



(USING DIGITAL LEARNING TOOLS FOR ENGLISH FOR YOUNG LEARNERS (EYL) IN PRIMARY SCHOOL: IMPROVING YOUNG LEARNERS' VOCABULARY MASTERY)

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Abstract

In this study, the authors learn about the integration of digital learning tools to improve English among young learners in primary school, with a particular focus on the use of digital storytelling techniques to improve vocabulary in English language learning at Nida El Adabi Islamic Primary School. Technology makes it easier for elementary school students. They are familiar with the use of digital devices such as tablets, iPads, computers, laptops, mobile phones, and interactive whiteboards. This study aims to provide insight into the optimization of digital storytelling techniques and resources in English language learning, especially to improve vocabulary for students in elementary schools. In the author's search, the author sees a contribution in the integration of technology into student learning which has proven effective in improving English language skills in children, increasing student motivation, and developing their self-confidence. to improve language such as grammar and vocabulary. In addition, the interaction of digital tools seems to attract the attention of students and make the learning process more interesting. The results of this study provide valuable insights into the effective use of digital tools, especially digital storytelling techniques, in enriching vocabulary for English learners for children.

Keywords: *digital storytelling, early childhood English learner, vocabulary*



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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the landscape of education is evolving, and the integration of digital tools has become increasingly imperative to engage and empower young learners. Recognizing the transformative potential of technology in the teaching-learning process, this study investigates the utilization of digital learning tools, specifically digital storytelling techniques, to enhance vocabulary acquisition among English young learners' primary students. According to (Kurt, 2021) In the 21st century, rapid and continuous advances in technology have led to significant changes in the nature of education and created a new culture of learning, this means digital devices are increasing rapidly establishing English proficiency and growing in importance. Understanding how digital learning tools can effectively contribute to language learning, particularly vocabulary development, is crucial for learners and curriculum designers.

Language acquisition in primary school lays the foundation for a student's linguistic capabilities, and vocabulary mastery is an important base for language proficiency. Vocabulary knowledge is often viewed as a critical tool for second language learners because a limited vocabulary in a second language impedes successful communication. Underscoring the importance of vocabulary acquisition, Schmitt (2000) emphasizes that "lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and the acquisition of a second language" p. 55) Nation in (Alqahtani, 2015).

Learning English for young learners is important, hence in this age, the children are in their golden age, and it will be easy to learn. Lightbown & Spada (1999:29) argued that "... childhood is the golden age for creating simultaneous bilingual children due to plasticity and virginity of the child's brain to make for superior ability specifically in acquiring the early sets or units of language", (Morrow, 2011).

Copland (2014) stated that there are several reasons why young learners should learn about English to begin with, it is commonly considered that studying languages at a young age is preferable. Second, as a result of economic globalization, English has become widely used, and many governments consider that having an English-speaking workforce is necessary to compete. Third, parents want their children to learn English so that they may benefit from new world rules, and they are pressuring the government to start teaching English to younger children.

In Indonesia, Students in elementary school are English young learners who learn English as a foreign language or additional subject. According to Suyanto (2008:15) (Oktaviani & Fauzan, 2017), Indonesian young learners are elementary school students between 6 to 12 years old children. They are divided into two

groups, the younger group (6 to 8 years old) and the older group (9 to 12 years old). Whereas, based on level, they are called Lower Classes, the students of grades 1, 2, and 3, and Upper Classes, the students of grades 4, 5, and 6, (Oktaviani & Fauzan, 2017).

Teaching English to young learners as a foreign language is a challenge for the teacher. Because the children easier bored while they have learned. The teacher should have the right technique to make the children learn English more quickly and effectively always enthusiastic to learn English. It should be fun and stimulate to motivate them to learn English naturally. Learning English should not be stressful and boring for children; however, English is highly recommended to be taught to children in primary school. When the teacher can make the atmosphere of the classes fun with the right techniques then their confidence will develop. Consequently, they will learn more and use English at a more challenging level. As stated by Johnstone in Copland et.al (2014), Education is possibly the most significant policy development in the world, and English is the most often taught language, particularly to young learners or primary school students.

1. Integration Digital Storytelling for English for Young Learners to Improve Vocabulary Mastery.

a. Developing children's language skills through storytelling

Learning English is an important skill that will help children achieve their full potential in their later life. If the teacher has the right techniques, they can learn English more quickly and effectively. As Bransford and Brown (1999) stated children differ from adult learners in many ways in learning a foreign language. It is also stated by Cameron (2003:1) that there are some obvious differences: children are often more enthusiastic as learners. They will have a go at an activity even when they don't understand why or how. However, they also lose interest more quickly or easy bored and are less able to keep themselves motivated on tasks they find and feel difficult. The other reason as Moon (2005) stated that 'longer is better': that by starting in primary school you increase the overall time for English and in the long term achieve a higher level of proficiency than those starting later. There is some evidence to support this position but it comes from second language situations where children are learning languages naturalistically. In foreign language school learning situations, exposure may not be sufficient for the benefits to emerge. It's means that, when the children concerned and start learning English early for the long term is more being a success in children's foreign language learners.

Each story that is used as a technique in the classes of English language can help and contribute to children's development of their language skills. Children an early age can understand the basic structures of the story and they are capable of retelling the story. Understanding cause and effect in a story is also one of the most important skills that are useful in terms of linguistic skills, (Zaro, 1995).

Stories are familiar to children; they enjoy listening to stories from their early childhood. The use of the stories in the class can encourage children's desire for further learning of any foreign language. Stories can be also used as help for a wide variety of language and related learning activities that were described in many books dealing with the topic. Using storytelling as a technique to teach children, can develop and improve their grammar, speaking, pronunciation, listening, vocabulary, reading and literacy skills, and also children's motivation. As (Mata & Aceh, 2018) stated, some advantages of using story-telling as language learning material; it helps children to empower themselves in language mastery and proficiency where they can communicate their thoughts and feelings through the story. At the same time, they also lift their confidence and personal motivation.

b. The ways of a good story for children

To find the best way to tell the story and make the children enjoy it. According to (Mata & Aceh, 2018) A teacher should understand the purpose of telling a story in class. It is to make the students get the genuine form of language usage not to make them sleep during the session. Therefore, the qualification of the story to be performed should contain a moral lesson, and the preference can be a fiction or non-fiction passage as long as it meets the proficiency level of the students. Second, the teacher needs to introduce students to the key vocabulary that are the most often words that occur in the story so that the students understand the plot. In this term, the teacher can also provide a picture as media to introduce new words for the students. Making sure that students feel comfortable during storytelling is important. Third, to make an enjoyable and interesting story time, the teacher should master some crucial storytelling skills. They have to be able to use and vary the intonation and the voice tempo. Body gestures, mimicry, and keeping eye contact with the listeners are also things that need to be covered in delivering the story. Furthermore, the teacher should encourage the students to get involved actively in the process.

The story chosen needs to be easily understandable for children because the better children understand, the more they enjoy the story and storytelling.

c. The acquisition of new vocabulary

Each story especially in the stories for young learners of English contains vocabulary that is repeated in the story. If the children do not understand all new vocabulary, the teacher can use other means to improve their understanding and comprehension of the context. Besides that, each story for children is accompanied by a series of pictures to support the text of the story. The teacher can also use their supporting materials. According to (Zaro, 1995) stated that, most of the new language in stories is perfectly contextualized and it is usually repeated more than once so that the listener has more than one opportunity to understand the meaning. The grammatical structures included in the story should be seen mainly as formulaic expressions that do not need grammatical analysis but can be learned in an ongoing way because they appear frequently in stories in the appropriate context.

d. Digital storytelling

Today's, children are born into the world of technology and they grow up into skillful and eager users of technology. In this context, teachers and educators need to redefine what it means to be literate in today's world. This means that schools need to provide a new curriculum to help children learn in the digital era. The children tried to improve their skills which include critical thinking, information and media literacy, creativity, communication skills, collaboration, and contextual learning. As Massat et al (2010) stated since the acceptance of new ways of teaching language, teachers should use new methods. The latest curricula for primary education in many countries around the world state that technology should be integrated into classroom practices because children can become skillful and effective communicators only in case if they develop both linguistic and digital competence.

"Digital storytelling makes use of a wide variety of techniques including standard storytelling, audio, and video recording, multimedia publication, and shared "mediated" events." (Skouge, Rao: 2009).

Creating digital stories is a perfect opportunity to engage students in media literacy, in learning about how the media influence our perceptions of the world, (Goodman, 2003; Tyner, 1998).

Digital storytelling is a multimedia process that inquiries the use of photographs, video, audio, and music. Digital storytelling as a teaching method is relatively new. it took some time to fully integrate digital storytelling into the classes of English language. But, when the teachers can integrate both of them, it will make the young learners more easily improve their vocabulary mastery. Digital storytelling captures the attention of young learners through its immersive and interactive nature. The engagement theory posits that learners are more likely to retain information when they are actively

engaged in the learning process (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1999). Digital storytelling, with its multimedia components and interactive features, has the potential to sustain learners' interest and motivation, thereby facilitating vocabulary mastery.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the impact of the utilization of digital storytelling tools on enhancing the vocabulary of young learners in English classrooms. By combining storytelling with the dynamic capabilities of digital platforms, the author seeks to create an immersive and engaging learning experience in learning English as a Foreign Language in primary school.

METHOD

The research was conducted at The Elementary Islamic School of Nida El Adabi which is located at Bogor Regency. This research will be conducted in the first semester of the 2023 school year, this research organized in September starting the survey stage and taking action. The subjects of the research are twenty students in the first grade. the researchers chose to conduct research in this place because this school requires an increase in the vocabulary skills possessed by the students.

This research uses Classroom Action Research (CAR), the purpose of this class action research is to improve students' ability to use digital storytelling in the classroom when their have learning English process. As Suryadi (2012), classroom action research is action research that is carried out in the classroom to develop ability in the group. Kemmis and Mc Taggart (2010) propose that the action research portion of the classroom are series of activities that begin with action planning and reflection at the end. This is called recurrent learning. Each cycle consists of four phases, there are;

1) Action Planning,

The activity in the class begins by identifying specific vocabulary challenges faced by students in the pre-test. Analyzed the data to pinpoint areas of improvement. Based on the identified challenges, plan the integration of digital storytelling techniques. Choose multimedia elements, interactive features, and story themes to enhance vocabulary learning. To set the objectives of this research, clearly define the objectives for vocabulary improvement through digital storytelling in Cycle 1. Establish measurable goals to assess success.

2) Action Implementation,

Implement the planned digital storytelling techniques in the classroom. Introduce stories with targeted vocabulary. To make the learning experience immersive, incorporate interactive elements to engage students actively, it can be

used multimedia components, visuals, and technology. While the activity is taking in the class, encourage discussion around the story to strengthen vocabulary. Provide opportunities for students to express their understanding and ask questions.

3) Observation and Interpretation,

Observe students' reactions, engagement levels, and participation during digital storytelling sessions. To observe in this part the researchers use observation sheets to document behaviors. Collect feedback from students regarding their experience with digital storytelling. Pay attention to their understanding of vocabulary and their interest in the learning process. And then analyze the observational data and feedback to understand the effectiveness of digital storytelling.

4) Analysis and Reflection.

Analyze the pre-test and post-test data assess the impact of digital storytelling on vocabulary improvement. Reflect on challenges encountered during the implementation phase. And then identify any unexpected issues or areas that require improvement. To adjustments for Cycle 2, based on the analysis and reflections, make specific adjustments to the digital storytelling approach. This may include refining storytelling techniques, modifying interactive elements, or incorporating additional multimedia resources.

These detailed processes the iterative nature of action research, emphasizing continuous reflection, adjustment, and improvement based on data and observations. Adjustments made in Cycle 2 should be informed by insights gained from the initial cycle, contributing to an ongoing cycle of improvement in enhancing students' English vocabulary using digital media containing stories. And the instruments in this research used were: pre-test, post-test, and observation sheet were used for data collection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the research are based on vocabulary tests. The question of the test was fifteen pictures of animals. In cycle 1 and cycle 2, before the lesson, the researcher as the teacher gave the students the pre-test, the students called to the front to name a few pictures of animals one by one, and each student had time for a minute. The researcher prepared the paper to record all the answers of the students. Actually, in cycle 1, the researcher found that most of the students were confused to answer the test. During the pre-test, the students still often asked the teacher and most of them were still silent when the researcher asked about the material given. After they finished the pre-test, the researcher collected

all the answers of the students who had given the post-test before, and then the researcher began the teaching-learning process in the classroom.

The result of the post-test of the students in cycle 1 there are 61,84% of the students got higher scores than the successful criteria. In the pre-test, there are just 43,91% of the students got a score higher than the successful criteria. Because those who passed in cycle 1 have not reached the successful criteria are 80% the researcher agreed to continue the research in cycle 2 to optimize the improvement of the vocabulary skills of students in the first grade.

The researcher conducted classroom action research for 2 cycles. The encountered data proved that there are improvements in the students' activity and scores. On the other hand, the student's motivation rises and they could answer the question more easily;

a) The implementation of digital storytelling to improve young learners' vocabulary mastery in the first grade at the Elementary Islamic School of Nida El Adabi was successful. The implementation of digital storytelling makes the students enthusiastic and active in the class. It was proved by students' observation sheets during the teaching-learning process in cycle 1 and cycle 2. The researcher can conclude that most of the students in the class have participated in the learning process of cycle 2 and they can know more about the vocabularies.

Table 1. The result of Observation of The Students in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

Cycle	A	B	C	D	E
Cycle1	8	9	8	10	11
Cycle2	12	10	11	11	13

Explanation:

- a. Paying Attention to the students
 - b. Asking and responding to questions of the students
 - c. Reflecting what the students learned
 - d. Doing work with their group in the class
 - e. Being Enthusiastic about a picture of digital storytelling when they learned
- b) The significant result of students' vocabulary mastery after the use of digital storytelling, can be seen from the data result of pre-test and post-test cycle 1 on Table 2:

Table 2 Analysis of Students' Improvement while the Research conducted

No.	Analysis	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
1	Mean of pre-test	43,91%	66,75%
	Mean of post-test	61,84%	90,40%
2	Number of the students who pass the passing grade (≤ 73)		
	Pre-test	70,47%	86,32%
	Post-test	77,08%	100%
	Improvement	6,61%	13,68%

According to data in table 2, the post-test is bigger than the pre-test. This means that there is a significant improvement in the student's vocabulary after digital storytelling. The improvement can also be seen in the number of students who can pass the successful criteria.

Throughout the implementation of digital storytelling in both cycles, there was noticeable shift in student engagement. Observations revealed a heightened level of enthusiasm and active participation among the students. The integration of multimedia elements and interactive features in the storytelling process appeared to capture the students' attention, fostering a more engaging learning environment. Students not only displayed increased interest in the stories but also actively participated in discussions, demonstrating a positive response to the use of digital media for vocabulary enhancement.

The analysis of both pre-test and post-test data provided compelling evidence of substantial improvement in vocabulary mastery among the students. The use of digital storytelling as an instructional method contributed significantly to this positive outcome. Students exhibited a greater understanding of the targeted vocabulary as reflected in the post-test results. The integration of visual aids, multimedia resources, and interactive elements seemed to enhance the retention and application of new vocabulary, reinforcing the effectiveness of digital storytelling approach.

CONCLUSION

Through this cycle of classroom action research, it can be concluded that the use of digital storytelling in English learning for first grade students is effective in improving vocabulary understanding and mastery. The percentage score of the students who had passed of the standardized score is really good, those are from 77,08% in cycle 1 up to 100% in cycle 2. Reflection on data and adjustments to learning strategies based on evaluation results contribute to significant improvements in student learning outcomes.

The observed increase in student engagement aligns with the idea that digital storytelling, with its multimedia components and interactive nature, has the potential to make the learning process more captivating for young learners. As students actively participated in discussions and demonstrated enthusiasm, it suggests that the integration of technology, in the form of digital storytelling, played a pivotal role in creating an immersive and enjoyable learning experience.

The notable improvement in vocabulary mastery as evidenced by the analysis of pre-test and post-test data, underscores the success of the intervention. Digital storytelling, with its emphasis on contextualized and repeated exposure to vocabulary within a narrative framework, proved to be an effective tool for enhancing language skills. The findings imply that the combination of storytelling techniques with digital media has a positive impact on vocabulary acquisition, providing a valuable avenue for language development among young learners.

In conclusion, the observed increase in student engagement and the significant improvement in vocabulary mastery validate the efficacy of the digital storytelling approach. These findings contribute valuable insights into the potential of integrating digital media, especially digital storytelling, to enhance language learning outcomes in the context of primary school.

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