



Digital Storytelling in Listening EYL Context: Students' Responses

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.Article Info

Submitted: June, 2024

Accepted: July, 2024

Published: October, 2024

Keywords:

Digital Storytelling, English for Young Learners, Listening, Students' Responses
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.Abstract

In the contemporary educational landscape, digital storytelling (DST) has surfaced as a promising pedagogical paradigm for facilitating the instruction of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Nonetheless, its implementation in educational settings has yielded divergent student responses, influencing the efficacy of educational DST as an English language instructional instrument (Baehaki & Wahyuni, 2023). This study aims to scrutinize the responses of kindergarten pupils engaged in the DST learning process, with a particular emphasis on nurturing students' listening proficiencies. The investigation was conducted at TK Labschool UPI establishments in Bandung, encompassing a cohort of 10 students aged 5-6 years, employing a qualitative inquiry approach and adopting a case study framework. Data accrual entails classroom observations, while thematic analysis is the methodological scaffold for discerning patterns and discrepancies within the gathered data corpus. The overarching aspiration of this research endeavor is to furnish nuanced insights into the efficacy of DST as a multimodal language acquisition tool in the milieu of kindergarten education. The findings endeavor to elucidate educational practices and enrich the ongoing dialogue of innovative language pedagogical methodologies by augmenting the extant reservoir of knowledge concerning early childhood English language assimilation. The research findings are considered favorable when students exhibit an 80% success rate in behavior and answering questions, indicating a significant response toward achieving the educational objectives.

INTRODUCTION

Listening skills are essential in language acquisition, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction in Indonesia. Students naturally develop listening abilities through exposure to teachers' instructions and materials (Bozorgian & Pillay, 2013). Rost, (2013) emphasizes listening as foundational for language learning, providing crucial input in classrooms. Technological engagement among

young children has surged, presenting educational opportunities through digital media (Rahiem, 2021). Preschoolers often encounter digital technology before traditional resources like books (Hopkins et al., 2013). Wang & Hoot (2006) advocate for modern teaching methods that incorporate technology to enhance learning. English instruction in formal education has evolved since the 1900s (Hayes, 2007), with many countries now including it in primary and even kindergarten education (Butler, 2011; Jenkins, 2009). This trend is driven by parental belief in the benefits of early language acquisition (Arifuddin, 2020). In Indonesia, preschool attendance has increased significantly, reflecting greater awareness of early education's importance (Indonesia Central Agency on Statistics, 2020).

Storytelling has long been an effective method for teaching English, aiding language development, and engaging young children (Loewen et al., 2019; Maureen et al., 2022; Phillips, 2005). Modern digital storytelling incorporates audiovisual elements, enhancing communication skills and aligning with Bruner's Scaffolding Theory (1976). Despite its potential, digital storytelling in early education is limited by concerns about negative effects and cultural insensitivity (Yasmine & Sara, 2023). However, studies show its effectiveness in enhancing learning and stimulating interest (Ahmed et al., 2022; Aljaraideh, 2020). Research on its impact on kindergarten students remains scarce, indicating a significant gap.

Cahyana, (2019) highlights the importance of students' responses in achieving educational objectives. Given the significance of students' responses in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the impact of digital storytelling on listening activity among kindergarten students, addressing the identified gap. By analyzing students' responses, the study seeks to provide insights into effective pedagogical approaches and trends in digital storytelling in early language education, contributing to refining language learning experiences for kindergarten students with 21st-century skills.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted at a private kindergarten school in Bandung; TK Labschool UPI that provides EYL programs encompassing a cohort of 10 students aged 5-6 years. The data was mainly collected through observation class conducted four times. All observation processes were documented using video recording (Ostrower, 1998) to ensure that the process was well-documented. The thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) employs a qualitative data analysis

approach to uncover recurring themes and patterns within the result of observation. Utilizing open coding as the primary data source, the analysis begins to identify key concepts, arguments, and recurring elements.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research reveal that a substantial 80% of students found digital storytelling to be an engaging and enjoyable medium for learning English. During the digital storytelling sessions, students exhibited various signs of engagement and curiosity, which are indicative of effective learning processes. Their behaviors included sitting neatly, maintaining eye contact, smiling, and providing both verbal and non-verbal responses. These observations are critical as they align with established educational theories and research on student engagement and learning. The students' behavior of sitting neatly during the class reflects their focus and readiness to learn. According to Pianta, Hamre, and Allen (2012), such physical comportment is a non-verbal cue of engagement and a precursor to active participation. Sitting neatly signifies that students are attentive and mentally prepared for the lesson, which is essential for effective learning. Maintaining eye contact is a significant indicator of cognitive engagement and attentiveness. As discussed by Sherwood (2013), eye contact between students and teachers fosters a connection that enhances communication and understanding. It indicates that students are actively processing the information being presented and are interested in the lesson. Eye contact is associated with increased concentration and a greater likelihood of information retention (Duncan et al., 2007). Smiling during the class is a positive emotional response that suggests students are enjoying the learning process. Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory posits that positive emotions broaden an individual's thought-action repertoire, encouraging exploration and learning. When students smile, it indicates that they find the activity enjoyable and engaging, which can enhance their motivation and willingness to participate. Additionally, students demonstrated observational responses, indicating their attentiveness and curiosity. The verbal and non-verbal responses from students are critical indicators of their engagement and understanding. Verbal responses, such as answering questions or participating in discussions, show that students are actively processing and interacting with the material (Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009). Non-verbal responses, such as nodding or gesturing, also demonstrate comprehension and engagement. These

responses are essential for teachers to gauge student understanding and adjust their teaching methods accordingly. The behaviors observed during the digital storytelling sessions—neat sitting, eye contact, smiling, and active responses—underscore the efficacy of this method in engaging young learners. These indicators of engagement are supported by educational research and theories that emphasize the importance of student involvement in the learning process. Implementing digital storytelling in the classroom aligns with the principles of constructivist learning theories, such as those proposed by Bruner (1978), which highlight the importance of social interaction and active participation in cognitive development. By engaging students through digital storytelling, educators can create a dynamic and interactive learning environment that fosters curiosity and enhances learning outcomes.

The observed behaviors during digital storytelling sessions—neat sitting, eye contact, smiling, and verbal/non-verbal responses—are indicative of high levels of student engagement and curiosity. These behaviors align with educational theories on effective learning and underscore the importance of using engaging and interactive teaching methods. Digital storytelling not only captures students' attention but also enhances their emotional and cognitive involvement, thereby supporting more effective language acquisition and overall learning. This overwhelmingly positive reception can be attributed to the technological materials utilized by educators. In the contemporary digital era, children are exposed to technology from an early age, a trend supported by the observations of Kane et al. (2022). Engaging with digital tools not only fosters a sense of comfort and competence among students but also enhances their enjoyment of the class by aligning with their contemporary learning needs. Consequently, this method indirectly transforms the experience of learning English into an enjoyable activity.

Furthermore, students have reported that digital storytelling significantly improves their comprehension of the story's content. The integration of video and audio components provides dual sensory input, which aids comprehension by offering visual context alongside auditory information. This multimodal approach helps students hear and grasp the meaning of vocabulary more effectively. Gills (2005) posits that integrating various sensory modalities caters to diverse learning styles, thereby enriching the overall learning experience for students and

enhancing the effectiveness of teaching listening skills to young learners through an attractive method.

Given the initial perception of digital storytelling as enjoyable, fun, and understandable, it is noteworthy that 80% of the students expressed a willingness to engage in similar lessons in future sessions. This high level of interest suggests a strong intrinsic motivation for learning, likely influenced by the tangible benefits they experience, particularly in enhancing their listening skills. Contemporary students are increasingly cognizant of the importance of acquiring English as a foreign language and recognize digital storytelling as a potent tool to facilitate their learning process.

In addition to its educational benefits, students believe that digital storytelling aids in maintaining their attention during lessons. The use of engaging tools appears to capture and sustain the focus of students, with nine students specifically reporting an ability to remain attentive. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Cahyana (2019), which highlights that learning engagement positively impacts learning outcomes by increasing active language use during the educational process. This study underscores the efficacy of digital storytelling as an educational strategy, particularly in the context of language acquisition. The alignment of technological tools with students' existing familiarity and comfort with digital media enhances both their engagement and comprehension. This alignment is crucial in making learning more effective and enjoyable, supporting the development of essential language skills such as listening. Moreover, digital storytelling provides an innovative approach that caters to the diverse learning styles of young students, as posited by (Gill & Irena, 2020). By utilizing audiovisual elements, educators can create a more inclusive and stimulating learning environment. This method not only addresses the varied sensory preferences of learners but also promotes a deeper understanding of the language being taught. The implications of these findings are significant for educators and curriculum developers. The positive reception of digital storytelling among students indicates a need to integrate more technology-based learning tools in the classroom. This integration can potentially transform traditional teaching methods, making them more aligned with the digital age in which today's students are immersed. By doing so, educators can enhance the effectiveness of language instruction and better prepare students for future educational challenges.

The research highlights the substantial benefits of digital storytelling in enhancing the listening skills and overall language acquisition of kindergarten students. A noteworthy behavior observed during the digital storytelling sessions was students' ability to repeat words and point to objects in their environment that related to the story by the teacher's instructions. This ability to repeat vocabulary highlights their auditory processing and verbal memory skills, which are crucial for language acquisition. As outlined by Silva et al., (2023), repetition is a fundamental aspect of language learning that helps reinforce memory and improve pronunciation. By repeating words, students engage in active learning, which is more effective than passive listening alone. Repetition plays a critical role in the language acquisition process, especially for young learners. Repeated exposure to vocabulary and language structures helps solidify these elements in long-term memory, aiding in the internalization of language patterns and enhancing pronunciation. For children, who's cognitive and language skills are still developing, repetition is particularly beneficial as it provides the practice necessary to master new linguistic concepts. Children's ability to repeat words they hear is a key indicator of their auditory processing and verbal memory skills, essential for understanding spoken language and recalling language-related information. Research by (Chou, 2014) highlights that strong verbal memory is associated with better language learning outcomes. Pointing to objects in their environment that are mentioned in the story or by the teacher indicates that students are making connections between the narrative and their real-world surroundings, a behavior consistent with the principles of situated learning theory (Islami, 2019), which emphasizes the importance of context and interaction in the learning process. By linking new vocabulary to familiar objects, students can better understand and retain new words, grounding abstract language concepts in concrete experiences and making them more relatable and easier to grasp. This process aligns with Bruner's scaffolding theory, which posits that learning is most effective when teachers provide structured support to help students build upon their existing knowledge and skills. Theories of listening emphasize the importance of active engagement and contextual learning in developing listening skills. Rost (2015) highlights that listening is not a passive activity but an active process of constructing meaning from spoken input, requiring cognitive and linguistic skills, including attention, memory, and comprehension. Interactive listening, where

children are actively involved in the listening process, enhances their comprehension and retention of language. This approach is supported by the interactive model of listening proposed by Brownell (2012), which posits that effective listening involves interaction between the listener and the speaker, as well as the context in which the communication occurs. In a classroom setting, digital storytelling provides an interactive platform where students listen to stories and respond by repeating words and pointing to relevant objects, thereby actively engaging with the content. The ability of students to repeat words and point to relevant objects in their environment demonstrates their active participation and contextual understanding, key elements of effective language learning. The integration of repetition and contextualization, supported by auditory processing and verbal memory skills, aligns with educational theories on language acquisition and listening. Digital storytelling, by providing an engaging and interactive medium, enhances students' listening skills and supports more effective language acquisition, fostering a dynamic and effective learning environment for young learners.

The high levels of student engagement and comprehension observed in this study suggest that digital storytelling is not only an enjoyable learning tool but also a highly effective educational strategy. The findings advocate for the broader adoption of digital storytelling in early childhood education to foster a more dynamic and effective language learning environment.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Most responses to using the digital storytelling method are positive. If these approaches are implemented in the future, they can serve as valuable references for teachers. These responses not only benefit teachers but also help students identify which learning approaches they prefer to integrate into their language learning strategies. The study's findings indicate that student responses improved learning outcomes when utilizing the digital storytelling method. This method enhances student attentiveness and engagement during lessons. Digital storytelling fosters active classroom participation, with students more frequently asking and answering questions and sharing ideas with peers, in contrast to the passive learning often associated with conventional "chalk and talk" methods.

To effectively address the challenges of teaching English, educators should consider adopting digital storytelling or interactive methods. This approach not only captures students' attention but also enhances the meaningfulness of lessons. By integrating digital storytelling, educators can create more enjoyable and effective English lessons, thereby facilitating better comprehension of the language among students. The incorporation of videos in digital storytelling has a substantial positive impact on both teaching and learning processes. In summary, the adoption of digital storytelling in English language instruction proves to be more significant and beneficial compared to traditional methods, for both learners and educators.

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