

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING DIGITAL STORIES TO IMPROVE STUDENTS READING SKILLS

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of using digital stories to improve students' reading skills. Reading comprehension is a crucial skill for students, yet many face challenges such as lack of motivation, difficulty in understanding complex texts, and traditional teaching methods that do not engage them effectively. Digital storytelling, which integrates text, images, and audio, has been proposed as a modern pedagogical approach to enhance students' reading experiences. This research employs a pre-experimental quantitative method with a one-group pretest-posttest design. The sample consists of 32 ninth-grade students from MTs Normal Islam Puteri RAKHA Amuntai. Data were collected through pre-tests, post-tests, and questionnaires. The results show a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension, with the mean score increasing from 62.47 (pre-test) to 82.00 (post-test), and a p-value of 0.000, indicating the effectiveness of digital stories in enhancing students' reading skills. Additionally, students responded positively to this method, as it made learning more engaging and interactive. The findings support the integration of digital storytelling as an innovative learning tool, particularly in the context of the 2024 Merdeka Curriculum. This study contributes to digital-based learning strategies and provides insights for educators in improving students' reading comprehension. Future research should explore the long-term impact of digital stories and their application in different educational settings.

Keywords: *Effectiveness, Digital Stories, Reading Skills, English Learning.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Education is a dynamic aspect of life that continues to evolve alongside technological advancements. Reading ability is the gateway to understanding educational texts used in various subjects. Without strong reading skills, students will struggle to grasp key concepts and essential information presented in written form. However, many students struggle with challenges such as lack of motivation, difficulty understanding complex texts, and unengaging teaching methods. (Hezam et al., 2024)

Numerous studies have highlighted the challenges students face in reading, particularly when learning English. For instance, Fitriana (2018) found that limited vocabulary significantly hinders students' comprehension of academic texts, leading to frustration and disengagement in the learning process. Additionally, Nety et al., (2023) highlighted that inadequate reading strategies contribute to difficulties in identifying main ideas and understanding complex sentence structures, particularly among

secondary school students. These challenges underscore the need for more engaging and interactive teaching methods, such as digital stories.

Digital stories are considered effective because they combine visualization, interactivity, and emotional engagement, making the material easier to understand and more engaging for students. (Ginting et al., 2024) Research has shown that digital stories can have a positive impact on students' reading skills. For example, Akdoğan (2023) showed that digital stories significantly improved vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension, with students finding this approach innovative. Similarly, Hamouda (2023) found that the integration of stories in the classroom promoted the development of micro-reading skills while improving students' confidence and critical thinking ability.

Engagement and motivation are key factors in the success of reading interventions. According to Rahmasari (2023), digital storytelling provides easy access to reading materials and interactive features that motivate students to delve deeper into texts. Moreover, Jalel (2023) emphasized that the use of digital storytelling videos aligns with students' preferences for digital content, making reading more appealing and encouraging positive reading behaviors. Despite the positive outcomes demonstrated in research, challenges remain. Rahmasari (2023) and Tan (2024) identified issues such as unstable internet connections and the need for teacher training in digital literacy. These challenges must be addressed to fully realize the potential of digital storytelling in improving reading skills.

While studies like those conducted by Akdoğan (2023) and Hamouda (2023) highlighted the global effectiveness of digital stories in enhancing reading skills, research on its implementation in Indonesia is still limited. Challenges such as poor internet infrastructure and limited teacher readiness, as noted by Rahmasari (2023) and Tan (2024), further complicate its implementation. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring how digital storytelling can be effectively implemented in Indonesian classrooms and providing solutions to the challenges encountered.

In the context of the 2024 *Merdeka* Curriculum in Indonesia, reading skills are considered a crucial foundation for the overall development of students' literacy. This curriculum emphasizes project-based learning, encouraging students to think critically and solve problems through a solid understanding of reading materials. Thus, the use of innovative media like digital stories can play a vital role in enhancing students' reading skills in alignment with the curriculum's goals (Prasida, n.d.)

Education is a fundamental right guaranteed to every individual, as outlined in the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia, Article 28C Paragraph (1), which states that every person has the right to develop themselves through education, including utilizing advancements in science and technology (Wahyuni, n.d.). In line with this, digital media such as digital stories offer opportunities for educational innovation. By integrating text, visuals, and audio narration, digital storytelling makes learning more interactive and engaging, helping students enhance their literacy skills, particularly in reading.

The integration of digital storytelling aligns with Article 28C Paragraph (1) by utilizing science and technology to improve the quality of education. Digital storytelling is expected to effectively improve students' reading skills, which contributes to a better quality of life and overall well-being through education. In this context, the use of digital storytelling facilitates material comprehension, enhances reading skills, and fosters a love for learning. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of using digital storytelling to improve students' reading skills and explore how technology can create a more meaningful learning experience.

At MTs Normal Islam Puteri Rasyidiyah Khalidiyah Amuntai, a preliminary study was conducted to explore the current state of students' reading abilities and the potential use of digital storytelling as a learning tool. Initial findings revealed that many students struggled to comprehend academic texts, particularly in English, as reflected in their limited vocabulary retention. Teachers reported using traditional methods, such as printed textbooks and written assignments, but faced difficulties maintaining student engagement, especially during reading activities.

Some students also expressed a lack of interest in reading due to the complexity of texts they found difficult to understand and the absence of interactive elements in the teaching materials. This further emphasizes the need for a more engaging and accessible method, such as digital storytelling, to improve reading skills. The preliminary study also indicated that while students are familiar with digital tools, challenges such as unstable internet connectivity and limited use of multimedia resources in the classroom exist.

Based on these findings, there is a clear opportunity to implement digital storytelling, not only to improve reading skills but also to increase student motivation and engagement in the learning process. The results of this preliminary study confirm the relevance of exploring digital storytelling within the context of Indonesian education, particularly under the framework of the 2024 *Merdeka* Curriculum.

Research related to the use of digital stories in learning has been conducted by several researchers, both domestically and abroad. Some studies have discussed the use of digital stories in improving students' reading skills. In Indonesia, research on the use of digital stories has shown promising results. For instance, Amaliah et al. (2022) conducted research at SMKN 1 Wajo to explore the effectiveness of digital stories in improving students' English language skills. The study involved 27 students who were given a pre-test and post-test. The results showed a significant improvement in their speaking ability after applying digital storytelling, with the post-test average score increasing from 17.59 to 21.52. The study concluded that digital stories not only improved students' speaking fluency but also increased their confidence in using the target language.

Another study by Bakar (2019) highlighted that digital stories not only help improve reading comprehension but also students' creativity in the context of 21st-century literacy skills. This research shows that through digital stories, students can be

more engaged in reading complex texts, understanding abstract themes, and developing creative thinking skills. With digital stories, students are given the opportunity to explore ideas in depth and present them through digital media, which in turn can improve their reading comprehension.

In international contexts, several researchers have also examined the impact of digital stories on students' learning outcomes. For example, research by Alshaye, (2021) examined the impact of digital storytelling in improving critical reading, critical thinking, and independent learning skills among prospective Arabic language teachers. This study employed a quasi-experimental design with pre- and post-tests, revealing a significant improvement in reading and critical thinking skills in the experimental group compared to the control group. These findings indicate that digital storytelling can be an effective tool for enhancing reading comprehension due to its interactive and multimodal qualities.

Similarly, research conducted by Abd Al-Hameed and Al-Shuair (2019) examined the effectiveness of digital stories in improving literal, organizational, and inferential comprehension skills in fourth grade students learning English as a second language. This study implemented a quasi-experimental design with pre- and post-tests, demonstrating that students who engaged with digital stories showed significantly greater improvement in reading comprehension compared to those taught through traditional methods.

Another research also discusses the use of digital storytelling (DST) in language education, which has been widely discussed in the literature as an effective method to improve students' language skills, including reading, writing, and critical thinking. Moradi and Chen (2019) emphasized that digital stories allow students to collaborate, think critically, and creatively construct stories, ultimately improving their literacy and comprehension of complex texts. This research found that the integration of digital stories in the learning process resulted in a more immersive and structured learning experience, which focused on students' interaction with multimedia content.

While these studies show the positive impact of using digital stories on reading skills, further research is needed to explore their effectiveness across different age groups and educational contexts. This study aims to fill this gap by focusing on middle school students and examining the specific components of digital stories, such as multimodal content (text, images, audio, and video), narrative structure, interactivity, visualization, audio narration, and customization options. These elements work together to create an engaging and accessible learning experience that contributes to improved reading comprehension and skill development.

This study differs from previous research in several key ways. While past studies have focused on the use of digital storytelling to improve reading skills, this study specifically targets middle school students in Indonesia, where factors like limited internet access and varying levels of teacher expertise in digital tools play a significant role in the effectiveness of the intervention. Unlike many previous studies that used a

quasi-experimental design with control groups, this study uses a pre-experimental design, focusing solely on one group of students to track their progress before and after using digital stories. This approach allows for a more straightforward evaluation of how digital stories directly affect students' reading skills. Moreover, this study aims to look deeper into the specific features of digital storytelling—such as its interactive and multimedia elements—and how they might impact students' understanding of the texts. This focus on the components of digital storytelling, as well as the specific challenges of implementing it in Indonesian classrooms, adds a unique perspective that has not been widely explored in the existing research. Therefore, the objectives of the study are to determine the effectiveness of using digital stories in improving the reading skills of students and to know students respond.

B. METHOD

This research adopts a quantitative approach, utilizing a pre-experimental design to evaluate the effectiveness of digital stories in enhancing students' reading skills in English. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018) a pre-experimental design involves studying a single group and implementing an treatment during the experiment. Unlike other designs, this approach does not include a control group for comparison. In this study, a single experimental group will be observed before and after the intervention to determine the impact of digital storytelling.

As for this study, the target population is class IX students at MTs Normal Islam Puteri Rasyidiyah Khalidiyah Amuntai, totaling 153 students. According to Suryabrata (Suryabrata, 2014), cluster samples are clumps, which are groups of individuals available as units of the population. The cluster sample technique yielded class IXA, an experimental class comprising 32 students who utilized Digital Stories for learning.

In this study, researchers used tests. The test in this study is a reading comprehension test, which is divided into two categories, namely pre-test and post-test. This technique is used to measure students' reading comprehension ability of a text. The researcher used several data collection techniques, which are as follows:

1. Pre-test: The pre-test was administered to assess students' reading comprehension ability before the intervention with digital stories. In the pre-test, students were given a reading comprehension test consisting of multiple-choice questions based on the text, which aimed to measure their understanding of key concepts, vocabulary, and text structure.
2. Post-test: To measure students' progress in reading skills after the implementation of digital stories. The post-test was used to collected the final data of students' reading comprehension.

The researcher gave pre-test and post-test to the students; the type of the test is multiple choice; the number of each pre-test and post-test consists of 20 questions. This strategy can assess the students' reading comprehension. Every question consisted of

four choices (a, b, c, and d). The test is intended to obtain reading comprehension in the ninth grade students of MTs Normal Islam Puteri Rasyidiyah Khalidiyah Amuntai.

An treatment program refers to the process of critically evaluating students during the teaching and learning process. In this research, the researcher worked with one group of students who participated in the pre-test, treatment, and post-test to assess the effectiveness of using digital stories in improving reading skills. The treatment was conducted in two class sessions, during which the students engaged with digital stories. Additionally, a questionnaire was administered after the treatment to gather students' perceptions and feedback on the use of digital stories. The digital stories used in this study were selected based on clarity, narrative simplicity, moral value, and appropriateness for ninth-grade students. These stories are easily accessible through internet platforms such as YouTube and other educational websites, allowing teachers and students to utilize them flexibly inside and outside the classroom. The stories integrated in the treatment were “the Bear and the Bee” (The Fable Cottage, 2022a); “the Fox and the Crow”, (The Fable Cottage, 2024); “the Wind and the Sun”, (The Fable Cottage, 2022b); “The Lion and the Mouse”, (*The Lion And The Mouse* □ *Read Free Online / Audio & PDF Available*, n.d.); and “the Fox and the Stork, (Anon Animation Rhymes for Kids, 2017) These stories provided engaging multimodal content through animation, voice narration, and subtitles, making them suitable for improving students’ reading comprehension. The use of these stories aimed to enhance students’ engagement and understanding during the learning process.

A questionnaire will be administered to gather additional data on students’ perceptions of the use of digital stories in their learning process. This will provide insights into how students feel about the digital storytelling method and its effectiveness. In this study, the researchers used the Likert scale, a bipolar scaling method measuring positive or negative responses to statements. The Likert scale is a psychometric scale commonly used in research involving questionnaires.

In this study, the basic research framework will focus on examining how the integration of digital stories affects students' reading skills. The framework will include:

1. Independent Variable (X): The use of digital stories in the English reading lessons.
2. Dependent Variable (Y): The improvement in students' reading skills as measured by the pre-test and post-test scores.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

1. Descriptive Statistics

Based on the results of data analysis, the following is a summary of descriptive statistics from the pre-test and post-test results:

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST SCORES

Category	Mean	Std. Deviasi	Minimum	Maximum
Pre-Test	62.47	22.80	16.60	100.00
Post-Test	82.00	17.21	50.00	100.00

Before being given the treatment using digital stories, the average score of students' pre-test was 62.47 with a standard deviation of 22.80. The minimum score obtained by students in the pre-test was 16.60, while the maximum score reached 100.00. After being given learning using digital stories, there was a significant increase in the post-test results. The average post-test score increased to 82.00 with a standard deviation of 17.21. The minimum score in the post-test also increased to 50.00, while the maximum score remained at 100.00.

2. Score Classification and Interpretation of Results

To better understand the improvement in students' learning outcomes, the pre-test and post-test scores were categorized following Arikunto (2009) classification. According to this classification, the average pre-test score of 62.47 falls into the "Enough" category, while the average post-test score of 82.00 is classified as "Very Good". These results indicate that after learning through digital stories, students' reading comprehension improved significantly.

3. Normality Test

Before conducting parametric statistical analysis, it is necessary to check whether the data follows a normal distribution. In this study, the normality test was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk methods through SPSS 25, as it is more suitable for small sample sizes ($N < 50$). The results of the normality test for both the pre-test and post-test scores are presented in table below:

TESTS OF NORMALITY

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
PRETEST	0.145	32	0.084	0.961	32	0.301
POSTTEST	0.134	32	0.154	0.939	32	0.070

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

- a. Pre-test: Shapiro-Wilk Sig. = 0.301 (data is normally distributed)
- b. Post-test: Shapiro-Wilk Sig. = 0.070 (data is normally distributed)

Based on the results obtained, the significance value (Sig.) for the Shapiro-Wilk test in the pre-test is 0.301, which is greater than the threshold of 0.05. Similarly, the post-test significance value is 0.070, which also exceeds 0.05. Since both significance values are greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that the pre-test and post-test data are normally distributed. These findings indicate that the assumption of normality is met, allowing for further parametric statistical analysis to be conducted in the subsequent sections of this study.

4. Homogeneity Test

Once normality was confirmed, a homogeneity test was conducted using Levene’s test in SPSS 25 to determine whether the variance of the data in the pre-test and post-test groups was equal. The results ($p = 0.130$, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05), suggest that the data is homogenous, meaning that the assumption of equal variance is met. This validates the use of a paired sample t-test for hypothesis testing.

TEST OF HOMOGENEITY OF VARIANCE

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Result	Based on Mean	2.361	1	62	0.130
	Based on Median	2.117	1	62	0.151
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	2.117	1	61.819	0.151
	Based on trimmed mean	2.447	1	62	0.123

5. Hypothesis Test (t-test)

Since both normality and homogeneity assumptions were met, a paired sample t-test was performed to analyze whether there was a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores. This test was performed to evaluate the effectiveness of the treatment by comparing the mean scores before and after the intervention. The results of the paired sample t-test analysis are presented as follows:

PAIRED SAMPLES TEST

		Paired Differences					T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	PRETEST - POSTTEST	- 19.53 125	14.75 574	2.60 847	- 24.85 126	- 14.21 124	-7.488	31	.000

The hypotheses testing are:

- a. H_0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results, or in other words, the use of digital stories has no significant effect on students' reading skills.
- b. H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results, which means that the use of digital stories has a significant effect on students' reading skills.

Since the p-value (0.000) is significantly lower than the standard alpha level of 0.05, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis. This means that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results, so it can be concluded that digital stories significantly improve students' reading skills.

6. Questionnaire Results

The results of the questionnaires collected from 32 respondents show the following distribution of scores:

CALCULATION OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Respondent	Statement													Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
1	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	3	3	5	5	59
2	4	3	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	51
3	3	4	5	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	3	45
4	4	3	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	3	3	4	3	53
5	4	3	4	5	5	5	5	3	4	3	3	4	3	51
6	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	63
7	5	3	5	5	4	4	5	4	4	3	3	5	5	55
8	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	49
9	4	3	4	3	4	5	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	45
10	5	3	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	61
11	5	3	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	4	4	5	5	59
12	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	3	58
13	3	3	3	1	4	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	40
14	5	3	3	2	4	4	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	38
15	5	2	4	3	3	4	5	3	3	4	4	5	5	50
16	4	1	5	2	5	5	4	1	4	3	3	4	3	44
17	5	3	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	59
18	5	3	4	5	3	5	4	3	4	3	3	4	3	49
19	5	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	52
20	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	61
21	5	3	3	5	4	4	4	2	3	2	4	4	3	46
22	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	59
23	4	3	4	3	3	4	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	44
24	5	4	4	4	4	5	4	3	4	3	3	4	3	50
25	4	3	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	3	3	3	4	54
26	4	2	5	4	4	4	4	3	2	2	2	5	3	44
27	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	4	57
28	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	4	3	5	4	57
29	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	61
30	5	3	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	60
31	4	4	4	1	4	4	5	4	3	3	4	4	3	47
32	4	2	4	5	4	5	5	3	3	4	4	5	4	52
TOTAL													1673	

The table above presents the statistical summary of students' questionnaire responses regarding digital storytelling. The maximum score achieved by students was 63, while the minimum score was 38, with a total range of 25. The number of classes was determined to be 6, and the class length was set at 5. The overall score distribution indicates that most students responded positively to digital storytelling, with a significant portion falling into the higher score range. This suggests that students found digital storytelling engaging and beneficial for their reading skills. Then, frequency distribution based on score intervals:

**DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES BASED ON INTERVALS
AND FREQUENCIES**

No	Interval		Frequency	Percentage
1	38	42	2	6%
2	43	46	6	19%
3	47	50	5	16%
4	51	54	6	19%
5	55	58	4	13%
6	59	63	9	28%
TOTAL			32	100%

These results show that the majority of respondents (28%) have scores in the range of 59-63, which reflects a strong tendency toward positive responses in the questionnaire. This indicates that most students have a favorable perception of the use of digital stories as a learning method. The high percentage of students in this category suggests that they find digital stories beneficial in enhancing their comprehension, increasing their interest in reading, and making the learning process more engaging and interactive.

Additionally, the distribution of scores highlights the variability in students' responses. A small proportion of students (6%) scored in the 38-42 range, which may indicate difficulties in understanding the material through digital stories. Factors such as individual learning preferences, familiarity with digital media, or prior learning experiences may have influenced these lower scores. However, overall, the higher percentage of students in the upper score ranges suggests that digital stories positively impact students' reading skills and engagement in learning.

Discussions

The results of this study are in line with the theory regarding learning effectiveness. According to Mahsun (as cited in Amelia, 2022), effectiveness can be measured by the extent to which a method achieves its stated objectives. In the context of this study, the effectiveness of digital stories is proven through the significant increase in post-test scores compared to the pre-test. This shows that the use of digital media can help students understand the material better and improve their reading skills. In addition, the theory proposed by Nunan (as cited in Nurdiana & Amelia, 2017), states that reading skills involve active processing of information by the reader by connecting the text read with prior knowledge. Digital stories, with their combination of text, images, and audio, provide a richer reading experience that helps students build a deeper understanding of the text.

Furthermore, this research also supports Robin's theory on the advantages of digital stories in learning. Robin as cited in Ferdiansyah (2019), emphasizes that digital stories can increase students' engagement in learning by utilizing interesting multimedia elements. The questionnaire results showed that the majority of students gave positive responses to this method, indicating that they felt more motivated and confident in reading after using digital stories.

From a curriculum perspective, the findings of this study are also in line with the learning approach adopted in *Merdeka* Curriculum 2024, which emphasises the importance of project-based learning and the use of technology in education (Prasida, n.d.). The use of digital stories allows students to learn independently, explore content interactively and develop better literacy skills.

Thus, based on the research results and theories that have been discussed, digital stories can be considered an effective method in improving students' reading skills. This method not only helps students understand the text better but also increases their engagement in the learning process. Therefore, the use of digital stories in English language learning is highly recommended as one of the innovative strategies to improve students' reading skills.

Based on the results of data analysis, it can be concluded that the use of digital stories has significant effectiveness in improving students' reading skills. The increase in the post-test score compared to the pre-test shows that this method is feasible to be applied in English language learning, especially in improving students' reading comprehension. In addition, the questionnaire results showed that the majority of students gave positive responses to the use of digital stories, which further strengthened the effectiveness of this method in supporting the improvement of their reading skills.

E. CONCLUSION

This research was conducted to examine the effectiveness of using digital stories in improving students' reading skills. Based on the data presentation and analysis in the previous chapters, the following conclusions can be drawn: The use of digital stories proved effective in improving students' reading skills. This is supported by the results of the paired sample t-test, which showed a t-value of -7.488 and a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). These results indicate a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, leading to the acceptance of H_a (alternative hypothesis) and the rejection of H_0 (null hypothesis). The increase in the average score from 62.47 in the pre-test to 82.00 in the post-test, with a difference of 19.53 points, demonstrates that learning with digital stories effectively enhances students' reading comprehension. The integration of visual, audio, and text elements in digital stories helps students better understand texts in a more engaging and interactive way. Most students gave positive responses to the use of digital stories in learning. The questionnaire results showed that 28% of students gave the highest score to the effectiveness of digital stories, while only 6% of students gave the lowest score. This shows that digital stories not only improve reading comprehension but also contribute to increasing students' motivation and engagement in the learning process.

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