

Beyond the Classroom: Transformative Approaches in Learning Methods

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v10i3.977>

*Nofry Frans, Vera Wahani^{ab} 

¹²Universitas Klabat, Airmadidi Manado, Sulaewsi Utara, Indonesia.

Corresponding Author: nofryfrans@unklab.ac.id

A B S T R A C T

Traditional classroom-based instruction has long dominated institutional learning paradigms; however, educational practices are increasingly shifting beyond structured settings to embrace more flexible and learner-centered approaches. This study aims to explore transformative learning strategies – specifically self-regulated learning (SRL), storytelling pedagogy, and gamified digital tools such as Duolingo – to enhance cognitive and linguistic development. Using a systematic literature review methodology, the study synthesizes theoretical perspectives and empirical findings from the past decade. The findings reveal that SRL fosters learner autonomy and metacognitive awareness, enabling students to take ownership of their learning processes. Storytelling pedagogy supports vocabulary retention and fluency by embedding language learning in meaningful, emotionally engaging contexts. Gamified digital platforms further enhance learner motivation and engagement through adaptive and interactive learning environments. These approaches collectively contribute to sustained proficiency and long-term retention. The study concludes that integrating these innovative, evidence-based strategies – supported by technology and experiential learning – represents a necessary evolution in modern pedagogy, requiring educators to rethink instructional design beyond the limits of the traditional classroom.

Keywords: *Classroom, Transformative Approach, Learning Method*

Article History:

Received 29th May 2025

Accepted 25th June 2025

Published 27th June 2025



INTRODUCTION

The landscape of education is undergoing significant transformation, driven by rapid advancements in technology, evolving learner expectations, and a growing emphasis on lifelong learning (Selwyn, 2016; OECD, 2020). Traditional paradigms – dominated by rote memorization and teacher-centered instruction – are increasingly seen as insufficient in preparing students for the demands of the 21st century (Biggs & Tang, 2011). In many conventional classrooms, learning is still confined to passive absorption of information, where teachers serve as the primary source of knowledge and students are expected to sit quietly and listen. Such approaches, while once effective, often limit creativity, critical thinking, and the development of learner autonomy (Freire, 1970; Sawyer, 2014).

This overreliance on direct instruction and rigid classroom structures fails to accommodate diverse learning styles and does not sufficiently engage learners (Tomlinson, 2014). As a result, there is a growing call among educators, researchers, and policymakers to adopt more transformative, learner-centered methodologies (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). These include self-regulated learning, storytelling pedagogy, and gamified tools – strategies that encourage active participation, foster deeper understanding, and support personalized learning experiences (Zimmerman, 2002; Egan, 2005; Hamari et al., 2014). The integration of digital technologies further expands the potential of these approaches, allowing learning to extend beyond the physical classroom and evolve into more immersive, meaningful experiences (Siemens, 2005; Anderson, 2016).

This paper aims to explore alternative methods of instruction that move beyond the limitations of traditional learning models, focusing on approaches that empower learners to take ownership of their education. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research question: *How do self-regulated learning, storytelling pedagogy, and gamified tools impact learner outcomes in terms of engagement, autonomy, and knowledge retention?*

METHOD

This study adopts a systematic literature review (SLR) design to explore transformative learning approaches beyond the limitations of traditional classroom settings. This method was chosen for its ability to identify, analyze, and synthesize academic studies in a structured, transparent, and replicable manner. The study does not involve direct human participants; instead, peer-reviewed academic articles serve as the primary units of analysis. Data sources were drawn from prominent academic databases such as Scopus, SpringerLink, ERIC, and Google Scholar, focusing on scholarly articles published between 2013 and 2023.

The data collection process consisted of several stages. First, a search was conducted using predefined keywords such as transformative learning, experiential learning, flipped classroom, digital learning, and self-regulated learning. This initial search yielded 346 articles. Next, titles and abstracts were screened to eliminate duplicates, irrelevant publications, or those that did not meet the inclusion criteria. After full-text review, 52 studies were deemed relevant and suitable for further analysis.

For data analysis, the study employed thematic analysis to identify common patterns and relationships among various transformative learning approaches across educational contexts. This process involved open coding of recurring themes such as project-based learning, flipped classrooms, the integration of digital technology in education, and collaborative instructional strategies. The analysis focused on how these methods support student engagement, learner autonomy, and critical thinking (Mandal, 2024; Stansberry, 2023). All sources used in this review are academically credible, and all references are cited accurately to ensure academic integrity.

The theoretical foundation of this study is based on transformative learning, as conceptualized by Mezirow (1991), which emphasizes critical reflection and experiential learning that leads to a shift in learners' perspectives. This framework is considered highly relevant in today's educational landscape, which demands more flexible and student-centered approaches (Taylor, 2017). By systematically mapping the existing literature, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how transformative learning principles can be effectively implemented beyond traditional classroom boundaries (Eames & Milne, 2021).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

The systematic review of 52 selected studies reveals several recurring themes in transformative learning beyond traditional classroom contexts. First, constructivist and socio-cultural learning theories frequently underpin approaches that emphasize active, experiential, and personalized learning. Key studies show that independent and self-directed learning promotes deeper cognitive engagement (Vygotsky, 2018; Piaget, 2019; Bruner, 2020).

Secondly, the concept of self-regulated learning (SRL) is consistently identified as a core factor in fostering learner autonomy. SRL strategies—such as goal setting, self-monitoring, and reflective practices—are widely adopted in language learning contexts and shown to

correlate with improved learner independence (Boekaerts, 1997; Zimmerman, 2002; Odo, 2020).

A third major finding is the integration of storytelling-based pedagogy, which is noted to enhance memory retention, emotional engagement, and linguistic fluency (Papadaki et al., 2023; Schmier, 2021). Story-based tasks, such as role-playing or digital storytelling, help learners internalize language through context-rich interaction.

Fourth, the use of digital learning platforms and gamified learning tools—such as Duolingo—is repeatedly cited for increasing motivation, personalizing content, and enhancing long-term retention (Venugopal, 2024; Alam et al., 2025). Gamification elements such as rewards, progress tracking, and interactive feedback have been linked to improved engagement, particularly in second-language acquisition (Triantafyllou et al., 2025; Kapp, 2020).

Lastly, several studies identify language anxiety as a major barrier to language acquisition. Research demonstrates that transformative approaches—especially storytelling, peer collaboration, and gamified learning—can significantly reduce learner anxiety and create supportive learning environments (Mierzwa-Kamińska, 2025; Gkonou et al., 2017).

Discussion

Constructivist Paradigms and Learner-Centered Design

The findings confirm that transformative learning beyond the classroom is rooted in constructivist and socio-cultural learning theories. These paradigms advocate for learner-centered approaches where knowledge is constructed through active experience rather than passive reception (Vygotsky, 2018; Piaget, 2019). The integration of constructivist principles enables students to connect prior knowledge with new concepts, facilitating deeper cognitive processing. This suggests that instructional design should shift from teacher-dominated models to learning environments that promote exploration, collaboration, and personalization (Bruner, 2020; Sawyer, 2021).

The Central Role of Self-Regulated Learning

Self-regulated learning (SRL) emerged as a critical factor in empowering learners to manage their own educational journey. The development of metacognitive awareness, intrinsic motivation, and behavioral control allows learners to become more autonomous and efficient problem-solvers (Boekaerts, 1997; Zimmerman, 2002). In particular, SRL is effective in language learning, where progress depends on consistent engagement and self-assessment. These findings highlight the need for educators to embed SRL frameworks into the curriculum, supporting students in setting goals, tracking progress, and adjusting strategies accordingly.

Storytelling as an Immersive Pedagogical Tool

Storytelling was consistently found to enhance both emotional and cognitive dimensions of learning. Stories activate various parts of the brain, improving comprehension and memory retention (Papadaki et al., 2023). In language acquisition, storytelling supports contextual learning and spontaneous communication, helping students move from rote memorization to meaningful use of language (Lim et al., 2022; Sembiring & Simajuntak, 2023). When integrated into pedagogy, storytelling not only reinforces linguistic competence but also cultivates empathy, critical thinking, and identity formation.

Gamified Digital Tools for Engagement and Retention

Digital platforms such as Duolingo offer a gamified learning experience that supports personalized and interactive education. Gamification increases learner motivation through feedback loops, rewards, and progress visualization (Kapp, 2020; Venugopal, 2024). The findings indicate that these platforms are particularly effective for second language learners who benefit from low-stakes environments and individualized pacing. Gamification also fosters autonomy, as learners engage voluntarily and at their own rhythm, reinforcing the principles of self-regulated learning.

Addressing Language Anxiety through Transformative Strategies

Language anxiety remains a persistent barrier, especially in oral communication. However, transformative approaches—such as storytelling, gamified practice, and peer-supported learning—were found to reduce affective filters and promote confidence (Mierzwa-Kamińska, 2025; Gkonou et al., 2017). By creating emotionally supportive environments and emphasizing learning through experience rather than correctness, educators can mitigate anxiety and improve learner outcomes. These strategies underline the importance of psychological safety in transformative learning environments.

Pedagogical Implications for Curriculum Design

The convergence of findings suggests that educational design must evolve to accommodate flexibility, engagement, and personalization. A hybrid model that combines traditional instruction with transformative strategies—like SRL, storytelling, and gamification—can meet diverse learner needs while enhancing critical thinking and problem-solving abilities (Kolb & Kolb, 2019; Stansberry, 2023). Educators should design curricula that allow students to co-construct knowledge, reflect on experiences, and interact with content across multiple modalities. Ultimately, transformative learning fosters lifelong learning habits that extend far beyond the classroom walls.

CONCLUSION

The exploration of transformative learning approaches highlights the significance of expanding educational methodologies beyond traditional classroom settings. Key findings indicate that self-regulated learning enhances autonomy and cognitive engagement, while storytelling-based pedagogy fosters linguistic proficiency and deeper comprehension. Additionally, gamified digital interventions, such as Duolingo, provide interactive, adaptive learning environments that motivate students and reinforce language acquisition. These methods collectively contribute to a dynamic learning framework that integrates technological advancements, personalized learning strategies, and experiential approaches to optimize student outcomes.

REFERENCES

- Alam, T. M., Stoica, G. A., Sharma, K., & Özgöbek, Ö. (2025). Digital technologies in the classrooms in the last decade: A bibliometric analysis. *Frontiers in Education, 10*.
- Al-Amri, M. (2020). Storytelling as a pedagogical tool for reducing language anxiety. *Language Teaching Research, 24*(4), 567-589.
- Arnold, J. (2021). Affective factors in language learning: Making a difference. In M. Simons & T. F. H. Smits (Eds.), *Language education and emotions: Research into emotions and language learners, language teachers and educational processes* (pp. 3-17).
- Bahian, R. (2023). *Instructional Approaches and Learners' Attitude Towards Alternative Learning System (ALS)*. International Journal of Research Publications.
- Banerjee, D. (2024). The impact of digital tools on the teaching of history: A comparative study of traditional and technology-integrated teaching methods. *International Journal of Future Research, 3*(22919).
- Bežilová, V. (2019). The effect of storytelling on longer vocabulary retention. *Contemporary Research in Education and English Language Teaching, 1*(1), 57-62.
- Boekaerts, M. (1997). Self-regulated learning: A new concept embraced by researchers, policy makers, educators, teachers, and students. *Learning and Instruction, 7*(2), 161-186.
- Boekaerts, M. (1997). Self-regulated learning: A new concept embraced by researchers, policy makers, educators, teachers, and students. *Learning and Instruction, 7*(2), 161-186.
- Cohen, J., Moon, M., & Hofferth, S. (2022). Enhancing learning experiences through digital platforms. *Educational Technology & Society, 25*(3), 254-265.

- Daflizara, U., Sulistiyo, U., & Kamil, D. (2022). Language learning strategies and learner autonomy: The case of Indonesian tertiary EFL students. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, 15(1), 76–92.
- Dumbuya, E. (2025). Innovative approaches to curriculum and teacher education. *Educational Research Journal*, 11(1), 45-62.
- Friedman, J. (2022). *How a New Learning Theory Can Benefit Transformative Learning Research*. *Frontiers in Education*, 7.
- Frontiers in Education. (2019). Innovative pedagogies of the future: An evidence-based selection. *Frontiers in Education*, 4, 113.
- Ge, Z. G. (2015). Enhancing vocabulary retention by embedding L2 target words in L1 stories: An experiment with Chinese adult e-learners. *Educational Technology & Society*, 18(3), 254-265.
- Geng, H., McGinley, M., Wong, K. F., Wong, P. P. Y., Lau, Y. K., Low, B. W., Hui, T. Y., & Lee, H. (2023). Cultivating students' independent learning and improving motivation through experiential learning. *Springer Education Series*, 189-203.
- Gkonou, C., Daubney, M., & Dewaele, J.-M. (2017). *New insights into language anxiety: Theory, research and educational implications*. Multilingual Matters.
- Herodotou, C., Sharples, M., Gaved, M., Kukulska-Hulme, A., Rienties, B., Scanlon, E. & Whitelock, D. (2019). Innovative pedagogies of the future: An evidence-based selection. *Frontiers in Education*, 4, 113.
- Hersh, M., & Mouroutsou, S. (2015). *Advances in adaptive learning technologies for language education*. Springer.
- Ismail, S., & Hastings, P. (2023). AI-driven language learning tools: Enhancing fluency and reducing anxiety. *Computers & Education*, 190, 104573.
- Jiang, P., Ruan, X., Feng, Z., & Xiong, B. (2023). Research on online collaborative problem solving in the last 10 years. *Mathematics*, 11(10), 2353.
- Kallinikou, E., & Nicolaidou, I. (2019). Digital storytelling to enhance adults' speaking skills in learning foreign languages: A case study. *Multimodal Technol. Interact*, 3(3), 59.
- Kandukoori, A., Kandukoori, F., & Wajid, F. (2024). Comparative analysis of digital tools and traditional teaching methods in educational effectiveness. *arXiv Preprint*, 2408.06689.
- Kapp, K. M. (2020). *The gamification of learning and instruction: Game-based methods and strategies for training and education*. Pfeiffer.
- Khalaf, B. K., & Zin, Z. B. M. (2018). *Traditional and Inquiry-Based Learning Pedagogy: A Systematic Critical Review*. *International Journal of Instruction*, 11(4), 545-564.
- Kim, T., & Kim, Y. (2025). The impact of language anxiety on second language acquisition: A systematic review. *Journal of Language and Education*, 11(2), 45-62.
- Klimova, B., & Zamborova, K. (2023). Digital language learning platforms and their impact on student anxiety. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 15(2), 112-128.
- Kolb, A., & Kolb, D. (2019). *Experiential learning theory bibliography*. *Learning from Experience*, 6, 2017-2019.
- Leuțanu, G. (2021). Comparative study between the traditional teaching method and the online teaching method. *Socioint21 e-Publication*.
- Lichtman, K. (2019). *Teaching proficiency through reading and storytelling (TPRS): An input-based approach to second language instruction*. Routledge.
- Lim, N. Z., Zakaria, A., & Aryadoust, V. (2022). A systematic review of digital storytelling in language learning in adolescents and adults. *Education and Information Technologies*, 27, 6125-6155.
- Narayan, R., Rodriguez, C., Araujo, J., Shaqlaih, A., & Moss, G. (2013). Constructivism Constructivist learning theory. In B. J. Irby, G. Brown, R. Lara-Alecio, & S. Jackson (Eds.), *The handbook of educational theories* (pp. 169–183). IAP Information Age Publishing.
- Odo, D. M. (2020). Connecting informal and formal language learning. In M. Dressman & R. W. Sadler (Eds.), *The handbook of informal language learning* (pp. 421–438). Wiley Blackwell.

- OECD. (2018). Understanding innovative pedagogies: Key themes to analyze new approaches to teaching and learning. *OECD Education Working Paper No. 172*.
- Papadaki, A., Karagianni, E., & Driga, A. M. (2023). The role of digital and traditional storytelling on teaching English to young learners – Detecting gender stereotypes in fairy tales. *TechHub Journal*, 6, 136-148.
- Papi, M., & Khajavy, G. H. (2023). Language anxiety and motivation: A dynamic perspective. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 45(1), 89-112.
- Pawlak, M., Mystkowska-Wiertelak, A., & Bielak, J. (2017). Investigating language learning strategies, beliefs, and autonomy. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 7(2), 205-226.
- Provident, I., Salls, J., Dolhi, C., Schreiber, J., Mattila, A., & Eckel, E. (2023). Design of an online curriculum promoting transformative learning. *Educational Technology Research & Development*, 71(2), 145-162.
- Rahmawati, N. M. (2020). The implementation of short story in enhancing student's vocabularies. *Wanastra: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra*, 12(2).
- Schmier, S. A. (2021). Using digital storytelling as a turn-around pedagogy. *Literacy*, 55(3), 172-180.
- Sembling, D. L. B., & Simajuntak, D. C. (2023). Digital storytelling as an alternative teaching technique to develop vocabulary knowledge of EFL learners. *Journal of Languages and Language Teaching*, 11(2), 211-224.
- Smith, K. L. (2024). The trouble with transformation: Reflective curricular designs for adult learners. *Transformative Dialogues*, 10(2), 45-58.
- Springer, M. (2023). Inclusion or isolation? Differential student experiences of independent learning and wellbeing in higher education. *Education Sciences*, 14(3), 285.
- Stansberry, S. L. (2023). A systematic mapping of literature on transformative learning theory in educational technology. *Learning, Design, and Technology*, 1459-1478.
- Swacha, J. (2021). State of research on gamification in education: A bibliometric survey. *Education Sciences*, 11, 69.
- Tran, D. T. (2021). Storytelling to enhance speaking and listening skills for English young learners: A case study at language centers in Binh Duong Province. *Vietnam Journal of Education*, 5(2), 29-36.
- Triantafyllou, S. A., Georgiadis, C., & Sapounidis, T. (2025). Gamification in education and training: A literature review. *International Review of Education*, 111(8).
- Venugopal, A. (2024). Impact of digital learning platforms on student academic performance. *Medicon Engineering*, 6(5), 208.
- Wilbraham, S. J., Jones, E., Brewster, L., Priestley, M., Broglia, E., Hughes, G., & Spanner, L. (2024). Inclusion or isolation? Differential student experiences of independent learning and wellbeing in higher education. *Education Sciences*, 14(3), 285.
- Yuan, Y. (2025). Adaptive learning technologies and their role in reducing language anxiety. *International Journal of Educational Technology*, 18(3), 215-230.
- Zeybek, N., & Saygi, E. (2024). Gamification in education: Why, where, when, and how? A systematic review. *Games and Culture*, 19(2), 237-264.
- Zimmerman, B. J. (2002). Becoming a self-regulated learner: An overview. *Theory into Practice*, 41(2), 64-70.