

# Enhancing Elementary Students' Literacy through Storytelling: A Systematic Literature Review in the Context of 21st Century Education

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## Keywords

Storytelling  
Literacy Skills  
Primary school

## Abstract

The storytelling method is an interactive learning approach, functioning as a learning resource, learning media, as well as a teacher evaluation tool. This study aims to determine the effect of the storytelling method on the literacy skills of elementary school students. The research was conducted using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method by reviewing relevant articles in the range of 2022-2024. A total of 10 articles were selected through a selection process from the initial 20 articles obtained from Google Scholar. Data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. In 21st century education, the storytelling method is a relevant strategy because it can foster creativity, critical thinking, and communication skills. The analysis showed that the storytelling method significantly increased students' interest, motivation, enthusiasm and engagement in literacy learning. Thus, storytelling is proven to make a positive contribution to the development of literacy competencies of primary school students.

## 1. Introduction

Education is a learning process that aims to educate the life of a nation, develop human potential such as intelligence, and form a civilized and better human being. Every individual has a way of learning and the ability to deal with difficulties in life. One of the efforts to overcome these challenges is to learn good reading literacy in order to interact socially (Fauziah et al., 2022).

Literacy is the ability to read and write (literacy). Literacy is the basic skill of reading and writing that serves as the main gate to develop a broad understanding of information. According to Rafitri et al. (2024), literacy is an important ability that everyone must have today because it can make it easier for someone to increase their insight. Several studies state that Indonesian people have low literacy skills (Anisa, A. A. Ipungkartti and K. N. Saffanah., 2021; Ucu, 2021; Utami, 2021; Prasrihamni, Zulela and Edwita, 2022). The lack of interest in reading among the community indirectly reduces the level of literacy, if this low interest in reading continues to be allowed, it will have a negative impact on increasing the capacity and quality of Human Resources (HR).

Fuadi et al. (2020) stated that the low literacy of students is caused by the selection of inappropriate textbooks, misconceptions, non-contextual learning, and limited reading skills. This shows that literacy skills are closely related to the culture of reading and writing. In the language learning process, one must first read before being able to write effectively. If the low literacy rate in Indonesia is left unimproved, even though various survey institutions continuously reveal findings on literacy issues, then a joint effort is needed from various parties.

In the 21st century, mastering cultural literacy is a must for every learner because literacy is the main key in developing their abilities and insights. Data from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2022 shows that Indonesia's literacy ranking rose by 5 to 6 positions compared to 2018, which is the highest ranking achievement in the history of Indonesia's participation in PISA. Data on the percentage of students by reading level in 2022 revealed that the majority of Indonesian students were still at level 2 or basic skills, with an average reading score of 25.46%, far below the OECD country average of 73.75% (OECD, 2023). Based on the findings of Indriani et al. (2022) emphasize that there are still many efforts that need to be made to improve students' reading skills.

The storytelling method is an effective learning approach in improving children's literacy skills, especially in the aspects of listening, speaking, and enriching vocabulary (Purnia, Fitri, & Febriyanti, 2024). Storytelling is not just about telling stories, but also involves a complete language structure and the use of words and sentences that pay attention to aspects of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Thus, this method helps children develop language skills as a whole.

Theoretically, the concept of storytelling can be explained through Jerome Bruner's narrative theory which emphasizes that learning occurs through a storytelling process that organizes experience and knowledge in the form of a meaningful narrative (Purnomo, 2022). Bruner suggests three stages of learning, namely enactive (direct experience), iconic (images or imagination), and symbolic (language and symbols), which are very relevant in the process of developing literacy through storytelling.

In addition, Lev Vygotsky's theory of child language development emphasizes the importance of social interaction in children's language and cognition development. The concept of *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) and scaffolding in this theory explains how teacher support through storytelling activities can help children reach their maximum potential in language acquisition (Etnawati, 2021). Learning activities through storytelling have been shown to help increase students' confidence in speaking and writing, enrich vocabulary and language skills, foster creativity, heighten understanding, and encourage ongoing discussions about opinions and beliefs (Rambe et al. 2021). This means that through storytelling activities, students not only listen to stories, but also gain knowledge of new vocabulary and terms to support their speaking skills.

Based on the low literacy rate of primary school students, this study aims to understand the extent to which the application of the storytelling method in primary schools can improve their literacy skills. By reviewing previous articles, this study will see to what extent the storytelling method has an impact on students' literacy. In this study, the storytelling method is a form of storytelling strategy implemented by teachers while students' literacy skills are measured through findings on the improvement of comprehension and language use among students. This study focuses on analyzing the implementation of the storytelling method in improving primary school students' literacy skills.

## 2. Method

This research uses a qualitative method with the SLR (*Systematic Literature Review*) method. The SLR method is carried out through the process of collecting, identifying, reviewing, analyzing and managing information from the findings of previous research articles that are relevant to the topic of the researcher's article. Researchers used electronic databases and Google Scholar to search and collect articles that have been published in the range of 2022 to 2024. The analysis was conducted thematically based on a narrative synthesis of the article findings. This research refers to a number of previous articles that are related to the research objectives and topics, namely articles that discuss the use of the storytelling method on primary school students' literacy skills, with attention to the relationship between the articles analyzed. The choice of this method is based on the researcher's objective which focuses on collecting information and data, not on testing hypotheses. The aim is to obtain various findings related to the use of the storytelling method on primary school students' literacy skills.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The results of the literature review show that the storytelling method has been widely implemented with various approaches and media to improve the literacy skills of elementary school students. From the ten selected articles, it was found that storytelling can be applied through fable videos, cartoon puppets, interactive presentations, and paired storytelling activities, each showing a positive impact on students' language development.

For example, Nurwahyu et al. (2022) showed that storytelling using fable videos was well-received and considered very feasible by both teachers and students in trials involving different group sizes. This use of digital storytelling helped improve students' engagement and comprehension. Similarly, Farroh et al. (2022) found that the use of cartoon puppet media in a paired storytelling model not only made learning more enjoyable but also enhanced students' speaking and listening skills, as well as their social interaction. Meanwhile, Nugrahadi et al. (2023) implemented Japanese folklore through interactive PowerPoint presentations. This method helped students visually grasp narrative structures while being introduced to cross-cultural understanding.

The findings are consistent with the objectives outlined in the introduction—namely, to improve literacy skills through innovative methods. Storytelling has been shown to effectively enhance various components of literacy such as reading comprehension, vocabulary enrichment, listening skills, and verbal expression. It also indirectly fosters writing and critical thinking skills as students are encouraged to retell or reflect on stories.

Scientifically, these findings align with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of language and interaction in cognitive development. Storytelling provides a contextualized and

meaningful language experience that supports literacy growth. Other studies (e.g., Ismail et al., 2021; Prasetyo et al., 2020) similarly report that storytelling can create a deeper emotional connection to learning material, resulting in improved retention and motivation.

However, the implementation of storytelling should be adjusted to students' developmental stages, cultural context, and available media. A potential limitation lies in teachers' preparedness and creativity in choosing or designing stories and integrating them with relevant learning objectives.

In conclusion, the storytelling method is not only flexible in its application but also highly effective in enhancing elementary students' literacy. Future research may focus on comparing the impact of traditional versus digital storytelling, or how storytelling may benefit students with different learning needs.

### **3.1. Use of the Storytelling Method**

The storytelling method is a learning strategy used to convey material in the form of stories with a coherent, interesting and communicative language structure. This method aims to create a fun learning atmosphere, increase concentration, and motivate students to actively participate in the learning process. Based on the study results from several articles analyzed, it was found that the application of storytelling is carried out with various approaches and supporting media.

Nurwahyu et al. (2022) implemented storytelling in the form of a fable video for grade III elementary school students. The video was developed as a means of learning language literacy and was rated very feasible by teachers and students in individual, small group, and large group trials. Meanwhile, Farroh et al. (2022) used cartoon puppet media in a paired storytelling model. In this model, students are asked to listen to the story and then work in pairs to retell the contents of the story orally. This approach not only attracts students' interest in learning, but also strengthens their social interaction and language skills.

Another application was shown by Nugrahadi et al. (2023) introduced Japanese folklore (Mukashi Banashi) through PowerPoint interactive media. This approach not only introduces foreign cultures to fifth grade students, but also helps improve the ability to understand the content of the story in a visual and fun way.

From the various forms of application, it can be concluded that the storytelling method has high flexibility and can be combined with various learning media both conventional and digital. The teacher plays an important role in determining the type of story, delivery technique, and supporting media that suits the needs of students. The right application will encourage students to be more active in listening, understanding the content of the reading, and being able to retell the story in their own language, both orally and in writing.

They should be combined. The study results should be clear and concise. Restrict the use of tables and figures to depict data that is essential to the message and interpretation of the study. The results should be presented in a logical sequence in the text, tables and illustrations. The part of result exposes the findings obtained from research data which is related to the hypotheses. The results should summarize (scientific) findings rather than providing data in great detail. The discussion should explore the significance of the results of the work. Explains the findings obtained from research data along with theory and similar research comparison. Make the discussion corresponding to the results, but do not reiterate the results. The following components should be covered in discussion: How do your results relate to the original question or objectives outlined in the Introduction section (what/how)? Do you provide interpretation scientifically for each of your results or findings presented (why)? Are your results consistent with what other investigators have reported (what else)? Or are there any differences?. Include in the discussion the implications of the findings and their limitations, how the findings fit into the context of other relevant work, and directions for future research.

The implementation of the storytelling method has been proven to have a positive effect on improving the literacy skills of elementary school students. Various articles reviewed show that storytelling activities, both direct and digital media-based, can improve various aspects of literacy such as listening, reading comprehension, speaking, simple writing, and even science and cultural literacy. This is in line with the main goal of literacy in primary schools, which is to form a whole and comprehensive language skill. In addition to improving learning outcomes, this method also fosters the spirit of literacy, enriches vocabulary and encourages students' critical thinking skills through

meaningful story experiences. Thus, storytelling can be a strategic approach that not only conveys teaching materials but also shapes students' character and literacy competencies holistically.

The researcher has conducted a literature review by reviewing 20 articles that are relevant to the research topic. From the total, 10 articles were selected that specifically discussed the use of the storytelling method on elementary school students' literacy skills. The selected articles were then selected for re-selection to be analyzed and categorized according to the topic and purpose of the writing. The strategy in selecting the articles is presented in Table 1 below:

**Table 1. Article Selection Strategy**

No.	Discussion Categories	Search Engine	Search Results
1.	Tracking year 2022-2024	<i>Google Scholar</i>	20
2.	Relevant title		10
	Results discussed		10

The articles analyzed refer to the criteria set by the researcher, which focuses on the findings related to the use of the storytelling method on primary school students' literacy skills. The ten articles selected have different perspectives from the researcher, thus providing variation in the results of the discussion. The articles are grouped according to their categories and presented in Table 2. The following are the results of the analysis of relevant articles on the application of the storytelling method to students' literacy skills in primary schools.

**Table 2. Review Results**

Article Title	Research Methods	Research Focus	Research Results
Application of the Storytelling Method to Improve Reading Literacy Skills in Indonesian Language Learning in Grade 2 Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.  (Nafisawati et al., 2023)	Classroom Action Research (PTK)	Application of storytelling method to improve reading literacy skills in grade 2 Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students	Based on the results of observations, the researcher of the article found that the application of the storytelling method at MI Tahfidz Al-Asyhar, Malang City was specifically able to improve the reading literacy skills of grade II students. Students showed improvement in listening, understanding the content of reading, and retelling stories orally using expressions and movements. This improvement can be seen from the evaluation results of two cycles which showed an increase in the average score from 74.20 to 83.50 and the percentage of learning completeness from 57% to 83%. The article states that this

			<p>success was influenced by the use of fairy tale media, question and answer activities, group work, and the preparation of image-based story texts.</p>
<p>Introduction of Mukashi Banashi through Storytelling Method to Improve Literacy of 5th Grade Students of SD Negeri Balok Kendal with Interactive Media PowerPoint.</p> <p>(Nugrahadi et al., 2023)</p>	<p>Descriptive qualitative</p>	<p>Analyzing the effect of storytelling based on Japanese fairy tales (mukashi banashi) with PowerPoint media on improving literacy of 5th grade students of SD Negeri Balok Kendal.</p>	<p>Based on the results of observations and interviews, the researcher of the article found that the application of the storytelling method using mukashi banashi (Japanese folk tales) at SD Negeri Balok Kendal was specifically able to increase the reading interest and literacy of grade V students. Students showed high enthusiasm during the activity, were active in answering questions, and were able to understand and retell the contents of the story well. The use of PowerPoint interactive media with visual and audio elements was effective in attracting students' attention and strengthening their understanding of the story. Teachers reported that after the introduction of mukashi banashi, students became more interested in finding and reading other stories independently, which also had an impact on increasing the frequency and quality of literacy activities in the classroom.</p>
<p>Digital storytelling based on Sasak culture to improve literacy of Sulin primary school students.</p> <p>(Uyun et al., 2024)</p>	<p>Descriptive qualitative through community service program</p>	<p>Improving reading literacy of low-grade elementary students through digital storytelling based on Sasak local culture using Canva and QR Code media.</p>	<p>Based on observations and pilot testing, the researchers of the article found that the implementation of Sasak culture-based digital storytelling at SDN Sulin specifically improved the engagement and reading skills of low-grade</p>

students. After reading digital books, students showed higher interest, were able to identify characters, and understood the moral message in the story better than when reading conventional books. Teachers felt more confident in creating digital teaching media, and 70% of teachers stated that Canva greatly facilitated the process of creating stories. However, some students still had difficulty understanding certain vocabulary, indicating the need for adaptation of materials according to ability levels.

<p>Analysis of the Implementation of the Storytelling Method on Students' Speaking Ability in Indonesian Language Learning in Class IV Sdn I Kayangan, North Lombok Regency in the academic year 2023/2024</p>	<p>Case study with descriptive qualitative approach</p>	<p>Analyzing the planning, implementation, and impact of the storytelling method on the speaking ability of fourth grade elementary school students.</p>	<p>Based on the results of observations and interviews, the researcher of the article found that the application of the storytelling method in class IV SDN 1 Kayangan specifically had a positive impact on students' speaking skills. Students showed an increase in confidence when speaking in front of the class, vocabulary mastery, as well as enthusiasm and courage to express ideas. The implementation was carried out through three stages: opening (greetings, attendance, apperception), storytelling (teacher and students take turns telling stories), and closing (discussion of moral messages and giving rewards). Teachers also felt helped in the teaching process because storytelling made it easier to deliver material and increase student involvement.</p>
<p>(Rahayu, F., &amp; Alawiyah, T. 2024)</p>			

<p>The Effect of Visual Storytelling Learning Method Versus Sq3r Learning Method and Learning Motivation on Literacy Skills of 3rd Grade Students of SDN Anggaswangi 1 and SDN Anggaswangi 2 Sidoarjo in the 2021/2022 Academic Year.</p>	<p>Experimental research design</p>	<p>Analyzing the effect of visual storytelling method compared to SQ3R method and learning motivation on literacy skills of third grade students.</p>	<p>Based on the experimental results, the researchers of the article found that the application of the visual storytelling method at SDN Anggaswangi 1 and 2 specifically improved students' literacy skills, especially for students with high learning motivation. Highly motivated students who learned with the storytelling method obtained an average score of 72.00, while students with low motivation obtained 60.44. The results showed that storytelling was more effective in improving the literacy of highly motivated students, although overall the SQ3R method produced a higher average score. The article concludes that there is a significant interaction between storytelling method, SQ3R method and learning motivation on students' literacy achievement.</p>
<p>(Tasu'ah et al., 2023).</p>			
<p>Improving reading and writing literacy skills of elementary school students in reciprocal teaching learning assisted by multimedia digital storytelling.</p>	<p>Quantitative Quasi-Experiment</p>	<p>Analyzing the effect and effectiveness of reciprocal teaching learning assisted by multimedia digital storytelling on reading and writing literacy of fourth grade elementary school students.</p>	<p>Based on the results of the study, the researchers of the article found that the application of reciprocal teaching learning assisted by multimedia digital storytelling was specifically able to improve the literacy skills of reading comprehension and narrative writing of grade IV students in one of the public elementary schools in Sukabumi. Students showed an increase in the average reading score from 62.16 to 92.40 and writing from 60.48 to 88.76. The N-Gain of reading was 0.67 and writing was 0.59, both of which were categorized as moderate.</p>
<p>(Suparman et al., 2023).</p>			

			Learning is done through the stages of summarizing, questioning, predicting, and clarifying, with interactive digital story media that strengthens understanding of text content and triggers students' writing creativity.
<p>Improving English Literacy Skills through Indonesian Folk Tales Storytelling Method for Elementary School Students.</p> <p>(Harputra et al., 2022)</p>	<p>Community service with a qualitative descriptive approach</p>	<p>Improving students' English language skills (especially storytelling ability and text comprehension) through storytelling method with Indonesian Folk Tales material at SD Negeri No. 200405 Padangsidempuan.</p>	<p>Based on the results of observation and evaluation, the researchers of the article found that the implementation of the storytelling method using Indonesian Folk Tales was specifically able to improve students' English literacy skills. The average score increased from a pre-test of 66.7 to a post-test of 85, indicating a significant improvement in students' abilities. The questionnaire results also revealed that 80% of the participants strongly agreed that the service was effective in improving their English skills. The success was influenced by the interactive delivery of the material, the use of supporting media and props, and the practical approach to learning.</p>
<p>English Reading Training with Storytelling Method for 4th Grade Students of SD Muhammadiyah 1 Medan.</p> <p>(Asrul, N., &amp; Rahmawati, R. 2022)</p>	<p>Community service (PKM) with a qualitative descriptive approach</p>	<p>Improving grade 4 students' understanding and English pronunciation skills through storytelling method implemented in 5 stages (observation, planning, implementation, application, and evaluation).</p>	<p>Based on the observation, the researcher of the article found that the implementation of storytelling method at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Medan was specifically able to improve the English reading and pronunciation skills of Grade 4 students. Students showed improvement in pronouncing English vocabulary correctly as well as increased confidence when reading texts in front of the class.</p>

			<p>Evaluation through pre-test and post-test showed that after the treatment, the average score increased significantly and responses from questionnaires showed the majority of students felt that learning became more fun, interactive, and able to add new vocabulary. This success was influenced by the interactive delivery of material through storytelling, the use of pictures and slides, and question and answer sessions that facilitated in-depth understanding.</p>
<p>The use of Cartoon Puppet Media through the Paired Storytelling Model to improve reading comprehension skills. (Farroh et al., 2022)</p>	<p>Classroom Action Research (PTK)</p>	<p>Improving reading comprehension skills of grade IV students through cartoon puppet media and paired storytelling models in Indonesian language learning.</p>	<p>Based on the observation, the researcher found that the application of cartoon puppet media through the paired storytelling model in class IV MIS Nurul Hasanah Sukaharja was specifically able to improve students' reading comprehension skills. The average score increased from 59.58 (pre-cycle), to 64.16 (cycle I), and reached 77.91 (cycle II). The percentage of learning completeness also increased from 45.83% (pre-cycle), 58.33% (cycle I), to 100% (cycle II). This improvement was supported by the use of visual storytelling media, paired reading activities, and the active role of the teacher in accompanying the learning process.</p>
<p>Development of Video Storytelling of Fable Tales Based on Language Literacy for Grade III Elementary School Students.</p>	<p>Research and Development (R&amp;D)</p>	<p>Developing language literacy-based fable storytelling video media to improve listening skills and fairy tale comprehension of</p>	<p>Based on the results of observations, researchers found that the ability to listen to grade III students of UPT SD Negeri Center Manggalli was low, with 70% of students not reaching the KKM. After</p>

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(Nurwahyu et al., 2022)	grade III elementary school students.	developing the fable storytelling video, it was validated by material experts (89.3%) and media experts (90.67%) with a very valid category. The results of student trials also showed very feasible results, namely 89% (individual test), 88.6% (small group), and 94% (large group). The response of class IIIA (94%) and IIIB (96%) teachers also showed very feasible. The product proved effective in improving listening skills and attracting students' interest in learning fairy tales.
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### 3.2. Conclusion

The main conclusion(s) of the study should be presented in a short conclusion statement highlighting the goals of the study and its importance. State new hypotheses when warranted. Include recommendations when appropriate. Conclusion shall be written in a paragraph. Do not repeat the Abstract, or just list experimental results.

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that the use of the storytelling method has a very positive influence on the literacy development of primary school students. This approach not only increased students' interest, motivation, enthusiasm and engagement but also resulted in significant improvements in literacy outcomes, such as the ability to read, understand and retell stories. The limitations of conventional learning, which tends to be monotonous and unimaginative, mean that students do not get enough stimulation to develop their literacy skills.

The storytelling method, which presents material in the form of interactive narratives with the support of digital media such as videos, animations, and interactive presentations, is proven to be able to answer these needs. Students who are at an early developmental stage more easily understand new concepts through visuals, physical activities, and games integrated in the storytelling process. Teachers also benefit by utilizing this method, as they can more easily evaluate the learning process through direct interaction during storytelling activities. However, the successful implementation of the storytelling method requires full support from adequate technological infrastructure and professional capacity building of teachers, especially in primary schools located in areas with limited access to technology.

Suggestions for future research include conducting a more in-depth empirical study using a quantitative or mixed methods approach to specifically measure the impact of storytelling on certain aspects of literacy, such as critical reading or creative writing skills. In addition, future research could explore the supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of storytelling in various geographical and social contexts, including schools in areas with limited technology. The development of effective teacher training models in the use of storytelling is also an important topic to research in order to increase the success of this method in a sustainable manner. Schools should also facilitate storytelling and interactive media training for teachers and ensure adequate learning infrastructure support.

### Author Contributions

All authors have equal contributions to the paper. All the authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

### Funding

No funding support was received.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Acknowledgement (Optional)

Recognize those who helped in the research, especially funding supporter of your research. Include individuals who have assisted you in your study: Advisors, Financial supporters, or may another supporter, i.e. Proofreaders, Typists, and Suppliers, who may have given materials. Do not acknowledge one of the authors names.

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