



Enhancing English Learning Awareness Through Transmedia Storytelling in Community Settings

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Abstract. This study examined the effectiveness of the transmedia storytelling (TST) approach in enhancing English learning awareness within a community-based context. Responding to persistent gaps in community English proficiency, this research collaborates with LPMK (Lembaga Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Kelurahan) to implement a multimodal learning pathway involving videos, audio content, text narratives, and interactive applications. This study applied a descriptive qualitative approach, and 30 participants aged 13–22 years were recruited, supported by observations, interviews, and questionnaires. The results indicate a significant improvement in English learning awareness, shifting from low to moderate-high. Approximately 80% of the participants reported that TST increased their engagement, motivation, and retention. The participants also demonstrated growth in metacognitive awareness, particularly in self-monitoring and learning reflection. These findings suggest that transmedia storytelling can serve as an inclusive and adaptive mode of community-based English learning, which also benefits the goals of digital literacy and lifelong education.

Keyword: transmedia storytelling, English learning awareness, community learning, digital media.

1 Introduction

English has become an essential international language, opening opportunities in education, careers, and access to global information. However, many people especially those with limited formal education or constrained by time and location perceive learning English as difficult and intimidating. This apprehension can hinder individuals' willingness to engage in language learning activities [1]. For instance, note that English learning is often seen as daunting by those who feel they lack an adequate educational background or time to study. Such perceptions underscore the need for learning approaches that reduce fear and increase students' motivation. Prior research has shown that strong motivation and contextually relevant methods significantly influence second language acquisition success. Therefore, strategies that make learning English more accessible, enjoyable, and integrated into daily life are crucial for improving language awareness in communities [2].

Community empowerment organizations play a pivotal role in this context. UNESCO reports that community-based educational initiatives tend to increase the effectiveness of local language programs. In Indonesia, the Lembaga Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Kelurahan (LPMK) is a community-driven body that partners with the local government to facilitate participatory development and education at the neighborhood level [3]. LPMK Sarirejo, located in Semarang, has the capacity to support English learning by serving as a platform to raise awareness of the importance of English and to deliver learning in a flexible, enjoyable manner integrated with everyday community life. Leveraging such community structures for language education aligns with empowerment principles, actively engaging learners in their own environment [4].

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Transmedia Storytelling offers an innovative approach to address the challenges of engaging community learners. Transmedia storytelling refers to narratives that unfold across multiple media platforms, each contributing different elements to the story. Defines transmedia storytelling as an integrated approach in which a story's message is disseminated via various media, with each platform adding meaningfully to the audience's understanding of the narrative world [5]. Rather than merely repeating content on different channels, transmedia narratives provide complementary pieces of a larger story, encouraging audiences to follow and engage across formats. Concept of "transmedia" originated from Marsha Kinder's idea of "transmedia intertextuality" in the early 1990s, but it was Henry Jenkins who popularized transmedia storytelling in the context of media convergence [6]. In educational terms, transmedia storytelling leverages text, audio, video, and interactive media to create a cohesive learning narrative. This approach can increase learner engagement by offering content in varied forms that cater to different learning styles (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic) and by embedding learning material in an entertaining narrative context. A recent study found that transmedia storytelling was effective in boosting learners' participation through engaging cross-platform narratives [7]. By spreading a story across multiple media, educators can harness what Jenkins calls "spreadability" – the ease with which participants can access and share content – thereby sustaining interest and motivation. Furthermore, transmedia methods often invite audience participation or co-creation, allowing learners to contribute to the story (for example, by creating their own narrative content), which deepens their engagement and sense of ownership of the learning process [8].

Given these advantages, this study explores the application of transmedia storytelling in community-based English learning programs. Specifically, we implemented a 9-month program in LPMK Sarirejo, aiming to enhance learners' awareness of the importance of English and improve their motivation to learn. The program was designed to demonstrate that learning English can happen anytime and anywhere – a key message delivered through the transmedia narrative – thereby dispelling the notion that language learning is confined to formal classrooms. This study presents the findings of that program, focusing on how transmedia storytelling impacted the participants' awareness, motivation, and learning experiences. We also identify the challenges faced during implementation and discuss how the theoretical principles of transmedia storytelling were realized in practice. The following sections describe the program's methodology, the observed results (quantitative and qualitative), and the implications of using a transmedia storytelling approach for community-based language education.

2 Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to examine a 9-month English learning program implemented in the LPMK Sarirejo community in Semarang, Indonesia [9]. Thirty participants aged 13–22 years were recruited, supported by observations, interviews, and questionnaires. Thirty adult participants (R1–R30), ranging from teenagers to individuals in their 50s, were included in the study. They represented diverse educational backgrounds (SMP, SMA, and S1) and occupations (e.g., informal workers and homemakers), reflecting the demographic richness of urban communities.

The intervention utilized a transmedia storytelling approach, where a single narrative was distributed across multiple formats 10 short texts, 8 audio stories, 6 videos, and interactive mobile modules delivered via WhatsApp, printed materials, community radio, and educational apps (e.g., Duolingo, Quizlet, and Kahoot). The storylines depicted daily life situations in which English is useful [10]. Participants engaged with the content during group sessions and independently at home. They were also encouraged to co-create by recording dialogues or writing story continuations, which promoted personal investment and contextualized learning. Data collection included pre- and post-program questionnaires assessing awareness (Low, Moderate, High) and motivation (1–5 Likert scale). In-depth interviews, focus groups, and direct observations documented the learner's experiences, behavioral engagement, and media interaction.

3 Result And Discussion

3.1 Participation and Engagement

The transmedia storytelling approach successfully engaged a broad range of participants in this study. Over the 9-month period, attendance at the various story sessions (text reading circles, audio listening sessions, video screenings, and app-based quizzes) remained high, with most participants actively participating in at least one form of media every week. Notably, about 65% of participants engaged with the content on a "sometimes" to "often" basis (as reported in

the post-program survey) [11]. The multi-platform design allowed participants to choose media that suited their preferences and schedules. Younger participants (junior high level, SMP) showed a strong preference for video content and interactive game-like applications, often expressing excitement about the videos and enthusiasm when using quiz applications [12]. In contrast, participants with higher education backgrounds (S1, equivalent to undergraduate) were more inclined toward textual content and reflective discussions, indicating that they appreciated reading the narrative and then discussing its meaning or relating it to their own experience. This suggests that the transmedia approach provides multiple entry points into the learning material, accommodating different learning styles and age groups [13]. One participant observation noted: "The interactive video makes it easier for me to understand the context of conversations, and the system responds quickly when I click on a quiz question", highlighting how the multimedia elements aided comprehension and kept the experience responsive. Another participant mentioned finding the mobile app "fun," though she noted "sometimes the video's audio is slightly delayed if the internet is weak" reflecting both the engaging nature of the content and the minor technical hiccups encountered.

3.2 Improvements in Awareness of English Learning

The primary goal of the program was to raise participants' awareness of the importance of learning English and how it can be pursued in everyday life. The results of the awareness questionnaire showed a marked improvement. Before the program, most participants rated their English learning awareness as Low to Moderate, with very few considering themselves highly aware or actively concerned about learning English. After the 9-month transmedia program, over 70% of respondents had shifted to a higher awareness category (i.e., many who were "Low" moved up to "Moderate" or "High"). Specifically, several participants who initially said they rarely thought about or valued English learning became much more conscious of its relevance to their lives [14]. They began to recognize opportunities to learn or use English around them one outcome of the program's emphasis that English learning can happen "anytime, anywhere." In concrete terms, participants started noticing English words on packaging, signage, or social media and brought these up during sessions, indicating increased awareness and curiosity [15]. In the words of one participant: "I realized that even small daily things can be chances to practice English, like reading product labels or simple phone apps in English." (This sentiment was echoed in the focus group and aligns with the increase in awareness ratings.) [16]

To complement the self-reported awareness data, the program facilitators also observed changes in behavior that implied greater awareness. By the fourth to sixth month, participants began to take more initiative for example, a few participants formed a small peer group to practice speaking after weekly community meetings, and others started asking the facilitators for additional story content or English materials they could try on their own [17]. This timeline coincides with a mid-program boost, suggesting that a few months of consistent transmedia exposure were needed before a significant shift in the mindset occurred. Indeed, metacognitive awareness (awareness of one's own learning processes) showed improvement toward the end of the program: participants became more reflective about how they learn, often discussing strategies like re-listening to audio stories or taking notes from videos as ways they found helpful [18]. By the end of the program, many could articulate what methods worked best for them, indicating higher awareness and self-monitoring in learning. As one of the more educated participants reflected, "The storytelling made me reflective I became aware of how my way of learning has changed through this media.

Quantitatively, the effectiveness of the program in raising awareness was also captured in a post-program evaluation metric: participants rated the effectiveness of the transmedia approach for increasing their learning awareness at 84% (categorized as "Very Good") on average. This high rating corroborates the positive shift seen in the survey categories and suggests that the participants recognized the approach as beneficial for making them more aware of learning opportunities.

3.3 Motivation and Attitude Changes

Alongside awareness, learner motivation to study English has seen a substantial increase. The pre-program average self-rated motivation score was 2.4 out of 5, indicating a generally low motivation. By the end of the program, this average had increased to 4.1 out of 5, a significant jump of approximately 1.7 points. This improvement was reflected across different educational levels, though there were slight variations: participants with SMA (high school) and S1 (undergraduate) education levels showed a more steady and continuous increase in motivation throughout the program, whereas some of the SMP (junior high) participants had fluctuations (possibly starting with enthusiasm, experiencing some dips, and then rising again towards the end). By the final assessment, over 60% of all participants

reported high motivation levels (rating themselves in the upper scale categories) compared to virtually none at the beginning.

Participants cited several reasons for this increase in motivation. A commonly mentioned factor was the interactive and immediate feedback provided by digital components [19]. For example, the use of quiz apps and language games provided participants with instant results and a sense of achievement. "I became excited to study because I could see my score immediately in the application," said one participant (an undergraduate) regarding the use of apps such as Quizlet and Kahoot. This instant feedback and the competitive yet fun environment of quiz games tapped into learners' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation – they wanted to improve their scores and enjoyed comparing results in a friendly way [20]. Another motivational factor was the narrative context: the story-based approach made learning English feel less like a formal lesson and more like entertainment or personal enrichment. Participants often wanted to know "what happens next" in the story, which incentivized them to keep engaging with the content (and incidentally, keep learning English in the process) [21]. This narrative drive helped sustain motivation over months as the unfolding story maintained a sense of anticipation.

The program also had a positive impact on the participants' confidence and attitudes toward using English. Many participants initially felt nervous or embarrassed to speak or even pronounce English words, fearing that they would make mistakes. Through repeated low-stakes practice (such as recording a voice message in a chat group as a character from the story or doing a role-play with peers during a session), these inhibitions began to fade. One 50-year-old interviewee admitted, "At first I was shy about my voice being recorded, afraid of being laughed at. But after a while it became normal because the themes were funny and close to our daily life." Over time, participants reported feeling "not as afraid of making mistakes" and were more willing to try speaking English in front of others. By embedding practice in playful storytelling contexts, the program created a safe space for making errors. For instance, when a participant stumbled over a word while narrating the story of a local market scene in English, it was treated humorously and tied back into the story so that the participant could laugh it off and try again. Such experiences gradually build speaking confidence. By the program's end, facilitators observed a notable increase in the number of participants who volunteered to speak or present in English during community events (something that rarely happened before). Indeed, more than 70% of the participants took the initiative to create their own mini English narratives or personal stories, which they shared with the group as part of the final sessions. This behavior of creating personal narratives was a strong indicator of both motivation and confidence: learners were not only consuming the story content but were inspired to produce content themselves, in English. One 38-year-old participant reflected on her change in attitude: "I used to think English was hard. Now I want to keep learning because it turns out I can do it bit by bit with fun stories". Such testimonials illustrate a shift from viewing English as an insurmountable challenge to viewing it as an attainable skill that can be built gradually.

Another motivation-related outcome was an improvement in vocabulary knowledge and usage. While the program's primary focus was on awareness and motivation rather than explicit testing, we did track an approximate measure of vocabulary growth: at the program start, participants on average could actively recall or recognize about seven English words or phrases relevant to their daily context (based on a simple checklist quiz); after nine months, this average increased to about 15 words/phrases. This more than doubling of the active vocabulary, though modest in absolute terms, was meaningful for low-proficiency learners in the community context. It provided participants with tangible evidence of learning ("I used to only know a few greetings, now I know how to say things for shopping or directions," noted one participant), which in turn reinforced their motivation to continue learning. Vocabulary improvement also underpinned confidence; knowing more words made participants more willing to attempt speaking.

3.4 User Feedback and Satisfaction

Feedback gathered from surveys and interviews indicated that the participants were largely satisfied with the transmedia storytelling approach. In the post-program evaluation, the participants rated various aspects of the program very positively [22]. User satisfaction with the learning experience was approximately 89%, categorized as "Very High". Participants especially appreciated the diversity of media; many commented that learning never felt boring because each session or week brought a different mode of engaging with English (one week a video, another week a game, another a group storytelling, and so on). The interactivity of the program was rated at approximately 86% (excellent), reflecting that participants found the quizzes, apps, and two-way storytelling tasks highly engaging. They did not just passively listen or read; they also responded, created, and made choices in the story world. This interactive element was new for many and was highlighted as a favorite aspect in the interviews.

The technical performance of the program's digital components was evaluated. Media functionality (e.g., whether the apps and videos functioned properly) received about 88% "Very Good" marks, and system stability (e.g. reliability

of the platforms, minimal crashes or errors) scored about 90% “Very Good” Very Good. These high marks suggest that despite a few issues (such as occasional internet slowness, as one participant noted), the technical delivery was largely smooth from the users’ perspective [23]. This is important because any serious technical failures could have disengaged participants or reinforced the belief that digital learning is too difficult; instead, participants came away with a generally positive impression of using technology for learning. One observation entry reads: “Interactive multimedia performance was rated very good (averaging ~87% success), with core functions (audio, video, text, app) running effectively throughout the 9 months”.

3.5 Challenges Encountered

Despite the overall success, the program encountered several challenges, which are important to acknowledge for a balanced understanding.

1. **Technology Access:** Approximately 35% of participants lacked adequate devices or stable internet access at home. Some were using very basic or older-model smartphones that struggled with newer apps or larger multimedia files. Others had limited data plans or Wi-Fi connections. This sometimes meant that the participants could not fully participate in the at-home or on-demand aspects of the transmedia content. To mitigate this, the program facilitators arranged for offline access where possible (e.g., providing content on USB drives or arranging small group video viewings). However, technology access remained a limiting factor for a portion of the community.
2. **Low Digital Literacy:** A participants were unfamiliar with using smartphone applications beyond basic messaging. This low digital literacy meant that they initially needed guidance to install and navigate apps like Duolingo or Quizizz. During the early weeks, facilitators held short training and troubleshooting sessions (for instance, showing how to scan a QR code to get the app, how to press play on an audio file, etc.). Over time, most participants became comfortable with the required apps, which was a beneficial outcome (ancillary digital skill development). However, the learning curve at the beginning did slow down content delivery slightly and required patience and additional support.
3. **Time Constraints:** The participants were informal workers or homemakers, meaning they had busy, often unpredictable schedules. Many could not dedicate a fixed daily time for learning due to other commitments. The program’s flexibility (allowing self-paced engagement with some content) partly addressed this, but finding time for learning was still a challenge. Some participants fell behind in the story because they missed a week’s content due to work or family obligations, and then they needed to catch up. To address this, the narrative was designed in modular episodes that could be enjoyed individually, and summaries were provided if someone missed a piece of the story. The community nature of LPMK also helped; participants often informally encouraged each other and shared content to ensure that no one was left out for too long.
4. **Affective Barriers:** Initially, affective factors such as fear of making mistakes, embarrassment, or low self-confidence were significant hurdles. As noted earlier, some were hesitant to speak or participate fully because of shyness. One interviewee described feeling “embarrassed if my voice was recorded, afraid people would laugh.” These fears were gradually reduced through the supportive and fun atmosphere of the program. The storytelling context (often humorous and familiar themes) helped the participants relax. By laughing together at story events and focusing on the narrative, the participants became less self-conscious about their language. The community also established a norm of positive reinforcement; everyone clapped or cheered whenever someone tried to speak or use a new word, even if it was imperfect. By the end of the program, the affective barriers had lowered considerably, though for a few individuals, a degree of anxiety still lingered (those who rated the method as “not effective” often cited personal difficulty in overcoming shyness). Overall, approximately 10% of participants remained skeptical or less engaged, citing personal or technical barriers as reasons for their belief that the method did not work well for them. Notably, those who rated the program as “not effective” were predominantly in the segment facing the toughest combination of challenges (e.g., an older participant with low education, no smartphone at home, and a very shy personality). This highlights an important consideration for future implementations: additional targeted support may be needed for the most disadvantaged learners to ensure that they can equally benefit from the approach.

In summary, the results of the program demonstrate that transmedia storytelling can significantly enhance learners’ awareness and motivation in a community-based English-learning context. Participants became more conscious of the value and possibilities of learning English in daily life, as evidenced by shifts in their awareness levels and reflections. The motivation to learn increased markedly, supported by engaging content and interactive media that provided immediate rewards and enjoyment. Furthermore, learners’ confidence in using English improved as the storytelling

format lowered anxiety and invited active participation in the class. The challenges encountered were real but largely surmountable with thoughtful facilitation: technology and literacy gaps were addressed through alternate access and training, time constraints were eased by flexible content delivery, and affective barriers were reduced through community support and enjoyable learning contexts. These findings suggest that with proper support, a transmedia storytelling approach is feasible and effective for community education, leveraging narratives and media to transform attitudes toward learning.

4 Conclusion

This study shows that implementing a transmedia storytelling approach in a community English learning program can effectively raise learners' awareness and motivation. In LPMK Sarirejo, Semarang, a 9-month program using text, audio, video, and interactive media enabled participants to learn English in a flexible, enjoyable, and contextually relevant way as part of their daily lives. The theoretical principles of transmedia engagement proposed by Jenkins were evidenced in our outcomes: the concept of spreadability was observed as participants accessed learning materials across multiple platforms at their convenience, increasing their connectedness to the content. The program's design allowed key messages (e.g., "English is useful in everyday life") to spread through various media, reinforcing learning. Similarly, drillability – the opportunity to delve deeper and repeat content – was facilitated by the multi-platform narrative; participants could replay audio stories or revisit quizzes, reinforcing their learning through repetition in an appealing format. The approach also fostered co-creation: participants actively contributed by creating personal stories and sharing experiences, thereby becoming not only consumers but also creators in the learning process. This active participation is a hallmark of transmedia storytelling and has proven to be a motivating factor, giving learners a sense of ownership in their language-learning journey.

Empirically, the program has achieved notable success. Awareness of the importance of English learning grew significantly, with more than two-thirds of learners advancing to higher awareness levels. Motivation and engagement also increased markedly, as reflected in the jump in motivation scores (2.4 to 4.1 on a 5-point scale) and the high rates of regular engagement with the content. Learners' increased vocabulary knowledge and communication confidence further illustrate the program's positive effects. Qualitative feedback reinforced these findings: participants reported that English no longer felt intimidating and that they were eager to continue learning beyond the program. Importantly, they discovered that learning could be interwoven with everyday storytelling and media usage rather than confined to traditional classroom settings.

The challenges faced during implementation offer valuable lessons for future practices. Technical and literacy barriers need to be planned for; community programs should consider providing access to devices or the Internet and include basic digital literacy training at the outset. In this study, although ~35% of participants had limited tech access, community resource-sharing and offline alternatives helped mitigate the issue. Time management in community learning is another consideration; flexible scheduling and modular content (so learners can catch up if they miss a session) were important in our context, where participants balanced learning with work and family duties. Addressing affective factors is also crucial; building a supportive, non-judgmental community environment has proven effective in reducing fear and embarrassment among adult learners. Ice-breaking activities, humor, and culturally relevant story themes (close to the participants' lives) were particularly useful in helping them overcome shyness. These elements should be incorporated into similar programs to facilitate early participation and confidence building.

Overall, this study highlights the practical application of transmedia storytelling in a community-based language learning setting. It bridges theory and practice by demonstrating that transmedia principles – multi-platform content, narrative engagement, and audience participation – can be leveraged to tackle real-world educational challenges, such as low motivation and awareness in adult learners. For communities seeking to empower their members through improved English skills, this approach provides an inclusive and innovative model. It meets learners where they are: using familiar media (like smartphones and social stories) and respecting their life context, while also stretching them to use new tools and languages. The success of the LPMK Sarirejo program suggests that similar community organizations or local education initiatives could adopt transmedia storytelling to invigorate their language courses or other educational programs.

We recommend that future studies build on these findings. For instance, a longer-term follow-up could examine how sustained the awareness and motivation gains are and whether participants continue to learn independently post-program. Further research could also explore scaling the approach: how might transmedia storytelling be adapted for larger communities or different demographic groups (such as youth vs. older adults) and different languages or subjects? Another interesting avenue is to investigate the role of participant-created content in depth: Does actively

co-creating parts of the narrative lead to even stronger learning outcomes? Our experience suggests that it does, aligning with constructivist learning theories, but targeted research could validate this.

In conclusion, transmedia storytelling in community settings is a powerful strategy for enhancing English learning awareness. It transforms learning into a narrative-driven, participatory adventure rather than a rote chore. By doing so, it not only teaches language skills but also fosters a mindset that is open to continuous learning. This aligns well with the goals of community empowerment, equipping learners with the skills and confidence to improve their lives through education. We find that this approach is well-suited to the Atlantis Press focus on innovative educational practices, and we hope that the insights from this program can inform educators, community organizers, and researchers interested in leveraging storytelling and technology for social and educational development.

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