



## Integrating digital storytelling into lesson plans to foster young learners' speaking skills

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze how pre-service teachers integrate digital storytelling into their lesson plans to foster young learners' speaking skills. A qualitative content analysis was employed to examine three selected lesson plans designed by three groups of pre-service teachers in the 5<sup>th</sup> semester enrolled in the Digital Storytelling for Young Learners class at a public university in Bandung. This study focuses on three key aspects, including digital storytelling features, speaking skills development, and lesson plan design. The analysis results showed that DST was integrated into the lesson plans through its well-developed narrative structure and multimedia tools, though learners' creativity and personalization should be reinforced more. Some oral production opportunities were also offered, but it needs more attention on how to embed vocabulary focus into speaking tasks. In addition, although all lesson plans were structured well and supported by interactive media and technology, the learning objectives should be more aligned with the expected speaking outcome. For future studies, it is recommended to include a greater sample size across institutions and employ more instruments in the data collection process. In addition, further investigation on pre-service teachers' challenges in this issue is highly suggested.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Rapid advancement in technology has significantly transformed instructional practices in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Teachers are now encouraged to integrate technology into the teaching and learning process, which is believed to foster students' motivation, engagement, and enthusiasm in learning. The effective use of digital tools enables teachers to create a more engaging and meaningful learning experience to enhance language education.

In 2024, the Emancipated Curriculum was implemented, aiming at enhancing the quality of learning through meaningful and effective learning (*Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2024*). It emphasizes the importance of fostering students' foundational competencies, increasing learner autonomy, and promoting new pedagogies (OECD, 2024). In this curriculum, English is introduced in the early stage, starting from phase A (commonly grade 1 and 2, aged less than 7 years old), focusing on the listening and speaking skills (*Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2022*). It is stated that English learning is expected to equip students with not only targeted academic skills, but also 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills such as critical thinking, creative, communicative, and collaborative skills. Following this current development, English teachers need to have the ability to create a meaningful learning experience by integrating technology in young learners' classes, especially to promote students' speaking skills.

In order to develop young learners' speaking skills, teachers need to design engaging, interactive, and collaborative classroom activities (Pinter, 2006). Teachers should provide opportunities for students to explore the language that supports their fluency, pronunciation, and confidence (Cameron, 2001). There are a lot of teaching speaking techniques that can be used, and storytelling is considered a powerful learning medium that can promote active participation and foster language skills (Harashchuk, 2025). It is further explained that the integration of storytelling in English language teaching can foster students' speaking skills through its holistic approach, covering linguistic, cognitive, and emotional aspects.

Along with the integration of technology into the curriculum, traditional storytelling is being transformed into digital storytelling by utilizing modern digital tools, which allow individuals to create their narratives by integrating text, audio, images, and video with their own voices (Porter, 2005). Digital storytelling (DST) is considered a powerful teaching and learning tool as it has the potential to enhance engagement both for teachers and their students, improve comprehension, and foster creativity in language learners through its elements (Robin, 2008). The seven elements of digital storytelling proposed by Robin (2008) are presented below.

**Table 1.** The seven elements of digital storytelling

Center for Digital Storytelling's Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling	
1. Point of view	What is the main point of the story, and what is the perspective of the author?
2. A dramatic question	A key question that keeps the viewer's attention and will be answered by the end of the story.
3. Emotional content	Serious issues that come alive in a personal and

	powerful way, and connect the story to the audience.
4. The gift of your voice	A way to personalize story to help the audience understand the context.
5. The power of the soundtrack	Music or other sounds that support and embellish the storyline.
6. Economy	Using just enough content to tell the story without overloading the viewer.
7. Pacing	The rhythm of the story and how slowly or quickly it progresses.

Several studies concerning the implementation of DST has been conducted in many contexts. Wijaya (2023) analyzed several previous studies on DST, and he found that DST successfully fostered EFL learners' competencies in speaking, and it could give insights to L2 speakers that create a positive learning atmosphere for EFL learners. In addition, Tymoshchuk (2025) also revealed that DST can enhance students' speaking skills among EFL learners in higher education. In the young learners' context, Maya et al. (2022) examined the use of DST in the classroom, which was proven to be effective in improving young learners' English vocabulary. Based on the results of previous studies, English teachers are encouraged to use DST as an alternative medium to support students' language learning in the classroom.

Even though DST certainly offers some benefits for language learning, its implementation is not without challenges. Isnaini and Kasiyarno (2024) investigated how English teachers implemented digital storytelling in their classrooms along with the challenges they encountered. Through the interviews, it was revealed that there were three phases taken, namely the preparatory stage, teaching activity, and feedback session. During the implementation of digital storytelling, several challenges were encountered by the teachers, including some difficulties in using devices and applications, searching for appropriate content, delivering the digital storytelling, and understanding students in terms of their level and language engagement. In addition, Nuroh et al. (2025) conducted an analysis on pre-service teachers' experiences in creating digital storytelling along with their difficulties and solutions. The findings of the research showed that pre-service teachers were likely to encounter various challenges in using digital tools that support their creation. It includes integrating movement, audio, images, and animation within the narrative, crafting engaging animations and narratives, and using editing applications. Moreover, it was mentioned that they found difficulties in designing materials to be organized and aligned with the lesson plan and real-world context. This is supported by Harashchuk (2025), who mentioned that one of the unresolved issues concerning the use of storytelling in English language teaching is the integration process of storytelling into lesson plans that is still lacking in consistency and scalability.

While existing research focuses on the digital storytelling creation, fewer studies analyze how it is integrated into lesson planning. Therefore, this study tries to investigate further how pre-service teachers integrate digital storytelling into their lesson plans, especially to promote young learners' speaking skills. The research question proposed is "How do pre-service teachers integrate digital storytelling into their lesson plans to promote young learners' speaking skills?" It is expected that this study can give a valuable

contribution to the pedagogical development of early childhood education, language teacher training and preparation, and theoretical and practical value in the implementation of digital learning in language classrooms.

## **2. METHODS**

This study employed a qualitative content analysis aiming at investigating how pre-service teachers integrate digital storytelling into their lesson plan to foster young learners' speaking skills. This method was chosen as one of its main concerns is the systematic procedures with concrete procedural modes that can be found in the data analyzed in this study (Mayring, 2014). The primary sources of the data were lesson plans designed by groups of pre-service teachers enrolled in the Digital Storytelling for Young Learners class in the 5<sup>th</sup> semester at a public university in Bandung. Out of five lesson plans submitted as a part of the course assignment, only three lesson plans were selected purposively for the analysis. The selection was based on its alignment with the research focus and the presence of lecturer feedback in the lesson plans, which can give valuable insights to the analysis process of this study. Each lesson plan was coded (LP01, LP02, and LP03) to ensure confidentiality and allow comparative analysis across data.

The data analysis procedures followed the deductive content analysis based on the relevant theoretical framework. The coding analysis focused on three categories, including digital storytelling features (Lambert, 2013; Robin, 2008), speaking skills development (Cameron, 2001; Nation & Newton, 2009), and lesson plan design (Nation & Macalister, 2010). First, the digital storytelling features focused on three criteria, including narrative structure (DSF 1), multimedia integration (DSF 2), and creativity and learner personalization (DSF 3). In addition, the speaking skills development category examined the oral production opportunities (SP 1), scaffolding and language support (SP 2), and integration of speaking goals and vocabulary (SP 3). The last category, the lesson plan design, dealt with clarity and relevance of learning objectives (LP 1), lesson sequence and flow (LP 2), and appropriateness of materials and technology (LP 3).

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, the triangulation process was employed by integrating the coding analysis and interpretations across multiple frameworks that validate and ensure the alignment of the data. In addition, the provision of the lecturer's feedback added expert judgment to the lesson plans as it provided valuable comments on the instructional design, content relevance, and pedagogical alignment. This feedback helps verify the interpretation of the findings while also reducing the subjectivity of the analysis.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

This study examined the integration of digital storytelling into lesson plans to promote young learners' speaking skills. The analysis was based on several frameworks related to digital storytelling features, speaking skills development in English for young learners, and lesson plan design. These frameworks served as the three key aspects analyzed in this study. The analysis results are discussed in the following sections.

### **Digital Storytelling Features**

This section presents the analysis of how digital storytelling features were integrated into the selected lesson plans. It was categorized into three key points (DSF 1, DSF 2, DSF 3) following Lambert's (2013) theories on narrative structure, multimedia use, and emotional engagement, as well as Robin's (2008) emphasis on DST elements and personalization. DSF 1 focuses on narrative structure, including point of view, storyline, sequence of events, and emotional content. DSF 2 examines the multimedia integration of voice, images, music, sound effects, and pacing. DSF 3 highlights the creativity and learner personalization, focusing on its original story elements, student voice, and engagement.

Each digital storytelling provided in the lesson plans has its distinct features, which make it interesting for language learning. A summary analysis of this aspect is presented in the following table.

**Table 2.** A summary analysis of the DSF aspect

<b>DST Features</b>	<b>LP01</b>	<b>LP02</b>	<b>LP03</b>
Narrative structure	Clear storyline and events with characters, dialogue, conflict, and resolution	Clear beginning - middle - end structure with characters, events, dialogues, conflict, and resolution	Fully developed narrative with emotional arc, characters, dialogue, conflict, and resolution
Multimedia integration	Story is presented using a flipbook with images, narration, and audio; quiz via LearningApps; minimal interactive use.	Story presented via flipbook with narration, visuals, and audio	Rich multimedia through Canva storytelling, audio, digital visuals, and linked interactive materials
Creativity and personalization	Students describe preferences but do not create stories	Students sequence story events, but don't personalize the content	Strong creative tasks: students design 'hope balloons' using action verbs; highly personalized

From the first key point (DSF 1), LP01's story, entitled "Cultural Bites: Tasting the Flavors of Culture", offers a clear storyline and events with diverse characters, simple dialogues, conflict, and resolution. The snippets from the story are presented in the following figure.



Figure 1. DST snippets from LP01

“Cultural Bites” story has six characters from different backgrounds, representing the ‘Unity in Diversity’ value in Indonesia. In the story, the characters are elementary students who come from different regions. They bring different traditional foods to share, such as *Tinutuan* from Manado, *mochi* from Sukabumi, *dodol* from Garut, *peuyeum* from Bandung, *seroja manis* from Ciamis, and *kue tapel* from Cirebon. The story has a clear storyline that starts where Davi, a new student from Manado, brings *Tinutuan* and shares it with his friends during recess. This is followed by the other students who also bring traditional foods from their regions. A conflict occurs in the middle of the story where Davi remembers that he is not allowed to eat sweet food. The resolution is then provided at the end of the story.



Figure 2. DST snippets from LP01: Conflict and resolution

As for LP02, the title of the story is “The Independence Day Competition Adventure”. It offers a clear narrative structure with simple dialogues, conflicts, and a sequence of events, with characters from various backgrounds represented by their appearances. The characters from the story are presented on the cover of the story shown below.



Figure 3. DST cover from LP02

This story revolves around Zaki, a young boy with a prosthetic leg, who doesn't want to play outside during Independence Day as he thinks no one wants to be his friend. After some encouragement from his mother, he is finally willing to go to the park, where he finds new friends and joins some competitions. Some snippets of the storyline are presented in the following figure.



Figure 4. DST snippets from LP02

This story offers cultural value of Indonesia as it tries to introduce some Indonesian traditional games that are usually played on Independence Day, such as sack race, tug of war, and *bakiak* race. This cultural element gives richer content to the story that can promote students' engagement. A conflict arises in the middle of the story, which also

triggers emotional attachment, where in the middle of the game, one of his new friends questions his skills because of his prosthetic leg. At the end of the story, it is proven that Zaki can compete well despite his disabilities. Some snippets of this part can be seen in the following figures.



Figure 5. DST LP02 snippets: Conflict and resolution

The last is LP03 with a story entitled "Lana and the Balloon". Similar to the other digital stories, it also follows a well-developed narrative structure with multiple characters, dialogue, conflict, and resolution. The following figures show some snippets from the story.



Figure 6. DST snippets from LP03

This story is about Lana and her friends who are playing in the park. They meet a clown who gives them a colorful balloon, but then Lana's balloon is blown far away because of a strong wind. Her friends try to cheer her up by imagining where the balloon might be going. Through the balloon's adventure, some famous tourist attractions all over Indonesia are introduced, such as Toba Lake, Kuta beach, and Raja Ampat. The conflict is resolved when the balloon floats back down, carrying a note that says it is a magic balloon.

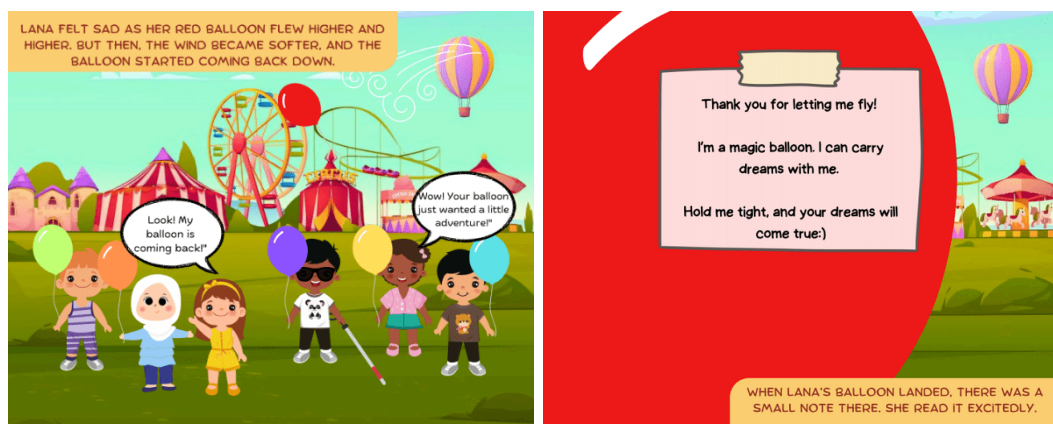


Figure 7. DST snippets from LP03: Resolution

From the analysis of DSF 1, it can be concluded that all digital stories created have followed the narrative structures by providing multiple characters, a clear storyline, conflict, and resolution. The provision of multiple characters from different backgrounds represents the “Unity in Diversity” principle in Indonesia, which is also highlighted in the Emancipated Curriculum (*Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2022*). The stories also try to introduce diversity in Indonesia, such as its traditional foods, traditional games, and famous tourist attractions. This cultural aspect is recognized as one of the benefits of DST, which provides context for language within cultural narratives (Robin, 2008; Sadik, 2008). Harashchuk (2025) also mentions that various stories with cultural similarities and differences reflect diverse values, traditions, and perspectives that validate students’ identities as well as reinforce mutual respect among them. Furthermore, the conflicts that emerged in the story are considered relevant to young learners as they talk about health issues (LP01), friendship (LP02), and hope (LP03). As it reflects young learners’ real-life experience to convey a message, it can enhance the audience’s engagement through its common themes with social and cultural values (Damayanti et al., 2023). Following Robin’s (2008) theory on the elements of DST, this conflict refers to ‘a dramatic question’ involving ‘emotional content’ that can connect the audience with the story.

For DSF 2 analysis regarding the multimedia integration, it was revealed that all digital stories mostly utilized images supported by recorded audio using the pre-service teachers’ voices. The digital stories are also presented using media such as Flipbook and Canva, with additional links such as LearningApps to create more interactive activities within the story. Even though the multimedia used can support language learning, there are some improvements that can be made. The following excerpts are some feedback given by the lecturer.

*“It is better if the Tinutuan picture is visualized using a lunch box rather than in a bowl, as it is not logical.” (LP01)*

*“Zaki’s voice is not clear, Puput’s voice is the clearest.” (LP02)*

*“Audio and slides are not synchronized, adjust the duration.” (LP03)*

As in the lecturer’s feedback, it is important to pay more attention to the integration of the visuals and audio in the story. In addition, the selection of images also needs to represent the real-life situation. The utilization of visuals and audio in DST should be optimized as it can promote students’ engagement that supports multiple learning styles (Robin, 2008). Moreover, the stories can also be enriched more with the use of music or sound effects that can create a lively learning atmosphere and grasp students’ attention, which promotes a deeper connection and support of linguistic content (Harashchuk, 2025).

The last key point is DSF 3 concerning creativity and personalization. It is expected that the integration of digital storytelling into learning can promote students’ creativity and personalization through their involvement in the creation of digital storytelling. However, it seems that this aspect is still limited as there is no activity that involves students in the story creation, which refers to “a gift of your voice” in Robin’s (2008) theories on elements of digital storytelling. Students’ involvement is encouraged as it combines their creativity and collaborative work, which are beneficial to improve vocabulary acquisition, fluency, and

digital literacy (Harashchuk, 2025). Dewi (2021) further adds that during the DST creation process, students are actively involved in creating their own digital products, which not only improve their language skills but also equip them with practical future-ready skills. In addition, students' involvement in the creation of personal narratives can enhance students' engagement and motivation, which promotes their understanding of the content (Sadik, 2008; Yang and Wu, 2012).

### **Speaking Skill Development**

This section presents how the integration of digital storytelling can develop students' speaking skills through oral production (SP 1), scaffolding and language support (SP 2), as well as integration of speaking goals and vocabulary focus (SP 3) based on the principles of oral language learning for young learners (Cameron, 2001; Nation & Newton, 2009; Pinter 2006). SP 1 highlights how the activities provide meaningful speaking opportunities that can encourage interaction or dialogue. Speaking skill activities also need to support scaffolding through repetition, prompts, or modelling for young learners to help them achieve the learning goals, which are analyzed in SP 2. In addition, SP 3 provides a more detailed analysis of how the speaking goals are integrated with the vocabulary focus highlighted in the lesson plans. A summary analysis of the speaking skill development aspect is presented in the following table.

**Table 3.** A summary analysis of speaking skills development

<b>Speaking Skills Development</b>	<b>LP01</b>	<b>LP02</b>	<b>LP03</b>
Oral Production	Limited to vocabularies and brief personal responses	Includes Q&A session, pair practice, and repetition	Multiple opportunities: making predictions, discussion, and retelling
Scaffolding and language support	Implicit; basic question prompts, limited modeling	Modeling of verbs (pronunciation), pair work, and vocabulary building	High scaffolding with modeled language, repeated patterns, and supported speaking tasks
Integration of speaking goals and vocabulary focus	Adjectives describing food texture and taste	Action verbs linked to movement (jump, hop)	Action verbs + place names integrated in multiple tasks

The analysis results reflected that all lesson plans incorporate some elements of speaking skills development with varying depth. LP03 provides the most comprehensive speaking support through multiple speaking opportunities during and after storytelling. These include making predictions, discussing story sequence, and retelling stories. The excerpts from LP03 are presented as follows.

#### **Digital Storytelling Session (15 minutes):**

- *Teacher plays the story using a digital medium.*
- *Interactive pauses are added where the teacher asks:*

- *“What do you think will happen next?”*
- *“How do you think Lana feels right now?”*

### **Guess the sequence**

- *The teacher reviews the correct sequence and discusses how each place was described in the story.*

### **Closing**

- *The teacher invites a few students to retell the story, focusing on 3 main points, either individually or in pairs.*

Harashchuk (2025) emphasizes that storytelling activities, such as retelling, can promote students' speaking skills and their confidence in communicating the language. Furthermore, students' memory and organizational skills can also be reinforced through activities like sequencing story events. However, even though there was a retelling story as the post-activity, the lecturer mentioned that there should be a speaking activity after the “Guess the sequence activity”. She stated that *“Because this lesson focuses on speaking skills, it is better to provide speaking activities after arranging the story.”* This means that there should be more speaking opportunities for students in various forms, such as role-playing, as they need more exposure to practice the language.

LP02 also provides some opportunities for students' oral production, combining vocabulary practices with interaction and some modelling. Some excerpts from LP02 are presented below.

### **Whilst-Activity:**

*“During the reading, the teacher pauses to ask simple comprehension questions, such as:*

- *Who are the characters in this part?*
- *What is happening in this scene?”*

*Vocabulary Practice (15 minutes):*

- *Students identify and **repeat** key action verbs (e.g., jump, pull, hop).*
- *The teacher **models** correct pronunciation and asks students to **practice in pairs**.*

However, similar to LP03, it was mentioned by the lecturer that *“After practicing the vocabulary, students should do a role-play based on the story given in class.”* Role-playing is considered one of the effective activities that can be carried out in a speaking class because it can enhance students' communicative skills, confidence, motivation, and active participation (Harashchuk, 2025; Piscesa & Aji, 2024). In addition, pair practices are also beneficial to improve students' pronunciation, clarity, and fluency, especially when combined with rehearsal activity (Mardhiah et al., 2024).

Compared to LP03 and LP02, LP01 offers minimal speaking opportunities during the learning. Below are the excerpts from the lesson plan in the whilst-activity.

*“Students will do a pre-activity where they will guess the names and origins of the traditional foods.”*

*“After the story, the teacher encourages students to reveal which traditional food they like and tell why they like it (for example, the taste, the texture, or others)”.*

From the excerpts, it can be seen that the students are only given a limited chance to speak on basic vocabulary usage, which is limited to food names and origin, and giving opinions express their preferences on food individually. These speaking opportunities are still lacking, as during the digital storytelling activity, it was only mentioned that *“The teacher tells the story “Cultural Bites”*. This part seems to be teacher-centered without any detailed explanation on how teachers will deliver the story. However, it is expected that teachers can utilize DST as a tool to promote students’ speaking fluency, build their vocabulary, and increase their confidence through interactive activities during the learning, which were not reflected in the lesson plan. This is also supported by the lecturer’s feedback that *“Students’ involvement in the story is only reflected in the pretest and post-test. It is only mentioned that teachers read the story, so students are not involved”*. Harashchuk (2025) explains that while teachers narrate the story, DST can encourage students’ active participation through various activities such as responding to questions, predicting outcomes, or mimicking characters’ actions. When young learners are actively involved in listening and responding to stories, they will naturally learn language in a joyful and meaningful way (Handayani et al., 2024).

In terms of scaffolding and language support, LP02 and LP03 offer sufficient support through repetition, modelling, and vocabulary building. Media such as flashcards were also used to support speaking tasks. On the other hand, LP01 does not provide an explicit form of prompts, questions, or modelling in the activities designed in the lesson plans. The teacher’s support is only in the form of encouragement when the students were asked to reveal their traditional food they like and why. This encouragement should then be explained more to reveal what kinds of strategies the teacher can use to support students’ speaking performance. In addition, teachers should optimize the utilization of DST to provide repetition, prompts, and modelling that can help students promote students’ speaking development. Sabnani (2023) argues that teachers’ modelling reinforced with repetition helps students in understanding vocabulary and language structure to be used in context.

While LP01 still lacks oral production and scaffolding, it actually manages to design clear and measurable speaking goals integrated with the vocabulary focus. Below are the excerpts of the learning objectives and their vocabulary focus.

**Table 4.** LP01 excerpts

Learning objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students are able to mention 6 adjectives to describe cultural foods after reading the story. (e.g., thick, savory, sweet, chewy, soft, crispy).</li> <li>2. Students are able to express their favorite food in English. (e.g., “I like it, because it is chewy and sweet.”)</li> <li>3. Students can mention where the foods come from.</li> </ol>
Targeted vocabularies	Adjectives: Texture (Chewy, thick, soft, crispy), and taste (Sweet, savory)

The learning objectives focus on speaking skills, in which students have to mention and express the language, integrated with the vocabulary focus (adjectives on food texture and taste), especially on the first and second ones. However, the vocabulary focus is only embedded in one task, reflecting the second speaking goals: *“After the story, the teacher encourages students to reveal which traditional food they like and tell why they like it (for example, the taste, the texture, or others)”*. Thus, it needs more task elaboration, especially to achieve the first speaking goal.

In LP02, there is only one learning objective that focuses on speaking goals with some targeted vocabularies that become the focus in the lesson. Below are the excerpts from LP02.

**Table 5.** LP02 excerpts

Learning objective	2. Students are able to pronounce the vocabulary mentioned in the story with 90% accuracy (6 out of 7) by the end of the lesson.
Targeted vocabularies	Action Verb: Jump, Hop, Run, Pull, Step, Right, Left. Focus: What are they doing? Games: Tug of war, Sack race, Bakiak.

From the learning objective, it can be assumed that the vocabulary focus is the action verbs included in the targeted vocabularies. However, it is questionable as there are words like “right” and “left” in the category, which was also commented on by a question mark by the lecturer. In addition, it also needs to be highlighted that other targeted vocabularies, like the games, are also not reflected in the lesson objectives. Moreover, the focus “what are they doing?” should also be categorized as language features rather than targeted vocabulary. Even though there are some inconsistencies between the learning objectives and vocabulary focus, the vocabulary focus is embedded well in tasks, as there is a vocabulary practice session where the teacher models the correct pronunciation, and students practice in pairs.

While in LP03, all lesson objectives represent speaking goals integrated with the vocabulary focus. Below are the excerpts from LP03.

**Table 6.** LP03 Excerpts

Learning objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. After engaging with the story, students will be able to correctly mention at least 3 of the places mentioned within 5 minutes.</li> <li>2. After engaging with the story, the students will be able to mention at least action verbs mentioned within 5 minutes.</li> <li>3. After engaging with the story, students will be able to retell the sequence of events in the correct order, at least 3 key points from the story within 5 minutes.</li> </ol>
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Targeted vocabularies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Places in Indonesia: Lake, beach, island, and mountain.</li> <li>- Action verbs: Play, walk, listen, run, hold, fly, see, shout, help, give, get, feel, join, go, swim, start, carry, come, and etcetera.</li> </ul>
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It is clear how the first and second objectives show specific speaking goals where students have to mention the targeted vocabulary, including places and action verbs from the story. In the tasks given, the vocabulary focus is embedded in the pre-activity session, where the teacher invites students to sing a song together related to the given materials. Then, the teacher asks students to match pictures with the correct answer from the targeted vocabulary. However, it is not clearly explained how this matching activity will be conducted. The lecturer also comments, “How?”, suggesting that there should be more detailed instructions in this activity. In addition, there is also another comment from the lecturer that *“Add more activities referring to the first and second objectives.”*

From the feedback, it can be reflected that in creating lesson objectives, it is important to highlight their relevance not only with vocabulary focus, but also how to embed it in the learning activities, focusing on the language skills targeted in the lesson. This finding implies that it needs to be further investigated on the challenges and difficulties encountered by pre-service teachers in aligning the activities with the stated objectives.

**Lesson Plan Design**

This section highlights the aspects of lesson plan design, including clarity and relevance of learning objectives (LP 1), lesson sequence and flow (LP 2), and materials and technology (LP 3) (Nation & Macalister, 2010). The following table presents the summary analysis of this aspect.

**Table 7.** A summary analysis of lesson plan design

Lesson Plan Design	LP01	LP02	LP03
Clarity and relevance of learning objectives	Clear, measurable speaking objectives	Well-written, vocabulary-based objectives	Clear objectives tied to comprehension, vocabulary, and storytelling.
Lesson sequence and flow (pre-, during-, post-)	Follows pre-, whilst-, post- structure; lacks variety of activities	Logical sequence from warm-up to practice and reflection	Highly structured: pre-task, story, interaction, creative output, and reflection
Materials and technology (media)	Flipbook, Kahoot!, LearningApps quiz	Flipbook, LearningApps, visual cards	Canva storytelling, vocabulary games, templates, visuals, LearningApps

All lesson plans have clear objectives, especially for LP01, where the lecturer specifically stated, *“Good job. 1. Action verbs are measurable, 2. Arrange the learning objectives from the easiest one.”* Even though the learning objectives in LP02 and LP03 are

also clear, they still need some improvement, especially on how to integrate them with the language focus, targeted vocabulary, and activities in the lesson. Below are the excerpts from the lecturer's feedback on this aspect:

*"1. There is an incompatibility between language focus and targeted vocabulary. 2. Learning objective 4 is not represented in the story or the learning activities. – LP02*

*"If students write their hopes in a balloon in the post activity, consider the suitability between learning goals and the activity, as well as language features. For example, the learning objectives should focus more on writing one sentence about hopes" – LP03*

Hence, it can be concluded that the learning objectives mentioned are not relevant to the speaking outcome in the lesson plans. This aspect requires more attention than the learning objectives not only need to be written clearly, but they also have to be reflected in the activities designed in the lesson. This is in line with Nation and Macalister's (2010) view that effective language lessons must link learning goals, content, and procedures.

The next analysis is on lesson sequence, and it can be seen that all lesson plans are logically structured from pre-activity, whilst, and post-activity. As Harashchuk (2025) points out that teachers must plan and design activities carefully, referring to learning objectives. A storytelling lesson can follow three stages involving pre-storytelling, during storytelling, and post-storytelling.

In the lesson plans, before the teacher starts the digital storytelling activity, they will start a lesson by singing a song or playing games to introduce some related vocabulary. This is powerful to build students' prior knowledge and can help students to follow the story more effectively and express themselves confidently (Harashchuk, 2025). For early language learners, pre-story activities such as singing, chanting, and vocabulary games can create a positive learning atmosphere that supports students' vocabulary development and oral participation during the DST phase (Miller & Pennycuff, 2008).

In the whilst activity, each lesson plan has a digital storytelling session, modified with practices, interaction, and reflection. According to Harashchuk (2025), the integration of DST and interactive and reflective elements can enhance students' engagement. Through DST, teachers can optimize the cognitive benefits offered for students when they listen to stories. They can enhance their comprehension and develop higher-order thinking skills when they follow narrative structure, identify cause-and-effect relationships, and predict outcomes. Teachers also play a significant role as they not only narrate the story (directly or through recorded audio), but they also deliver meaning and nuances of language through intonation, facial expression, and emotional expressions (Handayani et al., 2024).

The post-activity varies from a question-and-answer session, a quiz, or a retelling session. Harashchuk (2025) mentions that retelling the story can reinforce students' comprehension. He also recommends other activities such as writing an alternative ending, dramatizing key scenes, or summarizing the story by creating a short presentation or digital posters.

The last aspect is on the appropriateness of materials and technology as media used during the lesson. All lesson plans include various media to present materials related to the

topic through the use of Flipbook and Canva to present digital storytelling, and also other tools such as LearningApps and Kahoot! for quizzes and games. In addition, some lesson plans also use printed materials, such as flashcards and a balloon card template. A combination of traditional and modern approaches is necessary for students, as they can be exposed to the technology while also having hands-on experience during the learning. Fitriani and Firdaus (2025) point out that the combination of traditional and digital methods can enhance students' engagement, facilitate various learning styles, and increase the overall quality of English language learning in primary education.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study analyzed pre-service teachers' strategies in integrating digital storytelling into their lesson plans to promote young learners' speaking skills. Three key aspects of three selected lesson plans were examined, including digital storytelling features (DSF), speaking skill development (SP), and lesson plan design (LP). The analysis results showed that in the DSF aspects, all digital stories followed a required narrative structure, such as a clear point of view, characters, conflict, and resolution with emotional content included. They also used multimedia such as images and recorded voices that can support language learning, even though some improvements are needed. However, learners' creativity and personalization need to be reinforced more, as students are not yet involved in the creation process of DST. In the SP aspect, the activities offered some speaking opportunities, though some of them were still insufficient or irrelevant to the learning objectives. More improvement is also required in this aspect, especially in embedding vocabulary focus into speaking tasks. Lastly, in the LP aspect, the lessons were sequenced well with the utilization of various materials and technology that can create a more engaging and interactive learning experience. However, more attention is needed, especially in the integration of learning objectives with the expected speaking outcome.

There are several limitations of this study that should be taken into consideration. First, the data were taken from only three lesson plans, which limits the scope of the findings, so the results cannot offer a broader claim about how DST is integrated into lesson plans. Second, this study focused only on the lesson plans without the observation of how the lessons were taught in class. Thus, it cannot capture the effectiveness of the lessons in promoting students' speaking skills. Lastly, even though the presence of feedback from the lecturers can enrich interpretation and enhance trustworthiness, the study did not include interviews or reflections from the pre-service teachers that can provide deeper insights into their perspectives and challenges. Thus, it is suggested for further research to include more samples from different institutions or training contexts. In addition, it will also be better to add research instruments through classroom observation and interviews to explore how the implementation of DST can foster young learners' speaking skills. Further investigation on pre-service teachers' challenges in integrating DST into lesson plans is also recommended.

#### 5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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