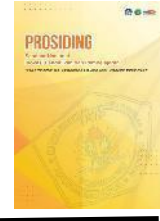




## Prosiding

Seminar Nasional Inovasi pendidikan dan Pembelajaran  
Fakultas Pendidikan Bahasa dan Seni  
IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro

Tema "Inovasi pendidikan dan Pembelajaran di era digital untuk Pengalaman Belajar  
Imersif"



# Learners' Meaning-Making and Perceptions in Multimodal Listening: A Phenomenological Study of TikTok-Based Digital Storytelling in Young EFL Learners

Triananda Rahmatul Izza<sup>1(✉)</sup>, Refi Ranto Rozak<sup>2</sup>, Meiga Ratih Tirtanawati<sup>3</sup>  
<sup>1,2,3</sup>Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro, Indonesia  
[trianandarahmatulizza@gmail.com](mailto:trianandarahmatulizza@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [refi.ranto@ikippgribojonegoro.ac.id](mailto:refi.ranto@ikippgribojonegoro.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>,  
[meiga\\_ratih@ikippgribojonegoro.ac.id](mailto:meiga_ratih@ikippgribojonegoro.ac.id)<sup>3</sup>

**abstrak**— Penelitian ini mengkaji proses pembuatan makna dan persepsi siswa EFL muda dalam pembelajaran menyimak melalui digital storytelling berbasis TikTok. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologi kualitatif dengan melibatkan delapan siswa dan satu guru bahasa Inggris di salah satu madrasah ibtidaiyah di Kabupaten Bojonegoro. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan jurnal reflektif siswa, yang selanjutnya dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif dan analisis tematik. Terdapat empat temuan dalam penelitian ini. Pertama, siswa membangun makna secara multimodal dengan mengintegrasikan subtitle, animasi, dan petunjuk visual untuk mengimbangi keterbatasan kosakata, sehingga mampu mengaitkan bahasa Inggris lisan dengan teks terjemahan dan gambar. Kedua, platform TikTok yang sudah dikenal siswa dalam keseharian mereka terbukti mengurangi kecemasan dan memunculkan respons afektif yang kuat, meliputi kegembiraan, antusiasme, dan peningkatan perhatian selama sesi pemutaran video. Ketiga, pemahaman kolaboratif berlangsung secara konsisten, di mana siswa aktif berdiskusi dengan teman sebaya, menegosiasikan makna kata, dan mencari bimbingan guru. Terakhir, pembuatan makna meluas ke tataran personal karena siswa menghubungkan narasi cerita dengan pengalaman hidup mereka sendiri, memperdalam keterlibatan interpretatif melampaui sekadar pemrosesan linguistik. Guru kelas mengonfirmasi temuan ini dan mengidentifikasi perancah subtitle-visual sebagai elemen instruksional yang paling efektif. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa digital storytelling berbasis TikTok berpotensi menjadi platform yang bernilai pedagogis untuk pembelajaran menyimak multimodal bagi siswa EFL muda.

**Kata kunci**— Digital Storytelling TikTok, Keterampilan Menyimak, Siswa EFL Muda, Kajian Fenomenologi.

**Abstract**— This study examines the meaning-making processes and perceptions of young EFL learners in learning listening through TikTok-based digital storytelling. This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach involving eight students and one English teacher at one of the Islamic elementary schools in Bojonegoro Regency. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and students' reflective journals, which were subsequently analyzed using an interactive model and thematic analysis. Four findings emerged from this study. First, students constructed meaning multimodally by integrating subtitles, animations, and visual cues to compensate for vocabulary limitations, enabling them to connect spoken English with translated text

and images. Second, TikTok as a platform already familiar to students in their daily lives proved to reduce anxiety and generate strong affective responses, including joy, enthusiasm, and heightened attention during video sessions. Third, collaborative comprehension occurred consistently, where students actively discussed with peers, negotiated word meanings, and sought teacher guidance. Finally, meaning-making extended to the personal level as students connected story narratives to their own lived experiences, deepening interpretive engagement beyond mere linguistic processing. The class teacher confirmed these findings and identified subtitle-visual scaffolding as the most effective instructional element. These findings suggest that TikTok-based digital storytelling has the potential to serve as a pedagogically valuable platform for multimodal listening instruction among young EFL learners.

**Keywords** – TikTok Digital Storytelling, Listening Skills, Young EFL Learners, Phenomenological Study.

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has brought fundamental changes to the way people learn, including in language education. Social media platforms are no longer merely spaces for entertainment, but they have also become spaces where students, including elementary school-aged children, are exposed to foreign languages naturally and repeatedly. In Indonesia, this reality is increasingly evident as the use of visual-auditory content among young learners continues to grow (Suardi & Al-Bahri, 2025). This situation should be seen as an opportunity to be leveraged in English language learning, particularly in the development of listening skills.

Rozak et al. (2019) found that listening instruction in Indonesia remains dominated by comprehension-based approaches that restrict input to classroom contexts and textbooks, leaving students without sufficient exposure to develop their listening abilities. This condition is further compounded by the fact that the materials used tend to be static, conventional audio resources that lack contextual grounding, an approach that fails to accommodate the learning characteristics of young learners, who require visual stimulation, meaningful context, and emotional engagement (Fathi et al., 2020). As a result, many students remain passive during listening activities and struggle to build comprehension independently.

Digital Storytelling (DST) emerges as one promising alternative. By combining narrative, moving images, sound, and text, DST creates a semiotically rich learning environment that supports multimodal meaning-making (Kress, 2010; Puspitasari et al., 2025). TikTok, as a platform already highly familiar to the younger generation, offers DST content that is short, engaging, and easily accessible. Several studies have demonstrated its potential in increasing listening exposure and learner motivation (Andini, 2024; Hadijah et al., 2023); however, research focusing specifically on young EFL learners at the elementary school level remains very limited.

Furthermore, most existing TikTok-based studies employ quantitative or Classroom Action Research approaches that prioritize measurable learning outcomes over an in-depth exploration of students' lived experiences (Maulina et al., 2022). Yet, to truly understand how young learners construct meaning from digital English-language content, a more personal and interpretive approach is needed. This study addresses that gap by employing a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore young EFL learners' meaning-making processes and perceptions in learning listening through TikTok Digital Storytelling. Specifically, this study addresses two research

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

## **METHODS**

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore young EFL learners' lived experiences in TikTok-based digital storytelling listening activities. Phenomenology was chosen because this study is concerned with how students perceive, interpret, and construct meaning from the learning experience, rather than measuring achievement through numerical data (Moustakas, 1994). This approach allows the researcher to capture the subjective and personal dimensions of students' engagement with digital listening content.

The study was conducted at MI Islamiyah Mojodeso, an Islamic elementary school in Bojonegoro Regency, Indonesia. The participants consisted of eight fifth-grade students and one English teacher, selected through purposive sampling as they were considered information-rich cases relevant to the phenomenon under investigation (Palinkas et al., 2015). The research was carried out over a two-week period with three instructional meetings, each lasting 70 minutes.

Data were collected through three instruments: classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and students' reflective journals. Observations focused on students' attentiveness, emotional responses, participation, and comprehension behaviors during the TikTok-based listening sessions. Interviews were conducted with all eight students and the class teacher to explore their perceptions, strategies, and personal interpretations of the learning experience. Reflective journals were completed by students after each video session to document their vocabulary findings, emotional responses, and personal connections to the stories.

The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014), which involves data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing, combined with thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify recurring patterns related to meaning-making and learner perceptions. To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher employed triangulation by cross-checking data from observations, interviews, and reflective journals, alongside member checking and peer debriefing to validate the interpretations.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the research findings based on data from classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with eight students and one English teacher, and students' reflective journals. Thematic analysis produced four interrelated themes.

### **Multimodal Meaning-Making**

Observations revealed a noticeable shift in the way students built comprehension after TikTok storytelling was introduced. Before the intervention, students struggled to retell the content of audio materials and often fell silent when asked to respond. After the TikTok videos were shown, students actively used

subtitles, animations, and visual cues simultaneously to construct understanding. Interview data confirmed this. APS described her strategy as follows:

"APS memahaminya melalui perbandingan antara kata/kalimat Bahasa Inggris dengan terjemahan yang ada dalam video kemudian APS susun untuk mempermudah pemahamannya."  
 [APS understood it through comparing the English words/sentences with the translations in the video, then APS arranged them to make it easier to understand.]

ZAK similarly stated:

"Melihat terjemahan dicocokkan dengan visualnya."  
 [Looking at the translation and matching it with the visuals.]

Reflective journal entries further reinforced this finding. Students were able to summarize story content in their own words, as LZZ, for instance, described The Ugly Duckling as the story of "*seekor anak bebek yang buruk rupa dan dikucilkan oleh teman-temannya.*" ("*An ugly duckling that was ostracized by its friends.*") These findings are consistent with Kress's (2010) multimodality theory, which holds that meaning is constructed through the integration of multiple semiotic modes rather than through spoken language alone. In relation to vocabulary development, Lutviya Sari et al. (2024) affirm that the selection of appropriate strategies in elementary school vocabulary instruction is highly determinative of how effectively students can absorb and retain new words, a finding that aligns with how students in this study leveraged multimodal cues to infer the meaning of unfamiliar English vocabulary.

### **Affective Engagement and Emotional Responses**

Before the intervention, the classroom atmosphere during listening activities was relatively passive and flat. After TikTok storytelling was implemented, students showed a striking transformation, as they laughed at humorous scenes, expressed empathy during sad moments, and spontaneously reacted to story developments. Seven out of eight students expressed feelings of happiness and enthusiasm in the interviews. NT stated: "*Asik dan seru.*" ("*Fun and exciting.*") MARS added: "*Berarti karena pembelajarannya menyenangkan.*" ("*It means because the learning is enjoyable.*") This reduction in anxiety is consistent with Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis, whereby TikTok's familiar interface helped students feel more comfortable engaging with English. This finding is further supported by Rozak (2023), who demonstrated that foreign language listening anxiety significantly affects students' engagement in listening activities, suggesting that reducing such anxiety, as observed in this study, is a critical prerequisite for meaningful listening development.

### **Collaborative Comprehension**

Observations showed that students consistently consulted peers, negotiated the meanings of unfamiliar words, and sought teacher guidance during viewing sessions. This collaborative pattern became even more pronounced after TikTok was introduced, reflecting the Zone of Proximal Development described by Vygotsky

(1978), in which social interaction enables students to achieve comprehension they could not reach independently.

### Personal Meaning-Making

The most profound finding of this study is how spontaneously students connected English-language story narratives to their own lived experiences. LZZ wrote in her reflective journal after watching *The Ugly Duckling*:

*"Saat TK aku tidak memiliki teman tapi saat kelas 1 aku mulai mempunyai teman walaupun masih sedikit."*

*("When I was in kindergarten I had no friends, but when I was in 1st grade, I started to have friends, although still only a few.")*

DR connected *Elephant Looking for Friends* to her own life:

*"Sama denganku. Suatu hari aku ingin bermain bersama dengan temanku tetapi temanku malah bepergian."*

*("Same as me. One day I wanted to play with my friend, but my friend went out instead.")*

ZAK even drew a moral reflection from *The Most Beautiful Bird*:

*"Keindahan sejati datang dari menjadi diri sendiri, jangan pernah berpura-pura menjadi sesuatu yang bukan dirimu."*

*("True beauty comes from being yourself; never pretend to be something you are not.")*

These personal connections demonstrate that the listening process that took place went far beyond linguistic decoding, as students integrated English-language content into their personal meaning-making systems, as described by Cameron (2001) regarding the holistic and personally connected nature of how young learners engage with language. The class teacher also confirmed these findings, stating that the combination of subtitles and visuals is the most effective instructional element as it helps students see the connection between English spelling and pronunciation. Overall, these findings suggest that the effectiveness of TikTok digital storytelling does not rest solely on the platform's features, but on intentional and well-designed pedagogy through which teachers and students together transform digital content into meaningful learning experiences (Puspitasari et al., 2025).

### CONCLUSION

This study examined how young EFL learners at one of the Islamic elementary schools in Bojonegoro made sense of their listening learning experiences through TikTok-based digital storytelling. The findings revealed that TikTok storytelling facilitated listening development in four key ways: students constructed understanding by integrating subtitles, animations, and visual cues at the same time; the platform's familiarity increased students' attention and generated genuine emotional involvement; comprehension grew through active collaboration with peers

and teacher; and meaning-making went beyond language itself, as students drew connections between the stories and their own lives.

Beyond skill development, the study found that engaging with TikTok storytelling was a deeply personal experience for many students. Some even expressed a desire to keep using digital platforms on their own for English listening practice outside the classroom which is an encouraging sign of growing learner independence.

In short, TikTok digital storytelling holds real promise as a listening learning tool for young EFL learners, especially when teachers use it with clear purpose and structure. Schools and educators may want to consider bringing short-form digital storytelling into listening lessons as a practical way to make English feel more relevant, enjoyable, and meaningful to young learners.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express sincere gratitude to the principal, teachers, and students of MI Islamiyah Mojodeso, Bojonegoro for their participation and openness throughout the research process. Appreciation is also extended to the supervisors for their invaluable guidance and feedback from the early stages of the research through to the completion of this article. The authors also acknowledge the support of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro for providing the academic environment that made this research possible.

## REFERENCES

- Andini, W. N. (2024). *Improving the Students' Listening Skill by Using Short Videos on the TikTok Application: An Undergraduate Thesis of the Eleventh Grade Students of SMK Ma'arif 04 Darurrohman*. Institut Agama Islam Negeri Metro.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Cameron, L. (2001). *CAMBRIDGE | Language Teaching Library Teaching Languages to Young Learners*. Cambridge University Press.
- Fathi, J., Derakhshan, A., & Torabi, S. (2020). The Effect of Listening Strategy Instruction on Second Language Listening Anxiety and Self-Efficacy of Iranian EFL Learners. *SAGE Open*, 10(2), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020933878>
- Hadijah, H., Widayati, U., Ilahi, T., & Puspitasari, E. (2023). Tiktok As a Tool of Autonomous Learning: Indonesian EFL Students' Voices. *Wiralodra English Journal*, 7(2), 89-98. <https://doi.org/10.31943/wej.v7i2.235>
- Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition* (First edition). Pergamon Press. <https://archive.org/details/principlespractiO00Okras>
- Kress, G. (2010). *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*. Routledge.

- Lutviya Sari, V., Heru Woro Prastiwi, C., & Ratih Tirnawati, M. (2024). The Analysis of Teachers' Strategies for Vocabulary at SDN Bakalan II Kapas. *Aisyah Journal of English Language Teaching*, 3(1), 245–253. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.30604/ajelt.v3i1.1617>
- Maulina, M., Ladjagang, R., Nasrullah, R., M. Esteban Jr, A., Hastianah, H., & Herianah, H. (2022). Conceptualizing Research Methods Used in Teaching Listening Skill Studies Using Social Media and Technological Tools. *Journal of Education and Teaching (JET)*, 3(1), 69–83. <https://doi.org/10.51454/jet.v3i1.140>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological Research Methods* (A. Viriding, Ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5), 533–544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Puspitasari, H. R., Widiarti, N., & Subali, B. (2025). Digital Storytelling for Enjoyable and Effective Learning in the Technological Era (2020–2025). *Pedagogia: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 14(2), 161–173. <https://doi.org/10.21070/pedagogia.v14i2.1905>
- Rozak, R. R. (2023). Portraying High Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Students' Engagement in The Implementation of Narrow Listening. *Professional Journal of English Education*, 6(6), 1327–1332.
- Rozak, R. R., Saleh, M., Bharati, D. A. L., & Sutopo, D. (2019). Reading While Listening (RWL) in an Extensive Listening Course to Reduce Student Teachers' Foreign Language Listening Anxiety (FLLA). *KnE Social Sciences*, 3(10), 349. <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v3i10.3916>
- Suardi, & Al-Bahri, F. P. (2025). Analysis of the Impact of Smartphone Use among Elementary School Children: A Study on Academic and Socio-Emotional Development. *International Journal Education and Computer Studies (IJECS)*, 5(1), 31–41. <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.35870/ijecs.v5i1.3999>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman, Eds.). Harvard University Press.