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The Effect of Using Storybird Application on Students' Reading Comprehension of Narrative Text

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Abstract

The problem in this study is that many Indonesian students still face significant challenges in English reading comprehension, especially with narrative texts, which hinder their academic progress. Addressing this issue requires innovative pedagogical approaches utilizing technology. This research investigated the effect of the Storybird application in improving students' reading comprehension of narrative text among ninth graders at SMP Negeri 3 Tangerang Selatan. A quantitative pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design was employed. The sample consisted of 47 ninth-grade students selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected using pre-test and post-test assessments and analyzed using descriptive statistics and a paired samples t-test. Data analysis revealed a significant increase in students' scores, with an average improvement of 18.98 points between the pre-test (M=65.11) and post-test (M=84.09). The statistical calculation confirmed this difference was significant ($t(46) = -16.492$, $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that the Storybird application was effective as a teaching and learning medium for improving students' reading comprehension of narrative text in this context.

Keywords: *Reading Comprehension, Storybird, Narrative Text*

Introduction

Language serves as the cornerstone of human interaction, enabling the communication essential for societal function. Among global languages, English holds a significant position, frequently utilized across international domains such as science, technology, academia, and commerce (Ke, 2015). The prevalence in global information exchange makes English proficiency a valuable asset for individuals navigating an interconnected world (Annisa & Susanti, 2024). Reflecting this importance, English is integrated into educational systems worldwide, including in Indonesia, where it is taught as a foreign language from elementary through high school levels (Sabilla et al., 2022).

Within the spectrum of English language skills, reading comprehension is particularly crucial for academic success and accessing information. This skill involves not merely decoding symbols but actively constructing meaning from text by understanding vocabulary, sentence structures, and the relationships between ideas (Tias et al., 2024). Developing robust reading abilities is fundamental for learning across subjects and impacts overall academic achievement (Ardiyanto et al., 2021).

Many Indonesian students, unfortunately, encounter significant hurdles in comprehending English texts. Common difficulties include insufficient vocabulary knowledge, which impedes understanding at the sentence and paragraph level; challenges in identifying specific details or

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main ideas; and difficulty making inferences from the text (Clemens et al., 2016). These challenges are often pronounced when students engage with longer texts, such as narratives. Narrative texts, although a common genre introduced early due to students' prior exposure through media, present persistent difficulties for many EFL learners when comprehension in English is required, especially concerning complex plots and unfamiliar vocabulary found in traditional classroom materials (Williams, 2018).

The response to these pedagogical challenges, educators are increasingly exploring the integration of technology into language instruction. Technology offers tools to create more dynamic, engaging, and effective learning environments, potentially enhancing student competency (Fatimah & Santiana, 2017). The rise of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) reflects this trend, with numerous studies demonstrating the positive impact of mobile applications and digital platforms on various language skills, including reading comprehension (Fajrin, 2023). Such technologies can increase motivation, provide access to diverse materials, and cater to different learning styles.

One such platform is Storybird, a digital storytelling tool that combines visual art with text. It allows users to read and create visually rich stories across various genres and languages. Storybird's potential lies in leveraging multimedia principles; the combination of text and images can enhance comprehension, particularly for narratives where visualization aids understanding (Kazazoglu & Bilir, 2021). The features may assist learners of different ages and abilities in developing both reading and writing skills, improve vocabulary and comprehension, and serve as an engaging, authentic reading resource (Sukmawan & Setyowati, 2019).

Although prior studies suggest benefits of digital tools like Storybird, research specifically investigating the effect of the Storybird application on the reading comprehension of narrative texts among Indonesian junior high school students remains limited. Existing research has often focused on other skills (like writing) or different digital platforms (Mustafa & Bakri, 2020). This study aims to address this gap by providing empirical evidence on Storybird's effectiveness in this specific context. Understanding how this unique blend of art and text impacts narrative comprehension can offer valuable insights for EFL pedagogy in Indonesia and similar settings. The objective of this research is to investigate the effect of using the Storybird application as a teaching and learning medium on the reading comprehension of narrative text among ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Tangerang Selatan.

This study presents a novelty by specifically examining the effect of using the Storybird application on the reading comprehension of narrative texts among junior high school students in Indonesia, an aspect that has been rarely studied compared to previous research which has mostly focused on writing skills or the use of other digital platforms.

Method

This research employed a quantitative method utilizing a pre-experimental design, specifically the one-group pretest-posttest approach. This design involves assessing a single group before (pre-test) and after (post-test) an intervention is administered to determine the intervention's effect. The population for this study comprised all ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Tangerang Selatan during the 2022/2023 academic year. A single intact class, consisting of 47 students, was selected as the sample for this research using convenience sampling. This sampling method was chosen due to accessibility and practical considerations for implementing the intervention within the school's existing structure.

The research procedure was conducted over five meetings, following the one-group pretest-posttest design illustrated below:

Table 1. *Pre-experimental Design*

Pre-test	Treatment	Post-Test
T1	X	T2

The sequence of activities was as follows:

1. Meeting 1: Administration of the pre-test (O_1) to measure the students' baseline reading comprehension of narrative texts. Meetings 2-4 (Treatment - X): Implementation of the Storybird application intervention.
2. Meeting 2: Students were introduced to the Storybird platform and its features. The researcher guided students in navigating the application and reading a selected narrative text together, followed by an initial discussion focusing on general comprehension and understanding the story's sequence, aided by the platform's illustrations.
3. Meeting 3: Students read a different narrative text on Storybird. Instruction focused on identifying specific narrative elements such as main ideas, characters, and setting, utilizing the platform's combination of text and visual elements to support understanding.
4. Meeting 4: Students engaged with another Storybird narrative. Activities centered on understanding vocabulary within the context of the story and identifying the moral lesson or theme. The interactive and visually appealing nature of Storybird was utilized to maintain engagement and facilitate deeper comprehension.
5. Meeting 5: Administration of the post-test (O_2) to measure reading comprehension achievement after the Storybird intervention.

Data were collected using a reading comprehension test administered as the pre-test and post-test. The instrument was a multiple-choice test consisting of 25 items designed to assess comprehension of narrative texts. Test questions covered several key aspects of narrative comprehension, including identifying the main idea, recognizing specific story details, understanding vocabulary in context, and determining the moral lesson. Prior to its use in the study, the instrument's content validity was established through review by subject matter experts, and its reliability was confirmed through statistical analysis using Kuder-Richardson Formula 20, appropriate for multiple-choice tests, ensuring the test consistently measured the intended construct.

The collected data from the pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics with the aid of SPSS for Windows software. Descriptive analysis was used to summarize the data, including mean scores and standard deviations. Inferential analysis involved using a paired samples t-test to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, thereby evaluating the effect of the Storybird intervention on students' reading comprehension. The comparison between pretest and posttest results is crucial for determining the treatment's success.

Following the t-test analysis and obtaining the significance value (2-tailed), the magnitude of the intervention's effect was calculated using Eta Squared (η^2). This effect size measure indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (reading comprehension scores) that is attributable to the independent variable (Storybird intervention). The formula used for calculating Eta Squared was:

$$Eta\ Square = \frac{t^2}{t^2 + (N - 1)}$$

The resulting Eta Squared value was interpreted using established conventions adapted from Cohen's guidelines to gauge the practical significance of the Storybird application's impact on reading comprehension within this study group. The study specifically referenced Cohen's general categories for interpreting effect size magnitude (e.g., 0.2 small, 0.5 moderate, 0.8 large) when evaluating the obtained Eta Squared value.

Results

The findings of this research that was carried out at SMP Negeri 3 Tangerang Selatan with 47 students of ninth grade as the samples discovered that there was an improvement of students' the pre-test and post-test results. The primary focus of the analysis is the comparison of the mean scores obtained in these two assessments to evaluate the overall impact of the intervention.

Table 2. *The Mean Scores Obtained in The Pre-Test and Post-Test*

Assessment	Mean Score
Pre-Test	65.11
Post-Test	84.09

Data within the table illustrate a distinct difference in the average scores recorded for the pre-test and the post-test. The mean score for the pre-test was 65.11, indicating the baseline level of the students' reading skills prior to the intervention. Following the implementation of the treatment, the students underwent a post-test, the results of which yielded a significantly higher mean score of 84.09. This increase in the average score from the pre-test to the post-test suggests an overall improvement in the students' reading skills during the course of the study. The magnitude of this difference will be further explored in subsequent analyses to determine the statistical significance and practical implications of this observed gain.

Table 3. *Students' Reading Skills Performance In The Pre-Test And Post-Test*

Score Interval	Criteria	Pre-Test Frequency	Pre-Test Percentage	Post-Test Frequency	Post-Test Percentage
86-100	Very good	2	4.20%	22	46.80%
71-85	Good	13	27.70%	23	49%
56-70	Enough	21	44.70%	2	4.20%
≤ 55	Poor	11	23.40%	0	0%

The shown in Table above, the distribution of students' reading skills performance in the pre-test reveals the following frequency: 2 students (4.2%) scored within the range of 86-100, categorized as "Very good." A larger portion of the students, 13 individuals (27.7%), achieved scores between 71-85, indicating "Good" reading skills. The most frequent score range was 56-70, where 21 students (44.7%) fell, classifying their performance as "Enough." Notably, 11 students (23.4%) scored below 55, which is considered "Poor" according to the Table 3. This pre-test distribution indicates that a significant portion of the students initially demonstrated reading skills that were in the "Enough" or "Poor" categories.

The frequency distribution of the post-test scores, shows a marked shift in students' reading skills performance. A substantial number of students, 22 (46.8%), achieved scores in the 86-100 range ("Very good"), indicating a considerable improvement. Furthermore, 23 students (49%) scored between 71-85 ("Good"). Only 2 students (4.2%) scored in the 56-70 range ("Enough"), and notably, no students scored below 55 ("Poor") in the post-test. This post-test distribution highlights a positive trend, with a majority of students demonstrating "Very good" and "Good" reading skills after the intervention.

Comparing the pre-test and post-test frequency distributions reveals a clear improvement in students' reading skills. The percentage of students in the "Very good" category increased significantly from 4.2% in the pre-test to 46.8% in the post-test. Similarly, the proportion of students in the "Good" category rose from 27.7% to 49%. Conversely, there was a substantial decrease in the percentage of students in the "Enough" category (from 44.7% to 4.2%), and the "Poor" category was completely eliminated in the post-test. This shift in frequency distribution strongly suggests a positive impact of the intervention on the students' reading skills performance.

Normality tests were conducted to evaluate the distribution of pre-test and post-test scores, specifically employing the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests (Table 4). The Shapiro-Wilk statistic was 0.973 for the pre-test and 0.959 for the post-test. The significance values for the Shapiro-Wilk test were 0.333 for the pre-test and 0.097 for the post-test.

Table 4. *Tests of Normality*

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-Test	.110	47	.200*	.973	47	.333
Post-Test	.162	47	.003	.959	47	.097

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The determine the normality of the data, the significance values (p-values) associated with these tests are crucial. The significance level greater than 0.05 typically indicates that the data does not significantly deviate from a normal distribution. In this case, the significance values for the Shapiro-Wilk test were 0.333 for the pre-test and 0.097 for the post-test, both exceeding the 0.05 threshold. Therefore, it can be inferred that the data for both assessments were considered to be normally distributed. The Shapiro-Wilk test is often considered more powerful for smaller sample sizes. The fact that the Shapiro-Wilk test, with non-significant p-values, suggests normality provides further confidence in the assumption that the data meets the criteria for parametric statistical analysis.

Table 5. *Paired Samples Statistics*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-Test	65.11	47	11.845	1.728
	Post-Test	84.09	47	7.712	1.125

Table 5, which presents the Paired Sample Statistics, was used to conduct a descriptive analysis of pre-test and post-test scores. The analysis showed that the pre-test mean score was 65.11, with a sample size (N) of 47 students. The standard deviation for the pre-test scores was 11.845, and the standard error mean was 1.728. In contrast, the post-test results showed a higher mean score of 84.09, also with a sample size of 47 students. The standard deviation for the post-test scores was lower at 7.712, and the standard error mean was 1.125. These descriptive statistics provide an initial indication of an improvement in students' reading comprehension from the pre-test to the post-test, as evidenced by the increase in the mean score and the decrease in the standard deviation. The standard error mean, which represents the variability of the sample mean, also decreased in the post-test, suggesting a more stable estimate of the population mean after the intervention.

Based on the T-test calculation detailed in Table 6, the analysis indicates a statistically significant effect of the Storybird application on students' reading comprehension improvement. The calculated t-value is -16.492, with 46 degrees of freedom. The corresponding two-tailed significance level is 0.000.

***Table 6**. T-Test Calculation/Value*

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre-Test - Post-Test	-18.979	7.889	1.151	-21.295	-16.662	-16.492	46	.000

The context of hypothesis testing, this significance level (p-value) of 0.000 is substantially lower than the conventional alpha level of 0.05. This finding suggests that the probability of observing the difference in mean scores (or a more extreme difference) between the pre-test and post-test, if the Storybird application had no actual effect, is extremely low. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H0), which posits no significant effect of the Storybird application on students' reading comprehension, is rejected. The analysis led to the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H1), which states that the Storybird application has a significant effect on improving students' reading comprehension. The substantial t-value, combined with the notably low p-value, provides strong statistical evidence that the observed improvement in students' reading scores from the pre-test to the post-test is not attributable to random chance, but rather a direct result of the Storybird application's implementation.

The t-test confirmed a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, demonstrating the intervention's impact. Statistical significance alone, however, does not convey the magnitude or practical importance of this effect. To quantify the practical significance of the observed improvement in reading comprehension, the effect size was calculated. Eta Squared (η^2) was selected as an appropriate measure for this paired samples t-test design. The formula, 't' represents the t-statistic obtained from the paired samples t-test, and 'N' represents the number of participants. Substituting the values from our analysis (t=−16.492 and N=47) yields the following calculation:

$$Eta\ Square = \frac{t^2}{t^2+(N-1)} = \frac{(-16.492)^2}{(-16.492)^2 + (47-1)} = \frac{271.9}{271.9+46} = \frac{271.9}{317.9} = 0.85$$

The resulting Eta Squared value is approximately 0.85. Interpreting this value requires referencing established conventions for effect size magnitude, such as those outlined where values around 0.2 suggest a small effect, 0.5 a moderate effect, and 0.8 a large effect. Based on these benchmarks, the obtained Eta Squared value of approximately 0.85 indicates a large effect size.

Discussion

The findings of this investigation unequivocally demonstrate a statistically significant improvement in students' reading comprehension of narrative texts following the implementation of the Storybird application intervention. The primary analysis revealed a substantial mean score increase of 18.98 points from the pre-test (M=65.11) to the post-test (M=84.09). This considerable gain is further substantiated by the paired samples t-test, which yielded a p-value of 0.000. This value falls well below the predetermined alpha level of 0.05 ($p < .05$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0) and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H1). These results strongly suggest a significant positive effect of utilizing Storybird as a pedagogical tool on the participants' narrative text comprehension abilities.

These positive outcomes align coherently with a growing body of research advocating for technology integration in second language acquisition, particularly for enhancing reading proficiency. Digital platforms and mobile applications present unique affordances that significantly benefit language learners (Darmawan et al., 2020). The emergence of technologies like Storybird offers educators innovative ways to engage students and facilitate deeper comprehension. Our finding that Storybird markedly improved comprehension resonates with the consensus that purposefully integrated technology acts as a powerful catalyst for developing reading skills in foreign language contexts. The interactive nature and accessibility inherent in such digital tools potentially boost student motivation and increase exposure to target language materials (Sujiatmoko & Puspita, 2024). Studies utilizing other interactive applications, such as Quizizz, Readable, Let's Read, Wattpad, and Webtoon have similarly reported significant gains in reading comprehension (Ramadhanti et al., 2021). These applications often demonstrate statistically significant improvements in pre-test/post-test comparisons and lead to the rejection of the null hypothesis based on t-test values (Lugina et al., 2024). Such consistency across different platforms reinforces the idea that technology-mediated interventions, leveraging factors like engagement, interactivity, and novel presentation formats, yield measurable improvements in reading performance.

Storybird's effectiveness can be understood particularly well through the lens of digital storytelling and multimedia learning principles. Storybird integrates textual narratives with visual art, creating a multimodal reading experience. This fusion of text and image aligns with research indicating that multimedia can enhance comprehension, especially for narrative texts where visualizing story elements is vital (Purwandari et al., 2019). Platforms incorporating visuals alongside text can potentially reduce cognitive load and scaffold understanding, leading to better comprehension outcomes (Marzona & Ikhsan, 2019). The visual support within Storybird likely aided students in constructing mental models of the narratives, interpreting vocabulary within context, and identifying key story elements more effectively than traditional text-only formats might allow (Habibah & Muftianty, 2020). The platform's engaging interface and the creative aspect of exploring stories paired with unique artwork may also have significantly boosted student motivation (Jannah, 2025).

The noteworthy finding of this study, extending beyond the significant increase in the mean score, is the marked decrease in the standard deviation of scores from the pre-test (SD=11.845) to the post-test (SD=7.712). This reduction in variability suggests that the Storybird intervention not only elevated the overall group performance but also contributed to a more homogenous level of reading comprehension among the participants after the treatment. Pre-test scores showed a wider spread, indicating greater variation in initial abilities, whereas the post-test scores were more clustered around the higher mean. This homogenization effect can be interpreted positively; the intervention appears to have been particularly beneficial in narrowing the gap between students with initially lower and higher reading proficiency levels. Several factors might explain this decreased variance. The scaffolding provided by the combination of text and visuals in Storybird might have offered more consistent support across different learning needs. This could allow students who initially struggled to make substantial gains, bringing them closer to their higher-achieving peers.

The shift in score distribution observed in this study, with a dramatic decrease in students scoring in the "Enough" (from 44.7% to 4.2%) and "Poor" (from 23.4% to 0%) categories and a surge in the "Very good" (from 4.2% to 46.8%) and "Good" (from 27.7% to 49%) categories during the post-test, supports this interpretation. The engaging and potentially motivating

nature of the platform may also have led to more consistent effort and engagement across the entire group, resulting in more uniform improvement compared to potentially varied engagement levels with traditional methods. Many studies using digital tools report increases in mean scores and shifts in score distributions towards higher categories (Jannah et al., 2024). The observed trend towards greater score consistency in our study, however, strongly suggests that the Storybird intervention fostered a more equitable improvement environment, effectively bringing a larger proportion of students to a higher level of comprehension.

These findings hold significant pedagogical implications for English language teaching, particularly in EFL settings like Indonesian junior high schools. The demonstrated effectiveness of Storybird, both in raising average comprehension and promoting more consistent outcomes, suggests educators should consider incorporating such digital storytelling platforms into their reading curricula, especially for narrative texts. These tools can supplement traditional methods, offering a dynamic, visually stimulating, and motivating approach to reading instruction.

Conclusion

This research investigated the effectiveness of the Storybird application on ninth-grade students' reading comprehension of narrative text at SMP Negeri 3 Tangerang Selatan. Data analysis confirmed a significant positive impact; students' average achievement increased by 18.98 points from the pre-test (M=65.11) to the post-test (M=84.09). The paired samples t-test showed this difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). The effect size calculation ($\eta 2 \approx 0.85$) further indicated a large practical effect, interpreted using benchmarks suggested by Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2007). These findings support the conclusion that Storybird utilization effectively improves students' narrative text reading comprehension. The results offer practical implications for educators. Teachers can incorporate Storybird as a supplemental tool to enhance engagement and comprehension when teaching narrative texts. Its unique combination of visual art and text provides a motivating, multimodal learning experience that may cater to diverse learning styles and help students visualize story elements more effectively.

This study has limitations such as a pre-experimental design without a control group, the use of convenience sampling, and a short intervention duration, which limit the generalizability of the results and leave the long-term effects unknown. Further research with stronger designs and larger samples is needed to reinforce the findings. The results indicate that using Storybird effectively improves narrative text reading comprehension significantly and consistently, thus it is recommended that educators integrate this digital storytelling platform into reading curricula as a complement to more dynamic and motivating traditional methods.

Acknowledgment

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