

MEANING-MAKING IN DIGITAL LISTENING: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF TIKTOK STORY- TELLING AMONG YOUNG EFL LEARNERS

SKRIPSI



Presented to
IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Sarjana in English Education

By:
Triananda Rahmatul Izza
NIM 22120061

ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND ARTS' EDUCATION
IKIP PGRI BOJONEGORO

2026

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MOTTO

"No matter how difficult the previous chapter was, your next step still leads to the future. Your purpose is not to be perfect, but to become better. Be better than you were yesterday, not better than someone else."

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May Allah give a great reply to all. To support further development, the author sincerely welcomes suggestions and constructive feedback. Finally, the author entrusts everything to Allah, aiming for usefulness, especially for writers and readers alike.

Bojonegoro, 05 July 2026
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STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

I, the undersigned bellow:

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In order to uphold academic integrity, sincerely and without coercion from any parties, I hereby declare that skripsi entitled:

MEANING-MAKING IN DIGITAL LISTENING: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF TIKTOK STORYTELLING AMONG YOUNG EFL LEARNERS

Is the result of my own original work, and all sources of information used have been clearly cited in the reference list according to the scientific and academic code of ethics. I am aware that if any violations of scholarly ethics regarding to the authenticity of this work are found, **I personally** accept the consequences in accordance with the applicable regulations and I am prepared to bear legal sanctions.

Bojonegoro, 05 July 2026



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ABSTRACT

Izza, Triananda R. 2026. Meaning-Making in Digital Listening: A Phenomenological Study of Tiktok Storytelling Among Young EFL Learners. Skripsi. English Education Department. Faculty of Language and Arts Education. IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro. Advisor (I) Refi Ranto Rozak, M.Pd., (II) Meiga Ratih Tirtanawati, M.Pd.

Keywords: TikTok, *Digital Storytelling*, Listening Skills, Young EFL learners, Phenomenology.

In the digital era, social media platforms such as TikTok have become an inseparable part of young learners' daily lives. This platform offers short-form, multimodal content that combines visuals, audio, and narrative; however, listening skills—as a fundamental language skill—are still frequently taught through static and unengaging materials. Furthermore, the use of digital storytelling on platforms closely tied to children's media consumption patterns has not been widely examined among elementary-level EFL learners. Therefore, this study aims to examine how digital storytelling through TikTok can facilitate the development of listening skills among young EFL learners, while also identifying students' perceptions and meaning-making processes when learning listening through this medium. To answer these questions, this study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach, involving eight fifth-grade students and one class teacher at MI Islamiyah Mojodeso. Data were collected through classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and students' reflective journals across six storytelling sessions. The findings show that TikTok Digital Storytelling enhanced students' attention, listening comprehension, and vocabulary mastery. Both bottom-up and top-down listening strategies emerged naturally through exposure to animation, narration, and bilingual subtitles. In addition, students also underwent a personal meaning-making process by relating story content to their own emotions and life experiences, drawing moral lessons independently, and showing early signs of learning autonomy and a more positive orientation toward English. Overall, this study concludes that TikTok Digital Storytelling functions not only as an entertainment medium but also as an authentic multimodal scaffold that supports both listening skill development and meaningful language engagement among young EFL learners, despite the limitations of this study in terms of the number of participants and the research duration.

ABSTRAK

Izza, Triananda R. 2026. *Meaning-Making in Digital Listening: A Phenomenological Study of Tiktok Storytelling Among Young EFL Learners*. Skripsi. English Education Department. Faculty of Language and Arts Education. IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro. Advisor (I) Refi Ranto Rozak, M.Pd., (II) Meiga Ratih Tirtanawati, M.Pd.

Kata Kunci: TikTok, *Digital Storytelling*, Keterampilan Menyimak, Pembelajaran Muda EFL, Fenomenologi.

Di era digital, platform media sosial seperti TikTok telah menjadi bagian yang tidak terpisahkan dari kehidupan sehari-hari siswa usia dini. Platform ini menawarkan konten multimodal berdurasi pendek yang menggabungkan visual, audio, dan narasi; namun, keterampilan menyimak—sebagai keterampilan bahasa yang mendasar—masih kerap diajarkan melalui materi yang statis dan kurang menarik. Selain itu, pemanfaatan digital storytelling pada platform yang erat dengan pola konsumsi media anak-anak masih belum banyak diteliti pada siswa EFL jenjang sekolah dasar. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menelaah bagaimana digital storytelling melalui TikTok dapat memfasilitasi perkembangan keterampilan menyimak siswa EFL usia dini, sekaligus mengidentifikasi persepsi dan proses pemaknaan siswa saat belajar menyimak melalui media tersebut. Untuk menjawab pertanyaan tersebut, penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif fenomenologis, melibatkan delapan siswa kelas lima dan satu guru kelas di MI Islamiyah Mojodeso. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur, serta jurnal refleksi siswa selama enam sesi storytelling. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa TikTok Digital Storytelling meningkatkan perhatian, pemahaman menyimak, dan penguasaan kosakata siswa. Strategi menyimak bottom-up maupun top-down muncul secara alami melalui paparan animasi, narasi, dan subtitle dwibahasa. Di sisi lain, siswa juga menjalani proses pemaknaan yang bersifat personal, yakni dengan mengaitkan isi cerita pada emosi dan pengalaman hidup mereka sendiri, mengambil pelajaran moral secara mandiri, serta memperlihatkan tanda-tanda awal kemandirian belajar dan orientasi yang lebih positif terhadap bahasa Inggris. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa TikTok Digital Storytelling tidak hanya berperan sebagai media hiburan, tetapi juga sebagai perancah multimodal yang autentik dalam mendukung perkembangan keterampilan menyimak sekaligus keterlibatan bahasa yang bermakna bagi siswa EFL usia dini, meskipun penelitian ini memiliki keterbatasan pada jumlah partisipan dan durasi penelitian.

PREFACE

Praise be to Allah SWT for His infinite mercy, guidance, and blessings, which have enabled the writer to complete this skripsi entitled "**Meaning-Making in Digital Listening: A Phenomenological Study of TikTok Storytelling among Young EFL Learners.**" This skripsi is submitted as one of the requirements for obtaining the Bachelor's Degree in the English Education Department, Faculty of Languages and Arts Education, IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro.

This study explores how young EFL learners construct meaning during listening activities through digital storytelling delivered via the TikTok platform. Using a phenomenological approach, this study investigates the students' lived experiences in engaging with digital listening materials and examines how multimodal features contribute to their meaning-making process

Throughout the process of conducting this study and writing this skripsi, the writer encountered various challenges, including collecting and analyzing the research data, interpreting the participants' experiences, and presenting the findings in accordance with academic writing standards. These challenges became valuable learning experiences that strengthened the writer's academic and personal development. Through perseverance, continuous effort, and the guidance of Allah SWT, the writer was able to complete this skripsi successfully.

The writer realizes that this skripsi is still far from perfect and may contain shortcomings. Therefore, constructive criticism and suggestions are sincerely welcomed for future improvement. Finally, the writer hopes that this skripsi will contribute to the development of knowledge, particularly in the field of English Language Education, and serve as a useful reference for future studies.

Bojonegoro, 05 July 2026

Writer

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

In the contemporary digital era, technological advancements have fundamentally transformed language pedagogy, fostering more flexible and student-centered learning environments (Shaojie et al., 2022). This shift is significantly driven by the proliferation of diverse digital media, which caters to the evolving habits of learners (Sahayu et al., 2025). In Indonesia, the rapid growth of digital platforms has notably influenced elementary school students, who are increasingly active consumers of visual-auditory content on social media (Suardi & Al-Bahri, 2025). This trend underscores the critical need to integrate digital learning tools that align with children's cognitive preferences and attention spans (Rahmanu & Molnár, 2024).

Within language education, technology offers innovative pathways to enhance core competencies, particularly listening skills (Maulina et al., 2022). Listening serves as a foundational skill, enabling learners to capture information, respond appropriately, and participate effectively in communication (Meshach, 2024). It is essential for the subsequent development of speaking, reading, and writing abilities. Despite its strategic importance, listening instruction often remains a secondary priority, with challenges arising from static and unengaging material presentation (Nuralisa et al., 2025). Consequently, there is a pressing demand for the innovation and development of digital-based learning media.

Digital storytelling has emerged as a promising pedagogical tool, merging narrative structures with multimedia elements to create contextual and enjoyable learning experiences (Puspitasari et al., 2025). This method leverages the multimodal nature of digital technology combining audio, visuals, and text to enhance comprehension and memory retention (Meshach, 2024). While storytelling has long been recognized for its power in language learning (Lucarevski, 2016), most existing research remains confined to offline, teacher-led contexts (Chuyên & Thiện, 2024; Utami et al., 2024), failing to integrate the digital platforms that are intrinsic to students' daily lives.

Concurrently, social media platforms like TikTok have gained immense popularity among young learners in Indonesia. Characterized by short-form video content, user-friendly editing tools, and strong visual appeal, TikTok presents a significant opportunity for educational integration (Sanny et al., 2024). Preliminary studies suggest that TikTok videos can boost student engagement and listening skills through repeated exposure to authentic material (Andini, 2024). However, such research has been limited to older students (e.g., vocational high school) and primarily employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) designs, leaving the deeper, lived experiences of learners largely unexplored.

This context reveals a conspicuous research gap. There is a scarcity of studies focusing on how digital storytelling, deployed via platforms that mirror children's media consumption patterns like TikTok, can support listening skill development in elementary school students (Puspitasari et al., 2025). Furthermore, the predominant use of CAR methodologies has limited the depth of inquiry into students' subjective perceptions and meaning-making processes

(Andini, 2024), which are crucial aspects best examined through a qualitative phenomenological lens (Lymbery, 2017). This study, therefore, seeks to address these gaps by investigating the lived experiences of young EFL learners engaging with listening activities via digital storytelling on TikTok.

B. Formulation of the Problems

Based on the identified background, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does digital storytelling on the TikTok platform facilitate the development of listening skills among young EFL learners?
2. What are the students' perceptions and meaning-making experiences when learning listening through digital storytelling on TikTok?

C. Objectives of the Study

Aligned with the problem formulation, this study aims to:

1. To explore the role of digital storytelling on TikTok in facilitating the development of listening skills among young EFL learners.
2. To investigate the students' perceptions and meaning-making experiences in learning listening through digital storytelling on TikTok.

D. Significances of the Study

1. Theoretical Significance

This study is expected to contribute to the theoretical discourse on technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) and digital storytelling. It seeks to extend the conceptual understanding of how participatory, multi-modal social media environments like TikTok can be leveraged for pedagogical purposes, particularly in developing listening comprehension. The findings may enrich theories related to meaning-making, learner engagement, and the affective dimensions of digital learning in young EFL contexts.

2. Practical Significance

a. For Teachers

This research provides educators with practical insights and alternative strategies for utilizing TikTok as a creative instructional tool. It can guide teachers in designing engaging, contextually relevant, and curriculum-aligned digital storytelling content that makes listening activities more appealing while fostering digital literacy from an early age.

b. For Students

The study highlights how students can utilize platforms like TikTok more purposefully to support their language learning, particularly in improving listening skills and building confidence through engaging narrative content.

c. For Future Researchers

The outcomes can serve as a foundational reference for further investigation into social media-based learning. Future studies could expand

on this work by exploring different variables (e.g., engagement patterns, content design), employing mixed-methods or experimental designs, or examining long-term impacts on digital literacy and language acquisition across various platforms and age groups.

E. Definition of Key Terminologies

To ensure conceptual clarity, the following key terminologies are defined based on the literature and contextualized for this study.

1. Listening Skills

Listening is widely recognized as a fundamental yet complex language skill. (Andini, 2024) defines it as an ability that encompasses the capacity to understand, interpret, and evaluate auditory input, emphasizing that it moves beyond mere hearing to grasp the meaning within a message. Similarly, (Alzamil, 2021) conceptualizes listening as an active and necessary process for communication, where listeners employ their prior knowledge to interpret the speaker's words and intent. Expanding on the cognitive dimensions, (Meshach, 2024) argues that listening involves a strong human interest in what is being conveyed, integrating affective engagement with cognitive processing.

Based on these expert definitions, listening skills in this research are defined as the active, integrative process where learners utilize cognitive strategies (to decode, interpret, and evaluate) and affective engagement (interest and empathy) to construct meaning from spoken language in digital storytelling narratives.

2. Digital Storytelling

Digital storytelling is an evolving pedagogical tool that merges traditional narrative with digital media. (Purnama et al., 2022) describe it as an interactive form of media that utilizes text, audio, and video to increase student interest, aid comprehension, and improve language abilities. (Setyawati, 2024) reinforces this by emphasizing the use of digital media like video, images, text, and audio to tell stories, making learning more engaging and relevant. Adding a layer of personal connection, (Davey & Benjaminsen, 2021) highlight that digital storytelling often involves combining narrative, audio, and visuals to produce short, emotionally resonant, and personal films.

Synthesizing these perspectives, digital storytelling for this study refers to the creation and use of short, multimodal narratives (integrating spoken word, music, imagery, and text) designed to deliver language content in an engaging, contextual, and personally resonant format to facilitate comprehension and skill development.

3. TikTok

TikTok has emerged as a dominant force in social media, particularly among youth. Technically, it is a social media platform launched by ByteDance in 2016 that allows users to create, edit, and share short-form videos. (Bahri et al., 2022) define it as a platform enabling the creation of short videos enhanced by a wide array of creative features such as music, stickers, and filters. From a behavioral and design perspective, (Montag et al., 2021) characterize TikTok as a globally successful app that attracts young users to

create and consume short, timed videos, powered by a personalized recommendation algorithm known as the "For You Page."

For the purpose of this research, TikTok is defined as a social media platform centered on short-form, user-generated video content. Its relevance lies in its native creative tools (editing, audio, effects) and its algorithmic "For You Page," which facilitates the delivery and consumption of the digital storytelling content used as the study's intervention.

4. Young EFL Learners

The term "young learners" is often defined by developmental stages. In the Indonesian context, elementary school students typically fall within the age range of 6-12 years. This period is characterized by significant cognitive and social development, where children are becoming physically stronger, more active, and increasingly independent from their parents, while also developing more individualized characteristics (Harmer, 2015). Specifically in language learning, Cameron (2001) notes that young learners are constructing their understanding of the world and are highly receptive to learning that is holistic, meaningful, and connected to their immediate interests.

In this study, young EFL learners refers to Indonesian elementary school students (ages 6-12) who are in the process of learning English as a Foreign Language. They are defined by their developmental stage—which includes high engagement with digital media—and their status as "digital natives" who require interactive, multimodal, and contextually relevant learning materials.