

Digitized story-telling: Its effect in English comprehension skills of primary learners

Olive Myrrh S. Caddawan *

Apayao State College, Malama, Conner, Apayao, Philippines, 3807.

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the effect of digitized storytelling on the English comprehension skills of primary learners at Mallag Primary School, Kabugao District 2, during the School Year 2025–2026. Specifically, it sought to determine the learners' level of English comprehension before and after the implementation of digitized storytelling and to identify whether a significant difference existed in their comprehension levels following the intervention. The study employed a quasi-experimental research design utilizing a one-group pretest-posttest approach. The respondents were primary learners from Grades 2 and 3. Digitized storytelling materials incorporating multimedia elements such as visuals, narration, animations, and interactive storytelling activities were utilized as the intervention to enhance learners' comprehension skills. The intervention was conducted over a period of five (5) weeks. Findings revealed that during the pre-test, most learners were classified under the Beginning and Developing levels of comprehension, indicating the need for teacher guidance and support in understanding texts. After the implementation of digitized storytelling, learners demonstrated marked improvement, with a greater number progressing to the Developing and Advanced levels of comprehension. Hypothesis testing further revealed statistically significant improvements in the English comprehension performance of both Grade 2 and Grade 3 learners after the intervention. The study concluded that digitized storytelling is an effective instructional strategy in enhancing the English comprehension skills of primary learners, particularly those transitioning toward independent reading. Hence, it is recommended that teachers continuously integrate digitized storytelling into English instruction to further improve learners' comprehension, engagement, and interest in reading.

Keywords: Digitized Storytelling; English Comprehension; multimedia instruction; Reading Intervention

1 Introduction

Education is widely recognized as a cornerstone of human development and societal progress, with literacy serving as its most fundamental pillar. Among the core dimensions of literacy, reading comprehension is particularly critical, as it enables learners to move beyond the mechanical act of decoding words toward the deeper processes of interpretation, analysis, and meaning-making. Improving the reading comprehension skills of primary learners, therefore, remains a central concern in language and literacy education, given its direct impact on academic achievement, knowledge acquisition, and lifelong learning. At the primary level, comprehension skills serve as the foundation for learning across all subject areas, since learners who struggle to comprehend what they read often experience difficulties in acquiring knowledge and developing higher-order thinking skills. Digitized storytelling is an innovative instructional strategy to enhance learners' understanding and engagement. It has been widely utilized to address challenges in reading and comprehension among elementary learners. It served as an effective educational tool for learners across different ages and grade levels, particularly when they are encouraged to create and share their own stories. This approach enhances learners' creativity by allowing them to explore, research, and present meaningful narratives. It also helps learners develop research skills through the use of library resources and the internet while enabling them to analyze, organize, and synthesize various information, ideas, and perspectives into coherent and engaging stories [1].

* Corresponding author: Olive Myrrh S. Caddawan

The integration of visuals, narration, audio, and interactive elements made learning more engaging and meaningful, particularly for young learners and struggling readers. Emphasized that digital storytelling supports English language learning by promoting creativity, critical thinking, and comprehension skills among young learners [5].

It shows that even simple technology, when used in well-designed digital storytelling activities, can greatly improve students' learning and engagement [8]. This approach is particularly valuable in multigrade classrooms, where learners exhibit varying ages, abilities, and reading levels, as it supports differentiated instruction and enables teachers to address diverse learning needs within a single lesson. Digital narratives use text, audio, images, and video to engage diverse learners, enhancing language skills while promoting motivation and 21st-century skills such as digital literacy, critical thinking, and creativity [12-13].

Moreover, Digital storytelling provides authentic contexts for language use, allowing students to engage with English in meaningful and communicative situations rather than isolated grammar exercises. It also increases learners' motivation and self-efficacy [15-16]. English education in the Philippines faces challenges, especially in rural areas, due to limited exposure and resources. However, digital technology can improve language learning by making instruction more engaging and interactive, which helps enhance students' motivation, confidence, and English performance [17-18]. Limited access to technology in Philippine schools creates both challenges and opportunities, as efforts by the Department of Education to improve digital learning are uneven, especially in rural areas; however, Filipino teachers show creativity and resilience by using simple tools like digital storytelling to enhance learning even with limited resources [19-20]. Studies shows that even simple technology, when used in well-designed digital storytelling activities, can greatly improve students' learning and engagement [21].

In the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), particularly in Apayao, educators continue to confront significant challenges in fostering reading comprehension among primary learners, especially within multigrade classrooms. Geographical isolation, limited instructional resources, and diverse learner abilities often hinder the attainment of desired literacy outcomes. In response, teachers have adopted innovative and learner-centered strategies to make reading instruction more engaging and meaningful.

A study conducted in Calanasan examined teaching strategies for enhancing comprehension among multigrade learners and revealed that, despite varied instructional approaches, learners continued to experience difficulties in understanding texts. The study emphasized the importance of employing interactive and engaging materials to support reading development [22]. Similarly, research on Grades 1 to 3 learners in selected Apayao schools identified several factors affecting reading performance, including inadequate instructional materials and persistent challenges in literacy instruction. These findings highlight the need for innovative interventions to strengthen comprehension and overall literacy outcomes [23]. Notably, subsequent studies found that digital storytelling improved learners' understanding of texts by making lessons more interactive and visually appealing [24].

Despite growing evidence of the effectiveness of digitized storytelling in improving comprehension, its application in Apayao, particularly in geographically isolated and multilingual communities, remains limited. This gap underscores the need to examine whether digitized storytelling can serve as a viable intervention to support English comprehension skills in rural primary schools. Accordingly, the present study investigates the effectiveness of digitized storytelling in enhancing the reading comprehension of learners at Mallag Primary School. The findings are expected to inform the development of context-responsive instructional strategies that address the unique challenges of elementary education in Apayao and similar rural communities.

Motivated by classroom realities, the researcher sought more engaging and interactive approaches to foster comprehension and participation. Digitized storytelling was identified as a promising intervention, as its integration of visual and auditory elements creates multimodal learning experiences that enhance learner interest, support comprehension, and promote meaningful engagement. As a teacher handling primary learners, I have observed that many learners struggle with English comprehension and often lose interest in traditional reading activities. This inspired me to explore more engaging and meaningful teaching strategies that could help improve understanding and participation in class. The use of digitized storytelling became the focus of my study because it combines visual and audio elements that can make learning more enjoyable, interactive, and effective for young learners.

2 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a quasi-experimental research design to determine the effectiveness of digitized storytelling in improving the reading comprehension skills of learners. Specifically, a one-group pretest-posttest design was utilized involving seventeen (17) participants without a separate control group. This design was considered the most appropriate because the study was conducted in an actual classroom setting where random assignment of learners and the creation of separate experimental and control groups were not feasible. Moreover, the design allowed the researcher to assess and compare the learners' comprehension performance before and after the implementation of the digitized storytelling intervention, thereby determining its effect on learners' reading comprehension skills in a natural educational environment.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in Mallag Primary School, a multigrade schools in Kabugao District 2, Kabugao, Apayao. These public school caters learners from different grade levels who are taught together in a single classroom setting.

2.3 Participants of the Study

The respondents of this study consisted of seventeen (17) primary learners from a multigrade classroom in Kabugao District 2 during the School Year 2025–2026, composed of six (6) Grade 2 learners and eleven (11) Grade 3 learners. The participants were treated as one group and were exposed to the same procedures and digitized storytelling intervention to ensure consistency in measuring their reading comprehension. Total enumeration sampling was employed, wherein all learners in the identified multigrade class were included in the study.

2.4 Research Instrumentation

The assessment tools utilized in this study included digitized learning materials administered during the pretest and posttest to determine the learners' level of reading comprehension before and after the intervention. For the intervention phase, digitized storytelling materials were employed to enhance learners' comprehension through multimedia-based instruction. To interpret the learners' comprehension performance, the researcher utilized the rating scale adopted from the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). The researcher utilized educational video materials from Department of Education Southville 5A Elementary School–Langkiwa, which were developed in line with PROJECT CHARM, IRISH, and the DepEd 3Bs Program. These digitized storytelling materials integrated narration, images, audio, and visual presentations to provide learners with engaging and meaningful reading experiences appropriate to their comprehension level.

2.5 Statistical Analysis

Percentage was used to analyze the learners' comprehension levels. It determined the effectiveness of the intervention.

3 Results And Discussion

Table 1 The level of English comprehension of Grade 2 learners before the implementation of digitized storytelling.

Learner	Percentage	Comprehension Level
Learner 1	33	Frustration
Learner 2	50	Frustration
Learner 3	67	Instructional
Learner 4	100	Independent
Learner 5	67	Instructional
Learner 6	50	Frustration

As shown in Table 1, the Grade 2 learners were mostly classified under the Frustration Level, indicating that they experienced difficulties in reading comprehension.

The findings imply that Grade 2 learners need intensive reading support and appropriate intervention strategies, such as the use of digitized storytelling, to address their comprehension difficulties. Through engaging and interactive literacy activities, digitized storytelling may help strengthen foundational reading skills, enhance learners' comprehension, and gradually support their progress toward the Instructional and Independent Levels. As highlighted by Curammeng (2025), digital storytelling helps Filipino learners enhance comprehension by combining audio, images, and narration, making reading activities more meaningful and engaging for young learners.

Table 2 The level of English comprehension skills of Grade 3 learners in Kabugao District 2 before the implementation of digitized storytelling.

Learner	Percentage	Comprehension Level
Learner 1	50	Frustration
Learner 2	67	Instructional
Learner 3	33	Frustration
Learner 4	100	Independent
Learner 5	83	Independent
Learner 6	83	Independent
Learner 7	50	Frustration
Learner 8	33	Frustration
Learner 9	33	Frustration
Learner 10	50	Frustration
Learner 11	67	Instructional

Table 2 shows that the Grade 3 reveals a wide variation in comprehension levels, with learners distributed across Frustration, Instructional, and Independent levels. Majority of the learner's comprehension level were at the "Frustration level".

This indicates that most of the learners have not yet mastered foundational reading skills and have struggles with comprehension. This supports findings from Philippine studies which indicate that comprehension difficulties persist among elementary learners, especially in multigrade contexts where instructional support may vary (Ocampo & Buenviaje, 2024).

The mixed performance among Grade 3 learners implies the need for differentiated and technology-integrated instructional strategies.

Table 3 Level of English comprehension of Grade 2 learners after the implementation of digitized storytelling

Learner	Perceatnge	Comprehension Level
Learner 1	60	Instructional
Learner 2	80	Independent
Learner 3	80	Independent
Learner 4	100	Independent
Learner 5	100	Independent
Learner 6	60	Instructional

As can be gleaned from Table 3, the Grade 2 results after the intervention show a significant improvement, with most learners reaching the Independent level, while the remaining learners were in the Instructional level. This indicates that the majority of learners were able to comprehend texts independently, demonstrating a substantial improvement in reading comprehension.

This outcome suggests that digitized storytelling was highly effective for Grade 2 learners. At this stage, learners are transitioning toward independent reading and are better able to integrate visual, auditory, and textual information to construct meaning. According to DepEd Order No. 14, s. 2018, learners at the independent level can read and comprehend texts without assistance, which aligns with the desired outcome of reading interventions.

This finding is strongly supported Segumpan, et.al, (2023) studies showing that multimedia-based instruction significantly improves comprehension among Filipino learners by enhancing engagement and understanding. Robin, (2016) and Yang & Wu, (2012) also confirm that digital storytelling improves comprehension through the integration of images, narration, and interactive elements that facilitate meaning-making.

Additionally, this aligns with the goals of the Basic Education Development Plan 2030, which promotes the use of innovative instructional strategies to improve literacy outcomes. Thus, the results indicate that digitized storytelling is an effective strategy for developing independent readers among Grade 2 learners.

Table 4 Level of English comprehension of Grade 3 learners after the implementation of digitized storytelling

Learner	Percentage	Comprehension Level
Learner 1	67	Instructional
Learner 2	67	Instructional
Learner 3	50	Frustration
Learner 4	100	Independent
Learner 5	83	Independent
Learner 6	83	Independent
Learner 7	83	Independent
Learner 8	67	Instructional
Learner 9	50	Frustration
Learner 10	67	Instructional
Learner 11	100	Independent

The Grade 3 results after the implementation of digitized storytelling showed a notable improvement, with an increased number of learners moving to the Instructional and Independent levels, as shown in Table 4. Most learners attained the Independent level, indicating improved comprehension skills and the ability to read and understand texts independently. This improvement suggests that digitized storytelling effectively supported learners in the transition from instructional to independent reading. According to Republic Act No. 10533, learners at this level are expected to demonstrate functional literacy and comprehension skills necessary for academic success.

This finding is supported by Pedros, Randy O. et al. (2024), who emphasized that the digital storytelling technique is a potent strategy for improving learners' reading comprehension, as it enhances engagement, understanding, and retention of textual information.

However, it can be gleaned from the results that two (2) learners remained at the Frustration Level, indicating that while the intervention was generally effective, some learners may still require more targeted and intensive reading support to fully develop their comprehension skills.

Table 5 Summary table of the Level of English comprehension of Grade 2 and 3 learners before and after the implementation of digitized storytelling

Grade	Mean Grade (Pre-Test)	Comprehension Level	Mean Grade (Post Test)	Comprehension Level
Grade 2	53	Frustration	84	Independent
Grade 3	59	Frustration	74	Instructional

The table 5 shows that before the intervention, Grade 2 learners obtained a mean grade of 53, interpreted as a frustration level. This indicates that the pupils experienced serious difficulty in comprehending reading materials independently and required substantial teacher assistance during reading activities. After the intervention, however, the mean grade remarkably increased to 84, which falls under the independent comprehension level. This implies that the learners became capable of reading and understanding texts independently with minimal supervision. The large increase in mean score demonstrates that the intervention greatly improved the learners' decoding, vocabulary recognition, fluency, and comprehension skills.

Similarly, Grade 3 learners recorded a pre-test mean grade of 59, which was likewise interpreted as a frustration level, signifying inadequate comprehension skills before the intervention. Following the intervention, the post-test mean grade improved to 74, categorized as an instructional level. This indicates that the learners were already able to comprehend reading materials with limited teacher guidance and instructional support. Although the improvement was not as high as that of Grade 2 learners, the increase in performance still reflects the positive impact of the intervention on the learners' reading comprehension abilities.

Comparatively, both Grade 2 and Grade 3 learners demonstrated notable improvement from the pre-test to the post-test, showing that the intervention was effective in increasing the learners' comprehension levels. However, the improvement was more pronounced among Grade 2 learners, who advanced from Frustration to Independent level, whereas Grade 3 learners progressed from Frustration to Instructional level only. This suggests that the intervention was highly beneficial in strengthening the foundational reading skills of younger learners. Such findings support the claim that early reading interventions significantly contribute to the improvement of literacy and comprehension among elementary pupils (Department of Education [DepEd], 2018).

The findings are aligned with the provisions of Republic Act No. 10533, otherwise known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, which emphasizes the development of functional literacy and the strengthening of foundational learning competencies, particularly reading comprehension among learners (Republic Act No. 10533, 2013). Likewise, the Department of Education, through DepEd Order No. 14, s. 2018 or the Policy Guidelines on the Administration of the Revised Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), underscores the importance of reading assessment and intervention programs in improving the reading proficiency and comprehension skills of learners (DepEd, 2018).

The results are also supported by local studies, which revealed that structured reading interventions, guided reading activities, and contextualized literacy programs significantly improve the reading comprehension performance of elementary learners. According to Balmes (2021), intervention-based reading programs helped struggling readers improve from frustration to instructional and independent reading levels. Similarly, Dela Cruz and Javier (2022) found that targeted reading remediation activities enhanced learners' comprehension skills, vocabulary development, and reading fluency among elementary pupils in Philippine public schools.

Table 6 Significant difference on the English comprehension of Grade 2 learners before and after the implementation of digitized storytelling

Indicator	Mean	DF	t-tabular	P-Value	Decision	Cohen's d	Interpretation
Pre-Test	61.17	5	-5.079	0.017	Reject H_0	2.07	Very Large Effect
Post Test	80.00						

As shown in Table 6, the results for Grade 2 revealed that the mean score increased from 61.17 (pre-test) to 80.00 (post-test). The computed p-value of 0.017 is less than the 0.05 level of significance; therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a statistically significant difference in learners' English comprehension before and after the implementation of digitized storytelling.

This result demonstrates that digitized storytelling had a significant positive effect on the comprehension skills of Grade 2 learners. At this stage, learners are transitioning from basic decoding to more meaningful comprehension, making them more receptive to instructional strategies that integrate visual, auditory, and textual elements. According to DepEd Order No. 14, s. 2018, learners at the instructional level benefit from guided and interactive learning approaches that support comprehension development.

This finding strongly supported by Segumpan, et.al (2023) indicating that Filipino learners significantly improve their reading comprehension when exposed to multimedia-based instruction, as these approaches enhance engagement and understanding. Robin (2016) and Yang and Wu (2012) also confirm that digital storytelling improves comprehension by providing contextualized learning through images, narration, and interactive elements.

The computed Cohen's *d* value of 2.07 indicates a very large effect size, confirming that digitized storytelling had a substantial and powerful impact on learners' English comprehension.

Moreover, this result aligned with the goals of the Basic Education Development Plan 2030, which emphasizes the integration of innovative and technology-driven strategies to improve learning outcomes. Therefore, the significant improvement observed in Grade 2 learners indicates that digitized storytelling is an effective intervention for learners at this developmental stage.

Table 7 Significant difference on the English comprehension of Grade 3 learners before and after the implementation of digitized storytelling

Indicator	Mean	DF	t-tabular	P-Value	Decision	Cohen's d	Interpretation
Pre-Test	59.00	10	-3.652	0.004	Reject H ₀	1.10	Large Effect
Post Test	74.27						

The results for Grade 3 show that the mean score increased from 59.00 (pre-test) to 74.27 (post-test). The computed p-value of 0.004 is less than the 0.05 level of significance; thus, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a statistically significant difference in learners' English comprehension after the implementation of digitized storytelling.

This finding suggested that digitized storytelling had a strong and significant impact on Grade 3 learners' comprehension. At this level, learners are expected to transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn," making comprehension skills critical for academic success. The improvement indicates that learners were able to better understand, interpret, and engage with texts after the intervention.

This result was supported by Ocampo and Buenviaje (2024), which highlight that learners' comprehension significantly improves when instructional materials are interactive, contextualized, and aligned with learners' experiences. Similarly, Yang and Wu, (2012) and Robin (2016) demonstrates that storytelling-based instruction enhances comprehension by promoting active engagement, critical thinking, and meaning-making.

The computed Cohen's *d* value of 1.10 indicates a large effect size, demonstrating that digitized storytelling produced a strong and meaningful improvement in learners' comprehension.

In line with Republic Act No. 10533, the development of functional literacy is essential for learners to succeed across subject areas. Additionally, the Basic Education Development Plan 2030 emphasizes improving literacy outcomes through innovative and learner-centered approaches. Therefore, the significant improvement observed in Grade 3 learners confirms the effectiveness of digitized storytelling as a strategy for enhancing comprehension.

4 Conclusion

Digitized storytelling is an effective instructional strategy in enhancing the English comprehension skills of grade 2 and grade 3 primary learners, particularly those transitioning toward independent reading and comprehension. The integration of digitized storytelling contributed to improved text understanding, increased learner engagement, and the development of reading comprehension skills. Digitized storytelling serves as a meaningful and supportive approach in strengthening early literacy instruction.

Compliance with ethical standards

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I acknowledge that I have not used ChatGPT or Copilot for refining some of the sections in the document.

Disclosure of conflict of interest

I affirm that the respondents voluntarily agreed to participate after being fully informed about the purpose, nature, and potential implications of the study. Their responses have been collected with utmost respect for their privacy and confidentiality, in accordance with ethical research guidelines.

Authors have declared that they have no known competing financial interests OR non-financial interests OR personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper

Statement of ethical approval

The study was conducted with approval and in accordance with the standards of the college. No ethical approval was required, as the research followed all applicable ethical guidelines, ensuring respect for the respondents' privacy and confidentiality

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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