

THE USE OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING-BASED VISUAL PROMPTS IN SUPPORTING SPEAKING FLUENCY IN TENTH GRADE ENGLISH CLASSROOM AT SMAN 1 WELAHAN

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Abstract

Speaking fluency remains a major challenge for EFL learners in Indonesian senior high schools, particularly due to hesitation, low confidence, and difficulty in generating ideas during speaking activities. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the use of digital storytelling-based visual prompts in supporting speaking fluency among tenth-grade students at SMAN 1 Welahan. This research is grounded in the theory of speaking fluency proposed by Lopez et al. (2021), which emphasizes continuity of speech and reduced hesitation as key indicators, and is supported by dual coding theory by Paivio as discussed in Fatima (2023), which highlights the role of visual and verbal integration in enhancing language learning. This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design following Colorafi and Evans (2021) and Sandelowski (2021), focusing on classroom-based phenomena. Data were collected through classroom observation, students' speaking performance, and questionnaires adapted from Asmawati (2023). The data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative techniques, including data reduction, categorization, and interpretation of patterns, as suggested by Sandelowski (2021). The research results were reported in both quantitative and qualitative forms, where students' scores and questionnaire responses were presented in tables and percentages, while observational data were described narratively to explain students' speaking behavior. The findings indicate that the use of digital storytelling-based visual prompts significantly supports students' speaking fluency by reducing hesitation, improving confidence, and enhancing the continuity of speech. In addition, students showed positive perceptions toward the learning method, as it increased their motivation, participation, and engagement in speaking activities. These results suggest that digital storytelling-based visual prompts can be an effective pedagogical strategy to improve speaking fluency in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: *Visual Prompts, Speaking Fluency, English Classroom, Qualitative Study, Senior High School, Digital Storytelling*

1. Introduction

Speaking is an important part of learning English because it allows students to use the language for real communication, not only to answer written questions. However, for many EFL learners, speaking remains one of the most demanding skills because it requires learners to think, select appropriate vocabulary, and respond quickly while interacting with others. In contexts where English is rarely used

outside the classroom, students often have limited opportunities to develop fluency through daily exposure, causing speaking to become a classroom-based activity rather than a natural communication habit (Ma et al., 2024; Abrar et al., 2024). Speaking performance also involves several elements working together. For instance, comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency function as

an integrated system during oral production (Hidayah et al., 2024). In addition, speaking is not only verbal; intonation, gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact contribute to conveying meaning and clarity, indicating that learners need both linguistic and paralinguistic competence to communicate effectively (Salam & Nurnisa, 2021; Msimeer, 2021).

In Indonesian senior high school classrooms, many students are able to understand instructions and ideas but still hesitate when they are required to speak in front of their classmates. Students often pause, repeat words, or stop mid-sentence due to pressure to produce grammatically correct language. This challenge is closely related to affective barriers such as anxiety and fear of making mistakes. When anxiety levels are high, students tend to avoid speaking activities and participate less, which limits opportunities for practice and slows fluency development (Zhong, 2024). Therefore, teachers need instructional strategies that can reduce speaking pressure and encourage students to maintain communication even when their language is not yet fully accurate.

One practical strategy to support speaking activities is the use of visual prompts, such as pictures or illustrations, which provide students with concrete content to discuss. Visual prompts help reduce cognitive load and allow learners to focus more on language production rather than generating ideas from nothing (Naviantara et al., 2024). The effectiveness of visual input is also supported by dual coding theory, which suggests that learning becomes more meaningful when information is processed through both visual and verbal channels (Fatima, 2023). Previous studies have reported that visual prompts can support speaking fluency and lexical development (Seroja Br Ginting &

Fithriani, 2021; Marpaung, 2022; Ngan & Lan, 2024). In classroom practice, picture-based speaking tasks have been associated with improvements in fluency, vocabulary use, and learner confidence (Syamsu, 2023; Ekaningsih & Faiz Haq, 2022). Furthermore, learners perceive visual prompts as helpful in generating ideas and understanding speaking tasks compared with other prompt types (Raja Yacob et al., 2025).

Along with the development of digital learning environments, visual prompts have evolved into multimodal instructional media, including digital storytelling. Digital storytelling integrates sequenced digital images, narrative elements, and sometimes audio support to provide structured and contextual visual input for learners. This type of visual prompt allows students to follow story sequences that support idea development and encourage continuous speech production. Research on digital storytelling indicates that multimodal visual support can enhance language learning by improving engagement, comprehension, and confidence during speaking activities (Azizah et al., 2024). By combining storytelling structure with visual stimuli, digital storytelling-based visual prompts can provide stronger scaffolding that helps students maintain speaking flow and reduce hesitation.

Despite growing evidence supporting the benefits of visual prompts and digital storytelling, many previous studies mainly focus on learning outcomes, survey perceptions, or score improvements. Limited research describes in detail how digital storytelling-based visual prompts are implemented in classroom interaction and how they influence students' fluency behaviour during speaking activities, particularly in terms of hesitation, confidence, and continuity of speech. Therefore, this study explores

the use of digital storytelling-based visual prompts in a tenth-grade English classroom at SMAN 1 Welahan and examines their influence on students' speaking fluency through classroom observations, interviews with teachers and students, and supporting documents such as lesson reflections and students' speaking performances. Based on these considerations, this study is guided by

the following research questions: (1) How are digital storytelling-based visual prompts implemented in the tenth-grade English classroom at SMAN 1 Welahan to support speaking activities? and (2) How do digital storytelling-based visual prompts influence students' speaking fluency, especially in terms of hesitation or pauses, confidence, and the continuity of speech during speaking tasks?

2. Literature Review

Speaking Proficiency

Speaking proficiency is one of the most essential yet challenging skills in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This skill represents a student's ability to communicate ideas effectively, maintain interactions, and deliver meaning in real-time communication. In the context of EFL, speaking is often considered the main goal of language learning because it represents the practical use of language for communication. Learners are expected not only to produce grammatically correct speech, but also to deliver speech naturally and meaningfully. Lopez, Paredes Becerra, and Ramirez-Avila (2021) state that speaking ability is closely related to communication efficiency, where learners must be able to maintain conversations naturally and maintain communication without significant interruptions.

Speaking proficiency consists of several components that are interrelated. Fluency is considered the main indicator of speaking performance. Fluency refers to the ability to produce speech smoothly, continuously, and with little hesitation. According to Lopez et al. (2021), fluency can be identified through observable speech characteristics, such as speech rate, pauses, repetitions, and self-corrections.

They further explain that fluency involves cognitive fluency, speech fluency, and perceived fluency. Among the three, speech fluency is often studied in classroom research because it reflects measurable speaking behavior, including speech fluency and reduced hesitation.

Speaking proficiency is also influenced by linguistic competence. Fauzan, Fitrah, Korompot, and Sakkir (2024) explain that effective speaking performance requires mastery of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Pronunciation supports clarity of speech, grammar ensures structural accuracy, vocabulary enables idea expression, fluency reflects smooth delivery, and comprehension supports interaction. These components collectively determine students' overall speaking performance. However, Fauzan et al. (2024) emphasize that speaking proficiency is not solely determined by linguistic ability but is also affected by psychological factors such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety, which often cause hesitation and limited participation in speaking tasks.

Technology-supported speaking activities have been identified as an effective strategy for improving speaking skills. Rohdina and Priyana (2025) found that digital speaking activities, especially self-recorded video

tasks, significantly improved students' speaking performance by allowing them to practice and evaluate their speech. Their study also showed that digital media reduces anxiety and increases confidence, encouraging students to participate more actively in speaking activities. In addition, authentic speaking activities provide meaningful opportunities for students to practice communication outside of traditional classroom methods (Lopez et al., 2021).

Visual Aids and Visual Learning in Speaking Instruction

Visual aids play an important role in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. They are particularly effective in supporting students' speaking development. Visual aids refers to instructional media that combine images, videos, or multimedia elements to facilitate language learning. In speaking instruction, visual aids function as support tools that help learners generate ideas, organize speech, and maintain communication flow. The integration of visual elements creates contextualized learning opportunities that support language production.

In theory, visual learning can be explained through multimodal learning. Nafiah (2025) states that audio-visual aids support language learning by integrating verbal and visual information. This allows learners to process language input through multiple sensory channels. This multimodal interaction helps learners understand vocabulary and communication patterns more effectively. In speaking instruction, contextualized visual input helps students construct ideas before producing speech, reducing hesitation and improving speech continuity. Visual aids serve as cognitive supports that facilitate language production.

Further empirical studies show the effectiveness of visual aids in

From this perspective, speaking ability involves linguistic competence, fluency, and psychological readiness. Fluency plays a key role because it reflects students' ability to speak naturally and continuously. Therefore, integrating digital storytelling-based visual prompts is expected to support students in producing ideas, reducing hesitation, increasing confidence, and improving fluency in speaking activities.

improving speaking skills. Rahman and Jamila (2024) found that audiovisual materials significantly improved students' speaking performance by providing authentic language models and interactive learning experiences. Their study showed that students exposed to audiovisual materials demonstrated higher participation and better speaking fluency compared to traditional teaching methods. In addition, audiovisual media helped reduce anxiety and increase confidence during speaking activities, which are important for successful oral communication.

The use of multimedia as a form of visual aid also contributes to speaking instruction. Nazara et al. (2024) found that multimedia-based speaking materials create an engaging and interactive classroom environment that encourages students to actively participate in speaking tasks. Multimedia combines visual, textual, and interactive elements that stimulate student interest and facilitate language practice. Students who are exposed to multimedia materials show higher motivation and participation which supports the development of speaking proficiency.

In summary, visual aids provide contextual language input that enhances comprehension, motivation, and participation. Digital storytelling-based

visual prompts, as an extension of multimedia visual aids are expected to support students in generating ideas, **Digital Storytelling in EFL Speaking Instruction**

Digital storytelling has become an innovative teaching strategy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, especially in speaking instruction. Digital storytelling combines narrative elements with multimedia components such as images, audio, video, and text to create meaningful learning experiences. This approach allows students to construct stories, express ideas creatively, and practice oral communication in contextual situations. By combining linguistic knowledge with visual and narrative elements, digital storytelling supports language production and communication skills.

Digital storytelling is considered effective for improving speaking fluency because it provides structured opportunities for students to organize and practice speaking. Agra (2025) explains that digital storytelling supports fluency through stages such as planning, drafting, practicing, and presenting stories. These stages encourage repeated language practice, which contributes to speaking fluency and the development of fluency. Agra (2025) also highlights that digital storytelling promotes self-regulation and peer interaction, which increases students' confidence in speaking. The integration of visual prompts and narrative structure helps students generate ideas and reduces hesitation during speaking activities.

The effectiveness of digital storytelling has also been proven in classroom implementation. Imama and Pusparini (2025) found that digital storytelling increased students' speaking performance. This was particularly evident in students' fluency, pronunciation, and engagement in class.

reducing hesitation, increasing confidence, and improving speaking fluency.

Students became more confident and motivated to participate in speaking activities through collaborative storytelling tasks. These findings indicate that digital storytelling creates an interactive learning environment that supports communication and improves speaking performance.

In addition to improving fluency, digital storytelling also improves overall language performance. Usmani, Ali, and Kottaparamban (2025) found that digital storytelling significantly improved students' speaking performance by providing authentic communication contexts and opportunities for creative expression. Visual and multimedia elements support language production and help students maintain verbal interactions more effectively.

In summary, digital storytelling integrates visual prompts, narrative structures, and multimedia elements that support idea generation, reduce hesitation, boost confidence, and improve speaking fluency in English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom.

3. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to investigate the use of digital storytelling-based visual prompts in supporting students' speaking fluency. Qualitative descriptive research aims to provide a straightforward description of a phenomenon and focuses on presenting participants' experiences in natural contexts without extensive theoretical interpretation (Colorafi & Evans, 2021). Furthermore, qualitative descriptive methodology is widely used to investigate the implementation of teaching strategies and instructional media because it enables researchers to document classroom practices and

learner responses in authentic learning environments (Sandelowski, 2021). Therefore, this design was considered appropriate to explore classroom implementation and students' responses toward digital storytelling media.

The research was conducted in class X.4 at SMAN 1 Welahan, consisting of 36 tenth-grade students. The researcher conducted classroom teaching by delivering narrative text material using digital storytelling as the instructional media. The digital storytelling video titled "The Mouse and the Lion" presented narrative sequences supported by visual and audio elements to help students understand story structures and generate ideas for speaking activities.

During the classroom activity, students first watched the digital storytelling video and discussed the storyline. Afterward, students were given worksheets containing randomly arranged pictures adapted from scenes in the video. Students were required to organize the pictures into a coherent story and orally retell the narrative as part of their speaking performance. This activity was designed to support fluency by encouraging students to maintain continuity of speech and reduce hesitation.

Data were collected through three main techniques: classroom observation, students' speaking performance, and questionnaires. Classroom observation was conducted to examine the implementation of digital storytelling and students' participation during speaking activities. The observation focused on students' speaking behavior, including hesitation, pauses, confidence, and engagement in classroom interaction. Students' speaking performance was assessed based on their ability to retell the story using the visual prompts, with attention

to fluency indicators such as continuity of speech and reduced hesitation.

In addition, a questionnaire adapted from Asmawati (2023) was distributed through Google Forms to gather students' perceptions of the use of digital storytelling. The questionnaire consisted of several statements categorized into three aspects: students' attitudes toward the implementation, perceived advantages, and perceived disadvantages of digital storytelling. The responses were measured using a Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, allowing students to express their opinions regarding their learning experience.

The data analysis was conducted using descriptive qualitative analysis techniques. The data obtained from classroom observations, students' performance, and questionnaires were first organized and reduced to identify relevant information related to speaking fluency. Then, the data were categorized into key themes, such as students' confidence, hesitation, participation, and continuity of speech. The categorized data were interpreted by linking them to relevant theories of speaking fluency and visual learning to produce meaningful explanations and avoid purely subjective interpretation.

Furthermore, the method of presenting the research results was carried out in both quantitative and qualitative forms. Quantitative data, such as students' scores and questionnaire results, were presented in the form of tables and percentage distributions to provide a clear overview of students' performance and responses. Meanwhile, qualitative data from classroom observations were presented descriptively in narrative form to explain students' speaking behavior and classroom interaction in detail. The findings were then discussed by integrating empirical data with

theoretical frameworks, such as speaking fluency theory and multimodal learning theory, to strengthen the validity and depth of the analysis.

4. Result and Discussion Students' Learning Outcomes

To evaluate the effectiveness of the learning activity, students were asked to complete a worksheet after participating in the speaking lesson using digital storytelling. The worksheet was designed to measure students' understanding of the story as well as their ability to express ideas related to the story in English. Through this task, students were expected to demonstrate their comprehension of the learning material and their ability to organize their thoughts before speaking.

The class involved in this activity consisted of 36 students in total. However, during the implementation of the lesson, three students were absent from the class. Because these students did not attend the lesson, they were unable to complete the worksheet and therefore received a score of 0. It is important to clarify that the score of 0 does not indicate poor academic performance but rather reflects the students' absence during the learning activity. Consequently, the worksheet results mainly represent the performance of the 33 students who were present in the class.

The following is the distribution of student scores, which can be seen in table 1:

| Score | Number of Students |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| 100 | 28 |
| 90 | 1 |
| 80 | 3 |
| 75 | 1 |
| 0 (absent students) | 3 |

The results indicate that most students obtained very high scores. Out of the 36 students in the class, 28 students achieved a perfect score of 100, showing that they were able to complete the worksheet successfully and demonstrate a strong understanding of the learning material. Only a small number of students obtained scores below 90. Specifically, one student scored 90, three students scored 80, and one student scored 75. Although these scores are slightly lower than those of most students, they still indicate that the students were able to understand the task and complete the worksheet adequately.

When the scores of all 36 students are included in the calculation, the average score is approximately 89.03. However, this average is influenced by the three students who were absent and therefore received a score of 0. When the calculation only includes the 33 students who attended the lesson, the average score increases significantly to approximately 97.12.

These results show that the students who participated in the activity were able to understand the learning material clearly and complete the worksheet effectively. In other words, the use of digital storytelling in the lesson appears to have supported students in understanding the story and preparing their responses for speaking activities.

Students' Perceptions of Digital Storytelling

In addition to examining students' learning outcomes, this study also explored students' perceptions of the use of digital storytelling in speaking activities. To gather this information, a questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms after the learning activity had been completed. A total of 33 students responded to the questionnaire,

which corresponds to the number of students who attended the lesson and completed the worksheet. The questionnaire was administered using a Likert scale, which included response options ranging from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, to strongly disagree. It was designed to explore several aspects related to the learning activity, particularly students' experiences when participating in speaking tasks supported by digital storytelling.

The questionnaire examined students' interest in the learning method, their enjoyment during speaking activities, and the role of visual elements in helping them understand the story. In addition, it aimed to identify how digital storytelling influenced students' speaking fluency, confidence when speaking, and overall language development. The questionnaire also explored students' motivation and participation during the lesson, as well as any challenges they experienced while engaging in the activity. Through these aspects, the questionnaire provided insight into how students perceived the use of digital storytelling in supporting their speaking practice in the classroom.

Students' Interest in Digital Storytelling

One of the questions in the questionnaire examined whether the use of digital storytelling makes speaking classes more interesting. The results show that 16 students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 14 students selected neutral responses, and three students disagreed.

These responses suggest that many students perceive digital storytelling as an engaging learning method. Compared with traditional speaking activities that rely mainly on textbooks or teacher explanations, digital storytelling introduces visual

elements and narrative structures that can make the learning process more dynamic.

The presence of stories and images may also help students become more involved in the learning activity. As a result, students tend to pay closer attention to the lesson and show greater interest in participating in speaking tasks.

Students' Enjoyment During Speaking Activities

Students' enjoyment during speaking activities was examined through questionnaire responses after the implementation of digital storytelling. The findings show that 20 out of 33 students agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed speaking activities more, while 13 students selected neutral responses, and no negative responses were reported. This indicates that the method was generally perceived positively, although the variation in responses suggests that the level of enjoyment differed among students.

Students' enjoyment can be understood based on several criteria reflected in the questionnaire. First, enjoyment is associated with increased interest in the learning method, as digital storytelling integrates visual and narrative elements that make activities more engaging. Second, it is influenced by ease of understanding, since visual prompts help students follow the storyline and reduce confusion. Third, enjoyment is linked to reduced speaking pressure, as structured visual sequences minimize the need for spontaneous idea generation. Fourth, it is related to increased confidence, as students feel more prepared when supported by visual and narrative guidance.

These findings can be explained through multimodal learning theory, which emphasizes that the integration of

visual and verbal input enhances engagement and comprehension (Nafiah, 2025). In addition, cognitive load theory (Sweller) suggests that structured visual input reduces mental effort, allowing students to focus more on language production. From an affective perspective, Krashen's affective filter hypothesis explains that reduced anxiety and increased confidence support language learning. This aligns with Lopez et al. (2021), who state that speaking fluency improves when learners engage in meaningful and structured communication tasks, as well as Rahman and Jamila (2024), who found that audiovisual media increases motivation and reduces anxiety.

Therefore, students' enjoyment reflects not only a positive emotional response but also improved cognitive and affective conditions, including increased interest, better comprehension, reduced pressure, and higher confidence, which collectively support the development of speaking fluency.

The Role of Visual Elements in Understanding the Story

Digital storytelling typically incorporates visual elements such as pictures, illustrations, or short videos. These elements can play an important role in helping students understand the story and its context. The questionnaire results show that 28 students agreed or strongly agreed that visual elements helped them understand the story more easily, while only a small number of students gave neutral or negative responses.

This finding indicates that visual materials serve as useful learning supports. By observing images or visual scenes, students can better follow the storyline and identify key events in the narrative. This understanding can make

it easier for them to retell the story and express their ideas during speaking activities.

Speaking Fluency

Another aspect explored in the questionnaire was whether digital storytelling helps students speak more fluently. More than half of the students agreed that digital storytelling helped them speak more smoothly. Visual prompts appear to assist students in organizing their ideas before speaking, which may reduce hesitation and make their speech more structured. When students can see images or story sequences, they can follow the storyline step by step. This structure helps them determine what to say next, which can support the flow of their speech.

Students' Confidence in Speaking

Confidence plays an important role in successful speaking activities. Many students feel nervous or worried about making mistakes when speaking in a foreign language. The questionnaire results show that 18 students agreed or strongly agreed that digital storytelling helped increase their confidence when speaking, while 15 students chose neutral responses.

Although some students may still feel hesitant, these findings suggest that digital storytelling can create a more supportive learning environment. When students have visual support and a clear storyline, they may feel more prepared and less anxious when expressing their ideas.

Language Development

Students also reported that digital storytelling helped them improve several aspects of their language ability, including vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar use. Through digital storytelling activities, students are exposed to language in a meaningful

context. Instead of memorizing vocabulary separately, students learn words and expressions through the stories they discuss. Learning language in context can make it easier for students to understand and remember new vocabulary. In addition, speaking activities related to storytelling provide opportunities for students to practice pronunciation and sentence construction while explaining the story.

Motivation and Participation

Another important finding from the questionnaire is that digital storytelling appears to increase students' motivation and participation in speaking activities. Many students reported that the method made them more interested in the lesson and more willing to participate in speaking tasks. When students feel motivated, they are more likely to engage actively in classroom discussions, ask questions, and share their ideas. Higher levels of participation may also contribute to better learning outcomes because students have more opportunities to practice their language skills during the learning process.

Discussion

The findings of this study showed that the use of digital storytelling in speaking classes produced positive results in both student performance and their perceptions of learning activities. First, the worksheet results showed that most students achieved high academic performance. Most students obtained perfect scores, and the average score of students who participated in the class was 97.12. This shows that students were able to understand the learning material and complete the tasks successfully.

Second, the questionnaire results show that students generally view digital storytelling as an interesting and supportive learning method. The

integration of storytelling and visual media seems to make speaking activities more interesting and easier for students to follow.

Third, digital storytelling seems to provide important support for speaking activities, especially in helping students organize their ideas and build confidence when speaking. The presence of visual prompts and story sequences provides a clearer structure for students when expressing their thoughts.

Overall, these findings indicate that digital storytelling can serve as an effective instructional strategy to support students' speaking development in English language learning. The combination of stories, visual elements, and speaking tasks created a learning environment that encouraged students to participate more actively and express their ideas with more confidence.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the use of visual cues based on digital storytelling has a positive impact on students' speaking fluency and learning experience. The findings indicate that most students achieved high learning outcomes and demonstrated improved ability to organize ideas and maintain speaking fluency during speaking activities. In addition, students generally expressed positive perceptions, indicating that digital storytelling increased their interest, facilitated understanding, reduced speaking anxiety, and boosted self-confidence and classroom participation. These results suggest that digital storytelling can create a more engaging and supportive learning environment for developing speaking skills in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction.

However, this study has several limitations. It was conducted in a single class with a limited number of

participants, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, this study relied on descriptive qualitative analysis without in-depth measurement of specific speaking fluency indicators such as speech rate or pause frequency. Therefore, future researchers are advised to involve a larger sample and employ more varied research designs, such as mixed-methods or experimental approaches, to obtain more comprehensive results. It is also recommended to investigate other aspects of speaking performance, including pronunciation and interactional competence. For educators, digital storytelling can be used as an alternative teaching strategy to support speaking activities and enhance student engagement in English language learning.

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