



## DIGITAL STORYTELLING IN READING LITERACY: A STUDY OF STUDENTS PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES

Ropiul Umam<sup>1</sup>, Imro'atul Husna Afriani<sup>2</sup>, Rizki Nurfida Pambayun<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>University 17 Agustus 1945 Banyuwangi

E-mail: [rflu923@gmail.com](mailto:rflu923@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [imroatul.h.afriani@untag-banyuwangi.ac.id](mailto:imroatul.h.afriani@untag-banyuwangi.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>, [rizkinurfida@untag-banyuwangi.ac.id](mailto:rizkinurfida@untag-banyuwangi.ac.id)<sup>3</sup>

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Corresponding Author:  
Ropiul Umam

Email Corresponding :  
[rflu923@gmail.com](mailto:rflu923@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

This study explores junior high school students' perceptions and experiences regarding the use of digital storytelling in English reading instruction, specifically in the context of descriptive texts. The primary aim is to examine how digital storytelling affects students' reading comprehension, motivation, and engagement. Using a qualitative descriptive method, data were gathered through Likert-scale questionnaires and semi-structured interviews involving 15 eighth-grade students from SMP Muhammadiyah 7 Sempu. Thematic analysis supported by triangulation revealed that over 69.70% of respondents expressed positive or neutral views toward digital storytelling, based on responses to 16 questionnaire items. In addition, data from 10 interview questions indicated that multimedia elements like images and audio significantly improved students' understanding and memory retention, while also boosting their motivation and interest in reading. Although some students reported challenges with vocabulary and reading confidence, the majority expressed a preference for digital storytelling over conventional approaches. These findings suggest that digital storytelling holds strong potential as an effective and engaging instructional method for enhancing reading literacy in EFL settings.

**Keywords:** *Digital storytelling, reading literacy, student perceptions, English learning, descriptive text.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the essential skills in English education, especially for students learning English as a foreign language (EFL). In the EFL context, reading is not only a means to acquire information but also plays a crucial role in enhancing students' overall language skills (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). Through reading, students can broaden their vocabulary, become familiar with various text types, and develop critical thinking skills. Reading goes beyond merely recognizing words; it also involves understanding the content, recognizing text structures, and interpreting underlying

meanings in the text (Grabe & Stoller, 2018). OECD (2019) states that reading literacy includes the ability to understand, apply, evaluate, and reflect on written information for various purposes, both in learning and daily life. Reading literacy serves as a strong foundation for students' academic progress, helping them develop critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and access to global knowledge (Zuraini et al., 2024). One type of text that is frequently studied is descriptive text, which aims to give a detailed description of objects, places, or people so that readers can vividly imagine what is

being described (Nunan, 2023). One approach considered effective in improving students' interest and comprehension in reading is storytelling. Storytelling has long been used as a way to share knowledge, culture, and experiences in an engaging manner. Delaney (2021) emphasizes that storytelling helps people make sense of the world by organizing information into meaningful and memorable narratives. Today, storytelling has evolved into digital storytelling, which blends traditional narrative techniques with digital technology such as images, videos, audio, and text to make the material livelier and engaging (Robin, 2019). In the educational context, digital storytelling has been shown to boost students' engagement, enhance critical thinking, and support deeper understanding of learning materials. However, the effectiveness of digital storytelling depends significantly on how students perceive this method. Perception is a psychological process through which individuals assign meaning to information received through the senses (Efron et al., 2020; Jaya et al., 2025). In the learning process, students' perceptions play an important role because they influence how students receive and respond to the teaching methods used by their teachers (Ünal & Kılıç, 2021). Previous studies have shown that students' perceptions of digital storytelling are often linked to factors such as the ease of using technology, increased interest in reading, and support in better understanding texts (Mills, 2021). Positive perceptions can encourage learning motivation, whereas negative perceptions can hinder the learning process (Alasmari et al., 2022).

This study is motivated by real conditions observed at SMP Muhammadiyah 7 Sempu. Based on interviews with teachers, it was found that students' reading literacy skills and English scores are still relatively low. Additionally, students' interest in learning English is lacking. However, teachers also noted that students have a

strong curiosity about new and interactive learning methods. This situation provides an opportunity to implement digital storytelling in reading lessons to examine whether this method can help improve students' reading literacy comprehension and to explore how students respond to this learning approach. The motivation for this study is to identify a more engaging, interactive, and effective teaching method suitable for the characteristics of today's learners. By understanding students' perceptions and experiences with digital storytelling, it is hoped that teachers can design more effective and enjoyable learning strategies tailored to students' needs.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Previous Research**

Previous studies play a crucial role in guiding new research by offering comparative insights and informing research design. Aksoy and Özdemir (2021) found that digital storytelling improved high school students' interest, comprehension, and confidence in reading and writing English. Similarly, Yang and Wu (2019) observed that students in Taiwan benefited in vocabulary understanding and reading enjoyment through digital storytelling. Nordin et al. (2019) also reported positive impacts on Malaysian junior high students' reading confidence and content understanding. However, most studies focus on older students and examine general reading or combined reading and writing skills, with limited research on junior high school students in Indonesia. Few have specifically explored the impact of digital storytelling on engagement, confidence, and interest in reading descriptive texts despite the text's importance in developing detailed comprehension (Nunan, 2023). To address this gap, the current study investigates junior high school students' perceptions of digital storytelling in reading, particularly its effects on comprehension, motivation, and

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engagement. Conducted at SMP Muhammadiyah 7 Sempu, where reading skills remain low, this research aims to inform more engaging instructional practices for enhancing EFL reading literacy in Indonesian classrooms.

**2.2 Definition of Reading Literacy**

Reading literacy encompasses the capacity to comprehend, interpret, and engage with written texts for personal growth, learning, and participation in society. Center (2020) explains literacy as a broad language skill that integrates reading, writing, speaking, and listening, all serving the purpose of effective communication. UNESCO also highlights literacy as a practical set of skills applicable across diverse contexts, while Haris et al. (2022) emphasize that reading literacy involves interpreting and evaluating written information so it resonates with the reader. Far beyond mere word recognition, reading literacy is a complex cognitive process requiring understanding, analysis, and the practical application of written material in everyday life. Children are encouraged not just to pronounce words but to derive meaning from what they read, forming the basis for reflective and critical thinking skills. This literacy develops gradually, beginning with early experiences such as recognizing symbols, mimicking reading behaviors, and engaging with narratives. Such early exposure builds the groundwork for advanced reading abilities, including following plots, identifying characters, and grasping cause-and-effect relationships in texts, which are essential for critical and reflective thought. Indicators of reading literacy, according to Hardianti (2019), include comprehending text, gathering new information, reflecting on content, and drawing conclusions. Tarigan (2018) further notes that reading is a receptive skill fundamental not only for acquiring information but also for cultivating imagination and creativity.

**2.3 Descriptive Text**

Descriptive text is used to portray objects, places, people, or events in a detailed way. Duha (2023) explain that this type of text offers rich details to help readers visualize what is being described. It often employs vivid and figurative language to paint a clear mental picture. Djiwandono (2018) notes that descriptive writing incorporates sensory details like sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste to make the descriptions livelier and engaging. As a result, readers not only receive factual information but also experience the atmosphere and emotions conveyed in the text.

According to Jannah (2021), descriptive texts follow a specific structure, usually beginning with an introduction of the subject, followed by detailed explanations of its characteristics and qualities. This structured approach helps readers easily follow the information presented. Rakhmawati (2022) further emphasizes that descriptive texts play a significant role both in education and everyday communication, as they can deepen understanding and influence how readers feel about a topic. Overall, descriptive texts are crucial for communicating ideas vividly and effectively, making them valuable tools for enhancing language skills, creative expression, and impactful storytelling.

**2.4 Reading Descriptive Text Focused on Playing Sports**

Reading is a vital cognitive skill in language learning and academic success. Grabe (2019) highlights that it involves word recognition, vocabulary understanding, and sentence analysis, making it an active meaning-making process. In English learning, reading supports vocabulary growth, critical thinking, and learner independence. A key type of reading is descriptive texts, which help readers visualize people, places, or events through detailed language. Anderson (2017) explains that such texts use structured

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descriptions to present clear images, while Knapp and Watkins (2019) emphasize the use of sensory details like color, shape, and mood. Fadilah et al. (2023) further note that vivid descriptions, such as in sports contexts, enhance reader engagement by bringing scenes to life. Thus, descriptive texts not only improve language skills but also make reading more immersive and meaningful.

### ***2.5 Fostering Creativity in Reading Literacy***

Fostering creativity in reading literacy helps students think critically and imaginatively. Creative reading involves more than just understanding words; it encourages interpretation, connection, and new idea generation. Robinson (2017) notes that creativity can be nurtured through open-ended activities using various media like visuals, drama, and digital tools, making students active participants. Almelhi (2021) adds that a creative environment supports original thinking and deeper reflection.

Such creativity thrives when students feel supported and engaged. Activities like rewriting stories, writing poems, or performing scenes from texts help improve comprehension while boosting confidence and motivation. Gayatri and Gaffar (2023) highlights that creating their own stories allows students to express ideas freely and build creative skills. This approach also reduces fear of errors and promotes a more positive learning experience. In short, combining creativity with reading literacy encourages both cognitive and emotional development, making reading more meaningful and dynamic.

### ***2.6 Definition of Digital Storytelling***

Digital storytelling (DS) is a method of telling stories using digital tools and multimedia elements such as text, images, sound, and video. Razmia, Pouralib, and Nozad (2018) describe it as a creative blend of various media to produce engaging

narratives. According to Robin (2019), DS combines traditional storytelling with modern technology, allowing individuals to express themselves in dynamic and personal ways. In the digital era, storytelling extends beyond words to include visuals and sounds that enhance emotional impact and meaning. Ohler (2017) notes that DS helps students express ideas creatively while building technical and critical thinking skills. It also supports problem-solving and narrative organization. Sadik (2019) emphasizes that DS increases student engagement by involving them in content creation, deepening their understanding and encouraging creativity. In essence, digital storytelling merges technology with narrative, making learning more interactive, meaningful, and personally relevant.

### ***2.7 The Perceptions of Digital Storytelling and Language Learning***

Students' perceptions play a crucial role in the acceptance and use of digital storytelling in language learning. Those who view it as enjoyable and user-friendly tend to be more motivated and actively engaged (Ünal & Kılıç, 2021; Alasmari et al., 2022). Multimedia features like visuals, audio, and animation enhance comprehension and make reading more interesting (Kim & Choi, 2021), while also helping students connect content to personal experiences (Mills, 2021). Positive perceptions are also linked to increased confidence in expressing ideas (Chen & Liu, 2020). Digital storytelling serves as a bridge between traditional literacy and modern digital skills (Alharthi, 2022), creating emotional engagement that supports deeper understanding (Hung et al., 2021). However, challenges such as limited time, lack of digital devices, and low digital literacy remain obstacles (Alasmari et al., 2022). Some students also feel stressed by the creative and technical demands (Ünal & Kılıç, 2021). Thus, students' perceptions are shaped by both the benefits and practical limitations of digital storytelling.

### 3. METHODS

This study aims to explore students' perceptions and experiences of digital storytelling in reading literacy at SMP Muhammadiyah 7 Sempu, Banyuwangi, using interviews and questionnaires. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the research seeks to understand how students interpret and experience digital storytelling in the context of English reading. As stated by Bhangu (2023), qualitative research involves non-numerical methods to collect and analyze data, its focus on individuals' interpretations of their experiences. Following Holly (2018), a descriptive approach presents data in a clear, organized manner to reveal the nature of specific events. Ananda et al. add that descriptive qualitative research explores social phenomena in depth without manipulation. The study systematically describes how digital storytelling supports reading literacy development.

#### 3.1 The Data and Source Data

This research distinguishes between primary and secondary data based on their sources. According to Surbhi S. (2020), primary data is obtained directly by the researcher, while secondary data is gathered by others. This study primarily uses primary data, collected through questionnaires and interviews with eighth-grade students at a junior high school in Sempu, Banyuwangi. These tools aim to explore students' perceptions and experiences of digital storytelling and how it supports reading literacy improvement.

Although the study focuses on primary data, secondary data from teachers such as students' low reading and English scores and low interest in learning English supports the research context. However, teachers also noted students' high curiosity for innovative methods, making eighth grade an ideal target group. This stage is critical for developing reading comprehension and critical thinking, and students are typically more receptive to

creative approaches like digital storytelling. Therefore, eighth-grade students were selected to investigate how digital storytelling influences their reading literacy.

#### 3.2 Data Collection Method

This study uses questionnaires and interviews for data collection. According to July (2020), questionnaires are sets of questions designed to gather information from participants. In this research, 15 eighth-grade students will complete questionnaires about their perceptions and experiences with digital storytelling in reading literacy.

Interviews will follow the questionnaire results, targeting students with the highest and lowest scores to gain deeper insights. Interviews involve direct interaction, allowing the researcher to clarify answers and explore participants' views more thoroughly. As noted by Sugiyono (2021), interviews are effective for collecting detailed, in-depth data. A mobile phone will be used to record the interview sessions.

#### 3.3 Data Analysis Technique

According to Arikunto (2021) data analysis is the process of processing data into information that can be used to answer research question or solve problem. To analyze the data, the researcher will follow the procedures adapted from George (2022):

- 1) Transcribing Interview : The researcher listens to the recorded interviews and documents the respondents' answers in written form.
- 2) Analyze Interview: Using a deductive approach, the researcher interprets the data by progressing from general ideas to more specific conclusions. This process involves determining whether the data aligns with the identified themes or existing concepts.

The researcher analyzes the questionnaire using a Likert scale adapted from Sugiyono (2022), with the following scoring system:

Table 1.1 Likert scale

No	Category	Score
1.	Strongly Agree (SA)	5
2.	Agree (A)	4
3.	Neutral (N)	3
4.	Disagree (D)	2
5.	Strongly Disagree (SD)	1

The formula is as follows:

$$p = \frac{f}{n} \times 100$$

P : Percentage

F : Number of answers

N : Number of samples

### 3.4 Data Validation Technique

Triangulation was used in this study to validate data by combining questionnaires and interviews. According to Maxwell (2014) and Zakiyah et al. (2024), triangulation enhances research credibility by using multiple sources and methods. This approach allows the researcher to compare and cross-check data from different instruments, leading to more accurate and reliable findings obtain reliable and well-rounded data.

Table 2. Tabulation data from questionnaire

No	Question	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total
1.	I enjoy reading English texts.	1	8	5	1	0	15
2.	I can understand the main idea of English texts I read.	2	2	8	2	1	15
3.	I feel confident when reading English texts.	0	4	4	5	2	15
4.	I often read English texts outside of school.	0	3	6	5	1	15
5.	I can identify new vocabulary when reading English texts.	2	4	8	1	0	15
6.	I understand the structure (beginning, middle, end) of English stories.	0	6	8	1	0	15
7.	I can remember details from English texts I have read.	0	5	8	2	0	15
8.	Reading in English helps improve my overall English skills.	4	7	4	0	0	15
9.	Digital storytelling makes reading more interesting.	4	7	3	1	0	15
10.	I understand English texts better when they are told through digital storytelling.	2	3	9	1	0	15
11.	images and sounds in digital stories help me understand the story.	5	5	3	2	0	15
12.	Digital storytelling helps me remember what I read.	0	7	8	0	0	15
13.	I feel more confident reading English texts after watching digital stories.	0	6	7	1	1	15
14.	I prefer reading texts in digital storytelling format over printed books.	4	1	8	0	2	15
15.	Digital storytelling helps me learn new English vocabulary.	2	7	6	0	0	15
16.	I feel more motivated to read when using digital storytelling in class.	4	7	4	0	0	15

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Result of Questionnaire

Table 3. Result Test of Questionnaire

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
1.	I enjoy reading English texts.	6,7%	53,3%	33,3%	6,7%	0	100%
2.	I can understand the main idea of English texts I read.	13,3%	13,3%	53,4%	13,3%	6,7%	100%
3.	I feel confident when reading English texts.	13,3%	33,3%	26,7%	26,7%	0	100%
4.	I often read English texts outside of school.	0	20%	40%	33,3%	6,7%	100%
5.	I can identify new vocabulary when reading English texts.	13,3%	26,7%	53,3%	6,7%	0	100%
6.	I understand the structure (beginning, middle, end) of English stories.	0	40%	53,3%	6,7%	0	100%
7.	I can remember details from English texts I have read.	0	33,3%	53,4%	13,3%	0	100%
8.	Reading in English helps improve my overall English skills.	26,7%	46,6%	26,7%	0	0	100%
9.	Digital storytelling makes reading more interesting.	26,7%	46,6%	20%	6,7%	0	100%
10.	I understand English texts better when they are told through digital storytelling.	13,3%	20%	60%	6,7%	0	100%
11.	Images and sounds in digital stories help me understand the story.	33,3%	33,3%	20%	13,4%	0	100%
12.	Digital storytelling helps me remember what I read.	0	46,7%	53,3%	0	0	100%
13.	I feel more confident reading English texts after watching digital stories.	0	40%	46,6%	6,7%	6,7%	100%
14.	I prefer reading texts in digital storytelling format over printed books.	26,7%	6,7%	53,3%	0	13,3%	100%
15.	Digital storytelling helps me learn new English vocabulary.	13,3%	46,7%	40%	0	0	100%
16.	I feel more motivated to read when using digital storytelling in class.	26,7%	46,6%	26,7%	0	0	100%

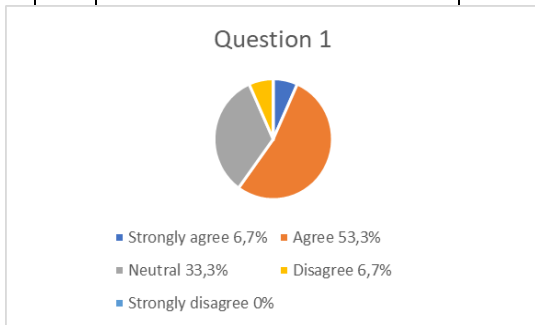


Figure 1. I enjoy reading English texts

A combined 60% of students expressed enjoyment in reading English texts, with the majority selecting "Agree." This indicates a generally positive attitude toward English reading activities.

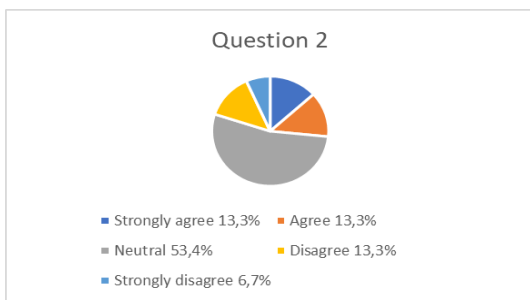


Figure 2. I can understand the main idea of English texts I read.

Only 26.6% of students felt they could grasp the main idea, while over half (53.4%) remained neutral. This suggests that many students are uncertain or struggle to identify key points in English texts.

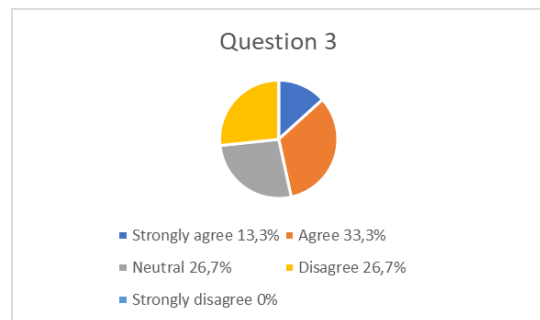
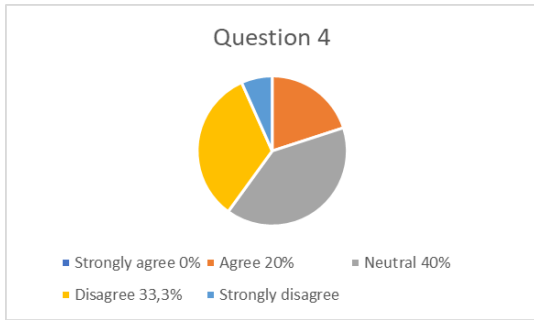


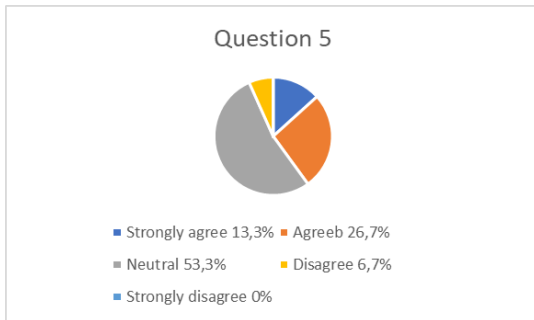
Figure 3. I feel confident when reading English texts.

About 46.6% of respondents expressed confidence in reading English texts, yet 26.7% felt unsure. Confidence levels are varied and highlight the need for additional reading support.



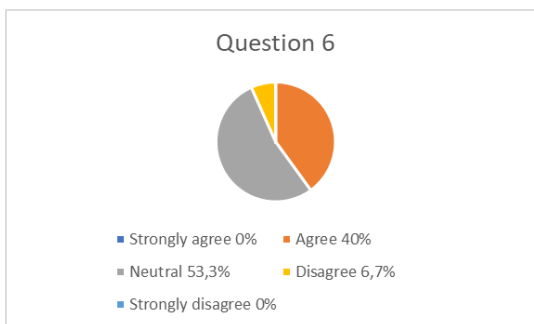
**Figure 4. I often read English texts outside of school**

Just 20% read English outside class, while 40% remained neutral and another 40% admitted they rarely or never read. This shows that English reading habits beyond the classroom are relatively limited.



**Figure 5. I can identify new vocabulary when reading English texts**

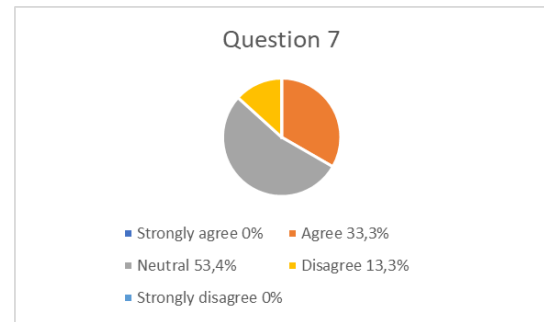
While 40% said they recognize new vocabulary, 53.3% were uncertain. This reveals a gap in vocabulary acquisition that might benefit from focused instruction or digital aids.



**Figure 6. I understand the structure (beginning, middle, end) of English stories**

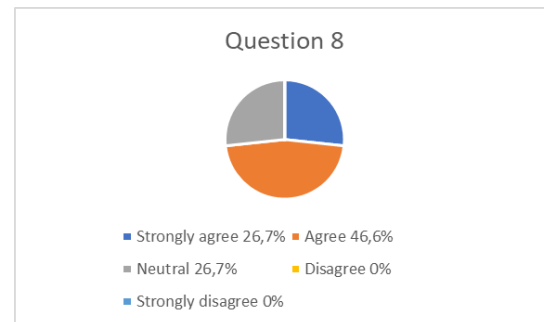
Only 40% reported understanding story structure, while a significant 53.3% remained undecided. This suggests a need to

enhance narrative comprehension through guided reading.



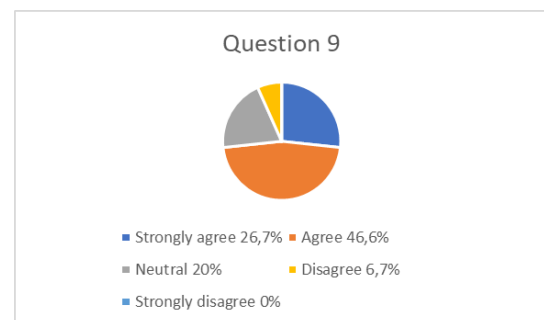
**Figure 7. I can remember details from English texts I have read**

Just one-third of students retained details, with over half (53.4%) unsure. Memory recall in English reading needs reinforcement, possibly through repetition or visualization.



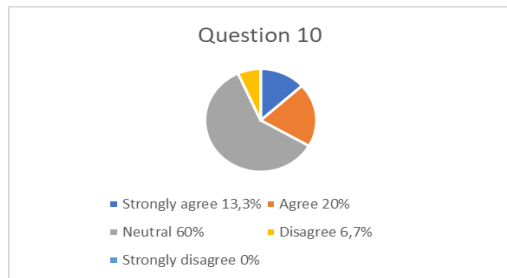
**Figure 8. Reading in English helps improve my overall English skills**

A notable 73.3% agreed that reading supports their overall English proficiency, underscoring its perceived value in developing language competence.



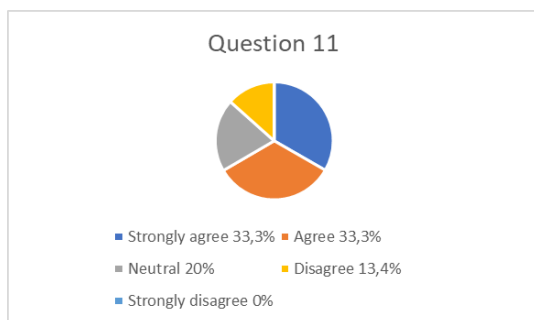
**Figure 9. Digital storytelling makes reading more interesting**

73.3% of students found digital storytelling engaging, showing that incorporating multimedia enhances the appeal of English reading.



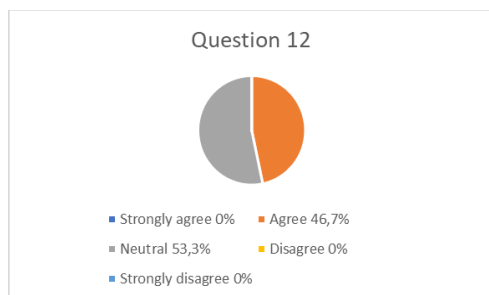
**Figure 10. I understand English texts better when they are told through digital storytelling**

Only 33.3% agreed, while 60% were neutral, indicating that although digital storytelling sparks interest, it doesn't always lead to improved understanding for all students.



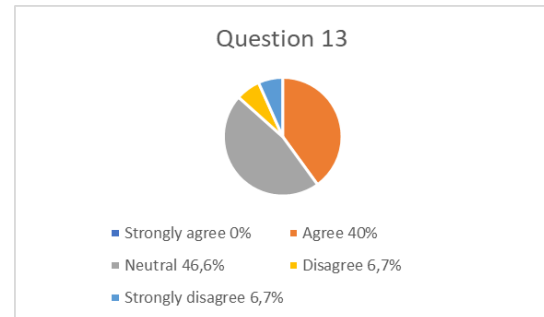
**Figure 11. Images and sounds in digital stories help me understand the story**

Two-thirds (66.6%) of students acknowledged that multimedia elements aided comprehension. This supports the idea that audio-visual tools enhance narrative understanding.



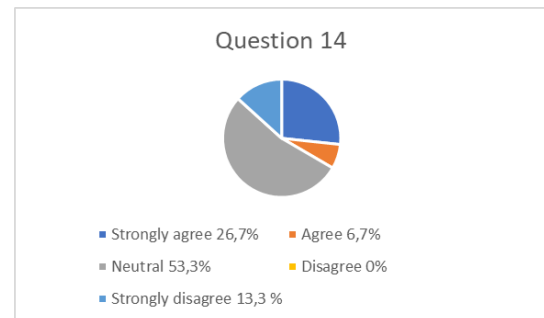
**Figure 12. Digital storytelling helps me remember what I read**

Nearly half (46.7%) found digital storytelling beneficial for memory retention, with no disagreement at all. It reflects its potential to aid learning through memorable experiences.



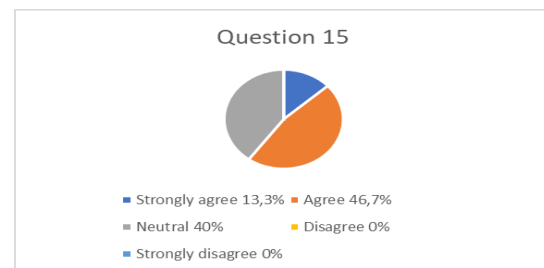
**Figure 13. I feel more confident reading English texts after watching digital stories**

40% reported increased confidence, but 46.6% remained neutral. While digital storytelling fosters self-assurance in some learners, others may still need additional encouragement.



**Figure 14. I prefer reading texts in digital storytelling format over printed books**

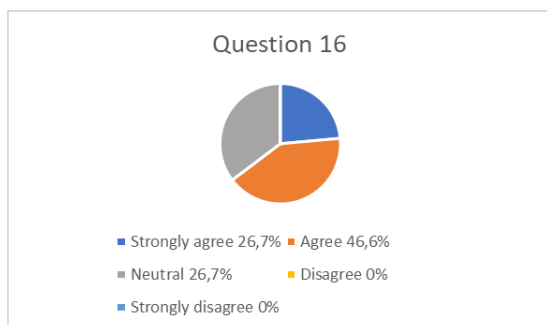
One-third of students favored digital formats, though more than half (53.3%) were unsure, indicating a gradual shift from traditional books to digital media.



**Figure 15. Digital storytelling helps me learn new English vocabulary**

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60% believed they could learn vocabulary better via digital storytelling, highlighting its effectiveness in making language input more accessible and engaging.



**Figure 16. I feel more motivated to read when using digital storytelling in class**

A significant 73.3% felt more motivated to read when using digital storytelling, affirming its value as a motivational tool in classroom-based reading instruction.

Based on the questionnaire results, many students show a positive attitude toward reading English, with 60% enjoying it and about half feeling confident in identifying new words. However, comprehension skills such as understanding main ideas or recalling details are still weak, and only 20% read English texts outside of school, indicating a gap between interest and actual reading ability. Digital storytelling shows promise in boosting motivation and engagement, with 73.3% of students feeling more encouraged to read and over 60% finding it useful for learning vocabulary. Yet, many students were neutral about its effect on comprehension. This suggests that while multimedia elements enhance interest, they do not automatically lead to deeper understanding. Therefore, digital storytelling should be paired with strategies focused on developing comprehension and analytical skills.

#### 4.2 Result Interview

Total question for interview 10 questions. For the first question, do you like reading English texts? Why or why not?

**Participant A:** Yes, it's fun and adds vocabulary.

**Participant B:** Yes, like learning new things.

**Participant C:** No, because I don't understand the meaning.

Based on the answers above, most students showed interest in reading English texts. They stated that they like this activity because they find it fun, it adds to their vocabulary and provides a new experience in learning. They also felt the benefits of reading such as increased knowledge and insight. This shows that interest in reading material can be an important factor in developing the habit of reading in a foreign language.

However, there are also students who do not like reading English texts because they find it difficult to understand the content of the text. Language barriers, such as ignorance of word meanings or sentence structures, make students feel frustrated and tend to avoid reading activities. Therefore, differences in ability and learning experience are the main determinants of students' attitudes towards reading.

**Question 2:** How confident do you feel when reading in English?

**Participant A:** Confident enough, needs dictionary.

**Participant B:** Confident if understands context.

**Participant C:** Not confident, often confused.

Based on the answers above, students' confidence in reading English depends on their understanding of the text. Participants A and B showed a good level of confidence, especially when they understood the context or theme. On the other hand, participant C showed low confidence in reading English texts because he often experienced confusion in understanding the meaning of words.

**Question 3:** What kinds of English texts do you usually read? (e.g. stories, articles, comics)

**Participant A:** Short stories and textbook articles.

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**Participant B:** *Fables and fairy tales.*

**Participant C:** *Comics and school assignments.*

Based on the answers above, Students tend to prefer texts that are short and easy to understand, such as short stories, simple articles, fairy tales, and comics. Participants A, B and C generally prefer narrative or story style reading because it is more interesting and easier to imagine. They also accessed much of their reading from textbooks, school assignments, or the internet, indicating that their reading sources still relied heavily on formal learning needs. In addition, the selection of light reading types such as fairy tales or comics shows that students are more comfortable with entertaining and less complex content.

**Question 4:** *Do you find it easy or difficult to understand English reading texts? Why?*

**Participant A:** *Sometimes hard with new words.*

**Participant B:** *Easier if the theme is clear.*

**Participant C:** *Hard if the theme is unfamiliar.*

Based on the answers above, students' ability to understand English texts varies greatly, depending on the theme of the reading and the difficulty level of the vocabulary. Participants A and B stated that comprehension would be easier if the topic was interesting or familiar. This shows that emotional involvement or interest in the topic is helpful in understanding the content of the text. In contrast, participant C found it difficult to understand the text, especially if the theme was unfamiliar or contained many unfamiliar words.

**Question 5:** *Do you read English texts outside of school activities? Give examples.*

**Participant A:** *Yes, comics at home.*

**Participant B:** *Yes, stories from learning app.*

**Participant C:** *Only when playing games.*

Based on the answers above, reading habits outside the school environment also show variations. Participants A and B actively read English texts through various platforms such as comics, learning apps or

articles on mobile phones. This shows that students with high interest tend to seek reading resources independently outside of academic obligations. In contrast, participant C admitted that he only reads English texts when there is an element of entertainment, such as in games. Therefore, there is a need for learning strategies that encourage students to explore texts outside the classroom, such as digital reading-based projects.

**Question 6:** *Have you ever learned reading using digital storytelling in class? How did you feel about it?*

**Participant A:** *Yes, it brings story to life.*

**Participant B:** *Once, more enjoyable.*

**Participant C:** *Yes, easier to understand.*

Based on the above responses, all participants reported having used digital storytelling in the learning process and found the experience enjoyable. Participants also felt that DTS helped to increase students' enthusiasm for learning and their engagement with the reading material. This method overcomes the boredom that usually arises when reading static text in books. As such, DS was shown to have a positive emotional and cognitive impact, making it an effective tool in English literacy learning.

**Question 7:** *Does digital storytelling help you understand the meaning of the texts better? How?*

**Participant A:** *Yes, with pictures and sound.*

**Participant B:** *Yes, clearer with visuals.*

**Participant C:** *Yes, images helped comprehension.*

Based on the answers above, participants agreed that digital storytelling helped them understand the text better. Factors such as images, sounds, and visual storylines make it easier for students to capture the overall meaning of the reading. Participants mentioned that the interactive presentation of the material helped them visualise the content of the story, making it easier to follow and understand. With visual support, students do not need to rely entirely on word-for-word translation, which is often a barrier

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to language learning. DS provides a contextualised and multisensory learning experience, thus improving the quality of students' understanding of the text.

**Question 8:** *Do the pictures, sounds, or animations in digital stories help you remember the story? Explain.*

**Participant A:** *Yes, remembers via pictures and sound.*

**Participant B:** *Yes, remembers via animation.*

**Participant C:** *Yes, helpful because a visual learner.*

Based on the answers above, all three participants stated that the use of visual and audio elements really helped them remember the story. Visualisation of the storyline with pictures and animations strengthens students' memory, especially for students who have a visual learning style. The effectiveness of DS in improving memory is seen from the statement that students can remember the story more easily through fun and interactive experiences that strengthen information processing in long-term memory. Thus, the use of multimedia in learning strongly supports the reinforcement of reading materials.

**Question 9:** *Do you feel more interested in reading English texts when using digital storytelling? Why?*

**Participant A:** *Yes, not boring.*

**Participant B:** *Yes, more exciting than regular reading.*

**Participant C:** *Yes, more fun and less boring.*

Based on the answers above, all participants stated that they became more interested in reading when using DS. Entertainment elements in the form of images, sounds and animations make the reading experience no longer monotonous. Students feel more enthusiastic and focused because the visual presentation is able to attract attention and arouse curiosity. This interest is very important because it is an entry point in building learning motivation. When students enjoy the reading process,

they tend to be more active in understanding the content and do not feel burdened.

**Question 10:** *Do you prefer learning through digital storytelling or traditional reading methods? Why?*

**Participant A:** *DS more interactive and fun.*

**Participant B:** *DS more interesting.*

**Participant C:** *DS more enjoyable and easier.*

All participants preferred digital storytelling over traditional reading because it is more engaging, easier to understand, and enjoyable. In foreign language learning, this method creates a more dynamic and supportive environment, helping both cognitive and emotional development. Overall, the results from both questionnaires and interviews show that digital storytelling is an effective way to enhance reading literacy among junior high students. The integration of text, sound, and visuals aligns with students' learning preferences and increases their interest and understanding. Therefore, digital storytelling is recommended as a valuable method to improve students' reading comprehension and motivation in learning English.

### Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that digital storytelling (DS) plays a significant role in enhancing students' reading engagement, comprehension, and motivation. Quantitative results from the questionnaire show that while 60% of students enjoy reading English texts, only 26.6% feel confident in identifying main ideas, indicating a gap between interest and actual reading comprehension skills. This aligns with prior research suggesting that interest alone does not automatically translate into deeper understanding (Zuraini, 2024). The use of digital storytelling, as reflected in over 73.3% of students reporting increased motivation, appears to bridge this gap by offering a more interactive and emotionally engaging approach to reading.

Interview responses support the notion that multimedia elements such as images, animations, and sounds help students process

and retain information more effectively, especially for visual learners. This finding is consistent with Singh et al. (2019) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which emphasizes that combining verbal and visual information enhances memory and understanding. Students reported that DS helps them “understand better” and “remember stories more easily,” confirming that digital storytelling provides a multi-sensory learning environment that aids comprehension and recall. Despite high motivation and improved memory, only 33.3% of students felt DS helped them understand English texts better, while 60% remained neutral. This may suggest that while DS enhances interest and surface-level engagement, it does not always foster deep comprehension unless accompanied by explicit instructional strategies. According to Bruner (2018) narrative formats can provide structure and coherence, but comprehension depends on how students are guided to process information critically.

Furthermore, the findings show that reading outside school remains limited (only 20%), reflecting a challenge in cultivating autonomous reading habits among students. Krashen (2019) emphasizes the importance of extensive reading outside the classroom as a key to second language acquisition. Digital storytelling may serve as a bridge, making English reading more accessible and enjoyable beyond formal learning environments. Overall, the study confirms that digital storytelling is not merely a technological enhancement but a pedagogical tool that addresses motivational and cognitive challenges in English reading instruction. As Robin (2019) asserts, DS can “personalize learning and make abstract content more tangible,” especially in language learning contexts. Therefore, integrating DS into classroom practice is recommended to improve students’ reading skills, though it must be complemented by strategies focused on comprehension development, such as explicit vocabulary instruction, guided reading, and metacognitive questioning techniques

## 5. CONCLUSION

The results of this study highlight digital storytelling as a promising method for improving reading literacy among junior high school students. Most students responded positively, noting that the use of visuals and audio made reading more engaging, enjoyable, and easier to understand especially for those with visual learning preferences. This method also increased their motivation and interest in reading English texts. However, some students still struggled with unfamiliar vocabulary and lacked confidence when reading independently. These findings suggest that while digital storytelling effectively boosts motivation and emotional engagement, it should be supported by strategies that strengthen language comprehension and vocabulary skills. Future research is recommended to explore the long-term impact of digital storytelling on reading proficiency and to examine its effectiveness across different learner levels and contexts. In addition, studies could investigate how to best integrate this approach with other instructional methods to enhance both engagement and deep understanding of texts..

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