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From Heritage to High-Tech: An Integrated Multimodal Framework for Enhancing English Communicative Competence and Entrepreneurial Agency among B40 Women

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ABSTRACT

The Sparkle Through Speech 4.0 (STS 4.0) initiative addresses a critical limitation in existing empowerment programmes for B40 women, which frequently treat vocational, linguistic, and digital skills as discrete domains, thereby constraining their real-world applicability. Despite growing interest in experiential and community-based learning, there remains limited research integrating multimodal skill development with language learning and entrepreneurial agency within a single, scalable framework. This conceptual paper proposes the Sparkle Through Speech 4.0 (STS 4.0) model as a framework for community-based language and entrepreneurship development, reconceptualising communicative competence as a form of entrepreneurial agency developed through the interaction of material, linguistic, visual, and digital modes. The study adopts a conceptual paper approach through theoretical synthesis of literature related to multimodal learning, entrepreneurship education, task-based language teaching, and adult learning. The model is structured around four interrelated components: (i) vocational mastery through printed batik production, (ii) linguistic agency via task-based English communication for marketing and public engagement, (iii) digital empowerment through the use of Canva and social media platforms for branding, and (iv) community leadership enabled by a peer-mentoring replication approach. Grounded in self-efficacy theory, andragogy, and transformative learning, the paper articulates the theoretical foundations and design principles underpinning the proposed model. The paper argues that integrated multimodal engagement can enhance participants' confidence, identity, and entrepreneurial awareness, particularly within underserved communities. By bridging language education, entrepreneurship, and community development, this study contributes a theoretically grounded and practice-oriented model for experiential language

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1. Introduction

The integration of language learning with entrepreneurship and community empowerment has gained increasing attention in recent years, particularly in contexts where economic participation and communicative competence intersect. In Malaysia, initiatives aimed at empowering women, especially those from low-income (B40) backgrounds and single-mother communities, have increasingly focused on providing practical skills that support economic independence and social mobility. However, many existing empowerment programmes continue to treat vocational, linguistic, and entrepreneurial skills as separate domains, limiting participants' ability to apply these competencies holistically in real-world settings. Research on B40 household income development indicates that possessing technical skills alone is insufficient to ensure sustainable economic participation. Rizal *et al.*, [1] highlighted that social innovation and social entrepreneurship remain underutilised as mechanisms for improving income levels among B40 households. Similarly, Yasin *et al.*, [2] reported that although Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has become a national priority for low-income communities in Malaysia, only a small proportion of the surveyed B40 population possessed formal skill certifications. These findings suggest that existing strategies require more targeted and contextually relevant approaches to improve the quality of life among vulnerable groups.

In addition to vocational competence, communicative competence, particularly in English, plays an increasingly important role in entrepreneurial engagement and socio-economic participation. Succi and Canovi [3] emphasised that communication and interpersonal skills are among the essential competencies required for employability and professional development. In entrepreneurial settings, oral communication skills are particularly important for activities such as product pitching, customer interaction, and marketing. However, Zarinah Jan Yusof and Ismail Sheikh Ahmad [4] found that learners frequently struggle to translate entrepreneurial knowledge into practice due to limited English oral communication skills. This challenge is especially significant among adult learners from underserved communities who may have experienced limited access to formal education, restricted exposure to English, and competing socio-economic responsibilities. Consequently, there is a growing need for learning approaches that are practical, contextually meaningful, and directly connected to participants' lived experiences.

One promising pedagogical approach is task-based and experiential learning. Ellis *et al.*, [5] explained that task-based language teaching (TBLT) promotes meaningful language use through authentic and goal-oriented tasks that mirror real-world communication. When learners participate in activities such as product presentation, promotional interaction, and collaborative discussion, communicative competence can be developed more effectively beyond traditional classroom practices. Likewise, Motta and Galina [6] demonstrated that experiential learning in entrepreneurship education enhances creativity, communication, and problem-solving skills through active engagement in authentic projects. These approaches are particularly relevant in community-based learning environments where participants learn by doing and interacting within socially meaningful contexts.

Another critical factor influencing learning and participation is self-efficacy. According to Bandura [7], individuals' beliefs in their capabilities significantly affect their motivation, persistence, and performance. Within the contexts of language learning and entrepreneurship, confidence in one's

ability to communicate effectively is essential for active participation and sustained engagement. Hao and Chen [8] further demonstrated that collaborative speaking tasks can improve learners' public speaking self-efficacy, while Clingingsmith, Drover, and Shane [9] reported that entrepreneurial pitch training positively influences communication performance and long-term entrepreneurial engagement. These findings indicate that authentic communication opportunities can simultaneously strengthen communicative competence and entrepreneurial confidence.

Adult learning theories further support the integration of these elements within community-based empowerment initiatives. Knowles' theory of andragogy [10] highlights that adult learners are self-directed, bring prior experiences into the learning process, and are motivated by immediate relevance and applicability. Similarly, transformative learning theory emphasises that meaningful experiences and critical reflection can reshape learners' perspectives and self-concept [11]. In community-oriented programmes, the integration of craft-making, language use, and entrepreneurial activities may therefore create meaningful learning experiences that extend beyond technical skill acquisition toward personal growth and social empowerment.

Despite these theoretical and empirical developments, existing community-based initiatives continue to address vocational training, language learning, and entrepreneurial development in fragmented ways. Many programmes focus solely on craft-based production without integrating communicative and entrepreneurial dimensions, while language programmes often remain disconnected from authentic economic applications. Furthermore, although TBLT and experiential learning have been widely discussed in formal educational settings [5,6], their application within informal adult community learning environments remains limited. There is also insufficient research examining how integrated interventions combining craft-making, English communication, digital entrepreneurship, and community mentoring can collectively enhance self-efficacy and entrepreneurial agency among adult women from B40 backgrounds.

Therefore, this study aims to address the absence of a holistic and theory-driven framework that integrates (i) hands-on craft-based skill development, (ii) English communicative competence, and (iii) entrepreneurial awareness within a community-based learning environment. The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to language education, adult learning, entrepreneurship education, and University Social Responsibility (USR) initiatives through an integrated and sustainable empowerment approach. In response to this gap, this conceptual paper proposes the Sparkle Through Speech 4.0 (STS 4.0) model, an integrated multimodal framework designed to empower B40 women through the convergence of experiential learning, task-based communication, digital entrepreneurship, and community engagement.

2. Methodology and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Conceptual Paper Design

This study adopts a conceptual paper approach through critical synthesis of literature related to multimodal learning, entrepreneurship education, task-based language teaching (TBLT), experiential learning, self-efficacy, and adult learning theories. The proposed framework was developed by integrating theoretical perspectives and empirical findings relevant to community-based empowerment among B40 women. Through this synthesis, the study conceptualises the Sparkle Through Speech 4.0 (STS 4.0) model as an integrated framework that combines craft-based learning, English communicative competence, entrepreneurial awareness, and community empowerment within a sustainable learning ecosystem.

2.2 The Sparkle through Speech 4.0 (STS 4.0) Model

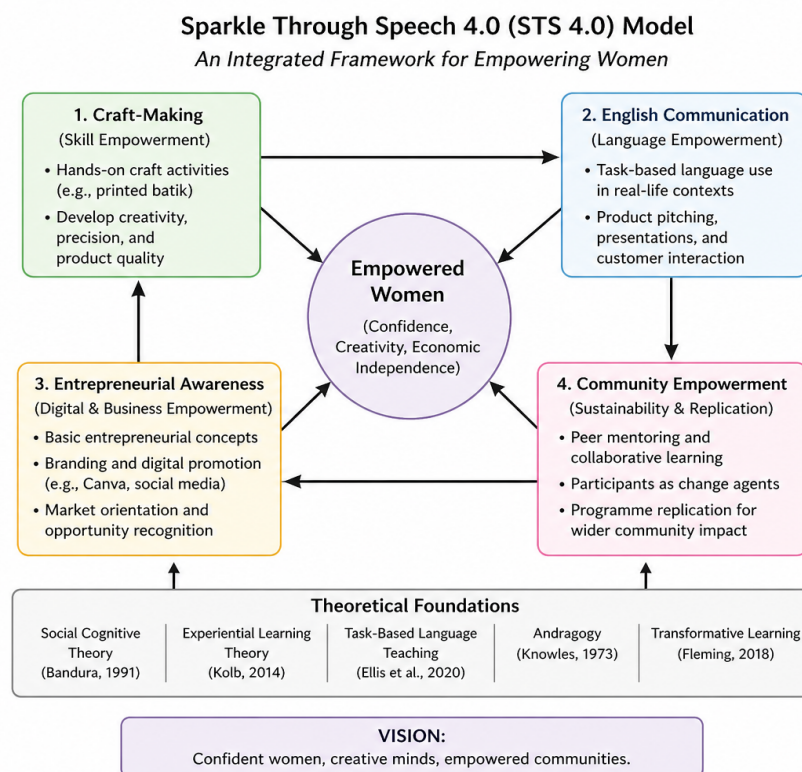


Fig. 1. STS 4.0 Model

First, the model draws on social cognitive theory, which emphasises the role of self-efficacy in shaping individuals' motivation, behaviour, and performance [7]. In the context of this study, self-efficacy is positioned as a central outcome, where participants' confidence in their ability to communicate, create, and engage in entrepreneurial activities is expected to increase through structured, meaningful experiences. Second, the model is informed by experiential learning theory, which posits that learning occurs through the transformation of experience [13]. Hands-on craft-making activities, such as printed batik production, provide concrete experiences that allow participants to actively construct knowledge while developing practical competencies. These experiences are further reinforced through reflection and application, aligning with evidence that experiential learning enhances creativity, problem-solving, and communication skills [6]. Third, the framework incorporates task-based language teaching (TBLT), which emphasises the use of authentic, goal-oriented tasks to promote meaningful language use [5]. Within the STS 4.0 model, language learning is embedded in real-world activities such as product pitching, customer interaction, and promotional communication, thereby fostering communicative competence in context rather than through decontextualised instruction. Previous studies indicate that entrepreneurship education, self-efficacy, and collaborative learning environments can positively influence entrepreneurial awareness, confidence, and learner motivation [15,16]. Additionally, the model is aligned with adult learning theory (andragogy), which highlights that adult learners are self-directed, experience-based, and motivated by immediate relevance [10]. By integrating craft-making with entrepreneurial and communication tasks, the model ensures that learning is practical, relevant, and directly applicable to participants' socio-economic realities. The inclusion of reflective and collaborative elements also resonates with transformative learning theory, where new experiences can reshape learners' perspectives and self-concept [11].

The STS 4.0 model consists of four interconnected components:

(i) Craft-Making (Skill Empowerment)

This component focuses on the development of practical skills through hands-on activities such as printed batik crafting. Participants engage in the creation of tangible products, which fosters creativity, precision, and problem-solving abilities. The production of marketable items also provides a foundation for entrepreneurial engagement.

(ii) English Communication (Language Empowerment)

Language development is embedded within meaningful contexts, particularly in product promotion and customer interaction. Participants practise vocabulary, persuasive communication, and presentation skills through role-play and pitching activities. This aligns with research highlighting the importance of communicative competence in entrepreneurial success [4].

(iii) Entrepreneurial Awareness (Digital and Business Empowerment)

This component introduces participants to basic entrepreneurial concepts, including branding, marketing, and digital promotion using tools such as Canva and social media [14]. Through these activities, participants develop an understanding of how to position and promote their products in real-world markets.

(iv) Community Empowerment (Sustainability and Replication)

The final component emphasises sustainability by encouraging participants to become peer mentors and extend the programme to other communities. This aligns with the broader goals of University Social Responsibility (USR) by promoting long-term community impact and knowledge transfer.

What distinguishes the STS 4.0 model from existing approaches is its integrated structure. Rather than treating skill development, language learning, and entrepreneurship as separate domains, the model positions them as mutually reinforcing processes. Craft-making provides content and purpose for communication, language skills enable expression and market engagement, entrepreneurial awareness ensures practical application and sustainability, and community empowerment extends impact beyond the individual level. Through this integration, the model operationalises theoretical principles into a cohesive framework that supports both individual development and community transformation. The STS 4.0 model is expected to generate several key outcomes such as enhanced self-efficacy in communication, creativity, and entrepreneurship, improved communicative competence through authentic, task-based interaction [5,7], increased creativity and problem-solving skills through experiential learning [6,13], greater entrepreneurial awareness and participation, particularly in micro-enterprise activities, and sustainable community impact through peer mentoring and programme replication.

3. Implications

This paper contributes to the growing body of literature on language education, adult learning, and community empowerment by proposing an integrated framework that bridges traditionally fragmented domains. First, the STS 4.0 model extends task-based language teaching (TBLT) beyond formal classroom settings by demonstrating how authentic, goal-oriented tasks can be embedded within community-based and socio-economic contexts [5]. This shifts the application of TBLT from institutional learning environments to informal, experiential spaces, thereby broadening its theoretical scope. Second, the model reinforces and operationalises social cognitive theory, particularly the role of self-efficacy in learning and performance [7]. While prior studies have examined self-efficacy in isolated domains such as language learning or public speaking, this framework conceptualises self-efficacy as multidimensional, encompassing communication, creativity, and entrepreneurship, and shows how these dimensions can be developed simultaneously through integrated tasks. Third, the study contributes to experiential learning theory by illustrating how hands-on, craft-based activities can function as a foundation for higher-order learning outcomes, including communication and entrepreneurial thinking [6,13]. It highlights the importance of linking concrete experiences with reflective and communicative practices, thus strengthening the theoretical connection between experience and knowledge construction.

Furthermore, by incorporating principles of andragogy [10] and transformative learning [11], the model advances current understanding of adult learning in non-formal contexts while reinforcing the importance of accessible and community-based adult learning initiatives for sustainable social development [12]. It demonstrates how learning experiences that are relevant, collaborative, and reflective can facilitate not only skill acquisition but also shifts in self-perception and agency among adult women. Overall, the STS 4.0 model contributes a holistic, theory-driven framework that integrates language learning, entrepreneurship, and community engagement, an area that remains underdeveloped in existing literature.

From a practical perspective, the STS 4.0 model offers a replicable and scalable framework for institutions, policymakers, and community organisations seeking to design impactful empowerment programmes. For educators and curriculum designers, the model provides a blueprint for integrating language instruction with real-world applications. Rather than teaching communication skills in isolation, educators can embed language learning within meaningful tasks such as product pitching, marketing, and customer interaction, thereby enhancing relevance and learner engagement. For higher education institutions, particularly those implementing University Social Responsibility (USR) initiatives, the model demonstrates how academic expertise can be translated into sustainable community impact. By combining student involvement, industry collaboration (e.g., social enterprises), and community participation, universities can move beyond one-off outreach activities toward structured, long-term empowerment programmes. For policymakers and government agencies, the framework aligns with national agendas on women's empowerment and economic participation. It highlights the importance of integrating communication skills and digital literacy into vocational and entrepreneurship training, ensuring that participants are not only skilled producers but also effective communicators and marketers.

For community organisations and NGOs, the model provides a practical guide for programme implementation, including the use of peer mentoring and collaborative learning to ensure sustainability. The emphasis on replication allows trained participants to become facilitators, thereby expanding the programme's reach and long-term impact. Finally, for adult learners, particularly women from underserved backgrounds, the model offers an accessible and empowering pathway to develop confidence, creativity, and economic agency. By linking skill development with

communication and entrepreneurship, the programme addresses multiple barriers simultaneously, increasing the likelihood of meaningful and sustained outcomes.

4. Conclusion

This paper has proposed the Sparkle Through Speech 4.0 (STS 4.0) model as an integrated conceptual framework for empowering adult women through the convergence of craft-based learning, English communication, and entrepreneurial awareness. Grounded in social cognitive theory, experiential learning, task-based language teaching, and adult learning principles, the model responds to a critical gap in existing literature, namely the lack of holistic approaches that connect skill development, language use, and economic participation within community-based contexts. By positioning learning as an active, meaningful, and socially situated process, the STS 4.0 model moves beyond traditional instructional paradigms and offers a more inclusive and practical approach to adult education. It demonstrates that when learners engage in authentic tasks that are directly relevant to their lived experiences, they are more likely to develop not only competencies but also confidence and agency.

Importantly, this conceptual paper lays the groundwork for future empirical research. Subsequent studies should seek to validate the model through implementation and evaluation, examining its effectiveness in enhancing communicative competence, self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial outcomes among participants. Comparative studies across different contexts may also provide further insights into its adaptability and scalability. In sum, the STS 4.0 model contributes to ongoing discussions on language education, community empowerment, and socially responsive pedagogy by offering a theoretically grounded and practically viable framework. It underscores the potential of integrated learning approaches to create meaningful, sustainable impact, particularly for marginalised groups such as adult women in low-income communities.

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