


## Enhancing Students' Speaking Skill through Digital Storytelling at State Islamic Senior High School 1 Surakarta

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### A B S T R A C T

This study examines the use of digital storytelling to enhance students' speaking skills in a formal classroom context, addressing the need for more engaging and effective speaking instruction at the tenth grade of MAN 1 Surakarta. Using a classroom action research design consisting of two cycles, data were collected through pre-test, post-test I, and post-test II, as well as observations and questionnaires. Descriptive analysis of test scores showed a steady improvement in students' average speaking scores, increasing from 65 in the pre-test to 74 in Cycle I and reaching 85 in Cycle II. Qualitative findings revealed that digital storytelling supported speaking development by helping students organize ideas, apply appropriate past tense forms, improve pronunciation through repeated practice, and use vocabulary in meaningful contexts. Students also perceived digital storytelling as an appealing and accessible activity that reduced learning anxiety and increased participation. However, initial difficulties in organizing narratives and limited language control emerged as challenges that required teacher guidance. This study concludes that digital storytelling can serve as a meaningful medium for enhancing speaking skills in formal classroom settings when implemented with proper guidance and integrated with structured speaking activities.

**Keywords:** *Digital Storytelling, Speaking Skill, Classroom Action Research, Educational Social Media*

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### INTRODUCTION

English is widely used as a global communication language in education, technology, and international communication, positioning speaking as a critical skill for effective interaction (Puspitarini & Junaedi, 2024). Speaking requires not only linguistic knowledge but also the capability to use language accurately, fluently, and meaningfully in the context (Nair & Yunus, 2021). However, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners still face challenges and difficulties in order to enhance speaking skill, mainly in expressing ideas, maintaining fluency, and using appropriate grammatical structures (Zhussupova & Shadiev, 2023).

In the Indonesian context, students' speaking proficiency at the secondary school level remains relatively low (Wulandari et al., 2022). Classroom practices often emphasize written tasks and grammatical accuracy rather than communicative use, resulting in limited opportunities for meaningful speaking practice. Consequently, students tend to lack confidence, struggle with vocabulary use, and experience difficulty in organizing ideas during oral communication (Zein et al., 2020). These challenges are further influenced by low motivation and minimal exposure to authentic language use outside the classroom.

At the same time, the rapid development of digital technology has transformed how students engage with language learning. Learners are increasingly familiar with digital media, which offers opportunities for more interactive and student-centered learning (Yang et al., 2022). One approach that integrates technology and language learning is digital storytelling, which allows students to create and present narratives by integrating images, audio, and text

(Alexander, 2017). This approach is particularly relevant for teaching recount texts, as it encourages students to retell personal experiences in a structured and meaningful way.

The use of digital storytelling is supported by several theoretical perspectives. From a constructivist view, learning occurs actively as students construct meaning through experience and reflection (Asnas, 2024). In this context, effective language learning requires meaningful exposure to language as well as opportunities for learners to actively use it in communication. Digital storytelling accommodates both processes by providing models of language use and enabling students to produce spoken narratives based on their own experiences (Nicoli et al., 2022). Furthermore, its multimodal nature can help reduce learners' anxiety and increase engagement, which are essential factors in the enhancement of the students' speaking skills.

Previous studies have shown that digital storytelling can positively impact students' speaking skills by improving fluency, pronunciation, and confidence (Wafa & Chakim, 2022). It also enhances students' ability to organize ideas and use language in context. However, most existing research focuses on general speaking outcomes and does not fully explore how digital storytelling supports specific text types, such as recount texts, particularly within classroom-based action research settings.

Given these gaps, this study focuses on the implementation of digital storytelling through personal narratives in recount texts to enhance students' speaking skills at the tenth-grade students of MAN 1 Surakarta. It aims to examine the extent to which digital storytelling improves students' speaking performance and to explore its impact on classroom engagement and participation. By integrating technology with communicative practice, this study seeks to provide a more effective approach to developing students' speaking competence in EFL classrooms.

## METHOD

The method of this research was classroom action research conducting of two cycles and conducted at the tenth grades student of MAN 1 Surakarta (Arikunto, 2013). The research used two cycles using test in the pre-test, post-test I and post-test II and non-test such as observation and questionnaire for collecting the data (Kemmis et al., 2014). The two cycles consisted planning stages from preparing the digital storytelling and the teaching module, action stages in applying digital storytelling, observation when applying digital storytelling, and reflection about the strengths and weaknesses when applying digital storytelling. This method was selected to obtain a solid knowledge of the learning process, students' involvement, and the development of their speaking skill during the implementation. The study focused not only on This study employed Classroom Action Research based on the model of Suharsimi Arikunto and Stephen Kemmis. The research was conducted in two cycles at the tenth grade of MAN 1 Surakarta. Each cycle included planning, action, observation, and reflection stages. In the planning stage, the researcher prepared digital storytelling materials and teaching modules. The action stage involved implementing digital storytelling in speaking activities. Observation focused on students' participation and performance during the learning process. Reflection evaluated strengths and weaknesses to improve the next cycle.

This method allowed systematic monitoring of students' speaking development and classroom engagement. The study not only measured speaking improvement but also examined how digital storytelling supported meaningful language use.

### Participants

The participants were 36 students of class XE-9 at MAN 1 Surakarta in the 2025/2026 academic year, consisting of 21 females and 15 males. The class was selected purposively based on the need to improve speaking skills. Students showed varied proficiency levels in fluency, confidence, and organization of ideas. This variation enabled a more comprehensive evaluation of the intervention.

### Instruments

Data were collected using test and non-test instruments. The main instrument was a speaking test conducted in three stages: pre-test, post-test I, and post-test II. Assessment used

the rubric developed by H. Douglas Brown, which includes grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, pronunciation, and task.

Non-test instruments included observation checklists and questionnaires. Observation recorded students' engagement and interaction. Questionnaires explored students' perceptions of digital storytelling as a learning medium.

To ensure validity, the study applied methodological triangulation by comparing data from tests, observations, and questionnaires. Content validity was ensured by aligning test tasks with speaking indicators in the curriculum. Reliability was strengthened through consistent scoring procedures using the same rubric across all testing stages.

### **Procedures**

The research followed four stages in each cycle. In the planning stage, the researcher designed lesson plans, digital storytelling guidelines, and assessment tools. In the action stage, students created and presented personal recount stories using digital storytelling. The activities emphasized past tense use, narrative structure, and oral clarity.

During observation, the researcher documented students' participation and speaking performance. In reflection, the researcher analyzed the results of each cycle. Findings from the first cycle guided improvements in the second cycle, especially in fluency, confidence, and idea organization.

### **Criteria of Success**

The criteria of improvement were defined clearly. The study was considered successful if: (1) The mean score of students' speaking performance reached at least 75 (minimum mastery standard). (2) At least 75% of students showed improvement in speaking scores across the tests. (3) Observation results indicated increased student participation and confidence during speaking activities.

These criteria ensured that improvement was measurable, consistent, and aligned with learning objectives.

### **Data Analysis**

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to compare mean scores across pre-test, post-test I, and post-test II. The analysis showed progressive improvement in students' speaking performance.

Qualitative data were analyzed using the interactive model of Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, which includes data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

To enhance trustworthiness, triangulation was applied across multiple data sources. This approach produced a more accurate understanding of how digital storytelling improved speaking skills and increased student engagement in the classroom.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings on The Use of Digital Storytelling on Students' Speaking Skill**

The results of pre-test indicated that students' speaking skill was at a relatively low level prior to the use of digital storytelling. Following the first cycle, the mean score increased to 74 in post-test I, suggesting an initial positive effect on students' speaking performance. Although the average score had not yet reached the expected minimum standard, noticeable improvements were observed in students' ability to express ideas, respond to prompts, and demonstrate greater confidence in speaking. These findings warranted the continuation of the intervention into Cycle II to achieve more substantial gains.

In Cycle II, the score of mean improved markedly to 85, reflecting a significant improvement when compared to both the pre-test and post-test I. The progress indicates that the iterative application of digital storytelling had a cumulative and more pronounced effect on students' speaking development. Students demonstrated higher levels of fluency, confidence, and coherence in organizing and delivering their narratives. Furthermore, consistent improvement was evident across all speaking components adapted from Brown's assessment criteria, including grammar (3.10 to 3.85 to 4.20), vocabulary (3.45 to 4.10 to 4.30), pronunciation (3.05 to 3.80 to 4.15), fluency (3.00 to 3.40 to 4.35), task achievement (3.05 to 3.45

to 4.40), and comprehension (3.15 to 3.50 to 4.38). These results highlight the multidimensional impact of the intervention on students' speaking competence.

In addition to performance gains, qualitative observations revealed a notable transformation in classroom dynamics. The learning environment became more interactive and student-centered, characterized by increased participation, reduced anxiety, and greater willingness to communicate. Altogether, these findings imply that digital storytelling beside enhances speaking proficiency as well as fosters a more supportive and engaging learning atmosphere, thereby reinforcing its pedagogical value in EFL contexts.

### **Findings on The Class Conditioned When Applying Digital Storytelling**

Prior to the implementation of digital storytelling, classroom observations revealed low student engagement in speaking activities, with most learners showing reluctance to participate and producing only minimal oral responses. The pre-test results further confirmed that students' speaking performance remained at an average level, with most indicator scores around 3, and vocabulary emerging as the strongest component. This suggests that while students possessed basic lexical knowledge, they lacked fluency, confidence, and grammatical accuracy in spoken communication. Following the implementation of Cycle I, a noticeable shift in classroom dynamics was observed. Students demonstrated increased interest and engagement, particularly when supported by animated video input that provided contextual grounding for personal narratives. Improvement at this stage was primarily evident in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, as instructional focus emphasized sentence construction and articulation. However, students continued to exhibit hesitation in extended speaking tasks, indicating that fluency and task achievement had not yet been fully developed.

A more substantial transformation occurred in Cycle II, where students displayed greater confidence, participation, and communicative competence. Instructional emphasis on fluency, task completion, and comprehension through activities such as summarizing and presenting digital storytelling contributed to more coherent and fluent oral production. Students were increasingly willing to present their narratives, respond to questions, and demonstrate clearer understanding of the content. These observational findings were reinforced by questionnaire data, which indicated that 61.1% of students perceived improvement in grammatical accuracy, particularly in the use of past tense structures. Additionally, 44.4% reported enhanced pronunciation as a result of repeated practice and self-monitoring during recording, while 41.7% acknowledged improved ability to retell personal narratives with clearer organization. Furthermore, 38.9% of students indicated increased motivation and improved ability to describe past events using more structured language, and 30.6% highlighted the role of feedback in refining their speaking performance.

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that digital storytelling not only facilitated measurable gains in key speaking components, including grammar, pronunciation, and organization of ideas, but also fostered positive affective outcomes such as increased motivation, confidence, and classroom participation. The convergence of observational and self-reported data underscores the effectiveness of digital storytelling as an instructional media that promotes both language development and student engagement in EFL speaking contexts.

### **Discussion**

The findings demonstrate that digital storytelling contributed to measurable improvements in students' speaking skills and classroom engagement. The increase in mean scores across the research cycles suggests that integrating storytelling with digital media can enhance students' ability to produce spoken language more effectively (Yang et al., 2022). This progress can be explained by the opportunity for repeated practice, meaningful communication, and structured narrative improvement.

Digital storytelling provided a context for students to use language purposefully, particularly in recounting personal experiences (Robin, 2016). This aligns with the concept of meaningful language use, where learners develop proficiency through contextualized communication rather than isolated practice. The requirement to construct and present narratives encouraged students to organize ideas, apply grammatical structures, and expand

their vocabulary. The variation in student performance reflects differences in proficiency levels. The findings suggest that integrating digital storytelling greatly enriched to the improvement of students' speaking skills in Indonesian EFL classrooms. Persistent challenges in EFL classrooms, such as the dominance of grammar-oriented instruction and limited opportunities for authentic communication, often result in a gap among students' theoretical information and their speaking ability. The implementation of digital storytelling addressed this gap by shifting the instructional focus toward meaningful and contextualized oral communication (Fu et al., 2022). As a productive skill, speaking was assessed through key components, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and task achievement, all of which showed gradual improvement across the two cycles of the study.

In Cycle I, students demonstrated notable progress in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, particularly in their ability to apply simple past tense forms when narrating personal experiences. The process of script preparation and voice recording encouraged reflection, self-monitoring, and repeated practice, which contributed to improved accuracy and clarity. However, students still experienced limitations in fluency and comprehension, often relying on scripted delivery and showing hesitation during performance. At this stage, their speaking largely reflected controlled production rather than spontaneous communication.

Following pedagogical refinement in Cycle II, the improvement shifted toward fluency, comprehension, and task achievement. Students were able to deliver their narratives more smoothly, demonstrate better understanding of content, and perform speaking tasks more independently. Their performance evolved into more extended and coherent speech, indicating a transition toward more communicative and meaningful language use. This progression highlights the cumulative impact of iterative practice and structured guidance within the digital storytelling framework.

The effectiveness of the digital storytelling is further strengthened by the nature of digital storytelling itself, which integrates narrative, visual, and audio elements to create a multimodal learning experience. By producing short digital narratives based on personal experiences, students engaged in meaningful language use that aligned with the characteristics of recount texts. This alignment between instructional media and learning objectives strengthened both linguistic development and communicative competence.

In addition to improvements in speaking performance, the implementation of digital storytelling positively influenced classroom conditions. Students showed higher levels of motivation, engagement, and participation throughout the learning process. Multimedia input in the pre-speaking stage helped students build background knowledge and organize ideas, which increased their confidence in performing speaking tasks. The classroom environment became more interactive and student-centered, with increased willingness to participate, ask questions, and engage in discussions.

These findings correspond to the prior studies that underline to the contribution of digital storytelling to creativity, involvement, and confidence in English language learning. The integration of multimedia elements created a more meaningful and enjoyable learning experience, which in turn supported students' active involvement in speaking activities. Overall, the findings recommend that digital storytelling is not only for enhancing students' speaking skills but also in creating a more dynamic and engaging classroom environment, thereby reinforcing its pedagogical value in EFL contexts.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the use of digital storytelling through personal narratives in recount texts contributed to significant improvements in students' speaking skills and classroom engagement. The findings showed measurable progress in speaking performance, as reflected in the increase of mean scores from 65 in the pre-test to 74 in Cycle I and 85 in Cycle II, together with enhancements in students' ability to organize ideas and apply appropriate grammatical structures, enhance fluency and pronunciation, and participate more actively in speaking activities. The results also indicated that digital storytelling functioned as an effective instructional media that promoted significant language use and supported the development of communicative competence, as students became more confident in expressing ideas through repeated practice and multimedia integration. In addition, positive affective factors such as increased motivation and reduced anxiety contributed to students' willingness to communicate. However, some challenges were identified, including students' initial difficulty in structuring narratives, limited language control, and varying levels of proficiency, which highlighted the importance of teacher guidance and structured implementation. Therefore, digital storytelling should be integrated as a guided instructional strategy to maximize its effectiveness, and further research is suggested to investigate its long-term effects, compare it with other digital approaches, and examine its application across different educational contexts and proficiency levels.

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