

Starry Gaze

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ABSTRACT

In a digital era where multimedia dominates learning, traditional literacy skills remain vital for academic success and personal development. While conventional reading practices support vocabulary and comprehension innovative strategies such as interactive storytelling can further strengthen these abilities, particularly among younger readers. *Starry Gaze* explores how an instructional storytelling book can enhance vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension by merging narrative engagement with educational design. Glossary terms, synonyms, and antonyms are embedded throughout the story to promote active language learning. Feedback from young readers evaluates engagement, comprehension, and vocabulary improvement. Findings are expected to show positive language development outcomes, supporting prior studies on how narrative-based and gamified materials improve literacy learning. This study also encourages further research into interactive book design and gamified literacy enhancement.

Keywords: educational book design, interactive storytelling, vocabulary learning

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Strong literacy skills are fundamental to a child's academic growth and lifelong learning. However, the increasing influence of digital media has reduced time spent on traditional reading, potentially affecting vocabulary growth and analytical thinking (Neuman & Wright, 2014). This study aims to address this issue by introducing *Starry Gaze*, an interactive storytelling book designed to help upper primary students improve vocabulary and reading comprehension through immersive narrative experiences.

The book encourages readers to infer meaning, connect context, and discover new vocabulary, thus transforming passive reading into an active learning process. The narrative follows a young protagonist's journey through a fantastical setting, integrating educational elements such as synonyms, antonyms, and glossary terms. This approach aligns with Duke and Pearson's (2002) emphasis on meaningful reading contexts to promote comprehension. The project originated from a school observation in which pupils displayed low English proficiency in both reading and speaking, highlighting the need for engaging literacy tools.

Objectives

The purpose of *Starry Gaze* is to provide an alternative, engaging medium to enhance vocabulary and comprehension among Standard 5 pupils. It also seeks to rekindle students' interest in reading through interactive and meaningful experiences.

Specific Objectives:

1. To design a storytelling book that integrates vocabulary learning and comprehension skills.
2. To create scenarios that encourage language analysis and active reading participation.

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION & METHODOLOGY

Product Description

Starry Gaze is an educational storybook designed for Standard 5–6 learners, combining narrative immersion with vocabulary learning. Glossary items, synonyms, and antonyms are seamlessly embedded in the story, allowing students to acquire new words naturally. The plot, illustrations, and color palette were tailored to captivate young readers while aligning with the national English curriculum. The final printed version is visually appealing, user-friendly, and durable for classroom or independent reading use.

Methodology

The development process followed five structured phases:

Phase 1: Research, Planning, and Design (Weeks 2–3)

A review of the Standard 6 English curriculum guided the selection of target words and comprehension skills (Kim & Quinn, 2013). The narrative and visual plan were developed to integrate vocabulary naturally within the story flow.

Phase 2: Story Draft and Content Development (Weeks 3–8)

The story was written using age-appropriate language and themes. Educational elements such as definitions and examples for glossary words were created and reviewed to ensure linguistic and pedagogical accuracy. Illustrations were produced to complement the narrative, enhancing comprehension through visual support.

Phase 3: Book Design and Printing

Content was formatted and printed using high-quality materials. Attention was given to readability, paper finish, and color balance to sustain engagement.

Phase 4: Showcase and Feedback

A small group of 11 participants—including UiTM students and children—read the book and responded to a Google Form survey evaluating engagement, comprehension, and language learning experience.

Phase 5: Final Presentation

The completed project and findings were presented to peers and educators for feedback and evaluation.

POTENTIAL FINDINGS & COMMERCIALISATION

Potential Findings

Initial survey feedback indicated strong positive responses: all participants found the book engaging, age-appropriate, and beneficial for vocabulary development. The results suggest that *Starry Gaze* effectively balances entertainment and education, supporting prior findings on the impact of reading motivation and contextual learning (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Neuman & Wright, 2014). The encouraging responses demonstrate the potential for scaling up the product to reach a wider audience.

Commercialisation

Starry Gaze possesses entrepreneurial potential through various marketing channels such as bookstores, e-commerce platforms (Shopee, Lazada), and collaborations with schools for classroom adoption. The concept can be expanded into a series for different age groups or adapted into digital formats, offering scalability and sustainability.

NOVELTY & RECOMMENDATIONS

Novelty

The innovative strength of *Starry Gaze* lies in embedding language learning within a cohesive narrative rather than isolating vocabulary from the reading experience (Beck et al., 2013; Sipe, 2008). By integrating synonyms, antonyms, and glossary terms directly into the storyline, it promotes active learning and reinforces word retention. This blend of instructional design and storytelling offers a creative alternative to conventional textbooks and aligns with Liu and Chen's (2010) model of interactive storytelling for educational engagement.

Recommendations

Despite promising results, this pilot study was limited by a small sample size. Future research should include larger, more diverse groups to validate findings. Further exploration of gamified learning elements and digital interactivity could enhance engagement and accessibility. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to assess the sustained impact of interactive reading materials on vocabulary growth.

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