INTEGRATING BILINGUAL STORYTELLING AND DIGITAL VISUALIZATION TO STIMULATE NON-NATIVE ENGLISH-SPEAKING STUDENTS' LANGUAGE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT
The increase in digital content that is accessed by all age levels, including ages 4-6 who are in Early Childhood Education, has a good impact on access to positive content for self-development but also has the potential to have negative impacts such as addiction, lack of social interaction, bad influences on physical to weakening language development. Sometimes, the lack of exposure to the use of English contributes to the less-than-optimal mastery of English in children. There is an idea that aims to integrate three components of learning, namely digital technology, storytelling, and the use of bilingualism. Bilingual digital storytelling is an alternative solution to accommodate the development needs of children in terms of receptive language skills, listening and productive language skills, speaking, with the use of two languages as a bridge for children to get used to using English in a tiered manner. Therefore, this study uses the Classroom Action Research type with respondents, namely students aged 4-6 years. Data collection uses observation techniques that refer to observation guide instruments and documentation as additional data to enrich data acquisition. The analysis is carried out descriptively by following several stages of the cycle and comparisons between the entire cycle that runs. The result shows that bilingual digital storytelling demonstrated encouraging progress in English vocabulary acquisition and usage among early learners. However, there was a noticeable gap in developing conversational skills, as most attempts at conversation remained limited to fragmented expressions rather than complete sentences.

Keywords: *Digital Storytelling, Literacy, Expressive Language, Receptive Language, Storytelling.*

INTRODUCTION

Digital literacy encompasses the skills to locate, evaluate, create, and communicate information using digital technologies (Maphosa & Bhebhe, 2019; Reddy, Sharma & Chaudhary, 2022). Its growing significance is driven by increased reliance on technology in work, education, and entertainment, making digital proficiency vital (Bhatt & MacKenzie, 2019; Liu et al., 2022). Social media also enhances digital literacy by requiring users to responsibly navigate platforms and assess information critically (Anisimova, 2020; Radesky et al., 2020). Additionally, the shift to online education underscores the necessity of digital literacy for academic success (Naila et al., 2021; Sari et al., 2023).

In Indonesia, early childhood education, particularly for ages 4–6, is critical for cognitive, emotional, and social development. Digital content can positively shape learning when carefully curated, supporting skills like language acquisition and creativity through interactive tools (Khaulani et al., 2020; Jayawardana et al., 2022). However, unfiltered content poses risks, including exposure to inappropriate material and reduced physical activity, necessitating parental supervision (Lauricella et al., 2020). Thoughtfully guided use of digital content fosters holistic development and complements traditional education.

Digital content provides accessible, interactive educational materials, including videos and apps, promoting personalized learning and independent study (Dung, 2020). Interactive features like quizzes and games enhance engagement and critical thinking, bridging education and entertainment. However, unrestricted access risks addiction, exposure to harmful content, and health issues (Vanderloo et al., 2020; Neophytou et al., 2021). Moderation and supervision maximize benefits, offering engaging learning experiences and supporting cognitive and language development (Liu et al., 2022; Armon-Lotem & Meir, 2019).

Storytelling remains an effective language teaching tool, engaging children's imaginations and providing contextual linguistic input essential for language development (Tompkins et al., 2019; Rahiem, 2021). Digital storytelling integrates traditional methods with technology, creating interactive experiences that enhance multimodal learning and foster collaboration (Ahmad & Yamat, 2020; Kim et al., 2021). Bilingual digital storytelling, combining English and Indonesian, enhances foreign language skills while preserving native language development. It reduces anxiety and promotes holistic learning through engaging narratives (Kurniawan, 2021; Yiğit Gençten & Aydemir, 2023). Research on this method highlights its potential to improve students' English skills in kindergarten education.

This research is based on the importance of digital literacy in the era of technology and globalization, especially for early childhood in Indonesia. Although digitalization provides various interactive and personalized educational content, there is still a gap in the development of content that is safe, targeted, and able to accommodate the linguistic needs of children who are not native English speakers.

The use of digital storytelling has not fully integrated a comprehensive bilingual approach and interactive technology that is in accordance with the local context and global developments (Ahmad & Yamat, 2020; Kurniawan, 2021).

This gap is the starting point for research, especially the lack of innovation in digital content based on storytelling that is not only linguistically educational but also in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood development and is relevant to the challenges of the digital age. The novelty offered is the concept of digital storytelling enriched with bilingual values (Indonesian-English) and interactive technology. This concept not only supports contextual and enjoyable foreign language learning, but also maintains the development of the mother tongue as the basis for children's thinking. This integration is designed to answer the needs of non-English speaking users in facing the challenges of globalization through an inclusive and educational approach. This research is important because it can be the basis for designing learning media that is adaptive, safe, and supports children's cognitive and linguistic development holistically. In addition, it also contributes to the development of children's digital literacy from an early age, which is essential for their future readiness.

METHOD

This study utilizes a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach to implement and evaluate the bilingual digital storytelling method in kindergarten classrooms. This CAR involves a cyclical process comprising three main steps: planning, implementing, and reflecting. In the planning stage, the researcher designs bilingual digital storytelling materials tailored to children's developmental needs focusing on listening and speaking. During implementation, these materials are used in classroom settings to observe their effectiveness in enhancing language skills and engagement. Finally, in the reflection phase, outcomes are evaluated to identify strengths and areas for improvement, informing the next cycle. This iterative process ensures continuous refinement and responsiveness to learners' needs in real classroom contexts. The study focuses on two Kanisius schools based in Semarang and Salatiga, targeting Kindergarten A (ages 4–5) and Kindergarten B (ages 5–6). Approximately 10–20 children per class participated, with data

collected through observations of their responses and learning outcomes during each cycle of the action research process.

The research process includes three main components: Lesson Planning, where learning activities are outlined to align with study objectives; Implementation, where the bilingual digital storytelling method is applied during teaching sessions; and Post-Lesson Reflection, identifying ineffective aspects and planning improvements for subsequent cycles. Observations were conducted by non-teaching research team members using structured guides to record students' reactions, responses, and immediate learning outcomes. Documentation, including child development records and teacher-provided supplementary information, was used to triangulate and validate data. Data analysis involves comparing pre-cycle observations, conducted using standard methods, with results from cycles incorporating bilingual digital storytelling. Observational and documentation data from pre- and post-intervention phases are analyzed to assess improvements in students' receptive and productive language skills. This analysis aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the bilingual digital storytelling method in enhancing early language development.

FINDINGS

Building upon the insights presented in the background, this section will present the results and discussion of the study, focusing on the implementation of bilingual digital storytelling in early childhood education. The previous section highlighted the potential benefits and risks of digital content in the learning process, particularly for kindergarten-aged children, who are at a critical stage of language and cognitive development. This study aims to explore how integrating bilingual digital storytelling can enhance children's receptive and productive language skills, while maintaining their engagement with educational content. Additionally, the role of digital content in fostering active participation, critical thinking, and social-emotional development will be examined. By comparing the pre-cycle data, where traditional teaching methods were used, with the post-intervention data from cycles involving bilingual digital storytelling, this section will assess the effectiveness of the approach and provide insights into its potential for improving early childhood education outcomes. The findings highlight the importance of designing activities

that not only introduce new vocabulary but also integrate its use in natural, conversational contexts to strengthen language learning outcomes. By using a passing percentage of 70%, none of the achievements get the goal. Figure 1 shows the result and comparative data of Pre-Cycle English Teaching in both schools.
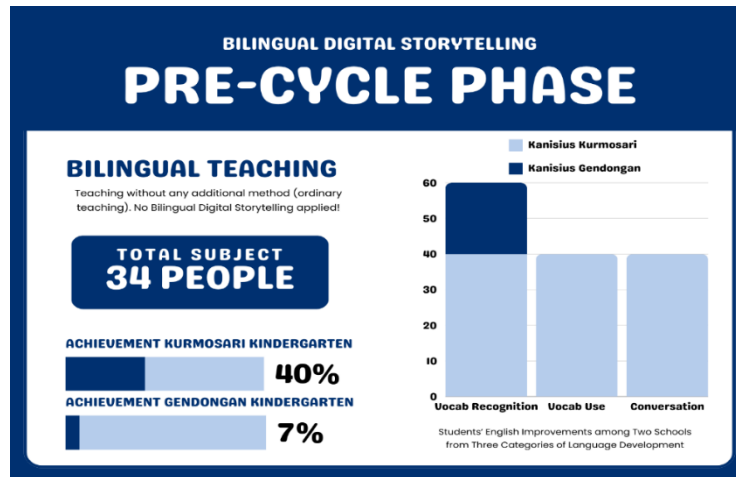

Figure 1. Pre-Cycle Achievement on Bilingual Digital Storytelling Implementation

The improvement in both recognition and usage highlights the positive impact of the instructional strategies employed, though additional support is needed to guide students toward constructing complete and coherent sentences. By using passing percentage 70%, none of the achievements get the goal but the slightly get it. Figure 2 visualizes the development of children's English listening and speaking during Cycle 1 Phase using Bilingual Digital Storytelling in both schools.
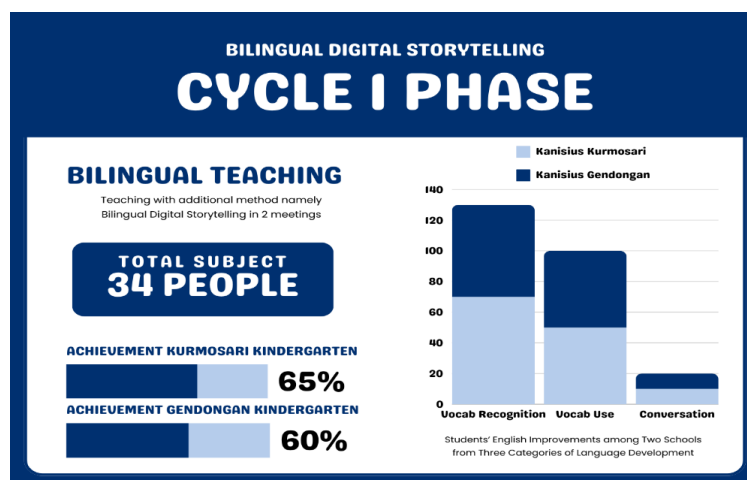

Figure 2. Cycle 1 Achievement on Bilingual Digital Storytelling Implementation

While the progress in Cycle 2 Phase is commendable, continued focus on guiding students to form complete sentences and help them develop their conversational abilities further. Kanisius Kurmosari Kindergarten Semarang goes beyond the passing grade (83%) while Kanisius Gendongan Kindergarten just passes the challenge (73%). Both schools show improvement in terms of student achievement in English taught using Bilingual Digital Storytelling. Figure 3 shows the result and comparative data of Cycle 2 English Teaching for both schools.
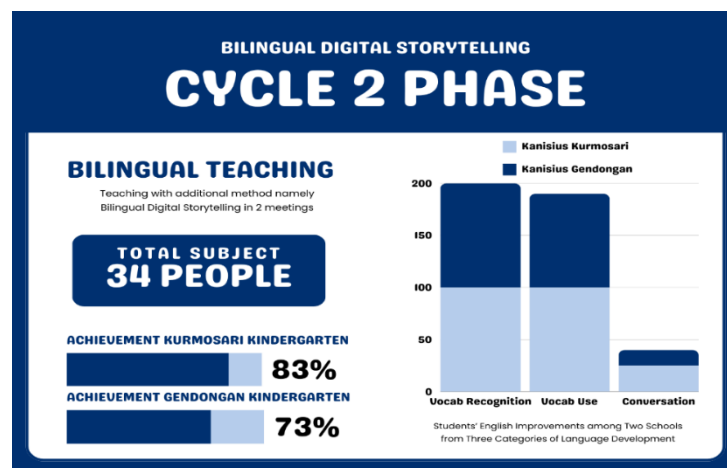

Figure 3. Cycle 3 Achievement on Bilingual Digital Storytelling Implementation

DISCUSSION

A. Teaching-Learning Process while English is Used Conventionally in Pre-Cycles

Based on the data provided, the descriptive analysis for the pre-cycle phase of the bilingual digital storytelling program conducted at two schools is as follows. In the pre-cycle phase of the bilingual digital storytelling program, the ability of children to recognize new English vocabulary varied between the two schools. At Kanisius Gendongan Kindergarten Salatiga, children were able to recognize only one English word after completing a single learning session. This indicates a minimal level of vocabulary acquisition during the initial phase, suggesting that the instructional methods or the children's familiarity with English may still be in the early stages. It could also highlight challenges in engaging the students effectively or presenting the vocabulary in ways that resonate with them. On the other hand, children at Kanisius Kurmosari Kindergarten Semarang demonstrated a higher level of vocabulary recognition,

managing to recognize three English words within the same time frame. This outcome suggests that the instructional techniques at this school were slightly more effective in aiding vocabulary recognition, or perhaps the children at this school had a stronger foundational understanding of English to build upon. The variation in outcomes between the two schools emphasizes the importance of exploring and understanding the factors that contribute to these differences, such as teaching approaches, classroom environment, or student demographics.

When examining the duration required for vocabulary recognition, both schools reported similar results, with children taking approximately 5–30 minutes per learning session to recognize new words. This broad time range suggests a variation in individual learning paces among the students, with some requiring less time to grasp the new vocabulary while others needed more. The 30-minute mark could imply that certain students struggled with retaining the new words introduced, which may point to the need for tailored learning strategies to accommodate different levels of ability. The uniformity in reported duration across the two schools could also indicate consistency in the instructional time allocated for vocabulary practice. However, this aspect raises questions about whether optimizing this duration or diversifying the teaching methods might help reduce the time required while increasing the number of words recognized. Overall, the data highlights the importance of balancing the time spent and the effectiveness of teaching strategies in fostering English vocabulary recognition in young learners.

In the pre-cycle phase, the active usage of newly learned English vocabulary revealed notable differences between the two schools. At Kanisius Gendongan Kindergarten Salatiga, children did not actively use any English words during the observed sessions. This absence of usage suggests that while students may have recognized or been exposed to some vocabulary, they were not yet confident or encouraged enough to incorporate these words into active communication. This gap might reflect a need for more engaging or interactive activities that encourage children to practice using the new words in meaningful ways. In contrast, children at Kanisius Kurmosari Kindergarten Semarang demonstrated the ability to actively use two English words during

the learning sessions. While this is a modest start, it reflects an encouraging step toward practical application and retention of vocabulary. The ability to use these words actively indicates that the instructional approach at this school might have provided more opportunities for verbal interaction or practice, enabling students to transition from passive recognition to active usage. This difference highlights the role of interactive and student-centered teaching methods in promoting the use of English vocabulary among young learners.

For both schools, the context in which children used English vocabulary was primarily limited to answering questions related to the newly introduced words. This structured setting likely provided a safe and guided environment for children to practice their emerging language skills. However, this narrow context suggests that vocabulary usage was still somewhat restricted and lacked spontaneity or application in broader communication scenarios. Expanding the contexts for vocabulary usage—such as incorporating games, storytelling, or peer interactions—could foster greater fluency and confidence in using English words. Creating diverse opportunities for students to apply their vocabulary meaningfully would help bridge the gap between recognition and active language use.

In the pre-cycle phase, the development of conversational skills in English was limited at both schools, with significant differences in outcomes. At Kanisius Gendongan Kindergarten Salatiga, children did not use any English expressions to build conversations. This suggests that the students were either not yet ready to progress beyond recognizing and occasionally using individual words or were not given sufficient opportunities to practice conversational English. The absence of conversational attempts highlights the need for targeted interventions, such as role-playing or guided dialogues, to help children transition from vocabulary usage to sentence formation. Meanwhile, at Kanisius Kurmosari Kindergarten Semarang, children made initial attempts at conversation by using one complete sentence. This demonstrates a modest but meaningful step toward building English communication skills. The ability to construct and express even a single sentence in English reflects a level of confidence and familiarity with the

language, indicating progress in their learning journey. The difference between the two schools underscores the potential impact of varying instructional strategies on the development of conversational abilities.

The duration of conversational activity further illustrates the contrast between the two schools. At Kanisius Gendongan Kindergarten Salatiga, no conversations were initiated or attempted, suggesting either a lack of focus on conversational skills or the need for a more supportive and interactive learning environment. In comparison, children at Kanisius Kurmosari Kindergarten Semarang were able to sustain simple conversations for 5–30 minutes, involving at least two sentences during each attempt. This time range indicates variability in the students' abilities to engage in English dialogue but also reflects a willingness to practice and explore conversational English. Encouraging this kind of interaction, through structured activities like storytelling or group discussions, could provide valuable opportunities for students to develop fluency.

B. Children's English Improvement through Bilingual Digital Storytelling Practice in Cycle 1

During the first meeting of Cycle 1, children at Kanisius Gendongan Kindergarten Salatiga showed slight progress in their ability to recognize and use English vocabulary. They were able to identify 2 English words after the learning session, which marks a small improvement compared to the pre-cycle phase. The session lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, allowing ample time for practice and engagement. In terms of active usage, the children managed to use 2 words, mainly while responding to questions related to the new vocabulary introduced during the session. However, no attempts were made to construct or engage in simple conversations during this meeting. The absence of conversational efforts suggests that while vocabulary acquisition is improving, more emphasis on interactive activities is needed to encourage practical application. Overall, the session highlights gradual progress in vocabulary recognition and usage but indicates the need for a greater focus on developing conversational skills.

At Kanisius Kurmosari Kindergarten Semarang, children also demonstrated the ability to recognize and use 2 English words during the first meeting. Interestingly, the session duration was shorter, lasting 5–30 minutes, which may suggest a more efficient teaching approach or higher engagement levels among the students. Similar to Kanisius Gendongan Kindergarten Salatiga, the vocabulary usage occurred mainly in the context of answering questions related to the new words. Despite this progress in vocabulary recognition and usage, there were no attempts to build simple conversations. This suggests that the focus of the session remained on vocabulary acquisition rather than its application in dialogic contexts. The data indicates comparable outcomes between the two schools in this meeting, though the shorter session duration at Kanisius Kurmosari Kindergarten Semarang may reflect better time management or more effective teaching strategies.

The second meeting of Cycle 1 showed further improvement in vocabulary acquisition at Kanisius Gendongan Kindergarten Salatiga. Children successfully recognized 3 English words, a notable increase compared to the first meeting. The session duration remained consistent at 30–60 minutes, providing ample time for learning and practice. Additionally, the children used 3 words actively during the session, again in the context of answering questions related to the new vocabulary. For the first time, some attempts were made at constructing basic conversational expressions, as children used 2–4 words, though these did not form complete sentences. This represents a small yet important step toward conversational development, reflecting increased confidence in applying vocabulary in a structured way. While the progress is encouraging, further guidance and activities are needed to help children transition from fragmented expressions to complete sentences.

At Kanisius Kurmosari Kindergarten Semarang, children achieved significant progress during the second meeting of Cycle 1. They recognized 5 or more English words, which indicates a strong improvement in their vocabulary acquisition. The session lasted 30–60 minutes, similar to Kanisius Gendongan Kindergarten Salatiga, but the outcomes suggest a higher level of engagement or a more effective teaching approach. The children used 3 words

actively, primarily while answering questions related to the new vocabulary. Additionally, they began experimenting with basic conversational expressions, using 2–4 words in combinations that, while not forming complete sentences, indicate progress toward conversational skills.

C. Stimulating Children's English Skill through Bilingual Digital Storytelling Practice in Cycle 2

During the first meeting of Cycle 2, children at Kanisius Gendongan Kindergarten Salatiga showed significant progress in recognizing English vocabulary. They were able to recognize five or more words, indicating a notable improvement in their ability to acquire and retain new vocabulary. The session lasted 30–60 minutes, providing adequate time for learning and engagement. In terms of active usage, children successfully incorporated four words while retelling a story, utilizing the new vocabulary learned during the session. However, no attempts at forming full sentences or engaging in simple conversations were recorded during this meeting. This highlights that while vocabulary recognition and application are improving, the ability to use these words in interactive or conversational contexts remains a challenge. The activity of retelling a story using new vocabulary provided a structured platform for practice, but further strategies are needed to encourage more dynamic language use.

At Kanisius Kurmosari Kindergarten Semarang, children also demonstrated strong progress, recognizing five or more words during the session. The session duration was similar, lasting 30–60 minutes, indicating that sufficient time was allocated for activities involving vocabulary learning and practice. Children were able to actively use five or more words, incorporating them into a playful context, such as games that involved the new vocabulary. In terms of conversation, the children used 2–4 words in phrases that did not form complete sentences. This indicates a partial transition toward more complex language use, though further support is required to help them form coherent expressions. The use of games as a learning tool appeared to engage students effectively, fostering active participation and vocabulary application in a fun and interactive manner.

In the second meeting of Cycle 2, the progress in vocabulary acquisition at Kanisius Gendongan Kindergarten Salatiga was maintained, with children recognizing five or more words during the session. Similarly, they actively used five or more words while retelling a story, showcasing an enhanced ability to integrate new vocabulary into structured activities. The session lasted 30–60 minutes, consistent with previous meetings, providing ample time for practice and engagement. Additionally, some attempts were made to use 2–4 words in conversational contexts, though these did not form complete sentences. While this represents a step forward in language development, the lack of full sentences suggests that children are still in the early stages of conversational skill-building. The structured activity of retelling a story appeared to provide an effective framework for vocabulary practice, but further emphasis on spontaneous and interactive language use is needed.

At Kanisius Kurmosari Kindergarten Semarang, the children continued to show significant improvement, recognizing and actively using five or more words during the session. The session lasted 30–60 minutes, and the children engaged in storytelling activities that involved using the new vocabulary to narrate new ideas or stories. This reflects an increasing level of confidence in their ability to apply what they have learned. Similar to the previous meeting, children used 2–4 words in conversational attempts, although these were not yet formed into full sentences. The activity of narrating new stories created an opportunity for the children to explore creative language use, bridging vocabulary acquisition with practical application. The utilization of bilingual in active language learning shows a positive progression. This condition seems to be similar to the research result of unitizing bilingual in Mini Theater activity for kindergarten students where the method became potential for teacher and students to develop English language teaching and learning in meaningful way (Kurniawan & Wulandari, 2025).

CONCLUSION

The Classroom Action Research on bilingual digital storytelling conducted at Kanisius Gendongan Kindergarten Salatiga and Kanisius Kurmosari Kindergarten Semarang demonstrated encouraging progress in English vocabulary

acquisition and usage among early learners. Across the pre-cycle and both cycles of meetings, students showed notable improvement in recognizing and using English words, with a gradual transition from passive recognition to active application. Activities like answering questions, storytelling, and games provided structured contexts for vocabulary practice, which positively impacted engagement and learning outcomes. However, there was a noticeable gap in developing conversational skills, as most attempts at conversation remained limited to fragmented expressions rather than complete sentences. This highlights the need for more interactive and student-centered methods that promote natural language use and build confidence in spoken English. The findings underscore the importance of integrating creative and playful methods, such as storytelling and games, to foster a holistic language learning experience.

Despite its promising results, the study has some limitations. First, the duration of the intervention was relatively short, which may have limited the depth of language skill development, particularly in conversational fluency. Second, the sample size was confined to two schools, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the data collection focused primarily on observable outcomes like vocabulary usage and conversation attempts, without delving into other factors such as student motivation, learning styles, or parental involvement. Future research could address these limitations by extending the duration of interventions, including a more diverse sample of schools, and employing mixed-methods approaches to explore qualitative dimensions of language learning. Moreover, studies could investigate the long-term impact of bilingual digital storytelling on overall language proficiency and literacy development. Expanding the research to include teacher training and parental engagement strategies could also provide valuable insights into optimizing bilingual education in early childhood.

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