

Teaching Reading Using *Storyberries* for Indonesian Young Learners

Rozanah Katrina Herda^{1*}, Nuraeningsih², Dyah Kusumastuti³, & Regine Aguilar Principe⁴

¹Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

²Universitas Muria Kudus, Indonesia

³Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, Indonesia

⁴Famy National Integrated High School, The Philippines

¹katrinaherda@uny.ac.id, ²nuraeningsih@umk.ac.id, ³dyahkusumastuti@ump.ac.id, ⁴regine.aguilar@deped.gov.ph

Abstract: Teaching reading to young learners in the twenty-first century requires teachers to be innovative and examine the educational impact on children through technology-enhanced language acquisition. At this stage, teaching reading as one of the components of literacies in an EFL environment presented teachers with the difficulty of simultaneously increasing students' motivation for and proficiency in reading in the digital age. This mixed-method study aims to describe the students' reading activity using *Storyberries* and reveal how well the learners can read. This study included 31 young students from a Yogyakarta, Indonesia, elementary school. *Storyberries*, a treatment used in this study, was a free online audiobook that provides many short stories that can be adjusted to readers' age, the duration of reading need, and reading interest. The design used in this study was an Exploratory Sequential Design, where the qualitative method preceded the quantitative one. The instruments used in this study were classroom observation sheets and tests. The three concurrent flows as a triangulation technique were used to analyze the qualitative data, while normality and descriptive statistics using SPSS version 25 were administered to analyze the quantitative data. The study's findings revealed that teachers used good pedagogical aspects to integrate *Storyberries* into the reading classroom and successfully enhanced students' reading motivation and proficiency. This pedagogical impact is expected to be implemented to the broader scope of teaching reading for young learners' needs.

Keywords: *Storyberries*; teaching reading; young learners

Abstrak: Mengajarkan membaca kepada peserta didik muda di abad ke-21 memerlukan guru untuk bersikap inovatif dan menilai dampak pendidikan pada anak-anak melalui perolehan bahasa yang ditingkatkan dengan teknologi. Pada tahap ini, mengajarkan membaca sebagai salah satu komponen literasi dalam lingkungan EFL menempatkan guru dalam kesulitan untuk secara bersamaan meningkatkan motivasi dan kemampuan membaca siswa di era digital. Studi metode campuran ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan aktivitas membaca siswa dengan menggunakan *Storyberries* dan mengungkap seberapa baik peserta didik dapat membaca. Studi ini melibatkan 31 siswa muda dari sekolah dasar di Yogyakarta, Indonesia. *Storyberries*, sebuah perlakuan yang digunakan dalam studi ini, adalah buku audio online gratis yang menyediakan banyak cerita pendek yang dapat disesuaikan dengan usia pembaca, durasi kebutuhan membaca, dan minat membaca. Desain yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah Desain Sekuensial Eksploratori, di mana metode kualitatif mendahului metode kuantitatif. Instrumen yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah lembar observasi kelas dan tes. Tiga aliran yang berlangsung secara bersamaan sebagai teknik triangulasi digunakan untuk menganalisis data kualitatif, sementara statistik normalitas dan deskriptif dengan menggunakan SPSS versi 25 diterapkan untuk menganalisis data kuantitatif. Temuan studi menunjukkan bahwa guru menggunakan aspek pedagogik yang baik untuk mengintegrasikan *Storyberries* ke dalam kelas membaca dan berhasil meningkatkan motivasi dan kemampuan membaca siswa. Diharapkan dampak pedagogik ini dapat diterapkan pada cakupan yang lebih luas dalam pengajaran membaca untuk kebutuhan peserta didik muda.

Kata kunci: *Storyberries*; Mengajarkan membaca; peserta didik muda

INTRODUCTION

In this digital era, educators have turned the old-fashioned reading classroom to innovative approaches that integrate technology and engaging content to captivate young learners' interest in reading since one of the vital skills for academic achievement and cognitive development for

students is reading comprehension. In Indonesia, nurturing a love for reading and supporting literacy has been a continuing challenge (Muhassin et al., 2021; Syahabuddin et al., 2019). However, a lack of reading motivation is one of the main reasons for poor reading comprehension among Indonesian learners. Another hindrance is getting young students interested in reading activities and giving them various reading resources (Hebbecker et al., 2019). In line with this, they should select appropriate reading resources that suit their reading needs, including their age, level of understanding, and reading ability. On the one hand, a textbook refers to the theories about the importance of teaching materials that consist of important teaching materials to fulfill the purpose of reading programs.

Technology can support the multifaceted issues in enhancing students' motivation and proficiency in the young learners' age in this digital era. Teaching reading will be exciting for them only if the material and media are appropriate and boost their enthusiasm in their EFL classroom. Previous research in various cultural and linguistic situations has yielded encouraging results, proving the favorable influence of digital storytelling on children's reading comprehension and overall language competency (Herda, 2022; Marsh, 2020). Additionally, Ribeiro et al. (2020) highlighted the beneficial impacts of digital storytelling on reading motivation and engagement. The technology-enhanced language learning in the L2 context can be a new way to promote beneficial praxis for reading at an early age. One way to fulfill students' learning needs is using stories that are extremely important for helping them learn unconsciously, as naturally, they enjoy reading and listening to stories and gazing at picture books (Slatterly & Willis, 2001).

Nevertheless, the issue of limited access to various reading materials in the Indonesian environment is also addressed. According to Santosa (2017), it is critical to give youngsters in Indonesia access to a variety of reading materials to foster the development of literacy in them. Stories they read gave them more input to develop their language (Ghosn, 2002). In the digital platform, the extensive library of tales covering a variety of genres and themes, the audiobook offers students an easy-to-use platform for reading exercises. Thus, stories are also beneficial for critical literacy development (Quintero, 2010) because children demonstrate their critical literacy and imagination affecting their linguistics competence, which they usually express via oral language. In this study, the researchers integrated Storyberries as an audiobook to teach reading to young learners. Storyberries is an interactive digital platform that provides a large selection of high-quality children's literature, such as fairy tales, fables, and original stories, that can stimulate children's interest and help them advance in their reading.

This platform seeks to provide young readers with an enjoyable and immersive reading experience while encouraging language development, critical thinking, and creativity. Rodriguez and Romero (2023) revealed that digital storytelling in primary education positively contributed to students' learning in the EFL context. In this case, this situation aligns with the Indonesian government's target to familiarize students with LE from the early stage. Furthermore, the use of it adheres to the principles of digital storytelling and encourages students' engagement and reading motivation with its aesthetically attractive images and interactive features. The story can be chosen by criteria including students' age and duration with the downloadable audio. Therefore, it clearly defines that teaching reading through storybooks focuses on inviting learners' imagination and desire to cope with the text. To prove it, the researchers explore whether a story text would develop children's reading learning.

Storyberries Digital platforms' interactive features, such as multimedia elements and interactive quizzes, increase interest and promote comprehension. The benefits of learning through storybooks might lead students to comprehend English vocabulary and fulfill their learning tasks based on the program's target. The ideas of prolonged reading also align with including Storyberries in the reading curriculum. This study aimed to describe students' activity while implementing Storyberries and investigate their reading achievement after being taught using Storyberries. An intervention attempts to create a love of reading and improve the language abilities of young learners in Indonesia by using interactive and entertaining stories. Furthermore, this study's findings are expected to significantly benefit EFL students, English teachers,

researchers, and Indonesian education stakeholders. Finally, it is hoped that this research will serve as a significant resource for Indonesian policymakers in the educational sphere in dealing with the issue of poor reading comprehension in EFL classrooms.

METHOD

Research Design and Procedure

The researchers used a mixed method to reveal the activities and situations in the research scenario by involving quantitative and qualitative data (Fraenkel et al., 2022; Gay et al., 2012; Yin, 2010). The researchers involved two types of data to understand and investigate teaching reading to young learners using Storyberries more fully, so there were two types of data collection and analysis techniques. Because this research was a mixed method, the researchers considered applying the Exploratory Sequential procedure, where *qualitative data was gathered in the first session to explore a classroom phenomenon* and then followed by the quantitative (Fraenkel et al., 2022; Gay et al., 2012). Figure 1 shows the research procedure.

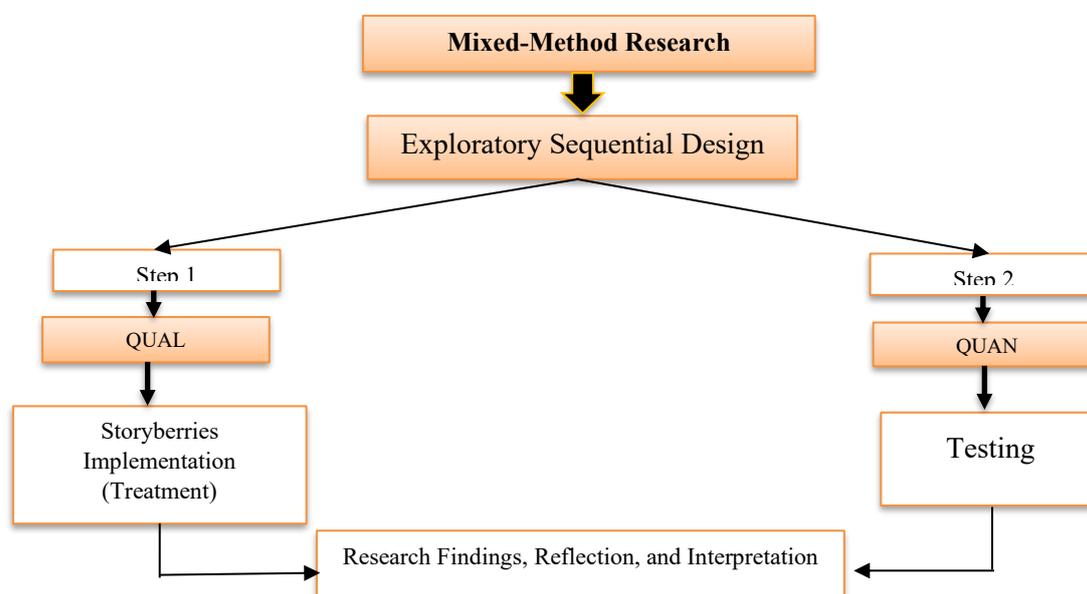


Figure 1. Research Procedure

Figure 1 shows the research procedure using the Exploratory Sequential Design. The study lasted for two meetings in June 2023. In the first stage, the classroom teacher introduced the students to Storyberries. Students were familiarized with the feature in it. Researchers distributed a reading sheet entitled *The Smart Frog* (<https://www.storyberries.com/bedtime-stories-the-smart-frog-short-stories-for-kids/>) from one of the online texts in Storyberries. Students learn how to read each word while listening to the audiobooks. At the second meeting, students did similar activities using a different reading title *A Pebble in My Shoe* (<https://www.storyberries.com/bedtime-stories-a-pebble-in-my-shoe-short-stories-for-kids/>), with vocabulary exploration. At the end of the second meeting, students did the reading test in True-False mode. The teacher and researcher asked them to orally reflect on reading the text through Storyberries in fun ways.

Participant

The participants of this study were 31 students (Male= 12, Female= 19) in the fifth grade of primary school in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. They were young learners aged 11 years old and

categorized into older groups of young learners since their age range was 9-12 (Asrial, 2022). The researchers pointed to S1, S2, and others to protect their identity until S31 to indicate the students. Convenient sampling was used as the school asked the researchers to research English fun and easy reading treatment using technology-enhanced language teaching since they realized their school was still developing in applying Kurikulum Merdeka. In a convenient sampling, there was no pattern in acquiring the respondents (Fraenkel et al., 2022; Gay et al., 2012). Based on the consent letter filled and signed by the teacher, in this study, the researchers were allowed to use all recorded media, including the students' photos, during the learning process.

Data Collection and Analysis Techniques

As articulated in the previous section, this study applied an exploratory sequential procedure, where *qualitative data was gathered in the first session to explore a classroom phenomenon* and then followed by the quantitative (Fraenkel et al., 2022; Gay et al., 2012). A classroom observation sheet as the qualitative instrument was used to observe students' and teachers' interaction. In this study, one of the researchers acted entirely as an observer in a nonparticipant observation setting. She adopted a classroom observation sheet developed by Hardiyanti and Herda (2023) that was simple but meaningful. During the research, she monitored the classroom situation since the classroom observation told the story of classroom life (O'Leary, 2020; Wragg, 1999).

In this context, she did not try to manipulate variables or control the activities, but she monitored and recorded what happened as things and phenomena naturally occurred (Fraenkel et al., 2022). The researchers analyzed the observation data by following Miles et al.'s three concurrent flows of activity (2014), covering data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. All data was gathered qualitatively through observation sheets that were naturally performed or shown by the students as participants. Thus, classroom observation was expected to give the researchers qualitative data about implementing Storyberries for young learners' EFL reading.

The second instrument was a test that belonged to the quantitative method instrument. In this case, the test was conducted to get the quantitative data at the end of the implementation session. Widoyoko (2012) argued that the test was administered to collect the research data about learning results to measure individuals' abilities through the question. In this study, the test was in a ten-question *True-False* style, comprising the young learners' reading comprehension after being taught by their teacher using Storyberries. However, assessing young learners in their early reading text should determine their baseline performance since they enter the classroom with diverse literacy backgrounds (Hasselgreen, 2005).

Furthermore, authentic reading materials linked to their real-world life are much needed because what students read may *demonstrate knowledge to perform real-world tasks* (Hardiyanti & Herda, 2023) *in a meaningful assessment context*. The researchers used SPSS version 25 and first did normality testing to analyze the data before revealing the descriptive statistics data from the students' scores. In this context, the researchers did a normality test to assess the assumption that the data was drawn from a normally distributed population. The variable could be considered normal only if the Sig. Value was more significant than 0.05 (Asrial et al., 2022).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and discussion based on the two research questions. Since the research design was an Exploratory Sequential (Qual to Quan), the researchers also presented the findings from qualitative, followed by quantitative data.

Results

The Reading Activities using Storyberries

Based on the observation, two aspects were observed in the teaching-learning process using Storyberries: the teaching process and students' responses. Table 1 shows the pivotal points in classroom observation.

Table 1. Classroom Observation

Aspects	Description	Yes	No
Teaching Process	The teacher performed pedagogical competence in teaching reading using Storyberries.	√	-
	The teacher could raise students' concentration in joining the TL process.	√	-
	The teacher could boost students' motivation to join the TL process.	√	-
	The teacher allowed students to explore their vocabulary memorization.	√	-
Students' Response	The students gave a positive response in interacting with the teacher and classmates.	√	-
	The students showed curiosity about Storyberries during the TL process.	√	-
	The students could perform vocabulary memorization in the reading comprehension context.	√	-

Table 1 shows two aspects of the classroom observation covering the teacher, students' activities, and their responses. All observation statement items in the table were checked as "Yes," indicating all actions needed were done and practiced by the teacher and students, as their role in the reading classroom.

The Students' Reading Achievement after Being Taught Using Storyberries

In this context, students' achievement was assessed through a True-False test. As articulated earlier, the researchers analyzed the test result by doing two stages of the test: normality and descriptive statistics.

Table 2. Test of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Reading Score	.165	31	.032	.944	31	.105

Table 2 provides information on the test normality of students' reading scores. There were two kinds of tests: Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk. The researchers interpreted the normality result based on Shapiro-Wilk since it was used for a sample size of less than 50. The Sig value for the test was 0.105. Thus, it implied that the data were normally distributed since the Sig values were more significant than 0.05 (Sig. > 0.05). After that, the researchers conducted descriptive statistics tests to investigate the mean, standard deviation, maximum and minimum values.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

Statistics		
N	Valid	31
	Missing	0
Mean		66.13
Std. Deviation		13.084
Minimum		40
Maximum		90

Table 4. Frequency Distribution

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	40	2	6.5	6.5
	50	4	12.9	19.4
	60	8	25.8	45.2
	70	9	29.0	74.2
	80	6	19.4	93.5
	90	2	6.5	6.5
Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 and 4 shows the descriptive statistics information and frequency distribution. The mean score of students' reading test was 66.13, with 40 as the lowest (N=2) and 90 as the highest (N=2).

Discussion

The findings of this study show some aspects dealing with the two research questions. Based on classroom observation, the researchers found that the teacher performed teaching and learning procedurally and implemented her pedagogical competence for teaching reading to young learners. It was because the teacher knew the characteristics of students aged 11, so she could monitor and guide the reading activities in fun and relevant ways. As active young learners in EFL learning, the students were interested in real activities to stimulate thinking, and they tend to be creative with limited vocabulary and grammar (Aslamiah, 2022). At this point, the teacher should understand their learning characteristics so that the learning activities can reach the goal of students grasping the meaning of the reading text (Scott & Ytreberg, 2004) and their world of imagination.

The second point was that the teacher's role in boosting students' concentration was good. As long as the implementation of reading activities using Storyberries, teachers could raise students' concentration by involving them in checking their memory and story plot from the audiobooks. According to Brysbaert (2019), students at the early stage of primary education are expected to read at the pace of 89–149 wpm. Indeed, the teacher applied her competence to make a balanced effort between the young learners' needs to learn a complex linguistic system at an early age (Cameron, 2001; Intasena & Nuangchalerm, 2022) for meaning-making. Additionally,

a one-shot case study by Pradini and Adnyayanti (2022) revealed that *creative learning media could attract students' attention and motivation to learn*. In line with that, the teaching technique for generating students' reading concentration becomes necessary.

Therefore, young learners must have good literacy skills at the early stages of learning. In this digital era, teachers and reading material are required to improve students' motivation internally and externally. Highly motivated students are likelier to participate in reading activities to achieve their learning objectives because they pay attention and spend their time efficiently throughout instructional learning (Oktavia et al., 2022; Patra et al., 2022). In this context, Storyberries, an audiobook, became one of the alternative learning materials and media that can be accessed and read online every time. Teachers may choose the appropriate stories for students by considering their age and duration. As a form of technology-enhanced language learning, it benefits reading classrooms as students are highly motivated to join the class and follow the instructions from the teacher.

A study by Mize et al. (2019) revealed that a technology-based reading scenario effectively increased literacy skills for struggling readers. However, it cannot be denied that learners face challenges in enabling themselves to read fluently and comprehend the context or meaning in the L2. During the Storyberries implementation, the teacher tried to improve students' motivation by using various motivating teaching tactics to create a favorable and comfortable effect. Furthermore, the teacher allowed students to explore the student's memorization of the vocabulary through reading while listening to the audio. Vocabulary becomes all the words recognized in the reading process (Serrano, 2023), and L2 vocabulary mastery is needed to accompany students' meaning-making process to fulfill the demands of the lifelong learning age (Hardiyanti & Herda, 2023).

In this study, the researcher observed that the teacher used a fun drilling strategy, namely WCSP (Watch, Collect, Share, and Practice), to activate students' critical thinking about the vocabulary used in the text. Halimah et al. (2022) argued the WCSP is a reading strategy to drill students' L2 vocabulary covering pre-, main, and post-activities. On the other hand, students' achievement based on the score gained at the end of the section indicated they had learned best and could practice meaning-making efficiently. The mean score (66.13) indicates that students reached the minimum criteria used in that school, that is, 60 for the primary grade. Thus, it can be linked to Storyberries' authentic material, where students successfully interpreted all reading information.

As real-world material is close to students' real-life context, it benefits students since they can imagine what happened in the story's plot. It is such a familiar context that it eases students to get the pivotal point authentically to interpret the educational character and value (Rochmiyati et al., 2020) from the young learners' perspectives in the reading classroom. The students were then assessed in the True-Flase method by considering validity, practicality, reliability, and washback, including their age-based characteristics. So, the reading assessment must be flexible at which they are assessed and allow them to manage and monitor their reading result (Herda & Ghozali, 2017; 2018) in a simple but meaningful way. The researchers implied that Storyberries gave positive input that affected students' reading motivation and ability.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The mixed-method study involving young learners in a reading classroom revealed that using Storyberries can improve students' reading motivation and proficiency based on reading material relevant to students aged 11. The reading activities using Storyberries helped students practice meaning-making and activate their vocabulary mastery. Students performed curiosity while joining the reading class using Storyberries. As an educational effort in the digital era, integrating technology-enhanced language learning for teaching young learners L2 reading becomes important. Furthermore, appropriate reading material and media assisted students in exposing new

words and ways of using language. In this study, students also scored well as their reading proficiency dealt with the L2 reading material they learned. The researchers highly recommend that other researchers with similar interests conduct broad research designs, such as experimental or classroom action research, for the larger young learners population to gain higher and lots of pedagogical impact of reading through Storyberries.

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