

USING DIGITAL STORYTELLING TO IMPROVE GRADE 6 STUDENTS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION

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Received:	03/6/2024	This study aimed to investigate the impact of digital storytelling on improving grade 6 students' listening comprehension at a primary and secondary school in a mountainous province in Vietnam. The research aims were (1) to investigate how digital storytelling impacts grade 6 students' listening comprehension; and (2) to determine students' attitudes toward using digital storytelling to improve listening comprehension. Research design was action research with the direct participation of the researcher and 38 students of grade 6A. A questionnaire and tests were used as data collection tools for analysis. Research results showed that digital storytelling was effective in improving students' listening comprehension and that students had positive attitudes towards using digital storytelling activities to improve their listening comprehension. Through a dynamic and interactive platform of using digital storytelling, students could develop their listening comprehension, thereby preparing them for more advanced levels of language learning.
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SỬ DỤNG KỂ CHUYỆN KỸ THUẬT SỐ ĐỂ NÂNG CAO KHẢ NĂNG NGHE HIỂU CỦA HỌC SINH LỚP 6

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO		TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài:	03/6/2024	Nghiên cứu này nhằm mục đích khảo sát tác động của việc ứng dụng kể chuyện số vào dạy học trong việc nâng cao kỹ năng nghe hiểu cho học sinh lớp 6 tại một Trường Tiểu học và THCS thuộc một tỉnh miền núi ở Việt Nam. Mục tiêu của nghiên cứu bao gồm (1) Xác định xem kể chuyện kỹ thuật số tác động như thế nào đến khả năng nghe hiểu của học sinh lớp 6; (2) Xác định thái độ của học sinh đối với việc sử dụng kể chuyện kỹ thuật số để nâng cao kỹ năng nghe hiểu. Thiết kế nghiên cứu là nghiên cứu hành động với sự tham gia trực tiếp của nhà nghiên cứu và 38 học sinh lớp 6A. Bảng câu hỏi và bài kiểm tra được sử dụng làm công cụ thu thập dữ liệu phục vụ cho mục đích nghiên cứu. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy kể chuyện kỹ thuật số có hiệu quả trong việc nâng cao khả năng nghe hiểu cho học sinh và học sinh có thái độ tích cực đối với việc sử dụng các hoạt động kể chuyện kỹ thuật số nhằm nâng cao khả năng nghe hiểu của mình. Thông qua cách tiếp cận tương tác dựa trên câu chuyện bằng việc sử dụng kể chuyện kỹ thuật số, học sinh có thể dễ dàng và hứng thú trong phát triển khả năng nghe hiểu của mình, từ đó chuẩn bị cho các cấp độ học ngôn ngữ nâng cao hơn.
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1. Introduction

People cannot overstate the significance of the English language as a primary medium for international communication, academic discourse, and business in our rapidly evolving global landscape. According to Nguyen (2021), the pervasive influence of English facilitates a variety of interactions across linguistic and cultural landscapes, acting as a catalyst for the exchange of ideas, collaborative endeavors, and access to a vast repository of global knowledge [1]. Lee (2022) further elucidates the critical role of English in offering individuals the linguistic tools necessary to thrive in this dynamic, interconnected environment [2].

Among these foundational skills, listening comprehension is particularly pivotal. Johnson (2023) emphasizes its role in the overall process of language acquisition and development, underscoring how proficiency in listening enables students to follow complex instructions, actively participate in discussions, and assimilate a wide array of information presented in diverse formats [3]. As students advance through their educational careers, this skill becomes more and more important, especially as they enter Grade 6, a crucial time when academic subjects become more complex and English language engagement increases [4]. As Goh (2008) suggests, it is during this formative phase that the development of listening skills is crucial for laying a solid foundation for future academic success and personal growth [5].

The challenges inherent in teaching and improving listening comprehension skills, particularly among Grade 6 students, are multifaceted. Students at this educational level, such as those at primary and secondary schools in a mountainous province in Vietnam, often face limited exposure to effective listening exercises and show varying degrees of interest and motivation in engaging with listening activities. The traditional methods used in language instruction, which might not fully accommodate the various learning styles and preferences of modern students, further exacerbate these difficulties.

Consequently, the integration of digital technologies into the educational landscape presents a promising avenue for addressing these challenges. The advent of digital storytelling as a pedagogical tool exemplifies the potential of technology to revolutionize teaching and learning practices. According to Nguyen (2023), the incorporation of digital tools into education has significantly enhanced the efficacy and engagement of learning experiences [6]. Digital storytelling, which combines the art of storytelling with multimedia elements such as images, sounds, and videos, offers a dynamic and interactive platform for language learning. Reinders & White (2010) highlight how this approach not only captivates students' attention but also caters to their multimodal learning needs, thereby enriching the listening experience and facilitating deeper comprehension [7].

Pardo Ballester (2012) further explores the benefits of digital storytelling in language education, emphasizing its role in providing students with access to engaging, context-rich content that stimulates both auditory and visual senses [8].

The goal of this research was to investigate how digital storytelling helped improve 6th grade students' listening comprehension. By introducing students to digital narratives filled with vibrant images, sounds, and interactive elements, this innovative educational model aimed to provide a more dynamic and interactive approach to enhance students' listening comprehension. Therefore, the hypothesis behind the thesis "Using digital storytelling to improve grade 6 students' listening comprehension at a primary and secondary school" was predicated on the hypothesis that digital storytelling can significantly improve English listening comprehension among Grade 6 students. The study sought to answer two following research questions:

Question 1: To what extent does the use of digital storytelling enhance students' listening comprehension?

Question 2: What are the students' attitudes towards the use of digital storytelling to develop their listening comprehension skills?

2. Research methods

2.1. Participants

A group of 38 students in grade 6A from a Vietnamese Primary and Secondary school were volunteered as research participants, who attended listening lessons using Digital Storytelling and provided their responses on the utilization of such teaching tools upon the completion of the study. Those learners have all studied English for only 1 year (at grade 5), yet their listening comprehension level is estimated at A1 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

2.2. Research Methods

The action research design was employed to investigate how Digital Storytelling helped improve the 6th grade students' listening comprehension and determine the students' attitudes towards the use of digital storytelling to develop their listening comprehension. The research design involved quantitative analysis, enabling the researcher to apply statistical tools to assess outcomes with precision and evident improvement of students' listening comprehension after the action.

The research adapted John Elliott's model of educational action research which focuses on the idea of developing practical knowledge that is directly applicable to educators' professional contexts. Elliott argues that educational action research should aim to improve educational practices by trying to understand them in relation to educational values and theories. The research procedure was conducted in three steps as shown in Figure 1 [9].

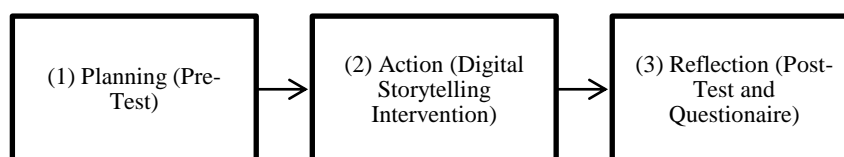


Figure 1. Data collection procedure
(Adapted from Elliott, 1991 [9])

In the beginning, a pre-test was given to 38 participants in order to obtain information about their initial listening level. During 7 weeks of the intervention, the researcher was performing the teaching and learning process by using digital stories on “learn English for kids” website of British council in listening lessons. The researcher chose suitable listening tasks for students' English level (A1-A2), students watched, listened to the digital stories and finish the tasks in the website such as filling in the blank, matching and doing crossword. Each performance was followed by teacher's feedback and evaluation. The post-test was administered at the end of the 7-week intervention to determine whether the students' listening comprehension has improved or not after Digital Storytelling was implemented in English listening lessons for 6th graders in the second term of the academic year 2023-2024. Students' pre- and post-test scores were gathered and analyzed in order to compare the mean scores in the two tests and determine the impact of Digital Storytelling on the listening comprehension of 6th graders.

In addition, a close-ended questionnaire of 10 question items was employed to gather responses from 38 students regarding the application of Digital Storytelling in learning listening comprehension. The questionnaire was designed based on Likert-type questions with five response choices: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree, and was distributed after a 7-week treatment intended to explore the students' attitudes toward Digital Storytelling after the intervention.

2.3. Data analysis

As for the pre-test and post-test data, the researcher employed the quantitative method to evaluate students' listening comprehension before and after applying Digital Storytelling for listening lessons.

For the questionnaire, the quantitative data obtained utilized statistical analysis using Microsoft Excel. This software provides a range of tools and functions that enable the researcher to process and interpret numerical data effectively. The collected data will be entered into Excel spreadsheets, allowing for calculations, summary statistics, and visualizations.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Results from pre-test and post-test

The data in Figure 2 details the pre-test scores of 38 students of grade 6A at a primary and secondary school in Vietnam, evaluated for their listening comprehension before the Digital Storytelling interventions. The scores range strictly between mark 4 and mark 7, with no students scoring in the lower (1-3) or the higher (8-10) ranges. This narrow scope is indicative of uniformity in listening skills, where students show only moderate listening comprehension.

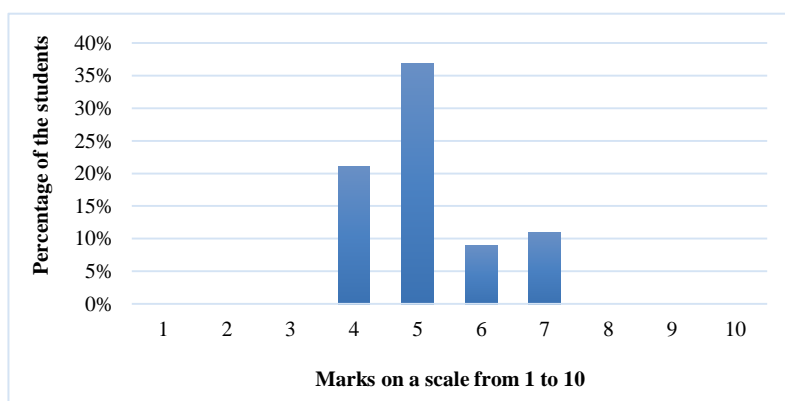


Figure 2. Pre-test scores of 38 grade 6 students (the participants)

The data in Figure 3 details the post-test scores of 38 students of grade 6A at a primary and secondary school in Vietnam, evaluated for their listening comprehension skills after the introduction of Digital Storytelling interventions. The scores show a broader range, from mark 5 to mark 9, with no students scoring in the lower (1-4) or the highest (10) ranges. This broader range indicates an improvement in listening skills after the intervention.

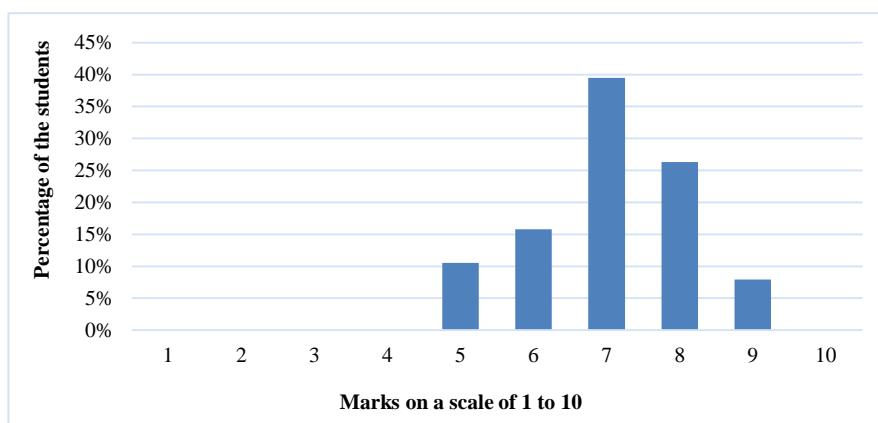


Figure 3. Post-test scores of 38 students of grade 6A (the participants)

Table 1 shows that after 7 weeks of the Digital Storytelling intervention, the post-test mean score rose significantly from 5.37 to 7.05. This increase of 1.68 marks in the average score

indicates a substantial enhancement in the students' listening comprehension. The significant rise in the mean score demonstrates the positive influence of the Digital Storytelling method in improving listening comprehension. Additionally, the post-test standard deviation increased from 0.98 to 1.08, reflecting a slightly broader range of outcomes in how students applied the listening skills they learned.

Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test comparison

	Mean	St.dev
Pre-test	5.37	0.98
Post-test	7.05	1.08

3.1.2. Result from the questionnaire

It can be seen from Table 2 that most students had positive attitudes toward using Digital Storytelling in learning listening comprehension. Students agreed that Digital Storytelling is a beneficial method for learning listening comprehension, as shown by a mean score of 2.35. Furthermore, they expressed a desire for teachers to continue using Digital Storytelling in future lessons, with a mean score of 2.02. This positive feedback highlights the students' appreciation of the method and their belief in its potential to enhance their listening comprehension.

Table 2. Students' Attitude to the Digital Storytelling Approach

No.	Statement	Mean	Level of Agreement
Section 2: Students' Experiences in Digital Storytelling			
1	I used Digital Storytelling and did the following exercises to practice comprehension listening before learning in class.	4.84	Strongly Disagree
2	I find Digital Storytelling very interesting.	2.15	Agree
Section 3: Effectiveness of Digital Storytelling			
3	Digital Storytelling helps me understand the stories more easily.	2.58	Agree
4	Using Digital Storytelling helps me remember details in the story better.	2.76	Neutral
5	I can follow the story better when it is presented in Digital Storytelling compared to traditional methods.	2.18	Agree
Section 4: Classroom Experience			
6	I like lessons that include digital storytelling more than lessons that don't.	2.30	Agree
7	I remember many new words as soon as I learn them in class.	3.14	Neutral
8	The classroom atmosphere is more exciting and enthusiastic when it comes to the listening section with Digital Storytelling.	1.43	Strongly Agree
Section 5: Overall Feedback of Students			
9	I think Digital Storytelling is a good way to learn listening comprehension in class.	2.35	Agree
10	After this experience, I hope teachers continue to use Digital Storytelling to teach listening lessons in the future.	2.02	Agree

3.2. Discussion

The comparative analysis of the outcomes from pre- and post-intervention tests illustrates the beneficial impact of Digital Storytelling on the listening comprehension proficiency of 6th-grade students. An evaluation of the test scores reveals a distinct contrast between the averages of the pre-test and the post-test, indicating a significant improvement in the students' listening comprehension following the instruction using Digital Storytelling. This initial data suggests a positive trend in the enhancement of listening comprehension among the students in class 6A, attributed to the interactive and engaging platform of Digital Storytelling.

The students' attitudes towards Digital Storytelling can be deduced from the questionnaire responses. The overall student attitude towards Digital Storytelling appears largely positive, with students appreciating its interactive and engaging nature, which in turn boosts their interest and listening comprehension. Still, like any educational tool, it may not be universally accepted by all

students, and educators may need to provide additional support to those who are less confident or unsure of the method's benefits.

The gain scores in the post-test indicated that incorporating Digital Storytelling in listening lessons improved students' listening comprehension. This corroborates with the outcomes of the experimental study implemented by Nguyen and Tran (2018) [10] on the integration of multimedia storytelling in improving English listening comprehension among primary students in northern Vietnam. Furthermore, the progress of the learners' listening comprehension confirmed the findings of Pham (2019) [11] stated that students exposed to digital stories showed a significant improvement in their listening scores, attributed to the enhanced engagement and richer sensory input provided by the multimedia content.

Moreover, the questionnaire revealed that the utilization of Digital Storytelling could raise interest in class and increase students' excitement to the lessons thanks to Digital Storytelling's vibrant images, sounds, and interactive elements. Such findings were in parallel with Johnson, A., Smith, and Davis (2019) [12] research, in which the research highlighted the substantial positive impact of digital storytelling on students' listening comprehension skills. It emphasized the potential of digital tools, such as audiovisual elements and interactive content, in creating engaging narratives that help students at different grade levels, including 6th graders, improve their listening skills.

The analysis of the pre- and post- test results and questionnaire responses reveals important implications for language instruction, and there should be various factors to consider when implementing Digital Storytelling into listening lessons in order to maximize the benefits of the materials to students' listening comprehension.

There are many types of stories introduced in Digital Storytelling Website, in which some are not common stories for 6th graders. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers carefully select digital stories that are relevant to the curriculum and align with the thematic focus or grade level. This ensures that the listening tasks are meaningful and applicable to students' learning.

4. Conclusion

The implementation of Digital Storytelling in teaching listening comprehension to 6th-grade students has been closely examined, focusing on both quantitative outcomes and student attitudes. The analysis has revealed a marked improvement in student performance, as evidenced by higher post-test scores. Equally telling is the students' increased interest and enthusiasm for the lessons, which underscores the method's effectiveness in enhancing listening comprehension skills.

While the majority of students responded positively to Digital Storytelling, indicating that it facilitates a more engaging and effective approach to learning, a minority exhibited either a neutral or less confident attitude. These findings suggest that Digital Storytelling serves as a beneficial instructional tool in the context of language education, promoting better understanding, retention, and engagement in students' listening comprehension.

Through this research, the positive points of Digital Storytelling have been highlighted. Although it is not an unfamiliar method, it has not been widely applied in the process of teaching listening comprehension. This study also partly demonstrates the effectiveness of Digital Storytelling in improving students' listening comprehension.

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