' oral proficiency and motivation, further research is required to examine how experiential approaches can be integrated within digital technologies and blended learning models. Furthermore, the reviewed studies are mainly short-term, which does not necessarily sustain improvements in oral proficiency and motivation among learners despite the positive findings. Also, further research should explore the impact of ELT on learning a second language once integrated with digital tools and blended learning environments.

In conclusion, the body of literature reviewed provides strong evidence that supports learner-centered instructional approaches, including DST and blended learning. Based on the reviewed studies, oral proficiency is the most reviewed outcome whereas motivation seems to have received less attention. Moreover, DST is more investigated than blended learning in technology-enhanced education. The review also demonstrates that most of the reviewed studies were mainly conducted in Asian EFL contexts, particularly Indonesia, Malaysia, China, and Iran. Moreover, the integration of digital storytelling, blended learning, and experiential learning theory remains insufficiently explored. Finally, although oral proficiency and motivation are interrelated, they are rarely investigated or explored in the same intervention

5. Research Gaps and Future Research Directions

The synthesis of the reviewed literature reveals several gaps that warrant further investigation. Previous studies have generally reported a positive impact of digital storytelling and blended



learning on students' oral fluency and motivation; however, limitations remain evident with respect to sample size, research duration, geographical representation, the integration of oral proficiency and motivation within a single study, and the use of diverse theoretical frameworks. One limitation across the reviewed studies is the small number of participants. Most studies employed small samples that involve a single class or a small number of learners which may affect the generalizability of. A second gap is related to the short duration of the reviewed studies. Many studies examined digital storytelling or blended learning for short-term interventions that last for few weeks or one academic year. In fact, short interventions may not be adequate to evaluate learners' speaking abilities and motivation over time. A third gap is concerned with the geographical distribution, as most of the reviewed literature was conducted in East (China), Southeast (Malaysia and Indonesia), and West (Iran) Asian contexts. This geographical concentration may limit the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other educational contexts. Learners' motivation, classroom interaction, access to technology, teaching practices, and attitudes toward digital learning may differ considerably across educational systems and cultures. A further gap is the limited number of studies that investigate both oral proficiency and motivation, as these variables were mostly examined separately. Most studies primarily investigated the effects of digital storytelling on speaking or while fewer studies focused mainly on students' motivation.

A final gap concerns the theoretical frameworks used in previous research. A large number of the studies reviewed relied on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory that advocates learning through social interaction. This theory is highly relevant the role of digital storytelling and blended learning because learning occurs through peer interaction supported by the teacher; however, greater diversity in theoretical frameworks could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the learning process.

Based on the identified gaps, future research should address the following. First, studies should employ larger samples in order to improve the generalizability of the findings. Second, researchers should adopt longitudinal studies to examine sustained changes with respect to oral proficiency and motivation. Third, the geographical scope of research should be expanded to include more countries, such as Lebanon and other countries in the Arab world. Moreover, future research should seek to integrate speaking and motivation within blended learning

environments. Furthermore, future research should consider combining Vygotsky's sociocultural theory with complementary theoretical frameworks, such as Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). This theory is particularly relevant to digital storytelling and may help explain how students can enhance their oral proficiency and motivation because students are actively involved in creating, organizing, reflecting on, and presenting their own stories. Therefore, combining sociocultural and experiential perspectives could consequently provide a more comprehensive theoretical explanation of how digital storytelling within blended learning environments may influence both learners' oral proficiency and motivation. Finally, it is worth noting that combining quantitative and qualitative approaches would also allow future studies to provide deeper insight into changes in students' oral performance and motivation.

In conclusion, the identified gaps in this section provide a rationale for further studies to develop a more comprehensive understanding towards investigating the role of digital storytelling on developing both students' oral proficiency and motivation within blended learning in the EFL context. Conducting such studies could support students' in improving oral proficiency and motivation within EFL context.

Conclusion

The present paper examined the impact of digital storytelling on oral proficiency and motivation among middle and high school learners between 2016 and 2026 as well as the extent to which DST has been combined with blended learning and its impact on both oral proficiency and motivation within blended learning. It is evident that the reviewed literature highlights a trend toward providing authentic experiences and more opportunities for communication and collaboration among students learning English as a second language. In fact, Digital storytelling has been a notably researched topic over the past decade, with the majority of the studies reported a positive relationship between DST and students' speaking and motivation. However, there is a shortage of literature concerning the concept of blended learning although existing studies generally report a positive relationship between blended learning and the development of learners' speaking skills and motivation. This paper also highlighted the



significance of Kolb's Experiential learning theory and its positive association with increased motivation and speaking proficiency.

Generally speaking, the findings indicate that DST positively contributes to both speaking and motivation among students learning English as a second language. It was highlighted that digital storytelling provides students with greater opportunities to use the second language in meaningful contexts, organize their thoughts, practice their speech, and receive teacher and peer feedback, all of which support oral proficiency and motivation. It was noticed that the findings with respect to DST reveal consistent results. Findings from quantitative and qualitative studies reported improvements in students' speaking performance and increased motivation.

Likewise, blended learning also demonstrated potential for improving speaking and motivation by combining face-to-face instruction with digital resources and extending opportunities for learning beyond the classroom. Blended learning is found to help students to extend beyond the traditional classroom by providing students extra material and resources that help develop their speaking and motivation. Nevertheless, one of the six reviewed studies on blended learning reported that it was unsuccessful in improving speaking and motivation. Tohamba (2022) found that the failure of blended learning is attributed to the imbalance between online and face-to-face instruction. Therefore, it can be suggested that the effectiveness of blended learning does not depend merely on the use of technological tools but also on the quality of instruction and the planning of the teacher that facilitates the learning process. Nevertheless, the existing research on combining DST with blended learning remains limited.

All of these findings concerning the impact of digital storytelling and blended learning on improving speaking and motivation can be supported by Kolb's theory of experiential learning theory. The literature on experiential learning complements the findings since ELT encourages students to be more active in the learning process upon having the opportunity to work on authentic experiences. The literature suggests that experiential learning may provide a theoretical approach to developing EFL/ESL learners' oral proficiency and their motivation. This makes it compatible such with digital storytelling and blended learning.

Nonetheless, several gaps were identified. The reviewed studies mainly relied on small samples, short-term interventions, and educational contexts concentrated mainly in East,

Southeast, and West Asia. Additionally, the majority of studies investigated oral proficiency and motivation separately, while only a limited number of studies examined both outcomes within the study intervention. Also, the review identified a shortage of research that examines DST within a blended learning environment. These gaps suggest that there is a need for conducting larger and longitudinal studies, having broader geographical representation, and integrating both linguistic and motivational outcomes.

In conclusion, the present review provides a rationale for investigating the impact of Digital Storytelling on students' oral proficiency and motivation within a blended learning with the focus of experiential learning theory as a framework. This review is seen to respond to an underexplored area in teaching/learning English as second language and seeks to provide a better understanding of how technology through digital storytelling can lead to enhancing students' speaking skills and motivation through employing the framework of experiential learning theory. Overall, the reviewed literature proposes that Digital Storytelling if implemented within a well-structured blended learning environment has strong potential to develop students' oral proficiency and motivation among students learning English with EFL context. However, further empirical studies are still required in this domain.

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