



## Inculcating Entrepreneurship through Communication Skills

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### ABSTRACT

Communication skills are essential for business and trading. However, young entrepreneurs in the school of business have often neglected this skill and viewed it as less important as opposed to their other core subjects offered at the university. Thus, this paper aims to investigate the importance of communication skills among young entrepreneurs in business schools at the university. This mixed method experimental study utilizes a digital story approach to language enhancement to enable clear communication. In order to do this, two business school classes at the university were treated with two separate treatments of the conventional approach and the digital story approach. The findings indicate that the digital approach promoted better communication among these young entrepreneurs. The study which is part of a more comprehensive study show that young entrepreneurs need to place importance in communication skills aside from their core subjects. For future studies, it is recommended that research on other skills besides communication skills can be investigated.

**Keywords:** communication skills, young entrepreneurs, digital story, conventional method

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Communication skills are important for young entrepreneurs in order to conduct their businesses effectively. According to the Business News Daily (February 19, 2018), an entrepreneur is a person who identifies a need and starts a business to fill that void. In other words, the entrepreneur is a willing risk taker who decides on venturing into the business. As such, communication skills are essential to enable the ideas, business dealings, and ventures to succeed. Unfortunately, it has been reported that young entrepreneurs with excellent academic results are unable to communicate well

(Aziz, 2016). The ability to use the English language for communication and interaction is vital in order for these entrepreneurs to remain competitive in the business world. In most higher learning institutions however, the curriculum does not fully support enhancement of communicative English. Communicative skills in language classrooms have been taught in Malaysia since young in the school syllabus but the state of English language for communication is still in a state of distress.

In most situations, employers today will give preference to those with good communicative skills in English. Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan, the Executive Director of the Malaysian Employers Federation commented that one of the most important factors for graduate employment was their communicative ability (Daily News, 2014). The mismatch between students' academic grades on paper with their ability to communicate during interviews is a reflection of the poor state of the education system.

In reality, many new techniques and strategies have been introduced to enhance communication skills. Many language theories have evolved along the way from Behaviourist theories to Communicative theories and Cognitive theories. In this day and age of digital technologies, computers and the internet have set new waves to the teaching and learning environment. Motteram (2013) asserts that the range of technologies that are accessible for use in language learning and teaching has become very diverse and the ways they are being used in classrooms all over the world have become a central practice in language teaching and learning. Thus, learning has never before been more interesting in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Teachers today have to keep up with new technologies in order to remain relevant. New inventive and innovative methods have been introduced to the language classrooms. One such method is digital storytelling. Robin (2016) describes digital storytelling as a combination of the art of storytelling with digital media, including text, pictures, recorded audio narration, music and video. The combinations of these elements usually revolve around a specific theme for a particular purpose.

Srivastava (2018) explains that communication is a process where verbal and non-verbal messages are transferred orally or verbally by the sender to the receiver. It refers to the ability to convey information effectively and efficiently. As such, effective communication needs skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are parameters for an individual's ability to communicate effectively. Srivastava (2018)

further reiterates that communicative skills are much sought after by the business world and can effect personal and professional growth. There are two ways in which communication can be done: orally and in writing. For oral communication to take place the sender delivers the information orally and the receiver receives the information by listening. For written communication to take place the sender conveys the information through a written format and the receiver responds after reading and digesting the information.

In the present study therefore, it would be interesting to investigate the preference of young entrepreneurs at business schools to study communicative skills in language classrooms for their future advancement. Thus far, we have discussed the importance of communication skills in the business world in terms of employment and professional growth in the industry. Many techniques and strategies have been proposed to enhance learning in this area. In the next section of this paper, literature on this area will be reviewed.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The awareness of the importance of communication skills with regard to future employment is necessary for budding entrepreneurs to succeed in the business world. In a study conducted by Abdul Kadir and Wan Mohd Noor (2015), it was found that business major students had only medium level awareness of the importance of language for communication for job employment. In 2012, the Education Ministry and Higher Learning Division revealed that out of 109,025 graduates, 55.4 percent gained employment, 24.7 percent were unemployed and 20.8 percent continued their studies (Daily News, 2014). This means that with every five students, three get employed and one remains unemployed. In another study, Samuel and Bakar (2008) proposed that the appalling state of English language proficiency be undertaken by using an innovative tool namely, the Virtual English Language Tool where learning takes place in the virtual environment.

In China, Liu (2013, as cited in Abdul Kadir and Wan Mohd Noor, 2015) observed that several factors contributed to low level competency among students and one of which is self-efficacy. Graduates in China with fluency in English had higher probability of getting jobs in a competitive environment. Marzuki, Ting, Jerome, Chuah

and Misieng (2013) also reported that the increase in unemployment was possibly attributed to their poor communicative skills in English. Hodges and Burchell (2003) investigated New Zealand employers' views of how well business graduates were prepared for the workplace. A number of competencies were expected of these graduates such as technical knowledge, personal attributes and oral and written communication skills. The results indicated that employers in general, expressed concern over the anticipated level of communication skills, particularly written communication skills.

In Australia, it was reported that international students' intake for undergraduate and postgraduate courses were growing at the Faculty of Business and Law at Edith Cowan University (Harris, 2009). These students were not native speakers of English and therefore the Faculty introduced the Business Literacy and Numeracy Project to cater to the needs of these students. This effort received recommendations by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) for its exemplary approach in addressing English language proficiency and best practice principles. Using new methods to enhance learning of languages and communication skills is therefore vital for educators to encourage effective practices with regards to 21<sup>st</sup> century education. The introduction of digital storytelling is one such method to create interest in learning the English language with focus on communicative abilities is therefore one method that should not be discounted. According to Bran (2010), digital storytelling with a combination of images, sound, and texts can create interest and enhance learning. Hung, Hwang and Huang (2012) conducted a study on the use of project-based learning and digital storytelling as an approach for improving students' learning motivation, problem-solving competence and learning achievement and the result was positive towards learning.

Smeda, Dekich and Sharda (2014) conducted a multi-site case study whereby students and teachers were given the opportunity to use innovative learning experiences based on digital storytelling. The mixed method research found that digital storytelling is a powerful tool to integrate instructional messages with learning activities to create more engaging and exciting learning environments. Further, it was found to be a meaningful approach for creating a constructivist learning environment based on principles and practices of teaching and learning. The study also found that there was

great potential in this approach for better educational outcomes for learners. Miller (2009) looked at the need for students to use effective written communication skills and strong literacy in technology. The objective of the study was to engage students in the writing process and integrate technology into daily learning activities. The study found that using digital storytelling as a means to enhance writing is beneficial to the classroom. However, careful planning should be considered before implementing the method. The study also asserted that digital storytelling would continue to be a quality learning strategy for classrooms of the future providing learners with a deeply meaningful learning experience.

Thus far, this section of the paper has described previous literature, summarising and explaining the issues and findings of the use of communicative skills in English for business students as young entrepreneurs. In the next section, the experimental mixed-method approach to the study will be discussed at length.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The aim of the study is to investigate the communication skills of young entrepreneurs at the school of business at the university as it has been found to be essential for such students when they join the business world upon graduation. In order to do so, a mixed method experimental study has been employed.

**The respondents.** The respondents consisted of 30 students in the control group and 30 students in the experimental group who were taking the Diploma of Business Studies programme. Selection was based on a purposive non-random sampling method to ensure the students were all Business Studies students in their second year of studies at the university. They were all aged between 18 to 20 years old and had all sat for their SPM and gained entrance to the university as a prerequisite.

**The instruments.** The instruments used for the study are pre and post-tests, and a digital story. A semi-structured interview was also prepared for the study. The pre and post-test consisted of communicative items which could help in determining their language proficiency levels. Digital storytelling is a method of teaching and learning that is fairly new and innovative. The study adapts this method from recommendations of previous studies such as Hung, Hwang and Huang (2012), Smeda, Dekich and

Sharda (2014) and Miller (2009). The digital story itself however, is an original story that has been copyrighted. The innovative method applied had previously been presented in the 2014 Invention, Innovation and Design Expo and won a Gold Award for Innovations.

**The procedure.** The lecturer and students were briefed on the research to be carried out in their English course. Before treatment was applied to the study, a pre-test was conducted for both the control and the experimental groups. In the experimental session, the control group was treated with the conventional method of teaching and learning. The experimental group on the other hand, was treated with the digital storytelling. Three students in the experimental group were then randomly selected for the semi-structured interview session. This was to validate how the students felt after the experiment was carried out on them.

#### 4. RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

The study investigated the importance of communication skills to be inculcated in entrepreneurs in order to thrive in the business world by considering business students at the university. The results from the pre and post-test show a slight difference between the control group and the experimental group scores.

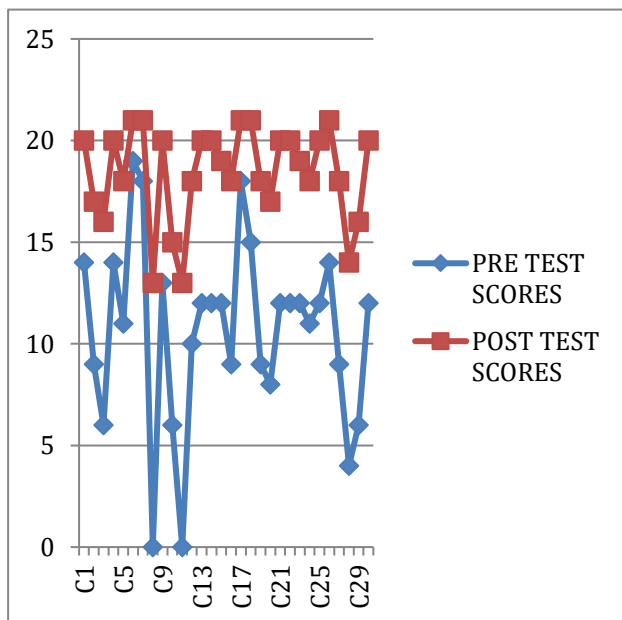


Figure 1: Control Group

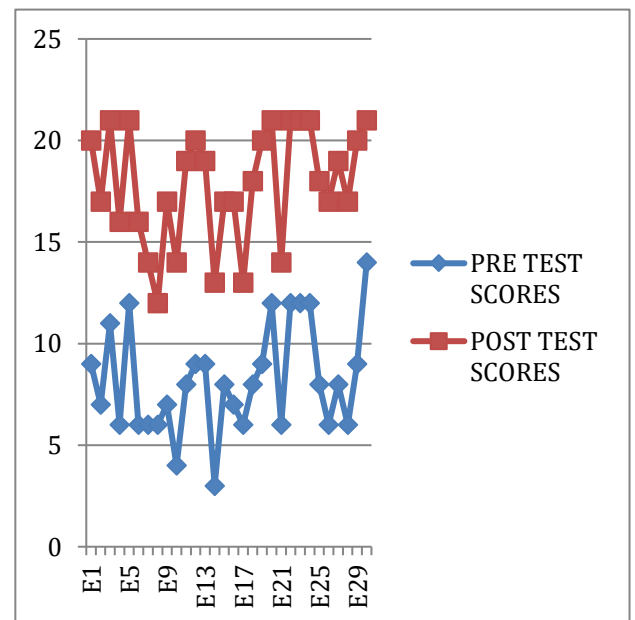


Figure 2: Experimental Group

Figure 1 and 2 show the pre and post test scores of the control group and the experimental group. For the pre-test, the control group scored an average of 10.63 while the experimental

group scored an average of 8.20. For the post-test, the control group scored an average of 18.40 while the experimental group scored an average of 17.80. The difference in the pre and post-test scores of the control group was 7.77 while the difference between the pre and post-test scores of the experimental group was 9.60. This means that comparison of the pre and post-tests scores indicate improvements in scores using the conventional method. There was also improvement in the experimental group score. However, the difference in scores for the experimental group was higher than the control group.

In the interview session, the results show that the students agreed that communication skills are important. They also said that they did not pay much attention to the course offered at the university because they deemed their core subjects are of greater importance. The idea of using innovative methods such as digital story telling in the classroom appealed to the students and they recommended that new innovative methods be applied to the course.

In conclusion, this preliminary study has shown that there is potential for students to inculcate entrepreneurship by means of enhancing communication skills for the business world. It was found that young entrepreneurs taking the business studies course at the university have not been treating the course as highly important for their learning. Thus they have taken it less seriously compared to the other subjects offered for their course. Next, it was also found that students' lack of interest could be contributed to the method of teaching whereby new innovative methods are welcomed instead of conventional methods used to convey the communicative skill. Further, students' performance improved with the introduction of the digital story in the lesson. Therefore, it is recommended for future research that new innovative techniques and strategies be constantly used to inculcate entrepreneurship in students.

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