ABSTRACT

This study addresses the low levels of reading comprehension, critical thinking, and digital literacy among EFL students in Indonesian high schools. It aims to investigate the effectiveness of digital storytelling integrated with Project-Based Learning in improving these skills. This Classroom Action Research (CAR) was conducted in two cycles involving 36 eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 2 Purworejo, Central Java. Data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests, classroom observations, interviews, reflective journals, and analysis of students' digital storytelling products. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically.

The results show substantial improvement after the intervention. Pre-test scores indicated low performance (M = 45.71 for critical thinking; M = 50.03 for reading comprehension). In Cycle 1, classroom observation results reached an average of 78.7% ("Good"), while digital storytelling products achieved 79.5% ("Very Good"), indicating initial development. In Cycle 2, students' performance increased significantly, with classroom observation scores rising to 88.1% ("Very Good–Excellent") and product quality improving to 80.6% ("Very Good"). Post-test results also showed clear progress, with the proportion of students in the "Excellent" category increasing from 5.6% to 16.7% in critical thinking and from 8.3% to 22.2% in reading comprehension, while the "Low" category decreased to 5.6%.

Interview data revealed increased motivation and confidence, while reflective journals indicated stronger metacognitive awareness, deeper text analysis, and improved problem-solving skills. These findings demonstrate that digital storytelling effectively enhances students' reading comprehension, critical thinking, and digital literacy through iterative, student-centered learning processes.

Keywords: *Digital storytelling, Project-Based Learning, reading comprehension, critical thinking, EFL students*