

Students' Perceptions toward the Implementation of YouTube-Based Digital Storytelling to Improve EFL Speaking Skills: A Case Study of Eleventh Grade

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the implementation of Digital Storytelling (DST) and students' perceptions of its effectiveness in improving English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking skills among eleventh-grade students at Walisongo High School, Semarang. A qualitative case study design was employed involving 13 students. Data were collected through classroom observations of all participants and semi-structured interviews with four students who actively participated in DST activities. The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings showed that DST was effectively implemented through three stages: watching, analyzing, and retelling digital stories. Observation results indicated positive student engagement across all observed indicators. Interview data revealed positive perceptions of DST in enhancing learning engagement, speaking confidence, speaking fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary development. Students reported that repeated exposure to digital stories helped them speak more fluently, improve pronunciation through imitation of native speakers, and acquire contextual vocabulary. They also felt more confident and less anxious when speaking in front of the class because they were familiar with the story content. However, some students experienced difficulties in reorganizing and retelling story content accurately and grammatically. Overall, the study concludes that DST is an effective and practical strategy for supporting the development of EFL speaking skills among Indonesian high school students

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji implementasi Digital Storytelling (DST) serta persepsi peserta didik terhadap efektivitasnya dalam meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL) pada peserta didik kelas XI SMA Walisongo Semarang. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif dengan melibatkan 13 peserta didik sebagai partisipan. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas terhadap seluruh peserta didik dan wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan empat peserta didik yang aktif dalam kegiatan DST. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan model Miles dan Huberman yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa DST berhasil diterapkan melalui tiga tahapan utama, yaitu menonton, menganalisis, dan menceritakan kembali cerita digital. Observasi menunjukkan keterlibatan peserta didik yang tinggi selama proses pembelajaran. Hasil wawancara mengungkapkan bahwa peserta didik memiliki persepsi positif terhadap penggunaan DST dalam meningkatkan keterlibatan belajar, kepercayaan diri, kelancaran berbicara, pengucapan, dan penguasaan kosakata. Kegiatan menonton dan menceritakan kembali secara berulang membantu peserta didik berbicara lebih lancar, memahami pelafalan yang benar, serta menggunakan kosakata yang lebih beragam dan sesuai konteks. Selain itu, peserta didik merasa lebih percaya diri dan tidak terlalu cemas saat melakukan presentasi lisan. Namun, beberapa peserta didik masih mengalami kesulitan dalam menyusun kembali isi cerita secara lancar dan sesuai tata bahasa. Secara keseluruhan, DST merupakan strategi pembelajaran yang efektif dan mudah diterapkan untuk mendukung pengembangan keterampilan berbicara bahasa Inggris di sekolah menengah

PENDAHULUAN

English speaking skills are essential in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because they help students communicate ideas, opinions, emotions, and information effectively in academic and social contexts. However, speaking is often considered the most difficult language skill since learners must produce language spontaneously while maintaining fluency, pronunciation, grammar, and meaningful interaction. Many EFL students still experience difficulties in expressing their ideas orally due to limited vocabulary, lack of practice, fear of making mistakes, and anxiety when speaking in front of teachers and classmates (Khudhur Omar, 2023). These problems reduce students' confidence and willingness to participate actively in speaking activities, which eventually affects the development of their speaking abilities (Hijra et al., 2024).

These speaking difficulties are closely related to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which explains that anxiety, low self-confidence, and motivation influence second language acquisition because they can block learners from processing language input effectively (Krashen, 1982). When learners experience fear, embarrassment, or low confidence, their speaking development may be hindered (Udhayachandran & Sreenivasulu, 2025). In addition, communicative competence includes not only grammatical competence, but also sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence that support meaningful communication (Subandowo, 2022). Nevertheless, speaking instruction in many EFL classrooms is still dominated by teacher-centered learning and memorization practices, resulting in limited opportunities for authentic communication and active student participation (Purmayanti et al., 2026).

To overcome these challenges, the integration of technology in language learning has become increasingly important, particularly through the use of Digital Storytelling (DST). DST

combines traditional storytelling with digital multimedia elements such as images, audio, narration, video, and music to create engaging learning experiences (Fitria & Afdaleni, 2025). Through DST activities, students are encouraged to express ideas creatively while practicing speaking skills through script writing, storytelling, voice recording, and digital presentations (Nasution, 2024). Previous studies explain that DST promotes active participation, collaboration, learner engagement, communication skills, motivation, and self-confidence in speaking activities (Selfa-Sastre et al., 2022).

Numerous studies have also shown the positive contribution of DST in improving students' speaking performance in EFL classrooms. Research by Mulyati et al. (2022) found that DST improved students' speaking fluency and vocabulary mastery, while Muzdalifah et al. (2024) reported increased confidence and motivation during speaking practices. Yuniarti et al. (2022) revealed that multimedia storytelling encouraged greater classroom participation and engagement. Similarly, Miao & Li (2024) and Rosalina et al. (2025) found that DST positively influenced language performance, classroom interaction, oral communication skills, and students' interest in learning English. Kurniawan et al. (2024) further emphasized that DST projects helped students develop communication skills and digital literacy simultaneously, while Asan et al. (2025) stated that DST created a more meaningful and engaging learning environment.

Despite these positive findings, studies discussing students' personal responses and experiences toward DST implementation are still limited because most previous research focused mainly on quantitative measurements such as tests, questionnaires, and statistical analysis (Mulyati et al., 2022). In addition, research on DST in Indonesian senior high school EFL classrooms, especially in Central Java, remains limited, and little attention has been given to the use of digital platforms such as YouTube in supporting students' speaking practice and self-expression. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the implementation of Digital Storytelling and students' responses toward its use in supporting EFL speaking skills among eleventh grade students at Walisongo High School in Semarang, focusing on affective, cognitive, and platform-specific dimensions that quantitative studies have not fully explored.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to investigate the implementation of Digital Storytelling (DST) and students' perceptions toward its use in improving EFL speaking skills. According to Creswell (2012), a case study enables researchers to explore a particular phenomenon in depth through detailed data collection from multiple sources. The study was conducted at Walisongo High School in Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia, during the 2025/2026 academic year. The participants consisted of 13 eleventh-grade students selected through purposive sampling because they were considered capable of providing relevant information regarding the implementation of DST in speaking activities. In addition, four students who actively participated during the DST sessions were selected for semi-structured

interviews to obtain deeper insights into their experiences and perceptions.

The data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Classroom observations were conducted during the implementation of DST activities to examine students' participation, interaction, fluency, pronunciation, confidence, and vocabulary development during the watch-analyze-retell process. The researcher acted as a non-participant observer and recorded the classroom activities using field notes, observation sheets, and photo documentation. Meanwhile, semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with four selected students after the DST project had been completed. The interviews aimed to explore students' experiences, challenges, motivation, confidence, and perceptions regarding the use of YouTube-based Digital Storytelling in improving their speaking skills. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

The collected data were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis technique proposed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, the researcher selected and categorized the relevant information obtained from observations and interviews. The data were then organized and presented descriptively to identify patterns and themes related to students' responses toward DST implementation. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the interpretation of the findings to explain how Digital Storytelling supported students' speaking development, including speaking fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary mastery, confidence, and classroom engagement. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, triangulation between observation and interview results was applied throughout the study.

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

Findings

The findings of this study were obtained from classroom observations involving all 13 11th-grade students and semi-structured interviews with four selected students at Walisongo High School in Semarang, following the implementation of Digital Storytelling (DST) in the speaking class. The four interview participants were selected based on their highly active and frequent involvement during the DST activities, making them the richest source of information for exploring students' perceptions in depth. The findings are presented based on the research questions and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman technique, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

To analyze the implementation of Digital Storytelling in teaching speaking skills, classroom observations were carried out during the DST learning sessions. The observation sheet included several indicators related to students' participation, interaction, and storytelling performance. The results of the observation are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Results of classroom observation on the implementation of digital storytelling

in speaking lessons

No	Statement	Yes	No	Notes
1.	Students enthusiastically watch the digital storytelling videos selected by the teacher on YouTube	Yes		Most students immediately turned their attention to the screen as soon as the YouTube video started. Some students showed enthusiastic facial expressions and made spontaneous comments while watching, demonstrating genuine interest and enthusiasm for the digital story content.
2.	Students pay close attention to the content and narrative structure of the digital storytelling videos	Yes		The students appeared to be watching intently, with no significant distractions. Many students were seen taking brief notes or whispering to their peers about important details of the story or new words they encountered during the viewing session, demonstrating their active engagement with both the content and the narrative structure of the video.
3.	Students are able to identify the elements of a story (characters, setting, plot, conflict, resolution) from the digital storytelling videos	Yes		After watching the video, the students were able to name the main characters, describe the setting, and explain the plot when asked by the teacher. Most groups successfully identified the five elements of a story during the group discussion, although some students initially needed the teacher's help to distinguish between conflict and resolution. Some of them even identified scenes in the digital storytelling video simply by watching it, as they did not yet fully understand English.
4.	Students actively discuss the story elements with their group after watching the video	Yes		The group discussion session was lively and productive. The students exchanged views on the elements of the story, corrected each other's interpretations, and built on ideas proposed by their peers. The discussion demonstrated collaborative thinking and a shared understanding of the material on digital storytelling.
5.	Students are able to independently search for and select appropriate digital storytelling videos on YouTube	Yes		The students demonstrated adequate digital literacy by browsing YouTube to find videos suitable for storytelling activities, as digital storytelling content is readily available on YouTube. Most groups chose videos they were already familiar with. Some students initially needed guidance in determining the criteria for videos suitable for storytelling
No	Statement	Yes	No	Notes

				activities, but they were able to make their own selections after receiving a brief explanation from the teacher.
6.	Students analyze and understand the narrative structure of the YouTube videos they have selected	Yes		After selecting their respective videos, the students demonstrated their ability to analyze narrative structure, including the opening, plot development, climax, and resolution. The groups were able to present their structural analyses coherently, indicating that they had moved beyond a superficial understanding and achieved a deeper understanding of the narratives.
7.	Students retell the digital story in front of the class using their own words	Yes		All groups presented their retellings orally in front of the class. The students generally did not read directly from their notes but tried to retell the stories in their own words. Some students showed creativity by adding their own interpretations or highlighting certain moments in the story as they retold it.
8.	Students speak fairly fluently when retelling the digital story	Yes		Most students were able to maintain a natural speaking pace with only very brief pauses as they retold the story. Compared to previous conventional speaking tasks, the students appeared more confident in maintaining the flow of their speech, likely because they had come to understand the story's structure through repeated viewings and prior group discussions.
9.	Students demonstrate proper pronunciation when presenting the story they retell	Yes		Most students demonstrated clear and easily understandable pronunciation throughout their retellings. Some students were seen correcting their pronunciation mid-sentence, particularly for vocabulary words that appeared in the YouTube video, demonstrating their ability to imitate the pronunciation of English words through digital storytelling.
10.	Students use varied and relevant vocabulary when retelling the story	Yes		The students incorporated vocabulary from the YouTube video into their retellings, demonstrating active use of the new words they encountered through that digital content.
11.	Students demonstrate confidence and reduce anxiety when speaking in front of the class	Yes		There was a significant decrease in anxiety levels compared to conventional speaking tasks. The students were able to maintain eye contact with their listeners, speak with a steady voice, and show fewer signs of
No	Statement	Yes	No	Notes

12.	Students are confident enough to ask and answer questions related to the stories presented by their classmates	Yes	nervousness, such as excessive hesitation or avoidant behavior. Their mastery of the story's content appeared to play a major role in boosting their self-confidence. During the Q&A sessions held after each storytelling session, the students actively participated by asking questions about the details of the stories and answering their classmates' questions. The interactive atmosphere created by this DST activity encouraged even the usually quieter students to join in the discussion.
13.	Students reflect on and draw conclusions from the digital stories they watch	Yes	When asked, the students were able to articulate the moral message or lesson contained in the stories they watched. Some students related the themes of the stories to real-life situations and their personal experiences, demonstrating higher-order thinking skills that went beyond mere comprehension of the stories to meaningful critical reflection.
14.	Students express their feelings and opinions after retelling the digital stories	Yes	During the closing reflection session, the students openly shared their personal responses to the activity. Some of the most common comments included a sense of satisfaction at having successfully retold the story, appreciation for the YouTube-based learning approach, and the acknowledgment that they now feel more comfortable and confident speaking English compared to their previous experiences in conventional conversation classes.

The Implementation of Digital Storytelling (DST) in Teaching Oral Skills

To examine the implementation of Digital Storytelling in teaching speaking skills, classroom observations were conducted across the DST learning sessions. The observation sheet consisted of 14 indicators encompassing students' engagement, story comprehension, narrative analysis, oral retelling performance, and speaking skills development. The results of the observation are presented in Table 1.

Based on the observational data, all 14 indicators were recorded in the "Yes" category, indicating that the DST implementation was carried out effectively and that students were actively involved throughout the learning process. The DST activities were structured across three main phases: watching, analyzing, and retelling.

In the first phase (watching), students enthusiastically directed their attention to the screen as soon as the YouTube video began, with several students making spontaneous positive

comments during viewing (Indicator 1). Students demonstrated focused attention toward both the content and the narrative structure of the digital storytelling videos, with many observed taking brief notes or quietly discussing story details with peers during the session.

In the second phase (analyzing), students engaged in structured story analysis by identifying key narrative elements including characters, setting, plot, conflict, and resolution from the videos they watched (Indicator 3). Group discussions were notably lively and productive, with students exchanging interpretations, correcting each other's understanding, and building on each other's ideas collaboratively (Indicator 4). Students also demonstrated sufficient digital literacy by independently navigating YouTube to search for and select appropriate digital storytelling videos (Indicator 5), though some initially required brief teacher guidance regarding appropriate video selection criteria. Following independent video selection, students analyzed and presented the narrative structure of their chosen videos coherently, demonstrating deeper narrative comprehension beyond surface level understanding.

In the third phase (retelling), students performed oral retellings of the digital stories in front of the class using their own words, generally avoiding direct reading from notes (Indicator 7). Most students maintained a natural speaking pace with minimal long pauses (Indicator 8), and improved pronunciation awareness was observed, with some students self correcting mid sentence for vocabulary encountered in the YouTube videos (Indicator 9). Students incorporated new vocabulary from the digital content into their retellings (Indicator 10) and showed a noticeable reduction in speaking anxiety, maintaining eye contact and steady vocal projection during presentation (Indicator 11). Interactive question-and-answer sessions following each retelling demonstrated students' growing confidence in engaging with their peers (Indicator 12). Furthermore, students articulated moral messages and connected story themes to real life situations, reflecting higher order thinking beyond simple story comprehension (Indicator 13). During the closing reflection session, students openly expressed feelings of satisfaction, appreciation for the YouTube based approach, and increased comfort in speaking English compared to conventional speaking tasks (Indicator 14).

These findings indicate that the watch, analyze and retell approach within DST implementation successfully fostered an active, collaborative, and communicative learning environment that supported the development of students' oral skills in the EFL classroom.

Students' Perceptions toward the Use of Digital Storytelling in Improving Oral Skills

To explore students' perceptions toward the use of DST in improving their oral skills, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four eleventh-grade students at Walisongo High School. The interview data were analyzed thematically and organized into five major themes: learning engagement, speaking confidence, speaking fluency, pronunciation and vocabulary development, and challenges.

Learning Engagement

All four respondents expressed positive perceptions toward the DST activity, consistently describing it as enjoyable, interesting, and distinctly different from conventional speaking practice. Students highlighted that watching YouTube storytelling videos made the learning atmosphere more relaxed and motivating.

"Menonton video storytelling di YouTube bikin pembelajaran lebih santai dan nggak membosankan. Jadi speaking terasa lebih fun dibanding cuma baca dialog." (Respondent 2) ["Watching storytelling videos on YouTube made learning more relaxed and not boring. Speaking felt more fun than just reading dialogues"]

"Saya merasa lebih tertarik belajar speaking karena menggunakan video cerita dari YouTube yang tidak membosankan." (Respondent 4) ["I find myself more interested in learning to speak because I use story videos from YouTube that aren't boring."]

These responses consistently indicate that integrating YouTube-based digital storytelling into speaking instruction created a more engaging and enjoyable learning experience, which in turn increased students' motivation to participate actively in oral activities.

Speaking Confidence

All respondents reported an increase in speaking confidence following the DST activity. Students identified that watching the story video multiple times prior to retelling provided adequate preparation that reduced their fear of making mistakes during oral performance.

"Karena sebelum tampil aku bisa menonton videonya beberapa kali, jadi lebih paham isi cerita dan cara penyampaiannya. Itu bikin aku lebih siap waktu speaking di depan kelas." (Respondent 1) ["Because I was able to watch the video several times before my presentation, I had a better understanding of the story and how it was presented. That made me feel more prepared when speaking in front of the class."]

"Setelah menonton video beberapa kali, saya jadi lebih siap dan tidak terlalu takut melakukan kesalahan saat berbicara." (Respondent 3) ["After watching the video several times, I felt more prepared and less afraid of making mistakes when speaking"]

"Kegiatan ini membantu saya lebih percaya diri karena saya bisa belajar dari cara berbicara di video sebelum tampil di depan kelas." (Respondent 4) ["This activity helped me feel more confident because I could learn from the way the speaker in the video presented before speaking in front of the class."]

These findings suggest that repeated viewing of the YouTube digital storytelling videos functioned as an effective confidence-building scaffold, enabling students to internalize story content and delivery style before performing orally in front of the class.

Speaking Fluency

Students across all interview sessions reported improvements in speaking fluency as a result of the watch-and-retell process. The structured exposure to story content through viewing and group discussion prior to retelling was identified as the key factor in reducing

hesitation during oral performance.

"*Habis menonton video, aku latihan menceritakan ulang berkali-kali. Jadi waktu ngomong Bahasa Inggris nggak terlalu banyak berhenti atau bingung.*" (Respondent 1) ["After watching the video, I practiced retelling multiple times. So when speaking English I did not pause or get confused too much"]

"*Semakin sering latihan retelling, semakin lancar juga waktu speaking.*" (Respondent 2) ["The more I practiced retelling, the more fluent I became when speaking"]

"*Kegiatan ini membantu meningkatkan fluency karena saya jadi lebih terbiasa berbicara Bahasa Inggris saat latihan retelling.*" (Respondent 4) ["This activity helps improve my fluency because I've become more accustomed to speaking English during the retelling exercises."]

These responses indicate that the repeated practice embedded in the watch, analyze and retell cycle enabled students to internalize narrative structure and deliver their retellings with greater ease and fluency, reducing the cognitive load typically associated with spontaneous speaking tasks.

Pronunciation and Vocabulary Development

Students consistently reported improvements in both pronunciation awareness and vocabulary acquisition through exposure to authentic English in the YouTube digital storytelling videos. Respondents highlighted that listening to proficient speakers in the videos provided natural pronunciation models that they actively attempted to replicate during retelling.

"*Aku jadi lebih tahu cara mengucapkan beberapa kata yang sebelumnya sering salah, kayak 'enough' atau 'through.' Aku biasanya mengikuti cara bicara di video.*" (Respondent 1) ["I learned the correct pronunciation of words I previously mispronounced, like 'enough' or 'through.' I usually followed the way they spoke in the video"]

"*Aku jadi lebih memperhatikan intonasi saat speaking. Misalnya aku jadi tahu pengucapan yang benar untuk beberapa kata yang sebelumnya salah aku baca.*" (Respondent 2) ["I've started paying more attention to intonation when speaking. For example, I've learned the correct pronunciation of some words that I used to mispronounce."]

"*Saya jadi lebih sering mendengar cara pengucapan native speaker dan mencoba menirukannya saat speaking.*" (Respondent 3) ["I've started listening more often to how native speakers pronounce words and trying to imitate them when I speak."]

Regarding vocabulary development, students noted that new words encountered in the storytelling videos were actively learned and applied during retelling.

"*Di video ada banyak kata baru yang berhubungan dengan cerita. Jadi pas mau retelling, aku jadi belajar kosakata baru dan cara pakainya.*" (Respondent 1) ["There are a lot of new words in the video that are related to the story. So when I retell it, I get to learn new vocabulary and how to use it."]

"Biasanya aku catat kata-kata yang belum tahu artinya lalu mencoba memakainya saat retelling."
(Respondent 2) [I usually wrote down words I didn't know and tried to use them during retelling]

These findings highlight that YouTube digital storytelling videos functioned as authentic linguistic input, supporting both phonological awareness and contextual vocabulary enrichment through naturalistic exposure and imitation.

Challenges

Despite the overall positive perceptions, all four respondents identified challenges during the DST activity. The primary difficulties included comprehending fast-paced speech in the videos, recalling the story sequence for retelling, and constructing grammatically natural English sentences during oral performance.

"Kesulitan utamanya biasanya pas memahami isi cerita yang terlalu cepat atau ada kata yang belum ngerti. Selain itu aku juga kadang nervous waktu harus cerita ulang di depan kelas." [My main difficulty was remembering the story content and reconstructing it in English with correct grammar] (Respondent 1)

"Kesulitanannya kadang pas harus mengingat urutan cerita dan menjelaskannya kembali pakai Bahasa Inggris. Kadang aku juga bingung memilih kata yang tepat." (Respondent 2) ["The challenge is sometimes having to remember the sequence of the story and retell it in English. Sometimes I also have trouble choosing the right words."]

"Kesulitan utama saya adalah mengingat isi cerita dan menyusunnya kembali dalam Bahasa Inggris dengan grammar yang benar." (Respondent 4) ["My main challenge is remembering the story and retelling it in English with correct grammar."]

These challenges reflect the gap EFL learners commonly experience between receptive comprehension, understanding a story through watching and productive oral expression, retelling it fluently and accurately in English. This underscores the ongoing need for linguistic scaffolding, adequate preparation time, and structured teacher support within DST based speaking instruction.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of Digital Storytelling through a structured watch, analyze and retell approach successfully increased student engagement and active participation across all three phases of learning, as evidenced by all 14 observational indicators being recorded in the "Yes" category. This finding is in line with Yang et al. (2022), who confirmed that DST fosters active student participation through the integration of discussion, collaborative production, and oral presentation, and with Nair & Yunus (2021), who established that the integration of multimedia elements in DST creates a more engaging learning environment capable of sustaining students' attention throughout language learning activities. Similarly, Yuniarti et al., (2022) revealed that multimedia

storytelling encouraged greater classroom participation and student enthusiasm, a pattern clearly reflected in the lively group discussions and enthusiastic retelling performances documented in this study. All four interview respondents described the activity as enjoyable and distinctly different from conventional speaking practice, with students noting that the YouTube-based approach made learning feel more relaxed and motivating, as expressed by Respondent 2: "*Menonton video storytelling di YouTube bikin pembelajaran lebih santai dan nggak membosankan. Jadi speaking terasa lebih fun dibanding cuma baca dialog*" ("Watching storytelling videos on YouTube made learning more relaxed and not boring. Speaking felt more fun than just reading dialogues"). A notable finding that distinguishes this study from prior research is that meaningful engagement was achieved without requiring students to produce digital content; rather, students became actively engaged through the process of watching authentic YouTube narratives, analyzing story structures collaboratively, and performing oral retellings, suggesting that DST-based engagement benefits are achievable through a receptive-to-productive framework that is more accessible for schools with limited technological resources.

The improvement in speaking fluency observed in both the observational data and interview findings of this study is consistent with several previous studies, while also offering a contextually distinct explanation of how fluency gains occur within a watch-and-retell DST framework. Mulyati et al. (2022) found that DST improved students' speaking fluency through repeated practice and the use of language in meaningful contexts, and Azqiya, (2025) similarly described how DST increased students' fluency and articulation by creating an interactive environment for self expression in EFL speaking classrooms. Xiaoxin Miao & Lingling, (2024) further confirmed that DST contributed positively to students' language performance through active involvement in creative and communicative practices, consistent with the observational finding in this study that students maintained a natural speaking pace with minimal long pauses during retelling (Indicator 8). Interview data reinforced this pattern, with Respondent 1 reporting that repeated retelling practice after watching the video significantly reduced pausing and confusion during oral performance, and Respondent 2 similarly noting that the more frequently they practiced retelling, the more fluent their speaking became (see Findings, Speaking Fluency theme). Importantly, while prior studies primarily attributed fluency gains to the process of repeated voice recording and self-monitoring during video production, this study demonstrates a novel finding: fluency development can also be effectively achieved through repeated viewing and retelling practice without recording technology, as story familiarity gained through watching and group discussion significantly reduced cognitive load and enabled students to produce more fluent oral output during live performance.

This study's finding that DST effectively reduced speaking anxiety and increased students' confidence is consistent with a substantial body of prior research, while also revealing a distinct confidence building mechanism that has not been previously described in the DST literature. Jitpaisarnwattana, (2025) observed increased confidence and greater participation following DST projects, attributing these gains to the student autonomy embedded in the

process, and Rosalina et al. (2025) similarly found that DST improved learners' oral communication abilities by creating a more comfortable and less threatening speaking environment. Bai & Xian, (2024) further confirmed the relationship between DST and reduced speaking anxiety, establishing that the structured preparation stages in DST activities function as an affective scaffold that lowers emotional barriers to speaking, which aligns with Krashen's Affective Filter Theory as referenced in this study's introduction (Udhayachandran & Sreenivasulu, 2025). The observational data in this study corroborated these findings, with students maintaining eye contact, speaking with steady vocal projection, and showing fewer signs of nervousness during retelling compared to conventional speaking tasks (Indicator 11), while the Q&A sessions showed even quieter students participating actively (Indicator 12). However, a distinctive new finding in this study is the specific mechanism through which confidence was built: unlike production based DST studies where confidence grows from the ability to re-record one's own voice until satisfied, students in this study built their self-confidence by becoming familiar with the story's content through repeated viewings, they were able to internalize the plot before performing, as expressed by Respondent 3, who reported feeling much more prepared and less afraid of making mistakes after watching the video multiple times (see Findings, "Confidence in Speaking" theme), which indicates that pre-performance understanding, rather than post-performance reflection, is the primary affective foundation in the DST Watch -Analysis-Retelling approach.

The positive impact on pronunciation awareness and vocabulary acquisition found in this study aligns with prior research while offering a new perspective on the source and pathway of these linguistic gains in a receptive DST approach. Kristiawan et al. (2022) emphasized that exposure to authentic digital content supports vocabulary building and communicative development in EFL learners, directly corresponding with this study's finding that students actively incorporated new vocabulary encountered in YouTube videos into their oral retellings (Indicator 10). Flores et al. (2023) further argued that storytelling cultivates oral communication by encouraging learners to use language in a targeted and purposeful way, consistent with observations that students deliberately applied story specific vocabulary and attempted to replicate pronunciation patterns from the videos during retelling (Indicator 9). Belda-Medina & Goddard (2024) also confirmed that DST supports linguistic development alongside critical thinking, a finding echoed in this study's observation that students engaged in deeper narrative analysis beyond simple vocabulary recognition. The interview data further enriches these findings, with Respondent 1 reporting an improvement in the pronunciation of previously mispronounced words by imitating the speech patterns of the speakers in the YouTube videos, while Respondent 2 mentioned their habit of noting down unfamiliar vocabulary encountered in those videos and actively using those words when retelling the stories (see Findings, under the themes of Pronunciation and Vocabulary Development). A novel finding of this study is the specific role of YouTube as a naturalistic pronunciation modeling platform: unlike production based DST studies where pronunciation improvement is attributed to self monitoring through

playback of one's own recordings, students in this study improved phonological awareness by observing and imitating proficient speakers in authentic YouTube storytelling videos, representing a receptive imitation pathway to pronunciation development that has received limited attention in prior EFL DST research.

Beyond linguistic outcomes, this study found evidence of higher-order thinking skills during the DST implementation, particularly in the analyzing and reflecting phases, which represents an additional dimension not consistently documented in previous DST speaking studies. Observational data showed that students were able to articulate moral messages, identify thematic connections between stories and real-life situations, and draw meaningful conclusions from the digital narratives they watched (Indicator 13), demonstrates a thinking process aligned with the levels of analysis and evaluation in Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), in which learners move beyond surface-level understanding toward deeper cognitive engagement with narrative content. This aligns with the analysis of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy in the context of Indonesian education, which emphasizes the importance of engaging students in higher order cognitive processes beyond mere recall of knowledge_ (Hartono, 2023). Belda-Medina & Goddard (2024) claimed that DST positions students as content strategists who develop critical thinking and digital literacy simultaneously, while Nasir et al. (2024) showed that DST facilitates cognitive development through constructivist and Bloomian learning frameworks, both of which are consistent with the critical reflection observed in this study. M. A. A. Tamimi (2024) further highlighted that DST develops critical thinking through meaningful storytelling experiences, a finding reflected in students' ability to connect story themes to personal experiences during the closing reflection session (Indicator 14). What distinguishes this study from prior research is that critical thinking was stimulated primarily through the watching and analyzing phases specifically through group discussion of story elements and structural analysis of YouTube narratives rather than through the creative production stage typically emphasized in DST literature, suggesting that the analytical dimension of DST is a powerful but underutilized pathway for developing higher order thinking in EFL classrooms without requiring students to create digital media.

Despite the overall positive findings across all five themes, this study also identified persistent challenges that are partially consistent with prior research while revealing a distinctive challenge specific to the watch and retell approach that warrants further pedagogical attention. Fitriyah (2022) noted that DST implementation is frequently challenged by time constraints and the need for intensive teacher support, findings that were echoed by students in this study who requested more preparation time before retelling and clearer teacher guidance on video selection criteria (Indicator 5). Puspitasari et al. (2025) similarly concluded that while DST promotes cooperative and enjoyable learning, its effectiveness depends on adequate planning and continuous feedback, consistent with this study's observation that some students initially needed teacher assistance to distinguish between narrative elements such as conflict and resolution (Indicator 3). However, a distinctive challenge identified in this study which has

received less attention in prior DST literature is the receptive to productive gap experienced by EFL learners: students reported understanding story content through watching but struggling to reconstruct it fluently and grammatically in English during live retelling, as expressed by Respondent 4, who identified remembering story content and reconstructing it in grammatically correct English as the primary challenge throughout the activity (see Findings, Challenges theme), reflecting the broader speaking inhibition challenges documented among Indonesian EFL learners by Hijra et al. (2024) and Khudhur Omar (2023). This finding suggests that future implementations of watch and retell DST approaches should incorporate targeted scaffolding strategies such as pre-retelling vocabulary mapping, story sequencing cards, and structured group rehearsal to bridge the gap between comprehension and oral production, thereby maximizing the linguistic and affective benefits of DST-based speaking instruction in Indonesian senior high school EFL contexts.

KESIMPULAN

This study aims to examine the implementation of Digital Storytelling (DST) and students' responses to its use in supporting English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking skills among 11th-grade students at Walisongo High School in Semarang, using a qualitative case study design that involves classroom observation and semi-structured interviews. Findings from classroom observations confirm that DST was effectively implemented through the structured watch analyze retell framework, with all 14 observation indicators recorded in the "Yes" category. Further interview findings revealed consistently positive student perceptions across five themes: learning engagement, speaking confidence, speaking fluency, pronunciation and vocabulary development, and challenges. Although students faced difficulties in reconstructing story content fluently in English, they overall demonstrated significant progress in oral communication skills through DST activities.

The DST watch, analyze and retell approach has proven to be an accessible, low-cost, and theory-based strategy for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), requiring only a projector, a smartphone or laptop, internet access, and YouTube without the need to produce digital content. This receptive-to-productive framework effectively reduces speaking anxiety by building familiarity with the story before oral performance, in line with Krashen's Affective Filter Theory and constructivist learning principles, making it highly suitable for schools in Indonesia with limited technological infrastructure. Future research is recommended to employ a mixed-methods design combining qualitative and quantitative measures, extend the implementation period to capture longitudinal development, and replicate this approach in various school contexts, including public schools, vocational schools, and rural settings, to test its broader adaptability across diverse EFL learning environments in Indonesia.

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