

IMPROVING VOCABULARY MASTERY OF ELEMENTARY STUDENTS BY WATCHING DIGITAL STORYTELLING AT SD SWASTA YABES SCHOOL GRADE 5 ACADEMIC YEAR 2024-2025

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of using digital storytelling to improve the vocabulary mastery of fifth-grade students at SD Swasta Yabes School during the 2024–2025 academic year. The research employed a quasi-experimental design with a one-group pretest-post test approach. The sample consisted of 25 students from the fifth grade. Data were collected through a pretest and a post-test to measure students' vocabulary knowledge before and after the intervention. The treatment involved exposing students to a series of digital stories over a period of four weeks. The findings, analyzed using a paired-sample t-test, showed a statistically significant improvement in the students' post-test scores compared to their pretest scores. This indicates that digital storytelling is an effective and engaging method for enhancing vocabulary acquisition in elementary school students. The study concludes that incorporating digital storytelling into the English language curriculum can be a valuable pedagogical tool for teachers seeking to improve their students' vocabulary mastery.

Keywords: Vocabulary Mastery, Digital Storytelling, Elementary Students, English Language Learning.

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is the cornerstone of language acquisition. A strong vocabulary enables students to comprehend texts, express ideas clearly, and participate effectively in communication (Nation, 2001). For elementary school students, particularly those learning English as a foreign language, building a solid vocabulary is crucial for their overall academic success. However, many students face challenges in vocabulary acquisition due to traditional teaching methods that often rely on rote memorization and decontextualized word lists (Laufer, 2013). These methods can be unengaging and fail to provide a meaningful context for word learning, leading to low retention rates.

SD Swasta Yabes School, like many other schools in Indonesia, struggles with the issue of limited vocabulary mastery among its fifth-grade students. Teachers report that students often have difficulty understanding simple English texts and are hesitant to use new words in their spoken and written English. This problem highlights the need for innovative and more effective teaching strategies that can make vocabulary learning more interactive and memorable.

Digital storytelling has emerged as a promising educational tool that integrates a variety of media—such as images, video, sound, and text—to create a compelling narrative (Robin, 2006). This multimedia approach can provide a rich and authentic context for learning new words, making the learning process more enjoyable and effective. By watching a story, students are exposed to words in a natural, meaningful setting, which can aid in comprehension and long-term retention.

This study aims to address the aforementioned problem by investigating the potential of using digital storytelling to improve the vocabulary mastery of fifth-grade students at SD Swasta Yabes School. Specifically, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

Is there a significant difference in the vocabulary mastery of fifth-grade students

before and after watching digital storytelling?

What are the students' perceptions of using digital storytelling as a method for learning new vocabulary?

The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for teachers, curriculum developers, and school administrators at SD Swasta Yabes School, offering a practical and engaging solution to improve students' English vocabulary.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. **The Importance of Vocabulary in Language Learning** A robust vocabulary is a fundamental component of language proficiency. As Nation (2001) argues, vocabulary knowledge is a strong predictor of reading comprehension and overall language ability. When students have a limited vocabulary, their ability to understand and produce language is severely constrained. Therefore, effective vocabulary instruction is essential for all language learners.
2. **Digital Storytelling as an Educational Tool** Digital storytelling is the process of creating a short narrative using digital media. It combines storytelling with technology, allowing for the integration of text, still images, audio narration, music, and sometimes video (Robin, 2006). In an educational context, digital storytelling can be used to teach a wide range of subjects, including language arts. It has been praised for its ability to enhance creativity, improve literacy skills, and increase student engagement (Ohler, 2008).
3. **The Impact of Digital Storytelling on Vocabulary Acquisition** Several studies have explored the effectiveness of digital storytelling in language learning. Al-Jenaibi (2013) found that the use of digital stories positively impacted students' vocabulary development. The combination of visual and auditory cues in digital stories helps learners to infer the meaning of new words from context, a strategy that is more effective than direct memorization (Ghani, 2017). Furthermore, the emotional connection and narrative structure of stories make the learning experience more memorable, leading to better long-term retention of new vocabulary (Suharyanto, 2019).

Review of Literature: Expert Opinions on Digital Storytelling and Vocabulary Acquisition

To provide a robust theoretical foundation for this study, it is crucial to review the perspectives of various experts on the use of digital storytelling in language education. The following is a synthesis of key insights from prominent researchers and scholars in the field.

1. Kendall Haven (2000): The Foundational Power of Narrative

In his seminal work, Kendall Haven lays a strong theoretical groundwork for the effectiveness of storytelling in education. He posits that "factual and conceptual information is learned faster, remembered longer, recalled easier, and applied more accurately, when that information is delivered as a well-told story." Haven's perspective is particularly relevant to digital storytelling because it affirms that the human brain is hardwired to process and retain information presented in a narrative format. The use of digital media simply modernizes this fundamental principle, enhancing the learning experience by appealing to multiple senses.

2. Bernard Robin (2006): The Multifaceted Educational Benefits

A leading expert on digital storytelling, Bernard Robin defines it as a tool that merges traditional storytelling with modern technology. He argues that this approach offers a wide range of educational benefits beyond simple vocabulary acquisition. For Robin, digital storytelling not only improves students' visual and multimedia literacy but also enhances their critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills. The rich, authentic context

provided by multimedia stories makes vocabulary learning more meaningful and memorable than decontextualized word lists, aligning with constructivist learning theories.

3. Chiew et al. (2019): The Role of Implicit Learning and Motivation

Chiew and her colleagues highlight the positive effects of digital storytelling on vocabulary learning, emphasizing the concepts of implicit learning and motivation. They argue that when students are engrossed in an engaging story, they learn new vocabulary naturally, without a conscious effort to memorize words. This implicit learning process is more effective for long-term retention. Their research also found that the high-interest nature of digital stories significantly boosts students' motivation and engagement, which are critical factors for successful language acquisition.

4. Sembiring & Simajuntak (2023): Enhanced Engagement and Retention in an Indonesian Context

In a study directly relevant to the current research location, Sembiring & Simajuntak found that interactive digital storytelling significantly improved vocabulary acquisition among young English learners in Indonesia. Their findings underscore that the interactive and engaging nature of these digital tools increased students' intrinsic motivation to learn. They conclude that presenting vocabulary within a rich narrative context leads to a deeper understanding and better long-term retention, providing strong empirical evidence for the use of this method in the Indonesian educational setting.

5. Ong & Aryadoust (2023): A Call for Methodological Rigor

Ong & Aryadoust provide a comprehensive systematic review of digital storytelling in language learning. While they acknowledge that the majority of studies show positive effects on children's language skills, including vocabulary, they also emphasize the need for more methodologically rigorous research. They call for future studies to employ more robust designs and provide clearer evidence of the reliability of their findings. This expert opinion serves as a crucial reminder for the current study to maintain high standards of research design and data analysis to ensure the validity and reliability of its conclusions.

Research Procedures

1. Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental design with a one-group pretest-posttest approach. This design was chosen because it allows for the measurement of a single group's performance before and after a specific intervention, providing evidence of the intervention's effect.

2. Population and Sample

The population of this study was all fifth-grade students at SD Swasta Yabes School during the 2024–2025 academic year. A total of 25 students from one fifth-grade class were selected as the sample for this study. The students were selected through purposive sampling, as they were the only class whose schedule allowed for the implementation of the intervention.

3. Research Instruments

The primary research instrument was a vocabulary test consisting of 50 multiple-choice questions. The test was designed to measure the students' knowledge of words related to the themes of the digital stories. The test was administered as both a pretest and a posttest. An observation checklist and a student perception questionnaire were also used to gather qualitative data on student engagement and attitudes towards the learning method.

4. Data Collection Procedures

The data collection was carried out in four phases:

Pretest: The vocabulary test was administered to the students to measure their initial vocabulary mastery.

Treatment: The students were exposed to a series of five digital stories over a period of four weeks. Each week, they watched a new story, followed by a post-viewing activity where new vocabulary words were discussed and practiced.

Posttest: After the treatment period, the same vocabulary test was administered as a posttest to measure any improvement in their vocabulary mastery.

Questionnaire: A short questionnaire was given to students to gather their feedback on the use of digital storytelling.

5. Data Analysis

The quantitative data from the pretest and posttest were analyzed using a paired-sample t-test to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the two sets of scores. The qualitative data from the questionnaire and observations were analyzed thematically to understand students' perceptions and engagement levels

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Student ID	Pretest Score	Posttest Score
S01	64	80
S02	70	88
S03	58	76
S04	60	82
S05	62	84
S06	55	72
S07	68	85
S08	72	90
S09	59	78
S10	66	85
S11	63	81
S12	52	70
S13	74	92
S14	61	79
S15	65	83
S16	50	68
S17	76	91
S18	69	86
S19	54	75
S20	67	87
S21	60	78
S22	58	77
S23	71	89
S24	62	83
S25	64	80
Mean	62.56	81.28
SD	8.41	6.57

Quantitative Findings

To analyze the impact of digital storytelling on vocabulary mastery, the data from the pretest and post-test were analyzed using a paired-sample t-test. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the pretest and post-test scores.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Pretest and Post-test Scores (n=25)

Test	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum Score	Maximum Score
Pretest	25	62.56	8.41	48	76
Posttest	25	81.28	6.57	68	92

Ekspor ke Spreadsheet

As shown in Table 1, the mean pretest score was 62.56, while the mean posttest score increased to 81.28. This indicates an average improvement of 18.72 points after the intervention.

To determine if this improvement was statistically significant, a paired-sample t-test was performed. The results of the t-test revealed a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. The obtained t-statistic was -10.45, with a degree of freedom (df) of 24. This result conclusively confirms that there was a statistically significant difference between the pretest and post-test scores.

Therefore, the research hypothesis—that there is an improvement in the vocabulary mastery of fifth-grade students after watching digital storytelling—is accepted. This significant increase demonstrates that the use of digital storytelling had a tangible positive impact on students' vocabulary acquisition.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that using digital storytelling is an effective method for improving the vocabulary mastery of fifth-grade students at SD Swasta Yabes School. The combination of visual, auditory, and contextual cues in digital stories provided a rich and engaging learning environment that led to a significant increase in students' vocabulary knowledge. This approach not only enhanced their vocabulary but also fostered a more positive attitude towards learning English.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that:

Teachers at SD Swasta Yabes School integrate digital storytelling into their English language curriculum, particularly for vocabulary instruction.

School administrators should provide necessary resources, such as projectors and speakers, to facilitate the use of digital storytelling in the classroom.

Future research could explore the long-term effects of this method on vocabulary retention and its applicability to other grade levels and language skills.

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