



Insights into Digital Storytelling and Its Support for Junior High School EFL Listening Comprehension

¹Ghina Natul Nabilah, ²Muhammad Handi Gunawan

^{1,2}Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Jawa Barat

Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-04-07 Revised: 2026-05-19 Accepted: 2026-09-20 Keywords: <i>Digital Storytelling; EFL Learners; Junior High School; Listening Comprehension; Thematic Analysis</i> DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i2.11584 Corresponding Author: Ghina Natul Nabilah handi_gunawan@upi.edu Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Jawa Barat	<i>The use of digital storytelling has been well accepted as a multimodal approach for improving listening comprehension skills of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. However, few studies have looked closely at how this process actually works in junior high school classrooms. This qualitative study explored how digital storytelling supports the listening comprehension of EFL students in junior high school in Indonesia, using classroom observations across four sessions and semi-structured interviews with six selected students, analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. The findings showed three primary themes: (1) mechanism, where using both visual and audio helped students guess meanings and learn how to make inferences as a separate skill; (2) process, where listening strategies varied among students, structured help deepened understanding over sessions, and story difficulty shaped the learning process more than the final score; and (3) evaluation, where students' feedback varied based on whether they thanked the method or their own basic skills for their improvement, while their interest was always high and clearly seen in class. The study concludes that digital storytelling gives positive and rich insights on listening comprehension through specific visual, audio, and inferential ways. It contributes new evidence to EFL listening teaching by focusing on the learning process rather than just the final results, and by differentiate student improvement that comes from method versus their own ability. Therefore, this paper suggests that digital storytelling needs to be integrated with direct pedagogical scaffolding instead of using it as a single activity.</i>

1. Introduction

Listening is a foundation aspect for language proficiency, supporting vocabulary development, communication skills, and the acquisition of other language skills, given that meaningful speech production depends on prior comprehension of spoken input (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Besides its importance, listening instruction in many EFL classrooms still depends heavily on unscripted audio recordings, leading to limited engagement, and learning outcomes (Vandergrift, 2004). These learning challenges are becoming serious in Indonesia, where the Merdeka Curriculum now makes varied, student-centered, and technology supported learning strategies mandatory at the junior high school level (Mubarok et al., 2023; Megawati et al., 2023), but the practice of EFL listening instruction and the classroom does not always align with these expectations.

Digital storytelling refers to the integration of narrative, text, audio, images, and video into an interactive multimedia narrative (Robin, 2016), which has become a promising pedagogical approach. The Theoretical Foundation is best on Mayer's (2009) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, stating that both verbal and visual processing support deeper understanding, as well as Pivio's (1991) Dual Coding Theory, suggesting that coding information using both verbal and nonverbal channels strengthens retention. Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Framework strengthens the pedagogical value of digital storytelling by using the structured and interactive format as a mediational scaffold that supports learners in reaching understanding in their zone of proximal development.

Factual research with different groups of learners confirms that digital storytelling supports listening comprehension and related learning outcomes. Studies on learning outcomes consistently report significant improvements in listening comprehension (Demirbaş & Şahin, 2022; Akdamar & Sütçü, 2021; Koroglu, 2020; Wang et al., 2026), with a systematic review confirming that a combination of audiovisual inputs reduces listening difficulties compared to audio-only materials, although the magnitude of the effect depends on factors such as the use of subtitles and type of the video (Tan et al., 2022). Studies on learner engagement have reported increases in motivation, self-confidence, and willingness to communicate (Ahmad & Yamat, 2020; Khasanah, 2023; Murad et al., 2023; Azizah et al., 2024), and studies on multimodal mechanisms indicate that learners utilize images, sounds, and narration in a way that is interactive and complementary, not just as passive receivers of information (Hung et al., 2012 & Yang & Wu, 2012). In the Indonesian context specifically, digital storytelling has been related to improved communication readiness with (Widodo, 2015) and measurable improvements in listening comprehension when adapted to the local context (Sinaga et al., 2026). Research in technology-supported language learning increasingly confirms that engagement in such contexts is multi-dimensional and task-dependent (Hiver et al., 2024; Cárdenas-Claros et al., 2023).

Even with this evidence, most existing research focuses more on measuring overall final outcomes rather than exploring the mechanisms behind the development of understanding during the learning process (Zhang et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2022). This gap at the process level has important implications for junior high school in Indonesia. This group is pedagogically different from more mature or proficient learners, as they are developing basic English language skills, metalinguistic awareness, and learning habits at the same time under a new curriculum that prioritizes creative and multimodal learning. Findings from research conducted with older learners cannot be directly applied into this group. Therefore, specific research conducted directly in the classroom makes a highly significant contribution.

Therefore, this study answers the following question: “How does digital storytelling support junior high school students' listening comprehension in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom?” This study also explores the relationship between digital storytelling and student engagement, and identifies specific elements that facilitate comprehension. The novelty of this study relies on the process-oriented approach that is integrated into classroom instruction to understand how listening comprehension is achieved with digital storytelling, including the specific mechanisms of compensation and strategies used by students, as well as on the clear methodological differentiation between improvements reported by students themselves as a result of this method and improvements resulting from students prior English proficiency.

2. Method

This study used qualitative research designed to explore the pedagogical support of digital storytelling on students' listening comprehension in detail. The qualitative approach was chosen because it enables for a comprehensive investigation of classroom experiences, teacher-student interactions, and contextual factors that shape comprehension in a realistic classroom setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018), giving a richer description of the meanings and the processes behind the observed understanding than what can be provided by quantitative measurement alone (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The study was conducted in a junior high school in Bandung, Indonesia, with institutional approval granted the school principal in November 2025. A total of 27 grade 8 students participated in four classroom observation sessions. Six students were purposely selected for semi-structured interviews based on two criteria: variation in their observable participation levels and the quality of their written responses to end-of-session comprehension tasks. This strategy was designed to capture a range of comprehension experiences rather than selecting only the most active learners. All participants had parental consent, documented through signed informed consent forms collected before the study started. Participant confidentiality was maintained throughout by using student code labels (Student 1 until Student 6) in all data analysis and reporting.

The researcher served as both classroom teacher and primary observer under the supervision of the regular English teacher. To minimize observer bias, two independent observers including the regular English teacher and peer colleague attended at the back of the classroom during all four sessions. Following each session, the researcher held a reflective discussion with both observers to review classroom events, and insight generated in these discussions were recorded as supplementary field notes alongside the primary observational data.

Data were collected in four classroom learning sessions using two animated digital stories from YouTube, selected based on the complexity of their plots. The first story was the channel *TheFableCottage.com* (2019) and the second was sourced from the *English Fairy Tales* (2016) channel. "The Bird and the Whale" (session 1-2) chosen for having a lighter and more repetitive narrative pattern. "The Lion and the Mouse" (session 3-4), introduced after students have developed a basic level of confidence in listening given its more dynamic narrative conflict. This sequencing was designed to help students improve their listening step by step, consistent with principles of scaffolded instruction. Each session followed a structured three-phase sequence: (1) a pre-listening phase consisting of direct vocabulary instruction delivered through definition-guessing and image-based activities; (2) while-listening phase in which students viewed digital story, first without help, then with structured note-taking prompts to build step-by-step comprehension; and (3) A post-listening phase including comprehension worksheets with task of progressively increasing difficulty across sessions, ranging from matching and short-answer task in Sessions 1-2 to true or false, reasoned short-answer, and oral partner-retelling tasks in Sessions 3-4. All four classroom sessions were video-recorded totally to allow word-for-word transcription of classroom interactions. Quick field notes were also taken during each session to record contextual observations, students' behavioral cues, and teachers' actions. The video recordings were then transcribed one by one by the researchers to produce complete observation transcripts used in the analysis.

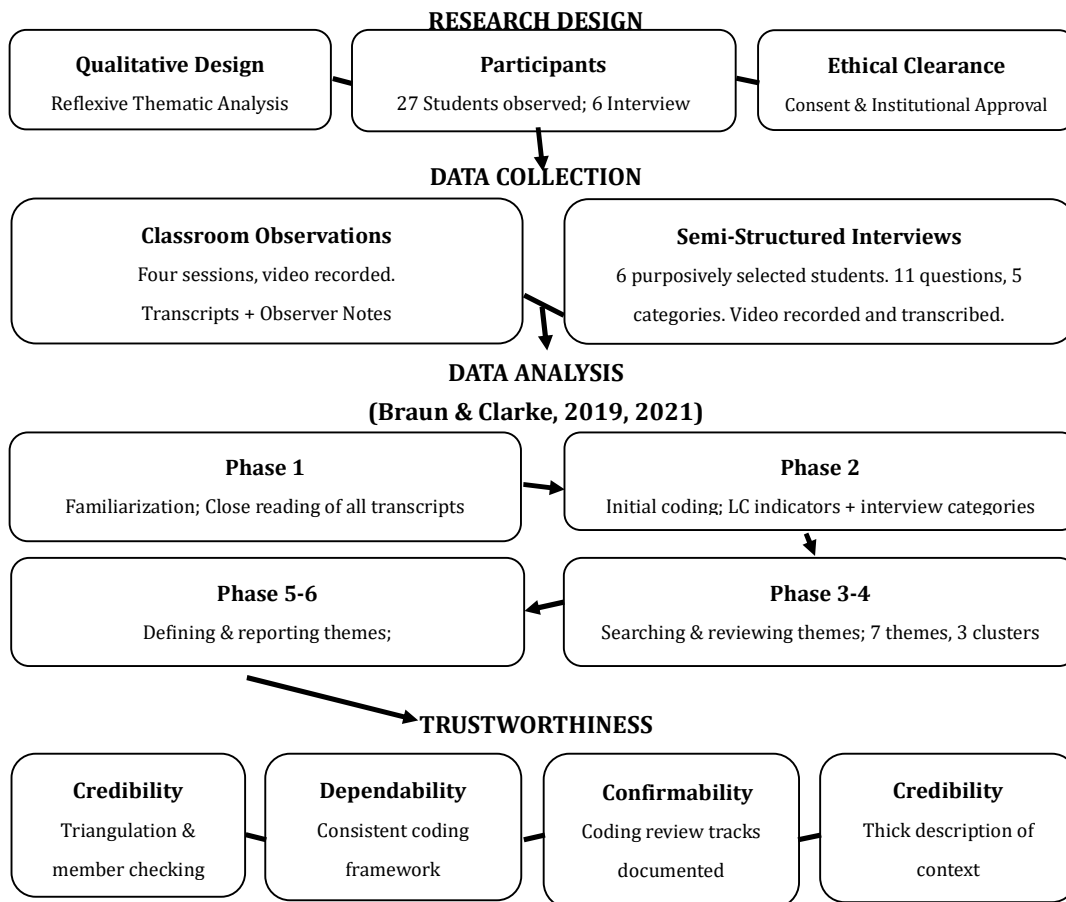
After four observation sessions, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the six student participants using an eleven-question protocol including five categories: listening experiences, engagement during listening, comprehension strategies, application of listening skills, and reflections and suggestions. Representative questions included: "*Apakah dua cerita yang ditayangkan mudah untuk dimengerti?*" (Were the two stories easy to understand?); "*Bagaimana cara kamu agar bisa lebih memahami cerita berbahasa Inggris?*" (How did you approach understanding the English story?); and "*Elemen apa dari digital storytelling yang paling membantu?*" (Which element of digital story telling help you most?). Full interview protocol is available from the responding author upon request.

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2019, 2021) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis procedure. Phase 1 (familiarization) included close reading and re-reading of all four observation transcripts and all six interview transcripts. In

phase 2 (initial coding), each transcript segment was coded against a predefined framework: observation data were coded based on seven indicators of listening comprehension, including content understanding, conclusion making, listening for specific information, critical listening, responses and interactions, and appropriate language use, as well as based on observation checklist categories adapted from Vandergrift (2004), the CLASS framework (Pianta et al., 2008) and Flanders Categories of interaction analysis (Flanders 1970). Interview data were coded based on the five interview categories: Listening experience, engagement during listening, comprehension strategies, application of listening, and reflection and suggestion. In phase 3, (searching for themes), codes from both sources were then compiled into candidate themes across the full dataset. In phase 4 (reviewing themes), all codes were checked to confirm coverage and overlaps: all codes were used, and no themes needed to be combined. In phase 5-6 (defining and reporting), themes were given precise definitions and organized into three analytical groups according to the types of questions explored by each theme in relation to the search the research question: mechanism, process, and evaluation. Two consistent coding decisions were applied throughout: first, group or choral student responses in the observation transcripts were recorded as valid comprehension evidence on the same basis as individual responses; second, self-reported skill gains in the interviews were recorded as evidence of student perception, with a directly note that these perceived rather than independently measured improvement.

The findings from these two data sources then were triangulated to support the credibility of the analysis (Nowell et al., 2017), according to criteria set for reliable qualitative research including credibility (through long-term involvement, triangulation, and member-checking in the reflective discussions with independent observers), dependability (through a consistent, documented coding system), confirmability (through the review tracks provided by the thematic analysis working), and transferability (through detailed description of the research context and participants) (Ahmed, 2024).

Figure 1. Research Procedure



3. Result

Thematic analysis of classroom observation data and interviews identified seven themes discussing digital storytelling on students' listening comprehension. Table 1 provides a triangulated summary of evidence across both data sources, followed by individual theme presentations and a synthesis of how the clusters interact.

Table 1. Summary of Themes and Supporting Evidence

Cluster	Theme	Observation Evidence	Interview Evidence
---------	-------	----------------------	--------------------

Mechanism	Multimodal reinforcement supported comprehension	Students cited both audio and visual elements as helpful in closing reflections.	Students described combining channels or using one to balance the others.
Process	Comprehension strategies varied across students	Note-taking observed inconsistently across students during structured viewings.	Students reported passive/contextual, active note-taking, and top-down/gist strategies.
Process	Repetition and structured scaffolding depended comprehension	Brief one-word responses in Session 1 become detailed, reasoned responses by session 2.	Students directly credited pre-listening vocabulary teaching for comprehension.
Process	Story complexity shaped the comprehension pathway	Vocabulary recalls notably fast in Session 3 despite the intentionally more difficult story.	One student directly reported the second story as harder, visually balanced.
Evaluation	Self-reported support varied by attribution	Not directly observable, interview only theme.	Some students connected the method to their prior knowledge, even though it received the highest rating.
Evaluation	Engagement was consistently high end behaviorally observable	Constant attention during all sessions, with a highlight when a partner told stories spontaneously, complete with sound effects.	All six students reported engagement, with a variety of individual reasons.
Mechanism	The ability to conclude is developed in stages	All sessions included questions directly related to feelings/meaning, considered open to interpretation.	A student showed an instinctive understanding of the difference between content and conclusion.

Multimodal Reinforcement Supported Comprehension

During these four sessions, the students used narratives, visual illustrations,

and audio together to support their understanding. In the second session, the students directly identified audio and visual elements as helpful when asked specifically. In interviews, one student described visual information as a backup source that used when the audio information was not fully understood:

Lebih paham video kaya gitu, jadinya mudah. Kalo misalkan gak ngerti bisa liat gambarnya juga. (Student 5)

(English translation: I understand better with that kind of video, so it becomes easier. If I do not understand [the audio], I can also look at the visual illustrations)

This pattern of compensation is also clearly seen in students' narration of the second story; they reported that the story was too difficult to understand by listening alone, so they relied on visual cues and contextual clues, but were still able to recall the ending accurately.

Comprehension Strategies Varied Across Students

Interview responses revealed meaningful variation in comprehension strategy. One student reported using contextual inference without active note-taking, while others reported making active vocabulary note-taking. One student directly described a top-down and gist-based strategies for dealing with limited vocabulary:

Kayaknya, itu kan karena bahasa Inggris aku cuma bisa dikit-dikit saja. Jadinya ngerti dari alurnya (Student 6)

(English translation: I think it is because my English is just limited, so I could only understand it from the storyline)

This variation matches Vandergrift's (2004) theory about bottom-up decoding and top-down schema-based processing, and shows that digital storytelling accommodates various processing pathways at the same time within a single classroom.

Repetition and Structured Scaffolding Deepened Comprehension Across Sessions

Comparing student output between and the first and second sessions on the same story showed there was a noticeable change. At first, they just give short, one word answers. By the second session, they were giving detailed answers with good reasons. Also, a few students said that learning the vocabulary words before listening really helps them understand the story once it starts:

Sebenarnya, waktu dijelaskan kata-kata nya itu jadi kaya 'Oh, jadi kaya gini', setelah itu kaya nyambung gitu loh sama ceritanya. (Student 6)

(English translation: Actually, when it was explained, it felt like 'oh so that's how it is', and then everything connected to the story.)

These findings suggest that the observed increase in understanding is not simply a result of the digital storytelling media itself, but rather of the structured pedagogical scaffolding that supports it.

Story Complexity Shaped the Comprehension Pathway More Than the Comprehension Outcome

The second story was designed to be more difficult in terms of language. One student confirmed it was harder to follow by ear, he relied on visual and contextual cues, but still recalled the ending accurately, suggesting that complexity changes how students understood the story, not their final performance. However, classroom data showed an unpredictable improvement in vocabulary recall during Session 3, suggesting that students' increasing familiarity with the task interacted with the intentional change in complexity. Therefore, comprehension outcomes are influenced by two interacting factors, linguistic difficulty and familiarity with the task rather than complexity alone.

Self-Reported Support Varied by Attribution

Students who connected their understanding to specific features of the digital story (such as the narrator's tone of voice, visuals or sound effects) showed stronger evidence of the method's supportive role than students who connected their understanding to their own English language skills. For example, student 5 who rated Digital storytelling's insights at 9 out of 10 and mentioned the specific method features, offered more methodologically defensible evidence than Student 2, who gave the highest possible rating of 10 out of 10 but repeatedly connected comprehension to already knowing English well. Student 4 gave an honest, average rating but explained the reasons in detail, while focusing on the lesson the entire time:

Lima. Karena ada yang dipahami, ada yang tidak. (Student 4)

(English translation: Five. Because there were parts that I understood, and parts that I didn't)

This honest and varied response shows that the interview data does not just try to please the researcher, and that not all students feel the same benefit from digital storytelling.

Engagement was Consistently High and Behaviorally Observable

Observational notes showed that the student stayed focused during all four sessions. The most obvious example of engagement was during the retelling activity in pairs at the final session. Without any instructions from the teacher, the students added sound effects and gestures from their own initiative. All six interview participants reported positive engagement, with varied reasons including story excitement, character design, and newness of format, agreeing with the observational evidence.

The Ability to Conclude is Developed in Stages

Besides basic understanding, during the four sessions, the teacher repeatedly helped students to learn how to make conclusions. The teacher explained that interpretive answers can differ and do not have to match a single "correct" answer. In session 2, the teacher stated: "*Pasti jawaban nya beda- beda... Karena itu point of view kalian*" (Answers will definitely be different... I want to see your point of view). During the interview, one student showed an understanding of this difference. This same student had asked the teacher in class if their answers had to follow exactly what happened in the video or if they could include their own personal interpretations.

Synthesis: How the Themes Interact

These seven themes do not work alone, but rather from an integrated support system. The Mechanisms themes (multimodal reinforcement and scaffolding for building inferences) explain how digital storytelling helps with understanding, specifically by giving us helpful visual cues and nonverbal cues that support the process of understanding. The Process themes explain the factors that shape the learning journey. Students bring a variety of strategies to the table, structured scaffolding builds on benefits across sessions, and comprehension approaches are adapted as the complexity of the material builds. The Evaluation themes confirm how these effects are evidenced, through the agreement between behavioral observations and self-reports, as well as the differentiation that strengthens credibility between effects that are methodological and those that are ability-based. Overall, these three groups of themes show that digital storytelling's support for listening comprehension is not the result of the media alone, but rather the result of the interaction between multimodal inputs, structured instruction, learning strategies, and engagement.

4. Discussion***Multimodal Reinforcement as a Mechanism of Comprehension***

The finding that students relied on a combination of narration, visuals, and sound, rather than narration alone, supports the idea that using digital storytelling enables students to use multiple sources of meaningful information together (Hung et al., 2012). This study suggests that this relationship is not simply a matter of combining these elements. Instead of just processing more information, students seemed to focus their attention on the element that was easiest to understand at that moment. This indicates that part of the educational value of digital storytelling is based on the fact that this method offers learners a built-in backup strategy to support their understanding. This is consistent with Mayer's (2009) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, the theory of learning that predicts the use of both verbal and physical information will help students create a better model of the material, even when one method alone is not enough. This study also applied Paivio's (1991) Dual Coding Theory in the context of English as a Foreign Language

(EFL) listening instruction by showing that the two coding systems not only operate together, but can also support the another when students experience difficulties an in-depth insight into the learning process that is typically not revealed by studies focused on end result alone. This is aligned with the findings of Yang and Wu (2012) that the combination of images, and audio leads to a deeper understanding of spoken content, but provides a detailed explanation not covered in previous studies.

Strategic Diversity, Scaffolding, and Sociocultural Support

There are several comprehension strategies identified, from guessing meaning based on context and active note-taking to focusing on main ideas (*top-down* processing), this reflects the difference described by Vandergrift (2004) between *bottom up* and *top-down* listening processes. This diversity shows that digital storytelling supports multiple learning pathways within a single classroom instead of having every student use the exact same approach. At the same time, the significant improvement in the level of detail in responses between the first and second viewing suggests that this outcome was not simply due to the digital storytelling format itself. This strategic approach can be understood using Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Framework, a structured learning process that includes vocabulary introduction before instruction, repeated viewings, and collaborative post-listening tasks, as scaffolding that supports learners within their zone of proximal development. These allow each student to develop and build understanding using the approach that best matches their current proficiency level. This aligns with the views of Sadik (2008) and Razmi et al. (2014) that digital storytelling gives optimal results when integrated into a structured lesson plan, with increasing levels of difficulty instead of being used as a stand-alone tool.

Story Complexity, Task Familiarity, and Contextual Factors

While feedback from one student supported the research plan to make the task more difficult, with reports that the second story had more complex vocabulary and that students had to use the pictures more to understand it, the observation data showed that the reality was more complex. The interesting part is that students actually remembered the vocabulary and understood the main ideas more quickly in the third session than in the first, even though the material at that stage was made more difficult on purpose. This indicates that students' understanding is shaped by a combination of two interacting elements; the level of language difficulty and students' familiarity with this learning approach. These findings add important insight to current research on digital storytelling and challenging material (Hung et al., 2012), as well as being consistent with the observation of Zhang et al. (2023). This also reflects practical challenges in Indonesian junior high school classrooms, when students must learn a new language and a new activity format together, making it very difficult to separate these two challenges. This also highlights a key lesson for future researchers who

want to separate the roles of task familiarity from the actual difficulty of the material.

The findings also highlight a wider situation specific to Indonesian junior high school students. As students who are developing their early English skills and thinking about how language works within a newly reformed curriculum (Merdeka Curriculum) that highlights creative, technology-based learning (Mubarok et al., 2023), these students may respond to digital storytelling differently than more advanced or older learners. The engagement and comprehension patterns observed suggest that digital storytelling is very suitable to this age group because it makes listening easier by distributing comprehension across multiple guides, but also that its effectiveness depends on careful alignment with the specific teaching and curriculum conditions of Indonesian junior high school setting.

Differentiating the Support of the Method from the Students' Ability

The most interesting finding for this research methodology may be the contrast between students who connected their understanding to features of digital storytelling and one student who was more focused on their own English language skills, even though that student gave the highest possible score. This finding supports the general observation that individual differences can make it hard to get a clear picture when students report on their language learning progress (Pan et al., 2023). In other words, high scores alone do not prove the success of a teaching method unless students can explain in detail how that method helped them.

There were also other students who gave average ratings but included honest and specific explanations of what they understood and what they did not. This gives important verification of the facts, showing that the interview data does not just reflect "social desirability bias" meaning, the students are not just saying what the researchers want to hear.

Engagement, Inference Making, and Pedagogical Design

The consistency between what was observed in the classroom where students stay focused for the entire session and added their own expression in a natural way, and a positive feed from the six interview participants strangers existing research findings. This confirms in specific terms that digital storytelling is an effective tool for raising students' interest, emotional engagement, and curiosity (Hung et al., 2012; Ahmad & Yamat, 2020; Khasanah, 2023). This finding is also consistent with Merdeka Curriculum that focuses on student-centered, creative, and active learning, showing that digital storytelling is not just an effective language learning tool in theory, but specifically matches the teaching goals of current Indonesian education.

The teachers' consistent focus on helping students practice making inferences, by dealing with it as a skill that is different from basic comprehension, targeted the

aspect of listening comprehension that is difficult to teach using static, text-based instructional materials. Because the ability to understand meaning is aided by nonverbal cues such as tone of voice and facial expressions (Vandergrift, 2004), students find it much easier to learn this skill using audiovisual format. By always showing that there can be different correct answers for making inferences, rather than just one right answer, the teacher created a comfortable environment for students to practice higher level listening and several students learn to separate literal meanings from hidden meanings. However, it should be noted that implementing digital storytelling in practice includes real-world challenges, including the need for reliable internet access and good devices, teacher readiness to design structured lessons with videos, and classroom management needs that are different from those traditional listening tasks. These practical challenges are worth acknowledging when considering how this approach can be used in other Indonesian junior high school settings.

5. Conclusion

The study explored the supportive role of digital storytelling on the listening comprehension of junior high school students in English as a foreign language (EFL), the relationship between digital storytelling and student engagement, and the specific elements of digital storytelling that facilitate comprehension. The findings showed that digital storytelling facilitates listening comprehension through two main mechanisms; multimodal reinforcement where students use visual auditory and contextual information to fill in information gaps, and the purposeful teaching of inference skills as a different ability from basic comprehension.

These mechanisms work together with classroom level factors, including individual variations and comprehension strategies, structured Lesson plan that included repeated viewings, and the interaction between material complexity and increasing familiarity with the task to shape how comprehension was reached. Regarding engagement, consistent findings from both observational data and interviews indicate that digital storytelling increases student engagement significantly, consistent with previous research (Hung et al., 2012). However, these findings also serve as a reminder not to claim that digital storytelling leads to consistent improvements and comprehension for all participants.

The support reported by the students themselves depends very much on whether they linked their success to the method or to their own level of English proficiency. Furthermore, the specific contribution of the material's complexity to comprehension cannot be completely separated from the effects of increased familiarity with the task. Overall digital storytelling has a positive and profound contribution to their listening comprehension of the junior high school students participating in this study. Supported by structured instruction and consistent increases in engagement, although this support mechanism is not universal among all students and cannot be completely separated from the larger instructional

context in the application of this method.

Several limitations should be noted when interpreting these findings. First, the data on skill improvement are based on students' subjective perceptions, not on independent *pre-test* and *post-test* measurements; This may be shaped by individual differences in motivation at the levels of proficiency at the start of the study (Pan et al., 2023). Second, the differentiation between outcomes related to the method and those related to ability was based only on interviews without a direct comparison in classroom observations. Third, the study did not fully differentiate between the complexity of the material and students' increasing familiarity with the task format over time. Fourth, while classroom observations captured the dynamics of a full class of 27 students, the in-depth interview data were limited to a small sample of six focused participants across four sessions, limiting the ability to generalize the findings beyond similar junior high school EFL contexts.

Based on these insights, it is recommended that EFL teachers integrate digital storytelling into structured lesson plans, including vocabulary introduction before listening activities, repeated viewings, and tasks with levels of difficulty that build progressively, rather than using it as a stand-alone activity. Listening tasks should differentiate clearly between literal questions and open-ended interpretive questions, to show students that interpretive responses can legitimately vary.

Teachers need to accommodate a variety of comprehension strategies instead of forcing a single approach, and explore the specific reasons behind students' positive responses rather than just relying on general assessments. For future research, follow up studies should include objective and independent measures of listening comprehension alongside qualitative data. In addition, researchers are advised to use a balanced design when arranging the order of material difficulty levels to separate the factor of complexity from the factor of students' familiarity with the task, extend data collection to larger and more diverse students' samples, and continue the practice of including independent peers, such as classroom teachers and colleagues to validate qualitative observation through collaborative discussion and minimize researcher bias.

6. References

- Ahmad, W. I. W., & Yamat, H. (2020). Students' perception on learning English language through conventional and digital storytelling. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(2), 379–390. <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v10-i2/6945>
- Ahmed, S. K. (2024). The pillars of trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*, 2, Article 100051. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.glmedi.2024.100051>
- Akdamar, N. S., & Sütçü, S. S. (2021). Effects of digital stories on the development of EFL students' listening skill. *Education Quarterly Reviews*, 4(4), 391–403.

<https://doi.org/10.31014/aior.1993.04.04.391>

- Azizah, R., Irdiyansyah, I., & Wahyuni, A. (2024). Empowering EFL students' speaking ability through digital storytelling: A quasi-experimental study. *Asshika: Journal of English Language Teaching & Learning*, 1(2), 10–23. Retrieved from <https://jurnal.saniya.id/asshika/article/view/394/309>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589–597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676x.2019.1628806>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE Publications.
- Cárdenas-Claros, M. S., Sydorenko, T., Huntley, E., & Montero Perez, M. (2023). Teachers' voices on multimodal input for second or foreign language learning. *Language Teaching Research*, 27(6), 1483–1509. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688211001289>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Demirbaş, İ., & Şahin, A. (2022). The effect of digital stories on primary school students' listening comprehension skills. *Participatory Educational Research*, 9(6), 380–397. <https://doi.org/10.17275/per.22.144.9.6>
- English Fairy Tales. (2016, September 13). *The lion and the mouse in English* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/GxcGVCEEdcU>
- Flanders, N. A. (1970). *Analyzing teaching behavior*. Addison-Wesley.
- Gilakjani, A. P., & Sabouri, N. B. (2016). The significance of listening comprehension in English language teaching. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 6(8), 1670–1677. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0608.22>
- Hiver, P., Al-Hoorie, A. H., Vitta, J. P., & Wu, J. (2024). Engagement in language learning: A systematic review of 20 years of research methods and definitions. *Language Teaching Research*, 28(1), 201–230. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688211030303>
- Hung, C. M., Hwang, G. J., & Huang, I. (2012). A project-based digital storytelling approach for improving students' learning motivation, problem-solving competence and learning achievement. *Educational Technology & Society*, 15(4), 368–379. Retrieved from http://www.ifets.info/journals/15_4/31.pdf
- Husnaini, H. (2022). Development of Self Esteem-Oriented Micro Teaching Materials for IAIN Palopo English Education Students. *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 10(1), 538–560.
- Ismayanti, D., & Syam, A. T. (2022). The Community Manipulation through Big Brother™ s Tyranny in George Orwell™ s Nineteen Eighty-Four. *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 10(2), 1556–1569.
- Khasanah, H. R. (2023). The use of digital storytelling to stimulate learners' listening comprehension. *Journal of English Education Program*, 10(2), 1–12.

- <https://doi.org/10.25157/jeep.v10i2.11693>
- Koroglu, Z. (2020). Effects of digital short stories on the development of listening skills: An action research. *Gist Education and Learning Research Journal*, 20, 65–84. <https://doi.org/10.26817/16925777.766>
- Mayer, R. E. (2009). *Multimedia learning* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Megawati, M., Suyitno, I., & Harsiati, T. (2023). Assessment model in Indonesian language learning based on the Merdeka Curriculum at junior high school in Banyuwangi Regency. *Jurnal Kependidikan*, 9(4), 1113–1123. <https://doi.org/10.33394/jk.v9i4.8808>
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Mubarok, H., Sofiana, N., & Mahendra, D. (2023). English language teaching in Indonesia: The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in senior high schools. *Journal of Namibian Studies*, 35, 2504–2519. Retrieved from <https://namibian-studies.com/index.php/JNS/article/view/4018>
- Murad, M., Assadi, L., & Badarni, K. (2023). Digital storytelling and EFL speaking skill improvement. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 14(4), 658–666. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1404.09>
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- Paivio, A. (1991). Dual coding theory: Retrospect and current status. *Canadian Journal of Psychology*, 45(3), 255–287. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0084295>
- Pan, Z., Wang, Y., & Derakhshan, A. (2023). Unpacking Chinese EFL students' academic engagement and psychological well-being: The roles of language teachers' affective scaffolding. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 52(5), 1799–1819. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10936-023-09974-z>
- Pianta, R. C., La Paro, K. M., & Hamre, B. K. (2008). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System™: Manual K-3*. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- Razmi, M., Pourali, S., & Nozad, S. (2014). Digital storytelling in EFL classroom (oral presentation of the story): A pathway to improve oral production. *Procedia — Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 98, 1541–1544. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.03.576>
- Robin, B. R. (2016). The power of digital storytelling to support teaching and learning. *Digital Education Review*, 30, 17–29. <https://doi.org/10.1344/der.2016.30.17-29>
- Sadik, A. (2008). Digital storytelling: A meaningful technology-integrated approach for engaged student learning. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 56(4), 487–506. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-008-9091-8>
- Sinaga, J. B., Saputro, I. E., Yulianingsih, L., Dewi, D. S., Subrata, D., & Ardhi, M. A. (2026). Developing local culture-based listening materials through digital

- storytelling. *Journal of Innovation in Educational and Cultural Research*, 7(2), 421–423. <https://doi.org/10.46843/jiecr.v7i2.2836>
- Tan, S., Samad, A. A., & Ismail, L. (2022). Systematic literature review on audio-visual multimodal input in listening comprehension. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, Article 980133. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.980133>
- TheFableCottage.com. (2019, May 22). *The bird and the whale — US English accent* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/FU_0NF_jrgE
- Vandergrift, L. (2004). Listening to learn or learning to listen? *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 24, 3–25. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0267190504000017>
- Vandergrift, L., & Goh, C. C. M. (2012). *Teaching and learning second language listening: Metacognition in action*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203843376>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Wang, W., Zheng, L., & Zhang, J. (2026). Effect of online digital storytelling on the comprehension of authentic listening materials and engagement of junior high school EFL learners. *Scientific Reports*, 16, Article 6639. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-026-36913-4>
- Widodo, H. P. (2015). Engaging students in literature circles: Vocational English reading programs. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 25(2), 347–359. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-015-0269-7>
- Yang, Y. C., & Wu, W. I. (2012). Digital storytelling for enhancing student academic achievement, critical thinking, and learning motivation: A year-long experimental study. *Computers & Education*, 59(2), 339–352. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2011.12.012>
- Yu, Z., Yu, L., Xu, Q., Xu, W., & Wu, P. (2022). Effects of mobile learning technologies and social media tools on student engagement and learning outcomes of English learning. *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, 31(3), 381–398. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1475939X.2022.2045215>
- Yuan, Y., Harun, J., Wong, B. Y., & Li, L. (2025). Technology-driven framework for college English courses: If and how mobile-assisted collaborative language learning affects EFL student engagement. *SAGE Open*, 15(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440251329687>
- Zhang, R., Zou, D., & Cheng, G. (2023). A systematic review of technology-enhanced L2 listening development since 2000. *Language Learning & Technology*, 27(3), 41–64. <https://doi.org/10.64152/10125/73531>