# DIGITAL STORYTELLING ENGAGES EFL SECONDARY STUDENTS IN LEARNING READING

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**Abstract**

The primary focus of this research is to examine the level of involvement exhibited by secondary students studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in the process of learning reading, specifically through the utilization of Digital Storytelling (DST). This study employs a qualitative research methodology, specifically utilizing a descriptive case study design. Data collection in this research includes the utilization of observations and interviews. The present study employs thematic analysis as stated by Braun and Clarke (2006). The research findings indicate that the implementation of DST has a positive impact on students' reading comprehension, critical thinking abilities, and technological proficiency. Furthermore, fosters increased cognitive, behavioral, and emotional engagement among students. Presentation sessions facilitate interactive discussions, thereby promoting cognitive engagement. The act of developing storyboards and disseminating digital narratives elicits pleasurable and emotionally immersive educational encounters. The research findings illustrate the favorable influence of DST on students' motivation and interest in reading, indicating a heightened emotional involvement in the educational experience.

**Keywords**:  Digital Storytelling; EFL Secondary Students; Learning Reading; Students' Engagement

## INTRODUCTION

Many teaching strategy can help students learn to read.  English teachers encourage reading aloud and remembering. EFL professors and methodologists have discouraged oral reading. Hill and Dobbyn (1979: p. 69) take the extreme position that reading aloud in class is just a way to waste time or make the teacher uncomfortable without benefiting the students. Reading helps with understanding and processing. Students may find it difficult to teach and practice many literacy skills. Ali & Razali (2019) suggest training students reading strategies that match their needs, English competence, and text genres. Especially if students utilize incorrect processing mechanisms and struggle to understand texts.

Baker and Brown (1984) believe reading techniques are cognitive actions readers do to make and maintain meaning. If a reader understands the active nature of reading and the benefits of problem-solving and troubleshooting to improve understanding, Self-regulation—monitoring and assessing one's cognitive functioning while reading—requires this level of self-awareness (Baker & Brown 1984: p. 376). Readers learn them to promote active, proficient, and intentional reading. However, it's crucial to teach students a range of reading skills to engage them in reading, boost their comprehension, and foster critical thinking.

Reading is one of the four core abilities that all language learners need to succeed. Reading is one of the key ways middle and high school students learn, making reading comprehension crucial for academic performance and postsecondary possibilities, according to Clemens et al. (2021). Reading comprehension helps students retain knowledge. Reading gives students the knowledge they need for school. Anderson (1999) shows that reading is the most important ability for students to learn since it helps them succeed academically.  Reading's main purpose

is to impart knowledge. Hedgcock and Ferris (2009: p. 49) state that reading involves a complicated interplay between the reader's cognitive processes and reading strategies and various textual information. Readers combine their past knowledge with the text's content and context. Reading in class helps students contextualize text. But students' reading classroom engagement is hardly discussed. Reading motivation leads to reading engagement and accomplishment (Guthrie & Klauda, 2016).

Digital storytelling can engage students in reading. Like digital storytelling, it helps students learn. DST helps students understand descriptive reading. DST motivates users to co-create and customize digital narratives as learning goods, according to Al-Shaye (2021). Digital storytelling helps students read. (Fauziah, 2022) Digital storytelling combines images, audio, text, and video using digital software. Technology has made digital storytelling possible. This technique uses digital tools to mediate storytelling and is multiliteracy (Chubko et al., 2020). Digital storytelling can make learning abstract topics easier (Robin, 2008).

Nuroh et al. (2021) taught youngsters how to understand stories in terms of their purpose and context, use story-telling technology, use Indonesian and English as storytelling tools, and engage in multimodal activities. The multilingual digital story-making learning experience gave students a new way to communicate their narrative in many languages and share and explore their life experiences through digital storytelling. Digital storytelling as an instructional tool engages students in creatively integrating technology to generate meaning (Mohamed, 2020). Few studies examined DST's impact on students' engagement. DST improves student engagement. As noted and demonstrated in the preceding paragraphs, students' engagement in DST approach is under-explored as past studies focused on reading efficacy. Thus, this study examines DST-assisted reading students' engagement.

## METHOD

A researcher employs a study design to obtain, analyze, and interpret data, according to Creswell (2012, p. 293). This study used qualitative research since it focused on process. It means the study's data were phrases or paragraphs, not numerical numbers. Ary et al. (2010, p. 29) define qualitative research design as a complete understanding of an event or natural social environment. This study utilized a descriptive case study design. Yin (2003: p. 46) suggests using a descriptive case study to explore school innovation, new curriculum, or educational technology. This research is noteworthy because it contextualized EFL secondary students' reading engagement through digital storytelling. Interviews, observations, and documentation provided data for this study. This study conducted at a private Junior High School in Bekasi. Eight graders were chosen by their English instructor to participate in this study. Their roles matched the researchers' needs. The researcher used thematic analysis to analyze the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). Additionally, the researcher collected and evaluated data using triangulation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The studies examine students' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement in reading descriptive text using digital story telling. The data's thematic analysis revealed several key themes about students' engagement in this study. This study found patterns. It involves digital storytelling group projects, which improve students' reading comprehension and critical thinking (Cognitive engagement), technology skills (Cognitive engagement), planning and

strategy (Behavioral engagement), discussion (Cognitive engagement), and joyful learning (Emotional engagement). Detailed findings:

**1. DST improve reading comprehension and critical thinking (cognitive engagement).**
Student engagement in digital storytelling (DST) group projects improves comprehension and critical thinking. DST group projects showed students actively assessing and synthesizing reading content. Through group work and conversations, students made connections, critically assessed major tale elements, and made book conclusions. Group projects allowed students to share ideas and deepen their understanding.

**2. DST helps students learn technology (Cognitive Engagement).**
According to studies, digital storytelling (DST) activities make students more tech-savvy, which improves their cognitive engagement with learning. Technology in DST promotes students to master a variety of digital tools and platforms, increasing their engagement in intellectual processes and technological knowledge. DST students extensively used technology. They chose and used digital tools well to construct, edit, and improve their stories. Audio, image, and multimedia editing helped students tell their tales. Their seamless use of technology in storytelling showed their growing familiarity and competency with internet tools.

**3. DST encourages students to plan and strategize (behavioral engagement).**
DST sessions encourage students to plan and prepare strategically, according to results. Students offer language study and reading materials. Planning and strategy formulation during DST sessions helps students' behavioral engagement. This engagement method also helps students learn by having them examine and synthesize facts to communicate their story through digital storytelling. DST students participated more actively. They pre-read by concepting, storyboarding, and sketching their digital narrative. These preparation exercises helped students consider the story's characters, narrative, and themes and decide how to present it.

**4. DST presentations encourage students to discuss (cognitive engagement).**
According to studies, digital storytelling (DST) presentations stimulate student conversation and cognitive engagement. Sharing digital stories with classmates promotes critical thinking, in-depth conversation, and engagement. As observed, students discuss their digital stories. Peers listened closely as students presented their work, questioned them, and provided ideas. During the presentation session, students shared their opinions, views, and book readings, which sparked intelligent debates.

**5. Storyboarding and publishing foster happy learning (emotional engagement).**
Storyboards and digital storytelling made DST sessions more fun for students, according to studies. These exercises boost students' reading engagement and happiness. Publishing digital stories by students was also important. Students were proud to display their work to classmates or a broader audience. Storyboarding and publication can help teachers create a positive and engaging learning environment. Encourage students to share their digital stories to boost emotional engagement and peer cooperation and critique. DST's joyful features can boost students' enthusiasm, creativity, and reading engagement.

**Discussion**
Data discussed show students' enthusiasm in learning to read through digital storytelling (DST). The research's key themes and their implications will highlight DST's emotional, behavioral, and cognitive engagement. The primary focus of this study is on students' behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement with descriptive texts on Digital Storytelling Group Projects.

Fredricks et al. (2004) emphasize language learning engagement. The findings demonstrate digital storytelling's positive effects on students' education.

Students' reading comprehension and critical thinking are improved via digital storytelling. Sulistianingsih (2021) also claims that digital storytelling improves students' reading comprehension and study motivation. By actively engaging with descriptive text to create digital stories, students enhanced their critical thinking and topic knowledge. Richards (2001) defines comprehension as understanding a text or speech.

DST also helps students gain confidence using digital tools and multimedia components. Technology enhances cognitive learning. It also supports Mohamed (2020), who discovered that digital storytelling engages students in the process of successfully integrating technology to create meaning.

Students' efforts to plan and prepare for their DST sessions show a high level of behavioral participation. Material preparation creates learning resources (Richards, 2001; 262). They deepened their learning by controlling their storytelling strategy. Teachers, practitioners, and researchers find it difficult to provide students with the abilities they need to use modern technologies in their learning, according to Moradi and Chen (2019).

Presentation sessions increased cognitive engagement through meaningful dialogues and group learning. DST presentations boost cognitive engagement and critical interaction and collaboration. Nunan (1992) observed that sociocultural theory students must collaborate to engage in the digital storytelling project and share their views.

In conclusion, digital storytelling may interest students in descriptive text. Mercer (2011: p. 1) states that teachers encounter students who vary in their sense of agency, motivation, willingness to participate in activities or set challenging goals, learning approaches and strategies, and level of self-directed behavior. Students may be encouraged to read descriptive information by using digital storytelling. Teaching materials shape lesson content, skill balance, and language practice for students, according to Richards (2001, 252). Thus, materials' role and uses are well-known.

Digital storytelling improves students' reading comprehension and motivation (Sulistianingsih, 2021). Interactive multimedia and digital storytelling increase students' reading experience. By creating and presenting their own digital stories, students become more engaged in the reading material and motivated. Technology engages students and improves their digital literacy. Digital storytelling can boost students' interest in reading descriptive texts, making it a vital and cutting-edge language and literacy tool.

Finally, creating storyboards and uploading digital stories on Instagram made students excited about studying. According to Zarei and Rudravarapu (2019), Instagram has increased students' interest in studying English through peer interactions. These findings show the various benefits of digital storytelling in language acquisition and its potential as an effective instructional method to boost student engagement and learning outcomes.


**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this study shows how Digital Storytelling Group Projects engage students' emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement with descriptive language. The results demonstrate the benefits of digital storytelling in language learning. Students' reading comprehension and critical thinking skills were initially better incorporated into the learning process as they actively engaged with descriptive content and made innovative choices while producing digital stories. DST seminars also helped students how to handle digital tools confidently. Students' active planning and preparation for DST sessions showed their behavioral engagement and ownership of the teaching and learning process. Presentations

promoted cognitive engagement through intelligent conversation and group learning. After sharing their digital stories, students felt emotional engagement and positive learning attitudes. These findings suggest digital storytelling can improve language acquisition and student engagement. This study has significance for educators who want to build dynamic, engaging language learning environments that promote critical thinking, creativity, and enjoyment. Digital storytelling can create interesting language learning experiences that prepare students for the digital age as technology changes education.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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