PROMOTING STUDENTS' CREATIVITY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE USE USING DIGITAL STORYTELLING MEDIA

Kadek Dita Dwi Artayani[1], Luh Putu Artini[2], Luh Indrayani[3]

[1,2,3]*Ganesha University of Education*
E-mail : [1]dita.dwi@student.undiksha.ac.id, [2]putu.artini@undiksha.ac.id,
[3]luh.indrayani@undiksha.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study examined the use of Digital Storytelling (DST) media in promoting students' creativity in English language use for the level of primary school students. A systematic literature review was used by analyzing peer-review journal articles, policy documents, and international and national studies that relevant with the focus of digital storytelling, creativity, bilingual learning, and English language teaching for young learners. The findings showed that DST support students' creative expression, participation in effective way, and meaningful use of English through multimodal elements such as images, audio visual, and bilingual narration. DST helped students to encourage its creativity to generate ideas, construct narratives, and communicate confidently in authentic contexts that align with deep learning principles of joyful, meaningful, and mindful learning. Furthermore, bilingual digital storytelling provided scaffolding that supported diverse students' needs and enhanced students' confidence in using English. Despite of the strong potential, the implementation of DST required careful design of instructional, teacher readiness, and contextual adaptation. Overall, this study concluded that digital storytelling media had a strong potential as an innovative pedagogical tool to promote creativity and English language use among primary school level. The findings provided theoretical and practical implications for educators, curriculum developers, and future researchers in the field of technology-enhanced language learning.

Keywords : *Bilingual Learning, Creativity. Digital Storytelling, English Language Learning, Graduate Profile value, Merdeka Curriculum, Young Learner*

INTRODUCTION

Learning methods for global education have been profoundly changed by the development of digital technology, especially for English learning in primary school level where in previous curriculum in 2013, English is not included in this level but had a strong foundation to learn before move on the higher education level (Artini, 2017). The way that knowledge is accessible, created, and shared in schools has changed as a result of digital tools, multimedia platforms, and online resources (Sumardi et al., 2020). Students are no longer expected to simply memorize facts or grasp discrete linguistic patterns in the context of 21st-century education. Instead, the young learner is expected to develop some skills such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity in this era (Bumela, 2020). It is commonly acknowledged that these four competencies are necessary for students in order to make them be able to do the best in a world that is becoming more connected year by year and technologically advanced every second time. And, one of the most important skills in this framework that going to be discussed more is students' creativity skill that young learners should be mastered for their character education since there is a discrepancy between the character values planned, implemented, and evaluated for character education practices in pilot elementary schools (Indrayani et al., 2018).

Creativity can be considered as one of the most crucial competencies within this framework and this skill should be done in the early age to make young learners adjust with the digital technology changes globally. Based on the research from Ratminingsih and Budasi (2018), children at the age of 3-12 are live in their golden age era and tend to have a higher level of curiosity which the best time to let them think creative and imaginative. According to Bumela (2020), promoting their creativity helps students come up with many things such as unique ideas, communicate ideas and feelings in a meaningful way, students also can solve problems in a flexible way, and adjust to quick changes in society and technology that happened a lot in this era. In the context of language learning, creativity enables students to have a progress from mechanical language practice to genuine conversation with others, self-expression when expressing their ideas or opinion, and have a creative interaction with texts and concepts they want. Therefore, creativity is an essential component of efficient language use rather than just an extra talent.

One of the actions from Indonesia government in responding the digital technology for education field is announcing Merdeka Curriculum through eights dimensions called Graduate Profile values for teaching and learning in all school in Indonesia (Permendikdasmen, 2025). The Merdeka Curriculum is being implemented to answer the global demand for education, focused on creativity. With its highlights on the autonomy, relevance, and in-depth comprehension, this curriculum signifies the changed of paradigm from content-driven instruction to student-centered learning where young leaners participate more during learning process and teacher being a facilitator to transfer the material. Through the framework of Graduate Profile Value, the Merdeka Curriculum incorporates character education and emphasizing the principles of deep learning such as joyful, meaningful, and mindful learning at the same time. According to Permendikdasmen (2025), this framework has eights dimension of it such as Faith and morality, global diversity, collaboration, independence, critical thinking, communication, health, and

creativity, are among the important aspects that students are expected to cultivate during their educational path. And creativity is one of the key components of the Graduate Profile Value in this Merdeka Curriculum. In other name, creativity is known as the ability that the students learn in order to think creatively, generate unique and significant ideas, and appropriately convey those ideas in the context of social and cultural. It can be concluded that this notion emphasizes creativity as an expression of ethical and contextualized in addition to cognitive novelty. It is happened since language serves as a medium for expression, storytelling, identity building, and meaning-making in addition to being a system of grammatical rules and vocabulary items, creativity is essential to learning English and increase students' enthusiasm combining with digital technology support (Haleem et al., 2022).

However, the traditional learning method, textbook-based learning, and teacher-centered methods still dominating English learning process particularly at the primary school level even though these curriculars demanded. This gives a little opportunity for students in using English to speak creatively and communicatively where instruction usually focuses on grammar drills, vocabulary memorization, and written activities (Jwair, 2023). Instead of viewing young learners as an active language users, these methods typically portray them as passive knowledge consumers. As a result, all students become less motivated to learn English and caused to the underdeveloped students' capacity for genuine communication in everyday situations. This discrepancy between curriculum objectives and classroom procedures emphasizes how urgently creative teaching strategies and educational materials are needed for solve and minimize those problems to happen in this century. Supported also by research from Padmadewi et al (2018), where committed and serious techniques application is very important to achieve sustainable success.

In order to overcome these obstacles, some previous studies have repeatedly stressed the significance of incorporating cutting-edge educational media. Based on the research that discussed about the technology integration in education field, digital media help teachers to improve student engagement, motivation in study, and learning outcomes when it used properly, (Maya et al., 2022). Digital tools offered teachers many chances for multimodal input, interactive tasks, and authentic communication in language learning contexts, all of which are critical for the development of students' communicative competence. By taking into account a range of learning styles and skill levels, technology-enhanced instruction also promotes differentiated learning that needed in this 21st-century (Santosa, 2022). Digital storytelling (DST), has drawn a lot of interest as a successful teaching method for English language acquisition and come as one of the many digital techniques. Traditional storytelling is combined with many multimedia components including text, pictures, audio narration, music, animation, and video in digital storytelling. Through DST, students are able to use digital technologies to make and display tales, enabling them to engage with language in a meaningful way and help to convey the ideas creatively. In addition, DST encourages students' ownership, agency, and creative engagement by turning students from information consumers into content producers. In other hand, students will have a potential to develop autonomous learning which learning is driven by young learners themselves and creating an individual who are responsible, creative, initiative, and hardworking (Artini, 2014).

Previous studies show that digital storytelling contribute to numerous facets of language development, such as acquisition of new vocabulary, fluent speaking, pronunciation, and competency of narrative give a benefit from digital storytelling used (Wafa and Chakim, 2022). Young learners can comprehend and apply linguistic forms naturally through story-based digital exercises that offer meaningful settings for language usage. Storytelling works well especially for younger students because it supports their emotional and growth of cognitive. Children are captivated by stories, which also spark their imaginations and offer tangible situations that aid in understanding. Furthermore, digital storytelling strongly connected with Constructivist and Experiential Learning theories from Dewey in 1938, which emphasize that learning occurs most effectively when students actively construct knowledge through experience and reflection in their real-life. According to constructivist perspectives, young learners will build an understanding by connecting new information to prior knowledge within meaningful contexts.

In Indonesian context, studies that specifically look at how digital storytelling fits within national curriculum frameworks in creativity context are still limited. A distinctive policy framework that prioritizes creativity, student autonomy, and deep learning is offered by the Merdeka Curriculum through Graduate Profile Value. Nevertheless, there are very few conceptual and empirical research that investigate how digital storytelling may operationalize these principles in English language use classes. This discrepancy between instructional research and policy expectations points to a substantial research gap. Thus, this study is focused on how digital storytelling medium might encourage students' creative use of the English language, especially in primary school level. This study aims to summarize previous theoretical and empirical studies rather than test particular learning effects empirically.

This paper is organized as follows: the research method used is presented in the second section. The findings of the literature review are then discussed in systematic way. And then, conclusion and a discussion with its implications that important for future research and studies will be included in the final section of the paper.

METHOD

This study is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) means all data were collected by selecting and systematizing several research, studies, and articles from previous researchers and being analyzed carefully to ensure a comprehensive, transparent, and replicable examination of studies related to digital storytelling, creativity, and English language learning (Knopf, 2006; Creswell, 2014). The review followed the key stages, including planning, identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and synthesis.

Over than 20 of relevant literature were collected from academic databases by using keywords related to bilingual learning, creativity, digital storytelling, English language learning, graduate profile value, Merdeka curriculum, and young learner in primary level. Then, the selected studies were analyzed thematically in order to identify the patterns, key findings, and research gaps concerning the role of digital storytelling in promoting creativity and English language use especially in the level of primary school students.

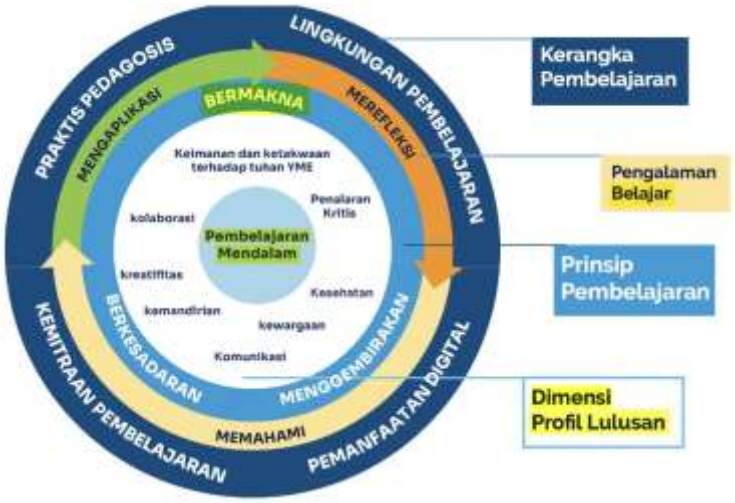


Figure 1. Deep Learning and Graduate Profile Framework by PERMENDIKDASMEN (2025)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the systematic literature review stated several significant findings related to the use of digital storytelling media in promoting students' creativity in English language use.

Most recent studies reviewed indicated that digital storytelling (DST) created meaningful opportunities for students to express ideas creatively through narrative construction. Research on digital storytelling by Maya et al (2022), in consistent way stated that digital storytelling promoted students' creative engagement through required learner to generate its characters, settings, and plotlines which stimulated flexibility and originality in thinking skills (Fitriana et al, 2024). Multimedia elements such as text, images, recorded speech, and soundtrack in its integration helped to support multimodal expression, accommodated diverse students learning skills preferences and reduced the affective filter in learning of language. According to Puspitasari et al (2025), students' involvement in designing and producing their own digital stories has been found to improve intrinsic motivation and self-expression creatively. From the point of view of constructivist, this creativity engagement is in line with Piaget's notion in 1972 where students construct meaning by organizing experiences actively instead of passively receiving information only. Thus, digital storytelling served DST as a catalyst for fostering the creative competencies in this 21st-century, not only about DST as a language learning medium for teaching English to young learner especially in primary school level.

Impact on English language use in the terms of language outcomes, DST showed the positive influenced for students' English language use, especially for its vocabulary acquisition, confidence of speaking, and skills of narrative. By using stories, it is provided some meaningful contexts for the use of language, enabling students to understand, and vocabulary applying in natural way. In addition, the use of bilingual narration also supported students' comprehension and anxiety reduction, particularly for beginners. Furthermore, according to Maya and Halim

(2021), students demonstrated increased willingness to speak English when engaged in storytelling activities. The context of narrative us in the classroom for teaching and learning, made language use purposeful rather than mechanical method and helps fostering the authentic communication. The findings supported by the learning theories of Constructivist and Experiential learning where both theories from Dewey highlights the learning process through real situations and meaningful experiences.

Moreover, this aligned with the principles of deep learning where digital storytelling supported students learning activities in joyful, meaningful, and mindful way. Joyful learning emerged by serving an engaging visuals and interactive storytelling experiences which helped to increase its motivation. According to Puspitasari at al., (2025), joyful learning increased students' interest and motivation since the used of this digital tools and creative tasks create classroom situation more enjoyable and fun. Meaningful learning occurred as students will be connected to the content of story to their real-life experiences and values of character, especially creativity (Pratiwi et al., 2024). While mindful learning was fostered by giving a reflection related to the story messages and personal learning processes. This made students evaluate themselves through reflective stages of DST production by narrative choices ad outcomes of learning practices which supported by the theory of Experiential learning that highlight reflection as a crucial phase of learning from experience (Kolb, 1984). Current studies evaluated digital storytelling in English classroom to encourage students to willing to communicate and able to speak fluently particularly who engage with digital storytelling since DST provided them an authentic and meaningful context which support their natural language use (Fitriana et al., 2024). For the used of bilingual narration in DST, it usually used to show the demonstration of activities for students' comprehension where DST allowed students to anchor new English vocabulary in familiar linguistic frames that in line Vygotsky's sociocultural theory which highlighting on scaffolding within students' Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978; Agra, 2025). Additionally, research by Sari and Setyawan (2025) stated DST help students to practice their cohesion and coherence spoken and written which support a part of communication competence, narrative competence. Another some similar findings by promoting students' creativity for English language use using digital storytelling by several research discussed as follows.

First is improves students' vocabulary and meaning-making. Digital storytelling facilitated students with learning that rich and contextualized. This exposure them to many new words that easier to be understood and remember to be used rather than decontextualized drills. DST make students learn on how the ideas will be organized into coherent stories that clearly has a beginning, middle, and ending. Through this way, sequencing, coherence, and level discourse for communication will be strengthened instead of merely sentence-level accuracy only. Kawuryan (2011) in Ratminingsih et al (2022), stated that young learners has three main characteristics in learning such as: 1) learning concrete things, where students will easier to understand the material by real experiences, 2) studying as a whole or integrative, where young leaners will easier to understand things comprehensively, creating thematic and contextual approaches for learning in more effective, and last 3) learning hierarchically, where young learners need to understand the basic concept of some things before jump into a complex one. Therefore, digital storytelling considered as one of an innovative method for students express

their creativity freely combining with narrative and digital technology to learn English in the classroom.

Second is promotes authentic communication, speaking confidence, and anxiety reduction. Students are able to enhance its speaking and communication skills by the feeling of willingness to use English in their interaction by shifting the focus of accuracy grammar to expression which meaningful. They are going to be more comfortable to present their tasks since visual and narrative support lowers the anxiety and reduces the affective filter, mainly for the young learners who learn English for the first time and to them who has a low English proficiency. According to Ratminingsih et al (2022), young leaners prefer to learn language through games or other activities which is fun and interactive. Additionally, DST tasks foster the authentic and purposeful communication where students will use English to convey messages instead of just complete the mechanical exercise given by teacher. This is supported also by the Experiential learning from Dewey, which emphasize learning through a meaningful experiences and social interaction among students.

Third is promotes creativity, multimodal literacy, and personal expression. The way digital storytelling become as facilitator in teaching English language use, DST strongly promotes students creative thinking and originality also multimodal literacy by requiring young learners to design characters and plots with the combination of text, audio visual, and images. Moreover, this engaged them in idea generation, imaginative thinking, and problem-solving in creative way while simultaneously developed its ability to communicate meaning across different modes (Saputri 2024). As a result, Creativity become embedded within language learning by the origin story production and personal expression.

Fourth is increases motivation, engagement, and collaboration. Padmadewi et al (2021) in their research stated that creativity involved in enhancing the motivation of young learners in study and can be instilled through in the form of activity-based project. The activities in the classroom using digital storytelling considered by young learners as enjoyable and meaningful learning methods that improve their motivation higher, stronger engagement, and participate actively in English learning. Digital storytelling projects basically include the collaborative work such as stories planning, ideas discussion, and peer feedback which need the students' skills for its communication during expressing ideas in social interaction. In addition, compared to conventional teacher-centered instruction where students are less active and receive information only from teacher, DST creates students to be more active or student-centered which make the learning environment that supports the development of linguistic and social learning.

Despite of those pedagogical benefits, there were several literatures reviewed related to the challenges that identified in the implementation of digital storytelling in the classroom. The common obstacles found such as the limited of digital competence literacy for teachers, constraints of time for planning and producing media and material for teaching, and insufficient technological infrastructure (Widiyanti and Nuroh, 2025). While some studies confirmed that DST enhanced creativity and students' outcomes in language use, most focus predominantly on short-term classroom interventions or isolated skill improvements, such as the fluency of speaking or vocabulary gained (Fitriana et al., 2024). The attention that has been given on how creativity is intentionally embedded as a core educational value within DST design, particularly in alignment with the Graduate Profile Value curriculum frameworks was still limited. The point

of view from teachers of digital storytelling are generally positive and indicating increased confidence in the practice of instructional also consideration of DST as one of a tool for nurturing the students' skills in this 21st-century. However, the need of professional development to the DST integration in purposeful way into the curriculum policy was still needed (Widiyanti and Nuroh, 2025). Another finding of literature review, mentioned students faced two kinds of difficulties in learning and expressing their ideas in creativity way. Those two problems according to Yang and Wu (2012) are classified into two majors as: linguistic and non-linguistic.

1) Linguistic problems, is a problem that students mostly in primary and secondary level experience that hinder the ability to use English creatively and communicatively. This difficulty often arise since English is being taught in decontextualized drills and using textbook-exercise more rather than activities that meaningful and communicative. When DST or other contextualized media are not used, students tend to fragmented language knowledge that is difficult to apply when they have a real communication (Andriani et al, 2024). The main linguistic problems here can be indentified such as: First, limited vocabulary mastery. Students basically know only a small number of words in English and having a problem to use it in sentences or orally which restricts both communication and expression of creative. The second is weak narrative and discourse organization, where many young learners struggle in order to organize their ideas into a coherent story that state a clear beginning, middle, and ending since they are rarely trained to produce extended discourse. Third one is low speaking fluency and accuracy, in this case students mostly afraid and hesitate to speak and express ideas, pause excessively, and wil try to avoid speaking altogether due to exposure meaningful oral language practice that still limited. Last is poor intergration of language skills which caused by the traditional instruction that dominated during study and separated each skill of listening, reading, writing, and speaking, make young learners feel difficult to use English language holistically while, in fact, the use of digital storytelling help young learners to have a progress especially in speaking skills (Putri, 2022).
2) Non-linguistic problems, besides the difficulties of linguistic, non-lingustic problem also have a strong influenced for students. This factors often decisive more than its linguistics knowledge because its affects the willingness, confidence, and motivation of students. Krashen (1982) in their book explained, anxiety and low motivation raise the affective filter, which is blocks language acquisition even when the input is available. In the classroom process, digital media like digital storytelling used to make the situation of the class more fun and active, when the classes did not use it, the learning activities might be monotonous and using teacher-centered more, which further reduced of engangement of students and participation. Several problems from non-lingustic factors include: first, low learning motivation, where students taught English is difficult and boring since the method use is just repetitive and mechanical learning activities. Second is high foreign language anxiety, students' fear of making mistake and being judged by people who clever more than them caused their confidence to speak in front of others. Third is limited creativity and imagination, this happened when the teacher often gives students some tasks with fixed answers that leave a little room for young learner to give a personal expression and creative thinking. Last is passive learning attitudes, where teachers being the main facilitator or teacher-centered and make a student position as receivers only instead of creator of meaning. Based on several

problems in lingustic and non-linguistic, it can be indicated that digital storytelling can help students' creativity by expressing their ideas with no limitation in more fun and meaningful way during learning process.

By those, the findings showed a gap between the recognized pedagogical potential of DST and its systematic integration into English language use in education. Therefore, the novelty of this study lied in synthesizing recent empirical evidence through a value-oriented lens which positioning creativity not merely as a byproduct but as a central learning outcome supported by DST. This result emphasized the importance of training for teacher in digital competence and structured instructional guidance to ensure the digital storytelling can be implemented in effective way with no problem indicate like overwhelming both teacher or students during learning English language use in classroom. By highlighting the digital storytelling, creativity development, and meaningful English language use for its intersection, this review contributed to the one going discourse on language pedagogy innovatively and provides a conceptual foundation for empirical review in the future, particularly that integrated technology, character value education, and policy curriculum at the same time.

CONCLUSIONS

This study can conclude that digital storytelling is a pedagogically powerful medium to use for promoting students' creativity in the use of English language, particularly in primary level. Based on the findings from systematic literature review, DST offered the advantages significantly through the integration of language learning with creative expression by narrative construction and multimodal elements. It helps students to generate their own ideas originally, express ideas confidently, and use English in authentic and meaningful context. By the combination of audio visual and textual modes, DST accommodated diverse learning skills and support students' cognitive and its emotional development. In addition, DST contributed to creativity as a core educational value by improving originality, flexibility, and self-expression which in line with the curriculum framework. The integration of bilingual narration in DST can reducing students' anxiety and foster their comprehension especially for student who lack of English vocabulary and less proficiency. These outcomes reported that innovative way, creativity-orientated English instruction are needed as a reflected in the result and discussion study which positioned DST as a medium for holistic development of students, not only as a language learning tool. However, this study had several limitations in literature such as digital competence for teacher technological constraints, and limited instructional time in teaching. Moreover, the predominance of short-term studies indicated a lack of evidence related to the impacts and systematic curriculum integration, suggested that while DST hold a strong potential, the effectiveness still depending on its contextual readiness and thoughtful instructional design.

Based on those conclusions, teachers are encouraged to integrate DST strategically into English language instruction by aligning the activities for digital storytelling with its learning objectives and students' level. Teacher professional development should highlight digital pedagogy and creative instructional design in order to support effective and sustainable for its DST implementation. Future research is recommended to explore more the long-term impact of DST for its creativity and students' language proficiency, alignment with framework curriculum

and character education value, even the scalability cross diverse educational context. Overall, DST demonstrated strong potential as an innovative approach for improving students' creative, confident, and meaningful English language use in this 21st-century era.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Om Dewa Suksma Parama Acintyaya Namah Swaha, Sarwa Karya Prasidhantam. All gratitude is offered to Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa for Its blessings, health, and the opportunities granted for researcher to completing this paper. The researcher also thanks people who give many supports throughout this paper process. Lastly, the researcher thanks to themselves for the effort put on this paper who have worked hard for this all work and never quitting until it is done.

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