

PROMOTING COLLABORATION AS CHARACTER EDUCATION VALUE THROUGH DIGITAL STORYTELLING IN ENGLISH TEACHING FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

Collaboration is an essential character education value that supports meaningful learning in English as a Foreign Language classrooms for young learners, yet it is often insufficiently integrated into instructional practices. This study examines how digital storytelling is used to promote collaboration as a character education value in English teaching for young learners. A systematic literature review was conducted by analyzing eighteen relevant studies published between 2020 and 2025. The study followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework to ensure a transparent, systematic, and replicable review process. The findings reveal that digital storytelling is commonly implemented as a collaborative and project-based learning activity that integrates language learning with social interaction through multimodal resources. Collaboration is fostered through small-group work, role distribution, joint planning, peer feedback, and shared problem-solving throughout the storytelling process. Digital storytelling activities are generally designed using structured instructional stages, with teachers acting as facilitators and learners functioning as active participants and co-creators. The study concludes that digital storytelling effectively supports the development of collaboration as a character education value while also enhancing young learners' engagement and English language learning. These findings highlight the potential of digital storytelling as an instructional approach that integrates language development and character education in English as a Foreign Language classrooms for young learners.

Keywords: digital storytelling, collaboration, character education, English for young learners, English as a Foreign Language

INTRODUCTION

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, collaboration is essential not only as a social skill but also as a foundation for meaningful language development (Haryadi, 2024). Language learning develops through interaction and social use of language (García Mayo & Lázaro Ibarrola, 2015). Accordingly, learners' ability to work together, exchange ideas, and construct shared understanding is central to successful language learning (Meilasari et al., 2023; Andriyani & Anam, 2022). For young learners, collaboration is particularly important because language is acquired primarily through concrete, participatory, and experience-based social activities (Ahinty, 2015; Ahmadian, 2017). In line with Indonesia's educational policy, particularly the Profil Pelajar Pancasila, collaboration is positioned as a core character value that should be integrated into classroom practices, including English language learning. In the context of English language learning, the teaching of 21st-century skills, particularly the 4C skills, requires instructional approaches that emphasize experiential learning and relevance to students' real-life contexts (Utami & Widiastuti, 2025). Teachers play a key role in facilitating the development of 21st-century skills (Padmadewi et al., 2020; Margareta & Savitri, 2023). Despite its importance, collaboration is often not optimally integrated into EFL classroom practices for young learners. English instruction still tends to emphasize individual tasks, mechanical drills, and isolated linguistic targets. This creates a gap between interaction-oriented learning goals and teacher-centered classroom practices (Fauzi, 2022; Taddese et al., 2025; Umam & Kristiyantini, 2025). This condition highlights the need for pedagogical approaches that can simultaneously support language learning and collaborative values in ways that align with young learners' characteristics.

To better understand its role in EFL learning, collaboration can be viewed from a theoretical perspective as both a pedagogical strategy and a character education value. Within this perspective, collaboration facilitates meaningful language use through interaction, shared problem-solving, and knowledge co-construction. Through collaborative activities, learners are engaged in authentic language use to communicate, solve problems, and co-construct understanding. At the same time, collaboration represents an essential component of character education, as it fosters values such as responsibility, mutual respect, cooperation, and empathy. In this sense, collaboration is not only a means of facilitating language learning but also an educational goal that contributes to learners' personal and social development. Therefore, integrating collaboration into EFL instruction allows teachers to simultaneously promote linguistic competence and character formation in young learners.

Recent advances in educational technology have created opportunities. One increasingly adopted approach in EFL instruction for young learners is digital storytelling, which integrates narrative with digital elements such as images, audio, animation, and text (Miller & Pennycuff, 2008). Digital storytelling creates a multimodal and engaging learning environment that enhances learner involvement (Ginting et al., 2024). When implemented through group work, digital storytelling is inherently collaborative, requiring shared planning, role distribution, collective decision-making, and joint story construction. These processes encourage communication, negotiation of meaning, and shared responsibility among learners (Robin, 2008; Lambert, 2013; Sadik, 2017), positioning digital storytelling as a potential bridge between language learning and character education. Despite its pedagogical potential, studies on digital storytelling in young learners' EFL contexts have mainly focused on language outcomes, creativity, and learning motivation. Research in English language teaching has emphasized teachers' creativity in instructional practices, giving less attention to collaborative learning processes (Artini & Padmadewi, 2021). Similarly, digital storytelling studies often highlight gains in learners' motivation and creativity, while treating collaboration as a secondary outcome (Setiyorini, 2025). As a result, findings on collaboration remain fragmented, with limited synthesis on how collaboration is explicitly integrated, operationalized, and supported through instructional design in digital storytelling for young learners. This gap highlights the need for a systematic literature review that provides a more comprehensive and analytical synthesis of how collaboration is conceptualized, enacted, and supported through digital storytelling in EFL contexts for young learners.

Based on this background, this study analyzes and synthesizes research on the use of digital storytelling in English teaching for young learners, focusing on collaboration as a character education value. It examines how digital storytelling promotes collaboration in EFL contexts, identifies the forms of collaboration that emerge during these activities, and analyzes how such activities are designed and implemented to support collaborative development in English language learning. Based on these aims, the present study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How is digital storytelling used to promote collaboration in EFL contexts for young learners?
2. What forms of collaboration emerge during digital storytelling activities?
3. How are digital storytelling activities designed and implemented to support the development of collaboration in EFL learning?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to identify, evaluate, and synthesize research on the use of digital storytelling in promoting collaboration as a character education value in English teaching for young learners. The review followed a systematic and transparent procedure using the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews

and Meta-Analyses) framework. Literature searches were conducted across three academic databases: Google Scholar, ERIC, and Semantic Scholar. The search used combinations of key terms related to the research focus, including (“digital storytelling” AND “EFL”) AND (“collaboration” OR “character education”) AND (“young learners”), along with relevant keyword variations. The search was limited to studies published between 2020 and 2025 to ensure relevance to current EFL practices. A total of 280 records were identified (150 from Google Scholar, 70 from ERIC, and 60 from Semantic Scholar).

Following the PRISMA procedure, 87 duplicate records were removed, leaving 193 unique records. Initial screening based on titles and abstracts excluded 122 studies that did not meet the inclusion criteria. The remaining 71 records were assessed for full-text availability, resulting in 40 accessible studies. During the eligibility stage, 22 studies were excluded due to lack of focus on collaboration, non-EFL contexts, or irrelevant participant groups. Ultimately, 18 studies met all inclusion criteria and were included in the final synthesis. Although the inclusion criteria focused on primary-level young learners, several studies involving adjacent populations (e.g., upper primary, secondary students, or pre-service teachers working with young learners) were retained due to their relevance to digital storytelling design and collaborative practices in young learner contexts. The study selection process is presented in Figure 1, and the characteristics of the included studies are summarized in Table 1.

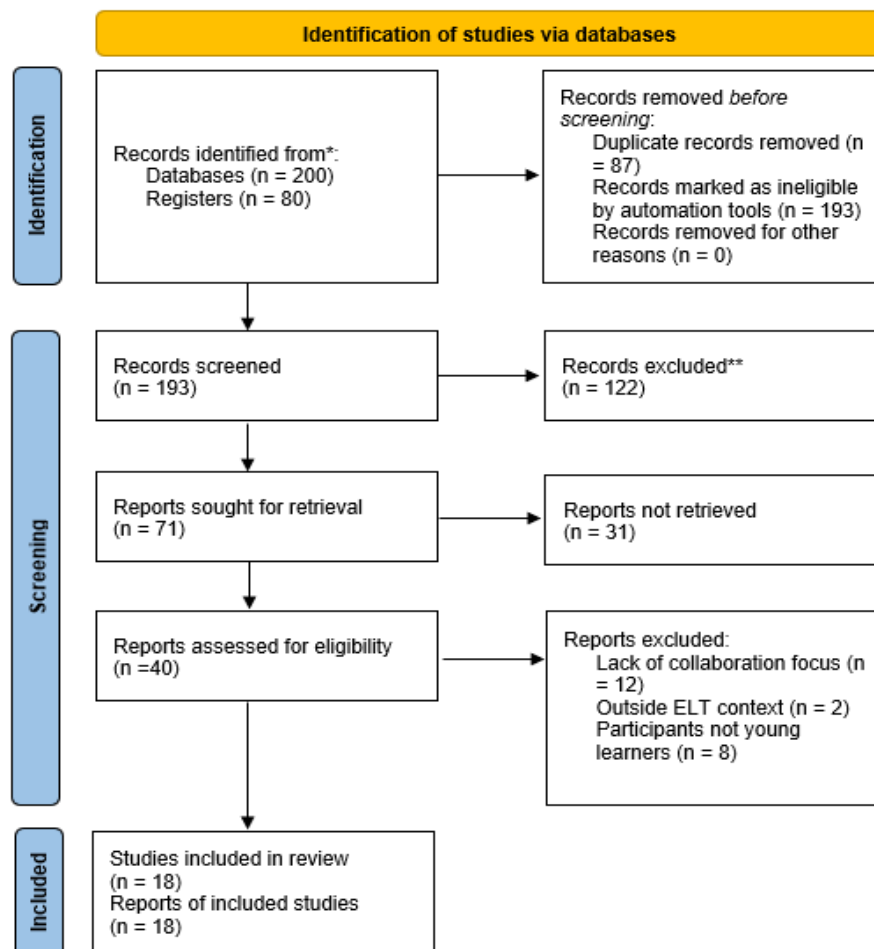


Figure 1. The Prisma Flow Chart

Articles were included in this review if they examined the use of digital storytelling in EFL contexts, addressed collaboration or character-related values, involved young learners at the primary level, were published between 2020 and 2025, and had accessible full texts. Studies

were excluded if they did not involve digital storytelling, did not focus on collaboration or character education, targeted secondary, tertiary, or adult learners, were published outside the selected time frame, or were not available in full-text form. These inclusion and exclusion criteria guided each stage of the PRISMA process, ensuring that only relevant and methodologically appropriate studies were retained for final analysis.

Table 1. Criteria Table

Inclusion	Exclusion
Digital storytelling in EFL contexts	No digital storytelling component
Focus on collaboration or character values	No collaboration or character focus
Young learners (primary level)	Secondary, tertiary, or adult learners
Empirical or review journal articles	Non-research or non-academic sources
Published 2020–2025	Published outside time range
Full-text accessible	Full text unavailable

Table 2. The Overview of Related Study

No	Author (Year)	Context	DST Use	Collaboration	Design
1	Guedes et al. (2025)	Primary EFL	Multimodal storytelling for engagement and oral skills	Small-group work, idea sharing, peer support	Teacher modeling, guided planning, collaborative production, sharing
2	Chi et al. (2025)	SLR EFL/ESL including YL	Multimodal pedagogical approach	Peer scripting, feedback, reflection	Five-phase digital storytelling model
3	Putri et al. (2025)	Upper primary EFL	Project-based storytelling	Role sharing, problem-solving, peer support	Planning, production, presentation, reflection
4	Harashchuk (2025)	Primary EFL	Multimodal storytelling for comprehension and engagement	Peer discussion, shared meaning-making, guided role-play	Pre-storytelling, storytelling, post-storytelling
5	Yu & Wang (2025)	Pre-service EFL teachers and Grades 3–6	Project-based multimodal storytelling	Pair and group work, role distribution, peer feedback	Training, collaborative production, classroom implementation, reflection
6	Karakas & Sarıçoban (2024)	Grade 4 primary EFL Turkey	Student-created digital stories	Small-group work, shared responsibility, joint decision-making	Pre-storytelling, storytelling, post-storytelling
7	Yazid et al. (2023)	Grade 10 secondary EFL Indonesia	Digital storytelling for interaction and engagement	Group discussion, idea negotiation, shared construction	Topic selection, collaborative production, presentation

8	Mardiana et al. (2023)	Primary EFL Indonesia	Literacy-based digital storytelling	Cooperative group work, shared story development, peer interaction	Guided storytelling, collaborative production, reflection
9	Kristiawan et al. (2022)	Young EFL learners Indonesia	Learner-generated storytelling for vocabulary and motivation	Pair and group work, shared planning, peer feedback	Planning, production, presentation
10	Kristiawan et al. (2022)	EFL/ESL learners	Task-based digital storytelling	Pair and small-group work, negotiation, peer scaffolding	Topic selection, scripting, production, sharing
11	Diblas (2022)	Primary EFL	Multimodal storytelling for engagement	Group storytelling, idea sharing, peer support	Guided storytelling, collaborative production
12	Aldbashi (2021)	Grade 5 primary EFL	Teacher-led digital storytelling	Class discussion, idea exchange	Story delivery, class discussion
13	Zarifsanaiey et al. (2022)	Female elementary learners	Digital storytelling for socio-emotional learning	Group discussion, emotional sharing, reflection	Digital storytelling, guided discussion
14	Uslu & Uslu (2021)	Grade 4 primary EFL Turkey	Collaborative storytelling using digital tools	Group work, role allocation, joint media creation	Planning, scripting, production, narration, sharing
15	Imama (2023)	Grade 4 EFL	Project-based digital storytelling	Idea sharing, role division, joint story creation	Group project, collaborative producti
16	Choo et al. (2020)	Conceptual ESL/EFL	Digital storytelling framed as a multimodal pedagogical evolution of oral storytelling	Collaboration through discussion, shared interpretation, and feedback	Conceptual comparison of oral and digital storytelling processes
17	Smeda et al. (2014)	Primary literacy (Grades 4–6)	Multimodal storytelling for literacy learning	Group planning, role allocation, peer negotiation	Planning, production, editing, presentatio
18	Huda et al. (2022)	Primary EFL Indonesia	Student-generated digital storytelling	Small-group work, joint story creation, peer support	Brainstorming, production, presentation

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The synthesis of the reviewed studies shows that digital storytelling (DST) is widely implemented as a collaborative, project-based, and multimodal pedagogical approach in English teaching for young learners in EFL contexts. DST functions not only as a medium for language instruction but also as an instructional strategy that embeds collaboration as a

character education value. Most studies report that learners engage in group-based digital story creation involving joint planning, narrative development, and digital production. Through these shared processes, collaboration is developed experientially rather than taught explicitly, allowing learners to practice cooperation, shared responsibility, and peer support in authentic learning contexts. DST also creates a meaningful and participatory learning environment that encourages interaction, negotiation of meaning, and positive social relationships, positioning collaboration as a value emerging from social practice.

Collaboration within DST activities is consistently structured yet varied in form. The most common arrangement involves small-group or pair work designed to promote intensive interaction and active participation. Many studies highlight role-based collaboration, where learners assume responsibilities such as script writer, illustrator, narrator, editor, or presenter. This role distribution supports accountability, interdependence, and respect for individual contributions. Collaboration is further evident in joint decision-making, collective problem-solving, peer feedback, and social support when learners encounter linguistic or technical challenges. Some studies also report extended collaboration through whole-class discussions and group reflections following story presentations, reinforcing communication skills, empathy, and interpersonal awareness.

The reviewed studies further indicate that effective collaboration in DST is supported by structured instructional designs and intentional implementation. DST activities commonly follow systematic stages, such as pre-storytelling, storytelling, and post-storytelling, or equivalent phases of planning, production, and presentation. During the initial stage, teachers introduce learning objectives, storytelling elements, and expectations for collaborative work. The production stage represents the core of collaborative engagement, requiring learners to coordinate ideas, manage digital tools, and produce a shared digital story. Teachers generally assume the role of facilitators and providers of scaffolding, offering linguistic, technical, and social support without dominating the learning process. Reflection and presentation stages further reinforce collaboration by encouraging learners to evaluate both group processes and outcomes. Overall, these findings demonstrate that when digital storytelling is intentionally designed as a learner-centered and project-based activity, it effectively supports English language development while simultaneously fostering collaboration as a character education value among young learners in EFL classrooms.

A closer examination of the reviewed studies reveals that the effectiveness of collaboration in digital storytelling is influenced by variations in instructional design and group structure. Studies that employed clearly structured stages, such as planning, production, and presentation, tended to facilitate more consistent and meaningful collaboration compared to less structured implementations. In these structured settings, learners were better able to coordinate tasks, manage responsibilities, and engage in sustained interaction. In contrast, studies with less explicit guidance often reported more limited or uneven participation among group members. Additionally, differences in group size also influenced collaborative dynamics. Small-group arrangements (three to five learners) were found to promote more active participation, balanced interaction, and stronger peer support, whereas larger groups sometimes led to unequal contribution and reduced individual engagement.

Variations were also observed in the use of technological tools and learner contexts, which further shaped collaborative practices. Studies utilizing accessible and user-friendly digital tools tended to support smoother collaboration, allowing learners to focus more on content creation and interaction rather than technical challenges. Conversely, more complex tools sometimes required additional teacher support, which influenced the level of learner autonomy during collaboration. Furthermore, differences in learner characteristics, such as age level and prior experience with digital tools, affected how collaboration was enacted. Younger learners often required more structured guidance and teacher scaffolding, while more

experienced learners demonstrated greater independence in managing collaborative tasks. These findings suggest that effective integration of digital storytelling requires careful consideration of both technological affordances and learner readiness to optimize collaborative learning outcomes. Overall, these findings indicate that collaboration in digital storytelling is not only shaped by the activity itself but also by how it is pedagogically designed and implemented, highlighting the importance of structured guidance, appropriate group organization, and suitable technological support.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review explored the role of digital storytelling (DST) in promoting collaboration as a character education value in English teaching for young learners in EFL contexts. This review shows that digital storytelling supports collaboration in EFL learning for young learners. The findings reveal that digital storytelling promotes collaboration by engaging learners in shared meaning-making, joint decision-making, and collective responsibility through project-based, multimodal tasks. Collaboration is embedded naturally within the storytelling process, allowing young learners to develop cooperative behaviors, communication skills, and social awareness while learning English.

In terms of pedagogical implications, the findings of this review suggest that English teachers should intentionally design digital storytelling activities to promote collaboration rather than assuming it will occur naturally. Teachers are encouraged to organize learners into small groups to facilitate active participation and meaningful interaction. Assigning clear roles within groups, such as script writer, narrator, editor, or illustrator, can help ensure equal contribution and accountability among learners. In addition, digital storytelling activities should be structured into clear stages, including planning, production, and presentation, to guide learners through the collaborative process. Teachers also play an important role as facilitators by providing scaffolding, monitoring group interaction, and supporting both linguistic and technical aspects of the task. Finally, incorporating reflection and peer feedback sessions can further strengthen collaboration by encouraging learners to evaluate their group processes and outcomes.

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