

Literature Review: The Role of Storytelling in Improving Story Listening Skills in Indonesian Language Learning in Elementary Schools

Ryanni Puspita Hasibuan

Primary School Teacher Education Study Program, Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia.

Andini Virdiana

Primary School Teacher Education Study Program, Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia.

M. Habibi

Primary School Teacher Education Study Program, Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia.

Corresponding Author: ryannipuspita@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the role of storytelling methods in improving listening skills in Indonesian language learning at school through a basic research design. The data collection process involved several stages: database identification, title and abstract selection, suitability determination, and in-depth analysis of selected articles. Results from ten articles show that storytelling methods, both conventional and digital-based, have proven effective in increasing students' listening skills. Improvements were seen in understanding story content, the ability to catch information, concentration, and student activity in learning. In addition, storytelling can create an atmosphere that makes learning more interesting, interactive, and fun. Thus, storytelling can serve as an effective alternative learning strategy to improve students' listening skills at the school level.

Keywords: Storytelling, Listening Skills, Learning Indonesian, Basic School, Literature Review.

Introduction

Language skills are a primary foundation for developing children's communication, cognitive, and social-emotional capacities at the primary education level. The skill of speaking Indonesian is a very important ability for Indonesians, because Indonesian functions as a tool to unify the nation and has become the language used by the majority of Indonesian society in daily communication (Januaryca & Santoso, 2022). In formal school environments, mastering Indonesian functions not merely as a mandatory academic subject, but also as the main medium of instruction for delivering other educational subjects. In the Indonesian language curriculum in basic schools, students must master four mandatory language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four skills are closely interconnected and form an integrated literacy competency within students. Among these four skills, listening is the first skill mastered by humans and becomes the main gate in the process of language acquisition

(Nofiani, 2025). Developing mature listening competencies early enables students to absorb information more easily, follow teacher instructions, and build advanced language skills such as reading and writing effectively.

Scientifically, listening differs fundamentally from passively hearing ordinary sounds. Listening is one of the four language skills; it is an interactive process that turns oral language into meaning in thought (Betaubun, 2023). This interactive process demands active mental engagement from students to process, interpret, and connect spoken sounds with their pre-existing schema and prior knowledge. According to Tarigan (2008), listening is the process of hearing various sounds in a way that fully captures information, messages, or content, and understanding the meaning the speaker conveys through those sounds. This definition emphasizes that listening focuses on achieving meaning and understanding the essence of speech, rather than simply receiving sound waves. In line with this view, listening is not just hearing; it also involves understanding the meaning in the utterances delivered. Consequently, the success of the listening process depends heavily on how well the listener can decode the structure of spoken language and capture the speaker's central ideas.

Among the various listening materials in elementary schools, narrative texts or stories hold a unique appeal that aligns well with the psychological development stage of elementary school children. Through listening to stories, students not only practice active listening but also develop skills to speak and think more complexly. Children's imagination-rich world makes stories a highly effective medium for conveying educational messages and training higher-order cognitive processing. In the listening process, students learn to focus their attention on the information conveyed so they can understand the story comprehensively, including what is well written and implied. Distinguishing between explicit and implicit meanings in narratives trains students' critical reasoning and attention to detail when processing spoken information. In addition, students are trained to identify key story elements, such as characters, setting, and plot, which helps them understand story structure more systematically. Familiarity with narrative structures not only enhances students' receptive skills but also provides a clear framework for how stories are organized sequentially and logically. Listening to stories also encourages students to take in the values they contain, such as moral and social values, as well as culture. Internalizing positive values through character portrayals in stories plays a significant role in shaping students' moral interpretation, empathy, and social awareness in daily life. Thus, listening activities serve not only as listening exercises but also as a means to develop understanding, reasoning, and character formation comprehensively.

However, in practice, listening often receives less attention and is taught in conventional ways, which can make students less interested and less active in the learning process. The main obstacles in conventional classrooms include monotonous teaching methods, limited use of interactive media, and a tendency toward teacher-centered instruction. This situation leads to a rapid decline in students' concentration and memory retention of story materials, ultimately resulting in lower Indonesian language learning outcomes. One approach to improve students' listening skills is storytelling, or activities that involve telling stories, which is known as an effective learning method for developing various aspects of children's language, from vocabulary mastery and sentence structure to listening and speaking (Sutanti et al., 2025). Storytelling presents narratives through vocal variations,

facial expressions, body gestures, and dynamic visual aids, making the classroom atmosphere much livelier and more enjoyable. This method not only creates a fun learning atmosphere but can also help students understand story content, grasp moral messages and improve concentration and retention. Integrating storytelling into instruction has been shown to evoke curiosity and emotional involvement in students toward learning materials.

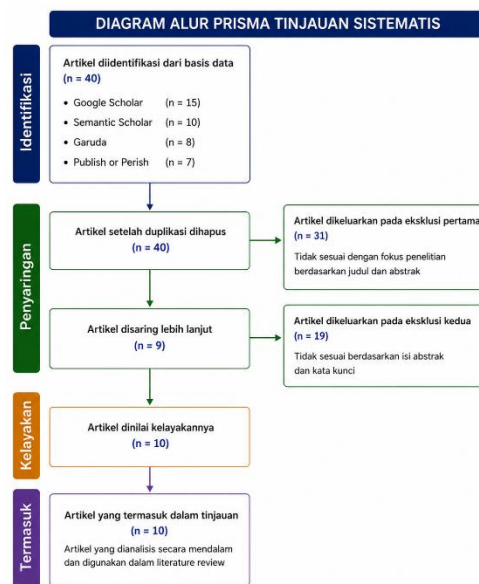
Although storytelling methods have been widely researched across various levels, a comprehensive synthesis of recent scientific literature is still needed to map its effectiveness and variations in Indonesian language learning clearly. This study examines how storytelling supports listening skill development in basic school Indonesian language learning. Through a systematic literature review of ten selected scientific articles from 2014 to 2026, this study seeks to present a holistic overview of the implications of storytelling—both conventional and digital-based—on improving student comprehension and active participation. This study is expected to contribute to the development of more engaging and effective learning strategies, especially by improving students' listening skills. In addition, the results are expected to serve as a reference for teachers applying storytelling as an alternative method to increase student involvement, understanding of story content, and overall speaking ability. Ultimately, this literature review is expected to serve as a theoretical reference and practical guide for educational practitioners designing innovative, student-centered language learning strategies.

Methods

This study is qualitative and uses a literature review approach. There are four stages in this study, namely: 1) database identification, 2) title-based identification, 3) search suitability, content, abstract, and keywords, 4) deletion of articles that are not appropriate and determination of articles to be reviewed. To answer the research question, this study used a literature review method and selected relevant articles based on the criteria. This study used a literature review method. This was done by systematically identifying and analyzing journal articles in accordance with the existing stages.

The first stage in this study is choosing journal database sources. The databases used in this literature review are Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, Garuda, and Publish or Perish. In general, articles were published in journals in the period 2014- 2026. In the next stage, journal articles were searched using the keywords: skills, listening, storytelling, and basic school. Based on these keywords, 40 journal articles were found; at the first exclusion stage, 31 articles were excluded, followed by a second exclusion stage (19 articles), and finally a third stage excluding 10 articles. Next, researchers collected data from the analyzed articles and presented it in the table. Then, the researchers carefully reviewed the articles, especially the research results. Finally, the researchers compared results across several articles and drew conclusions.

Figure 1 Stages of the exclusion process article in systematic review



Findings and Discussion

Findings

Table I Research Results on Improving Listening Skills of Elementary School Students Using the Storytelling Method

Research and Year	Journal	Research result
(Nur Ilmi et al., 2025)	Basics: Journal Basic Education Science	Implementing the paired storytelling learning model has increased listening skills in class V students, as shown by improvements in the learning process and results from cycle I to cycle II. At the beginning, student involvement and results were still low, but after improving learning activities and work, student completion increased until it reached the success indicator.
(Mardiyanti, 2023)	MY TEACHER: Journal of Education and Social Sciences Humanities	Based on the research results and discussion, the storytelling learning model effectively increases students' basic listening skills at school. This model creates interactive learning, so students are more active and motivated and can understand material more easily. Its application is proven to increase listening ability through both the process and results of the study.
(Sutanti et al., 2025)	Journal of Education for All (EduFA)	Based on research results and discussion, it can be concluded that storytelling activities play an important role in improving basic listening skills in school. Through this activity, students become more focused, understand the story content, and respond well.

Research and Year	Journal	Research result
(Salsabila & Satria, 2025)	JPUS: Journal of Education for All	Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that storytelling is effective in increasing students' listening skills in basic school activities; telling stories makes students more focused, helps them understand the story content, and helps them capture information better because it is presented interestingly.
(Betaubun, 2023)	Didactics: Journal Scientific PGSD FKIP Mandiri University	This study shows that implementing the story method in effective Indonesian language learning increases listening skills in class II students, as shown by an increase in the average value from 65.17 in cycle I to 75.86 in cycle II and a completeness rate of 97%. This method can also increase concentration, understanding, memory, and the ability to draw interesting conclusions, while making students more active and motivated to continue learning.
(Januaryca & Santoso, 2022)	Inventory: Journal of Elementary School Teacher Education	This study shows that the Teaching Proficiency Through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) implementation method is effective in increasing students' listening skills, as shown by the improvement in average scores from the low-start condition to the high-end category at the end of the cycle, and by the increase in the number of students who achieved KKM from a small group to all students. Improvement is seen in students' ability to understand story content, answer questions, compose flow, and retell, supported by active engagement and increased student focus during the learning process.
(Dita, 2024)	Indonesian Education Star Journal (JUBPI)	Study this show that the storytelling learning model has an effect significant to improvement skills listening story illustrated student class V, which is marked with improvement average value of 58.3 (category low) before treatment to 84.4 (very good category) after treatment, as well as increasing amount students who achieved the KKM from 7 people to 33 people. Students showed improved listening skills in understanding story content, capturing information, and retelling it, supported by increased attention, focus, and student activity during the learning process.

Research and Year	Journal	Research result
(Masykur et al, 2025)	Elementary School (Journal of Elementary School Education and Learning)	This study shows that using digital storytelling media in effective Indonesian language learning increases listening skills in class II students, as shown by an increase in average scores from 78.85 in cycle I to 94.62 in cycle II and an increase in study completeness from 78.85% to 94.62%. This increase was reflected in students' ability to focus on listening, understand story content, summarize, and respond, supported by increased concentration, interest, and student activity during the learning process.
(Bunga et al., 2024)	Basics: Journal Basic Education Science	The implementation method storytelling through the Problem Based Learning (PBL) model has been proven effective increase skills listening student class IVa SD 64/I Muara Bulian, proven with improvement completeness classical from 14.81% in cycle I with an average value of 56.35 to 100% in cycle II with an average value of 82.31, because method this capable create atmosphere learn more interesting so that student more active and enthusiastic in follow learning.
(Nofiani, 2025)	Basics: Journal Basic Education Science	This study shows that using digital storytelling media in Indonesian language learning effectively increases listening skills for class IV students, as shown by an increase in the average value from 70 in cycle I to 81 in cycle II and an increase in study completeness from 46% to 86%. In addition, this audio-visual media can increase students' activeness and involvement in the learning process, making learning more interesting and helping students understand the content better.

Based on the selection process, ten articles met the inclusion criteria and were analyzed in this study. All reviewed articles indicated that the storytelling method positively affected elementary school students' listening skills. This improvement was reflected in higher average scores, greater learning mastery, and improved ability to comprehend story content, identify important information, and retell stories they had heard. Several studies also reported improvements in students' concentration, motivation, and active participation during learning.

The magnitude of improvement documented across the ten studies is substantial and consistent. Most studies used a classroom action research design, measuring listening outcomes repeatedly across two instructional cycles and allowing teachers to refine their

storytelling techniques between cycles based on observation and reflection. Betaubun (2023) recorded an increase in students' average scores from 65.17 in Cycle I to 75.86 in Cycle II, with classical learning completeness reaching 97%. Dita (2024) documented a rise from 58.3 to 84.4, accompanied by an increase in the number of students meeting the minimum mastery criterion (KKM) from 7 to 33. Masykur et al. (2025) reported scores climbing from 78.85 to 94.62 alongside completeness rising from 78.85% to 94.62%, while Bunga et al. (2024) found classical completeness increasing from only 14.81% to 100%. Nofiani (2025) similarly noted scores improving from 70 to 81, with completeness rising from 46% to 86%. Taken together, these figures indicate that the storytelling method produced gains that were not only statistically meaningful but also practically significant, occurring within a relatively short instructional period of two learning cycles.

The analysis also revealed that storytelling was implemented in various forms, including paired storytelling, Teaching Proficiency Through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS), storytelling integrated with Problem-Based Learning (PBL), and digital storytelling. Despite these different approaches, all studies reported similar findings: significant improvements in students' listening skills after implementing storytelling methods. Studies using digital media showed even greater improvements in students' attention and engagement because the stories were presented more attractively and interactively.

Beyond higher test scores, several studies also reported non-cognitive gains alongside improved listening achievement, including higher concentration, more active participation in question-and-answer sessions, greater willingness to retell stories in front of the class, and a more enthusiastic overall classroom atmosphere. Variation across the ten studies was mainly related to grade level and the specific storytelling variant employed rather than the direction of the outcome. Studies conducted in lower grades, such as Grade II, tended to emphasize sensory engagement through puppets, pictures, or audio-visual media. In contrast, studies conducted in upper grades, such as Grade IV and V, placed greater emphasis on structured techniques like TPRS and PBL-integrated storytelling that required more complex comprehension and retelling tasks. Despite these implementation differences, every study reported improved listening outcomes, reinforcing storytelling as an effective intervention across ages, contexts, and delivery formats.

Overall, the ten reviewed articles indicate that storytelling not only improves academic achievement but also positively influences the learning process by increasing students' participation, collaboration, and enthusiasm, and by creating a more enjoyable and meaningful learning environment. These converging results, drawn from studies conducted across different grade levels, regions, and storytelling formats, provide strong cumulative evidence that storytelling functions as a reliable pedagogical tool for developing listening competence among elementary school students in the Indonesian language classroom.

Discussion

Based on the analysis of the ten reviewed articles, the storytelling method consistently improved elementary school students' listening skills. This finding aligns with the study's objective of examining the role of storytelling in Indonesian language learning, particularly in listening to stories.

Several variations in storytelling implementation produced consistently positive

results. Nur Ilmi et al (2025) demonstrated that the storytelling method increased students' activeness, collaboration, and learning completeness from Cycle I to Cycle II until the success indicator was achieved. This finding aligns with studies that found that storytelling created a more interactive learning environment, making students more active, motivated, and better able to understand the material. In addition, Sutanti et al (2025) and Salsabila & Satria (2025) emphasized that storytelling activities helped students focus more, understand story content more thoroughly, and capture information more effectively because the material was delivered engagingly.

The improvement in listening skills became even more evident when storytelling was combined with specific learning models or media. Januaryca & Santoso (2022) applying the Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) method, found that students' ability to understand story content, answer questions, construct plots, and retell stories improved to the point that all students achieved the minimum mastery criteria (KKM). Likewise, Lestari et al., (2024) who implemented the storytelling method through the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model and successfully increased completeness, because this method creates a more interesting learning atmosphere that makes students more active and enthusiastic.

The use of digital media in storytelling also had a considerable impact. Masykur et al., (2025) reported improvements in students' listening focus, comprehension of story content, summarizing skills, and responsiveness through digital storytelling media, alongside increased concentration, interest, and participation. In line with that, Nofiani (2025) found that audio-visual media in digital storytelling increased students' activeness and involvement, making learning more engaging and helping students understand story content more effectively. These findings are further reinforced by Dita et al., (2024) who demonstrated that a storytelling model significantly influenced picture-story listening skills, as reflected in students' improved ability to capture information, comprehend story content, and retell stories.

Beyond improving listening skills, implementing storytelling in learning activities also appears to play a significant role in developing students' imagination. Through storytelling activities, students are encouraged to think creatively and imaginatively, making it easier for them to explore, discover, and develop ideas they can later express in writing. This process indirectly trains students to think more openly and creatively. When students were directly involved as storytellers, they showed a range of positive reactions, most commonly joy and enthusiasm, when performing the role. This suggests that storytelling can create a fun and motivating learning atmosphere that encourages students' active participation (Wardiah, 2017).

In a way, overall, the findings from the reviewed studies indicate that various forms of storytelling, whether implemented as paired storytelling, TPRS, storytelling combined with PBL, or supported by digital media, consistently improved elementary school students' listening skills. This effectiveness can be attributed to storytelling not only engagingly delivering material but also encouraging students to become more active, focused, motivated, and collaborative during the learning process. Accordingly, storytelling can be considered a viable and effective alternative learning strategy for improving listening skills among elementary school students.

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Conclusion

Based on the systematic literature review of the ten selected articles, it can be concluded that the storytelling method plays a vital and highly effective role in improving the story-listening skills of elementary school students. The systematic selection process, which filtered 40 initial database entries down to 10 highly relevant studies, provides robust empirical evidence supporting this pedagogical approach. The analysis demonstrates that the implementation of storytelling, ranging from conventional techniques and cooperative models like paired storytelling, structured approaches like Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) and Problem-Based Learning (PBL), to modern digital and audio-visual media, consistently enhances students' cognitive capacities. These enhancements are reflected in significant improvements in students' listening comprehension, information retention, concentration span, academic scores, and overall learning mastery. Beyond academic gains, integrating storytelling fosters a dynamic, interactive, and enjoyable learning environment that stimulates students' imagination, reduces academic anxiety, and nurtures essential emotional and social character values.

These findings highlight the practical importance of shifting elementary language instruction from conventional, passive listening methods toward student-centered storytelling strategies. Teachers are encouraged to adapt various storytelling techniques—such as utilizing visual media for lower grades and structured interactive models or digital media for upper grades—to optimize learning engagement. Future research should examine the long-term impacts of storytelling using experimental designs across more diverse school contexts. Therefore, storytelling is strongly recommended as a viable, flexible, and alternative learning strategy to optimize Indonesian language instruction and elevate students' listening competencies in elementary education.

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