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## **INVESTIGATING EFL LEARNERS' ENGAGEMENT THROUGH DIGITAL STORYTELLING: A CASE STUDY AT ISLAMIC HIGHSCHOOL IN CIAMIS**

**Diana Lestari**

(dianasyantik17@gmail.com)

*English Education Program FKIP Galuh University Indonesia*

**Lilies Youlia Friatin**

(liliesyouliafriatin@gmail.com)

*English Education Program FKIP Galuh University Indonesia*

**Dedeh Rohayati.**

(dedehrohayati2017@gmail.com)

*English Education Program FKIP Galuh University Indonesia*

### **Abstract**

This study aimed to investigate students' activities during digital storytelling lessons and whether digital storytelling affects EFL students' engagement or not and identify the extent to which the improvement of EFL students' interest in their learning process by using digital storytelling. The present study implemented a qualitative approach. A case study was applied as a research design. The instruments in this study were observation and interview. The data analysis of this study is based on what the researcher observed; the observation was utilized to generate a description of whether or not students' engagement in implementing digital storytelling in the classroom was achieved. The researcher transcribed all of the interviews which were recorded to analyze the data from the interviews. In this research, non-random sampling was used to choose the participants. The sample consisted of four participants, which were categorized based on gender. There were 2 male students and 2 female students. The results show that digital storytelling can affect EFL students' engagement and the researcher found that the application of digital storytelling could increase students' interest in the learning process.

**Keywords:** *Multimedia, Digital Story Telling, StudentEngagement, and Interest*

## INTRODUCTION

Student involvement is significant in the learning procedure because student engagement shows the level of attention, effort, and persistence. Meyer (2014), Banna, Lin, Stewart, and Fialkowski (2015), and Britt (2015) insight the significance of learners' engagement in learning because learners' engagement can be shown as proof of student efforts necessary to the progress and their skill to generate their knowledge, which leads to the quality of students' learning. Student engagement in the learning process of academic and non-academic activities is seen from behavior, emotion; and cognitive is shown by students in the school and classroom (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). That means the students' engagement can be seen from the attitude shown by them during the learning process.

Based on the interviews administered to English teachers at MAN 3 Ciamis, it is revealed that the methods of learning used by the English teacher are lecturing methods, questioning and answering methods, and assignments. The teacher still tends to use makeshift media like a textbook which can cause boredom in students and reduce student motivation (Gunawan, Utanto & Martha 2017). Another problem is that the students are still lacking in receiving the material that has been given by the teacher. This is indicated when students are asked by the teacher; they still open books to find answers leading to students' less motivation to learn. Furthermore, the students look lazy, lacked motivation, bored, and get bored quickly.

Based on the problems and characteristics aforementioned, one alternative solution might be applied, namely, the digital storytelling method. Digital storytelling is technological know-how used to deliver a story to audiences whether in the text, graphics, animation, audio, or video. Based on Skouge and Rao (2009) digital storytelling is a device that makes use of image, video, and audio.

Another benefit of the use of digital storytelling is that it can make learning more interesting and can increase curiosity about animation to support student understanding. Robin (2006) claims that "Digital Storytelling has been a powerful instructional device for both students and teachers" (p. 709). This is one reason why digital storytelling is suitable as a learning tool.

Five previous studies have the same topic as the present study (Ivala, Gachago, Condy & Chigona, 2013; Hedderman, 2019; Foelske, 2014; Idayani, 2019; Lazareva & Cruz-Martinez, 2020). Almost all of the topics of previous studies are similar to the present study, i.e. exploring the use of the digital tool, especially, digital storytelling, for triggering student engagement. However, none of them have been researched on Islamic schools site. Therefore, the researcher tries to conduct research on the site of Islamic-based schools with the title Investigating EFL learners' engagement through digital storytelling: A case study at Islamic High School in Ciamis.

The difference/gap from my research with the previous study is that my

research focuses on students studying at Madrasah Aliyah, this is an added value for this research because previously no one has researched at Madrasa Aliyah and focused more on the interest and enthusiasm of the students. Thus, this research focuses on two research questions: "Does digital storytelling affect EFL students' engagement?" and "To what extent is the improvement of EFL students' interest in their learning process by using digital storytelling."

## **METHOD**

To reply the research questions and objectives, this study used a qualitative research approach under the case study as suggested by Creswell (2012) and Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012). The researcher is interested in implementing digital storytelling at MAN 3 Ciamis due to the availability of digital storytelling in the learning process. Marshall and Rossman (1999, as cited in Berg, 2001) explained that "the researcher must think about a rationale to find out and use a certain set of a data collection site" (p. 29).

The participants of the research were students at XII IPS 1 in MAN 3 Ciamis which was selected by using non-random sampling. Patton (1990, as cited in Creswell, 2012) stated that "in purposeful sampling, researchers intend to select participants and sites to investigate the primary phenomenon. The standard used in choosing participants and sites is whether or not they are information-rich" (p. 206). The participants consisted of four students which were categorized based on gender: 2 male students and 2 female students.

The researcher only observed the teaching and learning processes in the classroom. The researcher evaluated and formulated student responses when implementing digital storytelling and the researcher did a case study which is in accordance with Creswell (2012). Therefore, the researcher used semi-structured techniques and a classroom observation checklist as the methodical description of events, actions, and artifacts in the social environment chosen for study (Rossman, 1989, p. 79).

Meanwhile, the interview was used as a data collection in a way of interviewing a selected individual as a participant as proposed by Sugyono (2015, p.72).

The analysis of this research was completed after collecting data taken from observation and interviews. The researcher transcribed all of the interviews which were recorded to analyze the interview data. Analyzing qualitative data consists of six steps: organizing, manual or computer analysis, exploring and coding data, representing results, creating conclusions, and evaluating the validity of the findings. (Creswell, 2012, p. 237).

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

This research demonstrated the findings of the study after data from observation and semi-structured interviews were collected. The research focused on the involvement of EFL learners through digital storytelling in the classroom. The researcher in this study was non-participatory, which means that he or she only observed the teaching and learning process. To answer question number one, the researcher used observation to collect data. The question is "Does digital storytelling affect EFL students' engagement?" and to answer research question number two; the question is "To what extent is the improvement of EFL students' interest in their learning process by using digital storytelling." These research questions used semi-structured interviews.

As previously mentioned, this research is a qualitative case study, and the interview was directed in two languages, English and Indonesian, for learners to understand and obtain better answers. On August 23, 2021, the researcher did the study. Purposive sampling was employed for the participants, who were divided into two groups depending on gender. There were 2 males and 2 females.

The goal of this study was to investigate EFL learners' engagement in the learning process through digital storytelling. To answer the first research question, the researcher conducted classroom observation, evaluating and observing student responses while using digital storytelling in the learning process using an observation checklist. There was one meeting with participant XII IPS 1 on August 23, 2021, at 08.15 at the Islamic high school MAN 3 Ciamis. In this case, the duration of classroom observation was one hour. After finishing the classroom observation, the data from the observation checklist was examined by the researcher. The researcher examined the observation in light of how the students' responses in class when implementing digital storytelling; it was followed by analyzing the data using a descriptive analysis approach. Miles and Huberman (1994) identify that there are three main approaches to qualitative data analysis: interpretative approaches, social anthropological approaches, and collaborative social research approaches"

After the researcher conducted a study by selecting several participants who were grouped into 2 males and 2 females in class XII IPS 1 at MAN 3 Ciamis, the researcher found some data and facts from their experiences while their teachers implemented digital storytelling in their teaching and learning activities. The researcher described the data based on each participant who of course had different opinions and views. Here are their thoughts on digital storytelling:

The first participant was a man in class XII IPS 1 at MAN 3 Ciamis. The researcher got a lot of information about his experience when his teacher implemented Digital Storytelling in the teaching and learning process. He argued

that when a teacher implements digital storytelling in the learning process regularly, it made the teaching and learning process more interesting. The learning process was also more attractive because the teacher displayed several pictures that were displayed on a screen. So that the teaching and learning activities were not monotonous and the learning was more effective.

Then, he said that digital storytelling was very influential on teaching and learning activities. This learning activity was more conducive and more effective than traditional learning. The response of the class was very good. They were enthusiastic about the learning process, and every student in the class was active in asking and answering questions. He added that digital storytelling has many benefits in the learning process. For example, the learning become more interesting, the material presented was easy to understand, the material presented was not boring, and students were more active in learning. Finally, he said that he wanted the learning process to always apply digital storytelling because he was very enthusiastic when taking classes.

The second participant said that he felt happy when learning using digital storytelling. Learning became more fun. The material was easy to understand when learning took place. The students were not easily bored because their learning was not based on books. Also, they paid more attention to the teacher when explaining the material displayed. He had participated in learning using digital storytelling when he was in grade 11. In grade 11, learning using digital storytelling made it easier for him to understand the material.

The third participant was a woman who is in XII IPS 1 in Islamic school MAN 3 Ciamis. She argued that learning to use digital storytelling made learning more interesting; because she could see the material directly on the screen without having to open the book, the material looked clearer and made students more focused on looking at the front of the screen while listening to the teacher's explanation. She also did not feel bored when learning took place; her enthusiasm for learning also increased. She and the students had a learning experience using digital storytelling media, namely, during geography learning. At that time, the teacher taught students through YouTube shows, which, of course, learning was more relaxed but still focused on the core of the learning material.

Then, she said that learning to use digital storytelling media made the students easier to learn, not having to open a book, but they can see the material directly in front of the screen. This student wanted the learning method to use digital storytelling because she felt this learning had the potential to attract students' interest in learning. So, students can be more active in the classroom.

The last participant was also a woman who was in XII IPS 1 in Islamic school MAN 3 Ciamis. According to this student, digital storytelling was a fun learning process, which means that learning with this method did not make the class boring so that she could understand the material presented by the teacher and by looking directly at the material being taught on the screen. It is proven that when learning

took place, students were more active in the classroom. It indicated that they paid attention and understand what has been conveyed. Her experience when learning to use the digital storytelling method was that learning becomes very fun, besides that she was not sleepy when learning took place and she was also quick to understand the material.

She added that learning using the digital storytelling method was different from learning. It usually means that the learning was more relaxed, but the material was still conveyed well because the teacher also explained well supported by a screen that displayed the material. Therefore, she wants the class to apply the digital storytelling method to convey the material because, in addition to making the material easier to understand, students were also more active in class. After all, the learning was fun.

Based on the opinions of each participant, the researcher can conclude that such as follows: the first is that learning using the digital storytelling method can make learning more interesting. The second is that by applying digital storytelling, the material delivered is easier to understand. The third is that the digital storytelling method is fun because the method does not make students bored and does not make them sleepy. The fourth is that learning using digital storytelling makes students more active and enthusiastic in class. This is evidenced by their active asking and answering when the teacher asked questions. From the various opinions of the participants, the researcher found that the application of digital storytelling could increase students' interest in learning.

## **Discussion**

This section presented a research discussion that included several points that the researcher would discuss. At this point, she discussed student engagement, which included student interest in digital storytelling. The findings were based on research questions provided by the researcher. These were two research findings related to the question, "Does digital storytelling affect EFL students' engagement in their learning process?" and "To what extent does the improvement of EFL students' interest in their learning process by using digital storytelling?" To collect data, the researcher used observations and semi-structured interviews.

The results show that digital storytelling can affect EFL students' engagement. Students look more enthusiastic when learning takes place, students look active in asking and answering questions, the atmosphere in the class becomes more relaxed, students pay attention to the screen and listen to the teacher when given material, and students think more critically when giving their opinions. This proves that digital storytelling is able to be an active, effective, and fun learning method in teaching and learning activities. The result of the research was to answer the first research question, which was "Does digital storytelling affect EFL students' engagement?" The researcher used observation to find out the effect of digital

storytelling on students' engagement.

In this case, the researcher conducted a semi-structured interview to complete the data and reply the second research question, which was "to what extent does the improvement in EFL students' interest in their learning process by using digital storytelling?" The researcher found that the application of digital storytelling could increase students' interest in the learning process. This is evidenced by the responses from students when asked questions about why they feel interested in learning. They were more excited about learning. Learning was not boring, so it made students more active in class.

Several researchers had the same topic as this research. Some previous research results found that the use of digital storytelling media has significantly influenced learning. Previous research is as follows: The first, research by Rohayati (2011) entitled *Students in a Genre-Based Digital Storytelling Project*, showed that the students were actively engaged when the digital storytelling project was implemented. The finding of this research is that the employment of digital storytelling is beneficial to engage students in learning activities. This study also found a positive effect of digital storytelling on student engagement. The collected data is the difference between this research and the previous research; the previous research collected data through observation, interviews, document analysis, peer discussion, and questionnaires. Meanwhile, this research collected data by observation and interview only.

The second research is researched by Ivala, Gachago, Condy, & Chigona (2013) with the title 'Enhancing student engagement with their studies: A digital storytelling approach'. The results showed that producing digital storytelling increased student engagement in dealing with their studies, which resulted in high stage of reflection on the case, which resulted in a deep comprehension of the topic matter. The difference with this research was in the interview. Group interviews with the previous researchers focused on students and facilitators while the study only interviewed students.

The third research by Hedderman (2019) with the title "The Effects of Digital Storytelling on Student Learning and Engagement in the Secondary World Language Classroom." The project elicited numerous student responses; the findings show that students were extremely engaged throughout the unit as they displayed competency in language acquisition. Multiple means of communication, mini-lessons, and student work were critical components of the unit. The difference in this research lies in the goal, whereas the previous research lies in the second goal is to overcome the importance of teacher expertise while this research does not examine the expertise of teachers.

In the review of the research results above, it can be concluded that learning by utilizing information and communication technology can increase efficiency and effectiveness in the classroom. Digital storytelling can increase students' understanding of concepts and interest in learning.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In this chapter, the researcher takes the conclusion from the findings and discussions in the previous chapter. This study investigated EFL learners' engagement through digital storytelling. This study was designed to answer two research questions. The first research question was to find out the effectiveness of digital storytelling in student engagement in the classroom. The second question was to find out student interest this was seen through their responses about learning using digital storytelling. To answer those research questions, the researcher designed this study as a case study and also obtained qualitative data.

Digital storytelling is an effective way to foster student involvement in learning. By implementing digital storytelling in learning, the material that is conveyed is more interesting and easier to understand. Digital storytelling is one way to foster student interest in learning where this learning makes students more active in the classroom. In collecting the data, the researcher applied two instruments. There was an observation checklist and a semi-structured interview.

The researcher determined that there were some significant points from the observation in response to the first research question. Students responded very enthusiastically to the teacher. Students focused on paying attention to the screen displayed and also students looked more responsive to the teacher. The students looked very active in asking and answering questions. It can be interpreted that students can understand the material well. This proves that learning to use digital storytelling can affect student engagement because digital storytelling is modern and fun learning. This observation can answer the number one question that digital storytelling can have a good effect on student involvement in teaching and learning activities.

Based on the data collected through interviews, the researcher found that students were very enthusiastic about participating in learning activities because almost all participants said that learning by using digital storytelling learning became more fun and not boring. Students also said that they could understand the material presented. What they say proves that learning to use digital storytelling can increase students' mood in learning. With this interview, it is possible to reply to the second question that the interest of EFL students can increase in the learning process by using digital storytelling as evidenced by the activeness of students during the learning process. These results are supported by the explanation of Heriyana, Wina., and Maureen (2014) who state that digital storytelling is able to be used to generate student interest in learning and increase attention and students' motivation in the classroom.

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