Communicative Skills Through Corporate Storytelling Video: Students' Perception

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Abstract—In this era of advanced technology, students must be equipped with essential skills for success in today's world; critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration and communication. Having a successful communication does not only refer to success in delivering information, but also how it has engaged the audience. Corporate storytelling is a communication strategy in presenting a company's brand and values to an audience using narrative techniques. Using corporate storytelling video as an English language competency course can offer activities that assist students to use their creativity in presenting ideas and expressing opinions confidently. This paper presents students' perception on the effectiveness of these activities in enhancing their communicative skills through a survey questionnaire. The data were obtained from 227 students who took the Corporate Storytelling course through a questionnaire survey with the inclusion of open-ended comments distributed at the end of the semester. The findings show that the students perceive the activities to have improved their reading, writing, listening, speaking skills, presentation skills, critical thinking, and creativity. It is also found that the activities have helped the students to interpret the message in the video and to give their reaction to the video. The activities are also perceived to have boosted their motivation to use English to enhance their communicative skills.

Index Terms—corporate storytelling video, communicative skills, storyboard, video response presentation

I. INTRODUCTION

The increase in volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) in our world today has called for a need to equip students with the 21st century skills. Critical thinking, communication, technology, flexibility, leadership, and initiative are among the 21st century skills that should enable students to stay competitive in a changing job market. In Malaysia, employer surveys have repeatedly found that even though our young graduates are hardworking and possess the fundamental knowledge and skills in their own fields, they lack language proficiency, especially in English, and shortcomings in communication which hinder employment prospects (Lee, 2020). Communicating in English is an essential component as English is an international working language. The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 stipulates that each learner equips himself/herself with the necessary skills and is independently proficient in English language as defined by the Common European framework of References (CEFR) for languages.

The CEFR is the prevailing international standard for the teaching and learning of languages. It identifies three broad levels of language proficiency namely Basic (A1 and A2), Independent (B1 and B2) and Proficient (C1 and C2). According to English Language Education Reform in Malaysia: The Roadmap (2015-2025), the target level for university students to graduate is at B2; that is for students to achieve the independent level. At this level, students have a greater chance to secure a job and to function adequately using English. As there is a need for undergraduates exiting the university to be at CEFR B2, it is important that they have good communicative skills. This had triggered the initiative to design a corporate storytelling English module, to equip the students with the needful English language competency in their communicative skills for workplace in the industry.

According to Krashen's (1985) comprehensible input hypothesis, language is acquired by receiving comprehensible input. Studies have shown that in watching movies, students are exposed to comprehensible input such as real language and non-verbal linguistics elements in contexts. The story usually gives an element of curiosity during the learning process and encourages watching and listening that can increase students' interest in their learning. Storytelling has become more relevant nowadays as Fisher (2021) states that storytelling is perhaps the single most important skill for the younger generation to have in this 21st century. Storytelling works on language skills in an engaging, and contextualised way, stimulating students' interest in listening to stories as well as speaking, writing, and reading about them (Lucarevschi, 2017). Nowell (2019) poses that, students can use commercials to help them make links between their classrooms and the real world.

Since movies and commercials have been found to be valuable resources in language teaching, the researchers have used corporate storytelling video, a type of commercial or short movie, as a learning tool for their Corporate Storytelling course. Corporate storytelling is one of the communication strategies in the industry that aims at enhancing market engagement. This skill of presenting a brand through a story is crucial in capturing customers' attention for a business, be it small or corporate.

II. THE CONCEPT OF USING CORPORATE STORYTELLING VIDEO

The advanced development in technology has provided new opportunities and methods for enhancing the process of teaching and learning (Lertola, 2019). In this Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) era, students are familiar with various technologies and tools of the digital age. It is therefore expected for the teaching and learning to integrate these tools.

Movie is an audio-visual tool that stimulates people to see and hear that can motivate students to watch for skills improvement (Liando et al., 2018). Movies or short films are authentic materials that can provide lessons that are fun. Films give a visual context to students to help them understand better, making them an invaluable language teaching material (Yilmas, 2020). Mirvan (2013) poses that watching films give more sensory experience than reading materials because films provide colour, movement and sound accompanying the verbal communication. In other words, students can grasp the different expressions and intonations that express different meanings.

Storytelling conveys information in words, images, and sounds that should help to enhance social competencies. This is beneficial for the students when they go out working in the corporate world. Corporate storytelling video is a short film that delivers information through stories. There are four aspects that must be incorporated in a corporate storytelling video: (i) having a 'hero' in the story (ii) a strong story plot (iii) drama and twist and (iv) a solution and message. This makes corporate storytelling video similar to a movie except that it is not as lengthy as a movie, with a duration of usually less than 10 minutes. As this corporate storytelling video is real world material, it is appropriate to be used as a learning stimulus. Through corporate storytelling, we can engage the students and facilitate meaningful learning.

More and more large and small brands are engaging storytelling mode in their content marketing as the key to attract and retain customers (Pulizzi, 2012). This means that there are many corporate storytelling videos available online that the students can choose for the purpose of this course. The use of the videos is supported with structured activities that can help students to develop all four communicative skills. The tasks, activities, and guidance should help the students to enhance their critical thinking skills among others, to meet the learning goals and course outcomes. As Buehl (2013) states, classroom strategies or innovative ideas are needed to support learning for students with diverse learning needs.

Thus, this study aims to investigate students' perception on the effectiveness of the activities developed from the corporate storytelling video in enhancing their communicative skills. The two activities developed for this course are creating a storyboard and giving a response on the corporate storytelling video.

III. METHODOLOGY

Since several studies have posed the benefits of using movie as a language tool and the importance of storytelling in language learning, the researchers decided to combine these two aspects by using corporate storytelling video in this course. The course incorporated structured activities in its tasks as a process for students to acquire respective skills using corporate storytelling videos. These skills were acquired through the use of language skills in completing the tasks in the activities. The framework is as illustrated in Fig. 1.
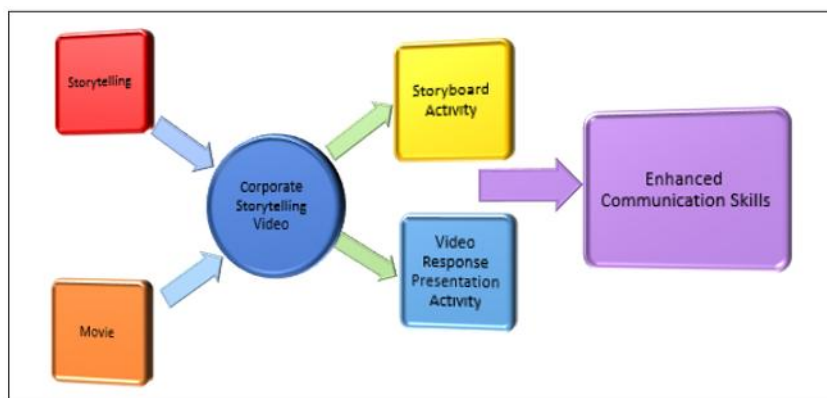

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

A. Data and Sampling

The respondents for this study were 227 students who had enrolled in the Corporate Storytelling course and had responded to the questionnaire survey. These students were generally of the CEFR A2 (basic user) and B1 (independent user) levels of competency who have completed two prior English proficiency courses. The Corporate Storytelling course is an enhancement course.

The data were collected through a questionnaire which investigated their perception on the teaching and learning of Corporate Storytelling course. The questionnaires were initially distributed to 845 students at the end of the course and 227 responded. This constituted a response rate of 27% approximately. The respondents in this study were undergraduate students from various faculties, male and female between the ages of 20-22. Their level of proficiency was lower intermediate to intermediate. The study took place over a period of 14 weeks.

B. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was divided into two parts excluding the demographic information. The former included questions on the course, and the latter focused on the activities derived from the corporate storytelling video. It covered the perception on the activities on statements of items with level of agreement in a four-point Likert scale statements from 'Definitely Disagree' to 'Definitely Agree'. The questionnaire also included open ended comments to reflect on what respondents enjoyed most and their major improvements throughout the course.

C. The Process

1. Creating a Storyboard

Akyeampong (2018) says habitual utilisation of the intellectual traits produces a well-cultivated critical thinker who can raise vital questions and problems; gather and assess relevant information; use abstract ideas to interpret it effectively and come to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions. Among the four language skills needed to get an idea of the meaningful language in the video is listening skills (Metruk, 2019 cited by Murshidi, 2020). Listening is a process that involves receiving, understanding, remembering, evaluating, and responding to the message from the speaker. Receiving the message involves understanding the speaker's pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. When students are given a task to complete, their listening and comprehension would be more structured as they have a purpose which is to complete the task. The task is to watch the corporate storytelling video and transfer the message and relevant information onto a storyboard.

A storyboard is a graphic representation of the video comprising sequential illustrations or images. It is formed from a certain number of boxes known as frames or panels either by drawing it on paper or using a certain software. Creating a storyboard is usually a step in the process of making a video. In this course, on the other hand, students create a storyboard from a corporate storytelling video that is ready and available.

The reason behind this is that a storyboard makes it easier for students to show their understanding and to better explain the storyline from a video. A study has shown that having students create visual storyboard for movie scenes can improve their reading skills and comprehension (Bruce & Chiu, 2015). Students are encouraged to explore beyond the story in the video to get the message by understanding the story plot, characters and settings that set the atmosphere and mood.

Students are put in groups of three in this course to enable them to work collaboratively. Sonnayi & Alapati (2021) note that students are most willing to partake in collaborative learning and it is an effective strategy to develop speaking skills. Students are given the autonomy on their learning when they work on the storyboard as they get to decide what to put in their storyboard. They also become aware of their strengths when they work on different tasks of the storyboard.

Based on what they watch and transfer onto the storyboard, students will develop their creativity and critical thinking skills by developing and presenting their opinions in a video response presentation.

2. Giving a Video Response Presentation

In this activity, students describe the messages and core values reflected in the stories in the video through an oral presentation that also evaluates the effectiveness of the corporate storytelling video. Storytelling integrates language and content and allows students to develop competency, increases awareness and appreciation of other cultures, and increases students' confidence level (Mokhtar et. al, 2012). The storyboard assists the students to picture the storyline and to better grasp the message. They should be more creative and critical, as digital storytelling promotes critical and creative thinking (Akyeampong, 2018). Critical thinking is the art of conceptualising, analysing, reflecting, and evaluating. Students can also critically engage with new knowledge and make meaning from this new knowledge.

In this course, students analyse and evaluate the video, then present their reflections in an oral presentation. This is a recorded video presentation of about 3 minutes in which the students express their opinions and responses to the corporate storytelling video. Since videos provoke interest, curiosity, convey feeling and texture of real experience (Harris and Mayer, 1993), videos are an excellent tool for students to improve on their responses. Students find the core values of the company in the video and identify which values are reflected in the video and how those values are demonstrated in the video. Students can evaluate the effectiveness of the video in delivering the intended message.

Recording their responses in videos also enhances their oral presentation skills as students did better in their language, facial expression, eye-contact, and body language when they see themselves in the recording and improve, according to

Ahmad and Lidadun (2017). Speaking is one of the important skills in English besides listening, reading, and writing. People can convey opinions, ideas, and perceptions by speaking. It can make students be active to communicate with others and give opinions or ideas in the teaching and learning process.

IV. RESULTS

A. Tabulation of Respondents

Questionnaires were given to students who enrolled in the course in one semester. From a total of 845 students, 227 students responded. The questionnaires were given out through google survey by 13 instructors teaching 37 sets of classes. The tabulation of the students in Fig. 2 is by faculty.
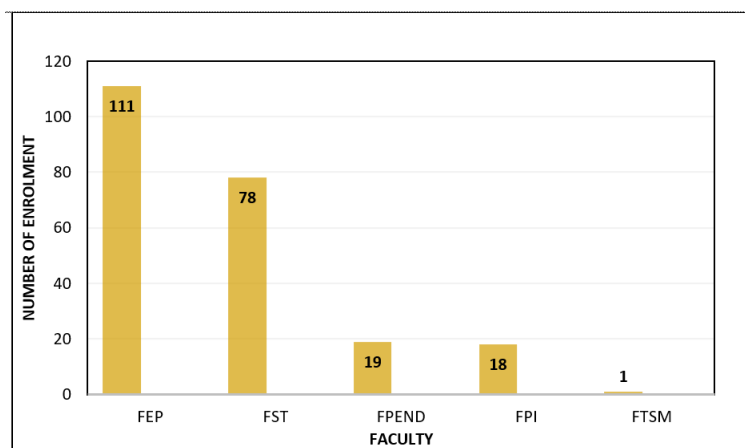

Figure 2 Tabulation of Students by Faculty

The students comprise 111 (48.9%) from Faculty of Economics and Management (FEP) and 78 (34.4%) from Faculty of Science & Technology (FST). There are also 19 (8.4%) of the students from Faculty of Education (FPEND), 18 (7.9%) from Faculty of Islamic Studies (FPI) and 1 (0.4%) from Faculty of Information Science and Technology (FTSM). There are 69.2% female students and 30.8% male students.

B. Reflection on Corporate Storytelling Video Activities

There are two activities generated from the corporate storytelling video in this course, which are creating a storyboard and giving a video recorded response on the corporate storytelling video. One of the questions in the questionnaire was for the students to reflect their experience in the activities related to the corporate storytelling video. The table below summarises their responses.

TABLE 1
STUDENTS' REFLECTION ON CORPORATE STORYTELLING VIDEO ACTIVITIES

No	Corporate Storytelling Video Activities	Definitely Agree	Agree, but with reservation	Total
1	Producing the storyboard helped me to understand the video better.	80.2%	18.9%	99.1%
2	The recorded Video Response Presentation that I did, helped me to improve my language.	75.3%	22.9%	98.2%
3	I participated actively in both activities.	64.6%	35.2%	99.8%
4	I was motivated to use English language throughout the learning process.	74.4%	25.1%	99.5%
5	The activities encouraged me to learn English language.	79.7%	20.3%	100%

From Table 1, 99.1% of the respondents agree that producing the storyboard has helped them to understand the video better. While 98.2% respondents say that the recorded video response presentation, which is the second and final activity, has helped them to improve their language. In response to the next question, Table 1 displays that 99.8% of the respondents say they have participated actively in both activities. When asked if they were motivated to use English language throughout the learning process, 99.5% of the respondents say yes. All of them or 100% of the respondents are encouraged by the activities to learn English language.

C. Perception on Learning Skills from Corporate Storytelling Video

In another part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked if the corporate storytelling video activities contributed to their learning and development of the skills. Table 2 below is their responses.

TABLE 2
STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON LEARNING SKILLS

No	Corporate storytelling video helps to improve my	Definitely Agree	Agree, but with reservation	Total
1	reading skills	68.7	29.5	98.2
2	writing skills	71.8	24.7	96.5
3	listening skills	78.4	20.3	98.4
4	speaking skills	78.4	19.4	97.8
5	presentation skills	76.7	20.7	97.4
6	critical thinking skills	75.8	19.8	95.6
7	creativity	77.1	20.3	97.4

The respondents' perception on the improvement of the four basic language skills can be seen in Table 2. They perceive that they have improved in their reading skills (98.2%); writing skills (96.5%); listening skills (98.4%) and speaking skills (97.8%). Going down the table, they also believe they have improved in their presentation skills (97.4%); critical thinking skills (95.6%); and creativity (97.4%).

V. DISCUSSION

A. *Reflection on Corporate Storytelling Video Activities*

Regarding the first activity, which is producing or creating a storyboard, most of the respondents believe that it has helped them to understand the corporate storytelling video better. This supports Bruce & Chiu (2015), who pose that when students create a storyboard for a movie scene, they improve their comprehension. In this course, students create a storyboard from a ready-made video. They have to comprehend the story in the video to enable them to transfer the information onto the storyboard. Interpreting the language and the story in a visual context enhances their understanding more.

In this course the students work in groups of three. The three students in each group share and create one storyboard, which means one student works on 3 – 4 frames or panels. Fig. 3 below is an example of a storyboard created by one group of three students.
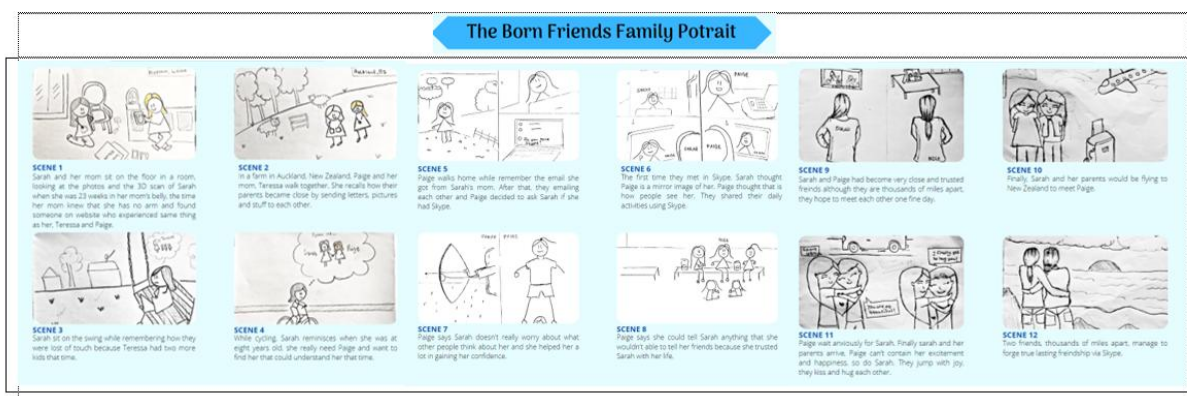

Figure 3 One Complete Storyboard

Figure 3 exemplifies a storyboard with twelve (12) frames depicting seven (7) elements, that are required for this course, shown on their storyboard which are title, setting, characters, plot, conflict, resolution, and conclusion.

From the storyboard, the students demonstrate their comprehension of the corporate storytelling video by retelling the story through images and words in sequential order. This activity illustrates that the students collaborate among them to create four frames per person, producing one storyboard which reflects their creativity and critical thinking skills. This is consistent to what Desi et al (2020) suggest, that storyboard is a way to make students be creative, critical, and collaborative. Collaborating to do the activities and making decisions together enable the students to develop their communicative skills. As Moradi and Chen (2019) state, research has shown that storytelling facilitates students' collaboration.

In the second and final activity, the students are required to give a 3-minute presentation of their response to the corporate storytelling video. They should talk about the company's values that they see reflected in the video and give their opinion on the video and its effectiveness in delivering the message to the audience. From the results, most of them also believe that it has helped them to improve their English language. When the students present their opinions in a video response presentation, they need to explore beneath the story to get the message. When they do this, they develop their creativity.

The presentation, being video recorded is an advantage to the students. They can record, then watch and identify their errors, weaknesses and strengths and work on the improvement. They can repeat this process as many times as they like

until they are satisfied. Every time they redo is a learning process and they improve gradually. This supports the findings of Ahmad and Lidadun (2017) and Berlian Nur and Mohamad Jafre (2011) which is by recording responses on video, students can see themselves and improve on their language, facial expression, eye-contact, body language and speaking skills.

From the results, almost all respondents say that they have participated actively in all activities. According to Harris and Mayer (1993), short films or corporate storytelling videos have colour, movement and sound accompanying the verbal communication, giving more sensory experience, making them excellent for provoking interest and curiosity. Being interested and curious will stimulate the sense of hearing and the sense of seeing. Our senses help us to understand everything around us and we learn through them. Therefore, having activities through a corporate storytelling video has induced participation from the students.

This can be seen from the results that show a very high number of the respondents stating that they were motivated to use English language throughout the learning process. Motivation plays an important role in learning a second language. When students are motivated, they are more open to the learning process involving the activities. This is proven in Table 1, where all the respondents are encouraged by the activities to learn English language.

A. Perception on Learning Skills from Corporate Storytelling Video

These results reveal that activities from the corporate storytelling video are positively connected to motivation to learn as the students perceived they have improved in all the learning skills of the 21st century. Perception is the basis of thoughts that bring about judgements or beliefs that influence the attitude towards something (Ahen, 2009). In other words, when the perception is positive towards the language, students will be moved to do the activities and learn the language.

The high percentage also shows that these respondents are feeling positive about learning this course that uses corporate storytelling video as a tool. Engaging in the activities related to the video contributes in many ways, from motivation to skills development. These results also support the findings by Murshidi (2020) who says that watching movies are positively related to the enhancement of the listening and speaking skills of the students.

When students watch and listen to the corporate storytelling video, comprehending and getting the message and then transferring onto the storyboard, this enhances their listening skills. When they create the storyboard, they work collaboratively in discussing and deciding what should be on the storyboard. They identify the story plot and explain in the notes accompanying the storyboard. It helps them in their writing skills. The activity also encourages creativity among the students.

To better understand the corporate storytelling video, they must read up on the company that is represented in the video. This allows them to practice their reading skills. For the video response presentation, the students are required to give their response and opinion on the effectiveness of the corporate storytelling video in delivering the company's brand and value. In giving a video response presentation, it enhances the critical thinking and creativity, as mentioned by Akyeampong (2018). The respondents themselves perceived it that way too. The students can improve on their presentation skills every time they record and redo their video response. These activities give the students the context to use and improve their communicative skills. The findings have also indicated what Kusuma (2017) and Omer (2017) pose that, when (corporate storytelling) videos are used, pedagogically, it can benefit oral presentation skills.

The authenticity of the corporate storytelling video with compelling characters and relatable story plot is a link to the real world. Corporate Storytelling videos in general would have the elements of a hero, a main plot, drama, and obstacles to overcome and a simple, trustworthy, and consistent message (Stoyanov, 2016). Consequently, these videos are very interesting to watch and to identify the underlying message from the company or organization.

Another dominant factor is that the duration of these videos that are, usually less than 10 minutes. This can resolve the problem of students' having short attention spans. It is expected that this motivation to learn English will lead to improved language skills as Murshidi (2020) says which is combining movie videos and motivation to learn English can result in improved language skills.

The above findings support Yilmas (2020) and Mirvan (2013) who state that, a video gives visual context and sensory experience to the students. It becomes relevant and useful. It is a highly motivational teaching tool to enhance listening, speaking, and writing.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The discussion is pointing to the fact that the activities generated from corporate storytelling videos are able to enhance English communicative skills and is highly recommended to be incorporated in an English course. Videos are generally interesting, challenging and stimulating resources. The students' responses reveal that the videos can capture their attention as the corporate storytelling videos boost their motivation, and most importantly they find it an enjoyable learning activity in improving all their communicative skills.

This initiative to incorporate the respective activities in this course has proven to provide students with an additional value to their existing acquired skills that should then enrich their employability skills. It is relevant and meaningful to offer such English course to students of an undergraduate program before they enter the working world. This study

highlights the significance of 'storytelling' itself which is up scaled to 'corporate storytelling' that also enhances the persuasive skills that are much needed in the branding industries.

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