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Utilization of the Let's Read Application for Slow Learners: A Qualitative Study at Bina Mustika Kindergarten, Tarakan City

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ABSTRACT

Background. Inclusive education requires integrating digital media with responsive pedagogy to accommodate diverse learning needs. For slow learners, conventional teacher-centered approaches may provide limited opportunities for sustained attention, participation, and communication, creating a need for adaptive learning media.

Purpose. This study scrutinizes the use of the Let's Read application in learning for slow learners at Bina Mustika Kindergarten in Tarakan City, focusing on its implementation process, the teacher's role, children's learning experiences, and the obstacles and strategies involved in its use.

Method. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through direct classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with teachers and analyzed descriptively to identify patterns in implementation and the learning process.

Results. Teachers used Let's Read through digital stories, illustrations, questioning, and story retelling. Teachers adapted materials, guided activities, and provided individual support. Children showed varied attention, participation, comprehension, and communication. Key obstacles included differences in attention, language, comprehension, memory, and confidence. Teachers addressed these challenges through repetition, simplified explanations, visual cues, questioning, and individualized assistance.

Conclusion. Let's Read provides opportunities to support learning experiences among slow learners, but its use cannot be separated from responsive teacher mediation. In sum, the study contributes to inclusive early childhood education by showing that digital storytelling can support learning beyond literacy when combined with differentiated instruction and attention to individual learning needs.

KEYWORDS

Inclusive Education, Let's Read App, Slow Learners, Tarakan City

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INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought a significant shift in education, including early childhood education, which provides an essential foundation for children's development and their comprehension of themselves and their surroundings. In this context, application-based learning media are not merely complementary tools; they can become an means of creating more interactive and meaningful learning experiences (Husamah et al., 2025; Mardika & Restian, 2026; Subaita et al., 2026).

The use of digital media in early childhood education is increasingly relevant, specifically when learning activities need to accommodate differences in children's learning abilities and needs. In addition, several studies have proclaimed that digital media can assist children's learning motivation and provide richer visual and audio stimuli, which may help children understand concepts more concretely (Abbas, 2025; Bay & Hartman, 2025; Kirkorian et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2024). One form of digital media that has potential for early literacy activities is the Let's Read application, which provides digital storybooks supported by illustrations, audio narration, and various reading levels (Hariyanti et al., 2025; Maulidiyah, 2025). These features give children opportunities to engage with stories through multiple forms of representation.

Theoretically, such an approach is consistent with multimodal learning, in which the use of different modes of representation can drive children's comprehension and retention of information. Thus, the relevance of digital media becomes more complex in inclusive early childhood education. Children who have difficulty processing information may require learning activities that provide repeated explanations, concrete examples, visual assistance, and sufficient time to respond. Children identified as slow learners, for instance, may need more time to process information and may struggle when instructions are complex or presented only verbally. As a result, learning approaches for these children need to be adaptive and responsive to their individual characteristics, rather than relying solely on a uniform classroom approach (Nurhabibah et al., 2023; Salsabila & Apoko, 2025). In this background, digital media may provide additional opportunities for teachers to vary how they present learning materials. But the availability of technology does not automatically guarantee effective learning. Its usefulness depends on how teachers select, introduce, accompany, and integrate the media into learning activities.

Moreover, this issue is specifically important because implementing technology in inclusive learning remains a barrier. Teachers may continue to use general instructional approaches without sufficient differentiation, while limited understanding of the pedagogical use of digital media can become another barrier to effective implementation (Anatasia et al., 2023; Gunadi, 2026; Febrianti, 2025). Hence, the central issue is not simply whether digital media can be used with children with different learning needs, but how the media is used in classroom practice, how teachers mediate its use, how children respond to it, and what obstacles emerge during concretization. This issue is evident at Bina Mustika Kindergarten in Tarakan City, where learning activities involving children with slow-learning characteristics still face several practical objections (e.g., limited learning media, variations in children's learning responses, and the need for instructional strategies that are more responsive to individual learning needs. These conditions suggest examining classroom practices more closely, instead of assuming that introducing digital media will directly resolve existing learning difficulties. Understanding what occurs during the actual use of the Let's Read application is important because the effectiveness of digital media in inclusive early childhood education is closely related to the interaction among the application, teacher, and child.

Furthermore, the urgency of this issue is also reflected in the limitations of previous research. Existing subject and literature reviews have discussed the use of digital media in early childhood education. Still, many have emphasized learning outcomes, motivation, or other measurable effects and have predominantly employed quantitative approaches. These studies provide valuable evidence of the potential benefits of digital media, but they offer less explanation of what happens during the learning process itself. In particular, qualitative research remains limited on how teachers use digital literacy media with children who have slow-learning characteristics, how children experience the learning process, and how teachers respond to difficulties that arise during implementation. Nonetheless, a further gap concerns the research context.

Research on digital learning media is often situated in elementary education or conducted in relatively well-resourced, larger urban settings. As a consequence, the daily implementation of digital literacy media in early childhood education in local contexts such as Tarakan City remains less visible. This contextual gap matters because technology availability, teachers' pedagogical practices, classroom conditions, and children's learning characteristics may influence how an application is used. Findings from other educational levels or settings cannot simply be assumed to represent the situation at Bina Mustika Kindergarten.

Based on these gaps, this study's research gap is not the absence of research on digital media itself, but the limited understanding of how the Let's Read application is implemented and experienced in an inclusive early childhood classroom involving children with slow-learning characteristics. This study addresses that gap by shifting attention from whether digital media produces particular learning outcomes to the learning process: how the application is used, how teachers facilitate its use, how children experience the activities, and what obstacles and strategies emerge in practice. The originality of this study lies in its qualitative exploration of the interaction between digital literacy media, teacher practices, and children's learning experiences in an early childhood inclusive setting.

Therefore, instead of treating the Let's Read application as a predetermined solution, this study tests its actual use in the classroom. It considers both its potential and the challenges encountered during implementation. The study contributes contextual evidence concerning the use of digital literacy media for children with slow-learning characteristics, particularly in an early childhood education setting in Tarakan City.

In sum, the study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the use of the Let's Read application by testing classroom implementation, the teacher's role, children's learning experiences, and the obstacles and strategies that arise during its use. Based on the background, research gap, and research focus, the following research questions are formulated:

1. How is the Let's Read application utilized in the learning activities of children with slow-learning characteristics at Bina Mustika Kindergarten in Tarakan City?
2. What roles do teachers play in implementing the Let's Read application in learning activities?
3. How do children with slow-learning characteristics experience learning activities involving the Let's Read application?
4. What obstacles are encountered in using the Let's Read application, and what strategies are employed to address them?

On the other hand, with these research questions, the objectives of this study are to:

1. Describe how the Let's Read application is utilized in learning activities involving children with slow-learning characteristics.
2. Identify and describe the roles of teachers in implementing the Let's Read application in learning activities.
3. Describe the learning experiences of children with slow-learning characteristics while participating in activities involving the Let's Read application.
4. Identify the obstacles encountered in implementing the Let's Read application and describe the strategies used by teachers to address those obstacles.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore the learning process involving teachers and children with slow-learning characteristics in a natural classroom setting. This approach was selected because the study aimed to understand participants' experiences,

interactions, perceptions, and learning processes rather than measure relationships between variables or test statistical hypotheses (Ghaemi, 2025; Maral & Özdemir, 2025).

The study was conducted at Bina Mustika Kindergarten, Tarakan City, North Kalimantan, involving teachers and children. The research site was selected because it provided a relevant context for scrutinizing the use of the Let's Read application with children exhibiting slow-learning characteristics. Participants were purposively selected based on their relevance to the research objectives: children were included if they were enrolled in the selected class, identified as exhibiting slow-learning characteristics based on teacher or school information, and participated in activities using the application. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation (Daniel et al., 2024). Observation focused on classroom activities, teacher-child interactions, children's responses, and the use of Let's Read. Interviews with teachers explored their experiences, perceptions, strategies, and challenges, while brief, age-appropriate questions were used with children. Documentation included learning materials, photographs, teacher notes, and relevant records.

The researcher served as the main instrument, assisted by observation and interview guidelines. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Gamble & Hewlett, 2026; Willie, 2024). Data were coded and organized into themes related to teacher strategies, interactions, children's responses, application use, and learning challenges. Ethical procedures included school permission, informed consent from teachers and parents or guardians, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and protection of children's identities.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Process of Using the Let's Read Application in Learning for Slow Learners

Based on the observation and in line with RQ1, the findings show that the application was incorporated into classroom activities as a support tool instead of a substitute for teacher instruction. Its use followed a sequence of activities: listening to digital stories, observing illustrations, introducing new vocabulary, responding to simple questions, and retelling stories. This sequence was adjusted to the learning characteristics of slow learners, specifically their need for concrete examples, repetition, and additional time to process information. The learning process generally began with the teacher introducing the topic and directing students' attention to the story presented through the Let's Read application. Students were then encouraged to listen to the story while observing the accompanying illustrations. After the story, the teacher introduced or repeated key vocabulary and asked simple questions related to the content. Students were then encouraged to respond to the questions and retell parts of the story according to their individual abilities. When students had difficulty responding, the teacher repeated the explanation, provided prompts, or directed their attention to particular illustrations.

Moreover, the findings stress that the teacher's intervention remained an important part of every stage of the process. The Let's Read application provided stories and visual representations, but students did not interact with the material independently. Teachers determined the appropriate story, explained unfamiliar words, repeated information, asked questions, and provided individual assistance. This pattern shows that using digital media for slow learners is not simply a matter of providing access to technology. Yet, technology becomes useful when it is incorporated into a structured instructional process that responds to differences in students' abilities. The combination of digital stories and illustrations was particularly relevant to the learning needs observed in the classroom. Slow learners may experience difficulties when information is presented primarily through abstract verbal explanations.

In the observed learning activities, visual representations provided students with a concrete reference for understanding the information conveyed through the story. For instance, when learning about the procedure for ablution, illustrations depicting the sequence of activities helped students identify the order of the steps. The illustrations did more than make the material visually attractive; they provided an additional representation through which students could connect verbal explanations with observable actions. This finding is also confirmed by studies emphasizing the potential of digital media to support attention, motivation, and engagement by combining visual and auditory stimuli (Breuer et al., 2025; Kosch et al., 2025; Yaros, 2026). However, the relevance of these findings does not lie simply in the presence of multimedia elements. In the context of Bina Mustika Kindergarten, the value of the Let's Read application appeared to arise from the combination of the application, teacher guidance, and instructional adaptation. The application provided the content and visual stimulus, while teachers mediated the material according to students' comprehension levels. Thus, these findings offer a more contextual interpretation of the role of digital media in learning for slow learners.

On the other hand, the findings support a more critical position: technology does not automatically produce effective learning. Imran et al. (2023) emphasize that the effectiveness of digital media depends on students' abilities, teachers' readiness, and the media's suitability to learning needs. The observations at Bina Mustika Kindergarten reinforce this argument. Even though students showed interest in the stories presented through the application, their responses were not uniform. Some students followed the story, responded to questions, and retold parts of it more readily, while others required repeated explanations and individual assistance. This difference indicates that increased interest should not automatically be interpreted as equivalent to improved learning outcomes. Differences between students were also evident in their ability to maintain attention, understand story content, and remember newly introduced vocabulary. The students in the first year appeared to demonstrate better listening, comprehension, and retelling abilities during the observed activities. In contrast, students in the fourth to sixth years still encountered difficulties in several of these areas. Instead of indicating that the application was ineffective for older students, this finding suggests that chronological age alone does not determine students' responses to digital learning media. Characteristics such as individual cognitive abilities, previous learning experiences, attention span, and familiarity with learning activities may influence how students respond to the same instructional material.

As a result, using Let's Read requires teachers to adjust the pace, level of questioning, repetition, and amount of assistance provided to individual students. The process also changed classroom participation patterns. Before the application was incorporated into learning activities, teacher explanations occupied a greater proportion of the instructional process. After using Let's Read, students had more opportunities to observe, listen, answer questions, identify vocabulary, and retell stories. These activities created more opportunities for students to respond to the learning material rather than only receive explanations from the teacher.

Nevertheless, the findings should not be interpreted as a complete transformation from teacher-centered to student-centered learning. For slow learners, teacher direction remained necessary throughout the activities. The process was therefore better characterized as guided student participation, in which students became more actively involved while teachers continued to structure and facilitate the learning process. Additionally, this finding extends previous research on Let's Read, which has generally examined its use in relation to reading literacy, particularly among elementary school students and general student populations (Ginting et al., 2024).

The present study places the application in a different instructional context: learning for slow learners in kindergarten. In this setting, Let's Read was not used solely to teach reading. Digital stories and illustrations were also used to introduce vocabulary, support comprehension, stimulate responses, and convey everyday learning materials. The contribution of the present study lies in showing how an application commonly associated with literacy activities can be incorporated into a broader learning process for children with special educational needs. From a theoretical perspective, the findings strengthen the view that digital learning media should be understood as part of an instructional system rather than as an independent determinant of learning.

The effectiveness observed in this study resulted from the interaction between the characteristics of the learning material, the affordances of the application, the teacher's instructional mediation, and the individual characteristics of the learners. It explains why the same digital medium may generate different responses among students. The finding also deepens understanding of technology-assisted learning for slow learners: visual and auditory stimulation can facilitate access to learning materials, but the instructional value of that stimulation depends on how the teacher organizes and mediates it. The practical implication is that teachers working with slow learners should not treat the Let's Read application as a stand-alone learning solution. Teachers should accompany its use with short, clear instructions, repetition of key information, simple questions, visual references, and individualized support. Teachers also need to select stories and learning activities based on students' comprehension levels rather than assuming all students can respond to the same material in the same way. For schools, the finding suggests that providing digital applications alone is insufficient. Teacher capacity to integrate digital media into inclusive learning is equally important.

Overall, the findings show that the Let's Read application supported slow learners through a structured sequence of digital storytelling, visual observation, vocabulary development, questioning, and story retelling. The process was most meaningful when the application was accompanied by teacher guidance and adjustments to individual students' abilities. The findings suggest that Let's Read's contribution lies not simply in its technological features but in its capacity to become part of an instructional process that makes learning materials more concrete, participatory, and accessible to slow learners.

The Teacher's Role in the Implementation of Digital Media in Inclusive Learning

Observations and interviews at Bina Mustika Kindergarten in Tarakan City found that teachers played a primary role in implementing the Let's Read application in learning activities for children in the slow learner category. Their role extended to operating digital media and involved planning learning activities, selecting and adapting materials, guiding students during learning, evaluating their responses, and maintaining students' motivation to participate.

The first role identified was that of the teacher as a learning designer. Before using the Let's Read application, teachers selected stories and learning materials based on students' abilities and the activity's objectives. The selection considered language complexity, story length, theme relevance, and the clarity of accompanying illustrations. This preparation was important because not all students could necessarily understand the same digital material. Materials that were too long, linguistically difficult, or insufficiently supported by visual information could increase the difficulty for students who needed more time to process information. In addition, the findings stress that the use of Let's Read was not a spontaneous technological activity. Teachers first interpreted the available digital content and then determined how to incorporate it into classroom learning. This

process illustrates that technology integration involves pedagogical decision-making. The application provides content and technological features, but teachers determine which content is appropriate, how it should be presented, and what support students require. During classroom implementation, teachers functioned primarily as facilitators and instructional guides. Students were not simply directed to access the application independently. Instead, teachers introduced the story, directed students' attention to the illustrations, explained unfamiliar words, repeated important information, and asked questions about the story. When students had difficulty understanding the material, teachers simplified the explanation or repeated particular parts of the story.

Hence, this pattern connects to inclusive learning because the digital application does not automatically adjust its instructional process to the different abilities of individual students. Teachers make these adjustments through direct interaction with students. Their intervention makes it possible to slow down the learning process, provide additional explanations, or redirect students' attention when necessary. Thus, the teacher serves as the link between the content provided by the application and students' individual learning needs.

Moreover, the finding contributes to the broader debate about whether the increasing availability of digital technology reduces the essential role of teachers in learning. Some studies emphasize that digital technology can give students wider access to information and create opportunities for more independent learning, potentially changing the teacher's traditional role as the primary source of knowledge (Alieto et al., 2024; Mthembu et al., 2023). From this perspective, teachers increasingly function as facilitators rather than as the central providers of information.

Additionally, this study's findings offer an interpretation of that argument. At Bina Mustika Kindergarten, the availability of digital content did not result in independent learning by students. Instead, teachers remained actively involved in determining how students understood and used the content. It was particularly apparent when students encountered unfamiliar vocabulary, lost attention, or had difficulty responding to questions. The teacher's intervention was not made redundant by the technology, but it became part of the mechanism through which the technology could be used meaningfully.

This finding aligns with research emphasizing the continuing importance of teachers in technology-supported inclusive education. Digital media can present information through visual and auditory forms. Yet, it cannot independently identify why a particular student is experiencing difficulty, determine the appropriate level of assistance, or provide individualized encouragement in response (Jimenez et al., 2023; Ronzhes, 2023).

The observations in this study confirm this limitation in practical terms. The application's effectiveness depended on teachers interpreting students' responses and modifying their instructional approach accordingly. Teachers also served as communication guides. The use of Let's Read was not limited to listening to stories or viewing illustrations. Teachers used the stories as a basis for asking simple questions, introducing vocabulary, encouraging students to express responses, and asking them to retell parts of the story. These activities gave students opportunities to communicate their understanding rather than merely receive information. The teacher's questioning strategy was particularly important because students did not demonstrate the same level of confidence in expressing their responses. Some students responded readily, whereas others required prompting before attempting to answer. Teachers adjusted their questions and encouraged students when they hesitated.

In this way, the digital story became a starting point for interaction between teachers and students rather than an end in itself. Another role identified in the findings was that of teacher as motivator. Observations showed differences in students' willingness to participate. Some students

were enthusiastic when responding to questions or discussing the story, while others were more passive or hesitant. Teachers responded by providing praise, verbal encouragement, positive reinforcement, and emotional support. Such responses helped maintain students' willingness to participate in activities that required them to speak, answer questions, or retell stories.

This finding stresses that the teacher's role in inclusive learning extends beyond cognitive assistance. Students' participation is also shaped by their confidence and emotional comfort during learning. For slow learners, hesitation or delayed responses should not necessarily be interpreted as a lack of interest or inability to learn. Teachers need to recognize individual differences and create opportunities for students to respond without excessive pressure. As a result, teacher support operates at both instructional and interpersonal levels. Implementing Let's Read also revealed challenges related to differences in students' abilities. Students did not demonstrate identical levels of comprehension, attention, vocabulary retention, or ability to retell stories. Some students followed the material with relatively limited assistance, while others required repeated explanations and closer guidance. These differences required teachers to make continuous adjustments during the learning process.

Hence, while these differences may be seen as a weakness of the digital application, the findings yield the importance of differentiated instructional support. A single digital resource may be presented to several students, but the form and intensity of teacher assistance may need to differ. One student may need only a brief explanation, whereas another may need the story repeated, vocabulary simplified, or questions broken into smaller steps. The teacher translates a common digital resource into differentiated learning experiences. This finding also provides an important qualification to claims concerning the capacity of educational technology to personalize learning.

Even though digital applications may offer varied content and multimedia features, personalization does not necessarily occur automatically. In the setting observed in this study, teachers achieved personalization through their decisions and interactions with students. The teacher identified differences in students' responses and adjusted the learning process accordingly. Thus, technological affordances and teacher judgment worked together rather than operating as separate components. The findings further contribute to previous research on digital learning by shifting attention from the medium's technological characteristics to the human processes surrounding its implementation. Previous studies have often examined digital media in terms of its influence on engagement, literacy, or learning outcomes.

The present study shows that, in an inclusive early childhood setting, the teacher's role is central to how digital media is translated into classroom practice. It supports the argument that technology should not be treated as an independent solution to learning difficulties. Its educational value depends partly on teachers' capacity to select appropriate content, mediate interaction, identify individual needs, and adapt instruction (Alzoraiki et al., 2023; Kizilcec, 2024).

The theoretical implication is that technology integration in inclusive education should be understood as a mediated pedagogical process. The teacher is neither displaced by digital media nor simply positioned as an operator of technological tools. Instead, the teacher interprets the technology in relation to students' characteristics and learning objectives. This interpretation helps explain why the same application may produce different classroom experiences depending on how teachers use it. The present study highlights the importance of teacher agency in understanding technology-supported learning for students with special educational needs.

The practical implication is that schools should not focus solely on providing digital learning applications. Teachers also require sufficient competence to select digital content, adapt learning activities, communicate with students with different abilities, and provide appropriate support

during technology-assisted learning. Professional development should therefore integrate digital literacy with inclusive pedagogical competence. In the case of Let's Read, teachers need to understand not only how to operate the application but also how to select suitable stories, formulate simple questions, provide repetition, and adjust instruction to individual students.

In this sense, the researcher acknowledges several limitations of this study. First, the findings were obtained from one early childhood education institution, Bina Mustika Kindergarten in Tarakan City, so they reflect that institution's specific instructional context and should not be generalized to all inclusive early childhood education settings. Second, the study focused on teachers' roles during the implementation process and did not quantitatively measure the extent to which particular teacher practices affected students' learning outcomes. Third, the observed differences among students may have been influenced by individual characteristics and previous learning experiences that were not examined in depth.

Overall, the findings confirm that teachers play a multidimensional role in implementing digital media in inclusive learning. Teachers act as learning designers, facilitators, instructional guides, communication guides, motivators, and mediators between digital content and students' individual learning needs. The Let's Read application provides digital stories and visual resources, but teachers determine how those resources are selected, presented, explained, and adapted. The central finding is not that technology replaces conventional teaching, but that its usefulness in inclusive learning depends largely on the teacher's capacity to integrate digital resources with responsive, differentiated instruction.

The Children's Learning Experiences While Using the Let's Read Application

This study's findings address research question 3: Based on observations of learning activities at Bina Mustika Kindergarten in Tarakan City, children in the slow learner category used Let's Read through a combination of cognitive, behavioral, communicative, and emotional responses. Their experiences were reflected in how they attended to the learning activities, responded to stories and illustrations, participated in classroom interactions, communicated their understanding, and reacted emotionally to the learning process. The children's learning experience in this study is understood not only in terms of whether they could understand the learning material, but also in how they experienced and responded to the learning process.

One of the most visible aspects of the children's learning experience was their attention to the learning activities. Compared with activities that relied primarily on verbal explanations from the teacher, Let's Read served children with stories accompanied by visual illustrations. During the activities, children were observed looking at the illustrations, listening to the stories, and following the teacher's questions about the content. The combination of images and narration provided multiple ways for children to engage with the material. It was especially relevant for children who had difficulty maintaining attention when information was delivered only through verbal explanation. The illustrations also appeared to support children's attempts to understand the stories' meaning. In this context, functioning merely as decorative elements, the images provided concrete references that children could use when interpreting the information presented in the story. For instance, when learning about the procedure for ablution, illustrations depicting the sequence of activities provided children with a visual representation of the steps being discussed. Children could therefore relate the information in the story to actions that they had encountered in everyday life. It stresses that the learning experience was supported by the connection between digital representations and children's prior experiences. This finding highlights the learning experience itself. For children who have difficulty processing abstract information, concrete visual references

can make the learning material easier to approach. The children were not required to rely entirely on verbal explanations to construct an understanding of the material. Instead, they could observe, listen, and relate the information to familiar situations. The learning experience involved an interaction between the information presented through the application and the children's existing experiences. Using Let's Read also gave children more opportunities for active participation.

In the observed activities, children listened to stories, observed illustrations, responded to simple questions, learned new vocabulary, and attempted to retell parts of the stories. These activities changed the children's position from merely receiving verbal explanations to responding to and interacting with the learning material. Participation was not always expressed through complete verbal answers; for some children, looking at the illustrations, responding briefly, repeating vocabulary, or attempting to retell part of the story represented meaningful forms of participation. This finding connects to the idea that children's participation in inclusive learning should not be assessed solely by whether they can provide complete or correct answers. Slow learners may need more time to process information and may demonstrate their understanding through gradual responses. In the observed activities, some children needed prompting before answering, while others could respond more readily. Such differences indicate that participation occurred at different levels and that the learning experience should be understood as a process rather than as a uniform response among all children. The children's experiences also differed in terms of comprehension, vocabulary, and communication. Some children could follow the storyline, recognize several words introduced during the activity, answer simple questions, and retell portions of the story using short sentences. Their responses suggested that the story and accompanying illustrations provided a useful context for practicing communication. Here, instead of learning vocabulary as isolated words, children encountered the words within a story and subsequently used some of them when responding to questions or retelling the content. Other children experienced greater difficulty. Some had difficulty maintaining attention throughout the activity, while others needed the story or specific explanations repeated.

In several instances, children remembered only selected parts of the story and could not arrange the information into a coherent retelling. These differences demonstrate that exposure to the same digital material does not result in identical learning experiences. The application provided a common learning resource, but how children interacted with it depended on their individual attention, language ability, comprehension, and communication skills. The variation among children is one of the central findings of this study. Children who demonstrated stronger attention and communication abilities generally appeared more involved in the activities and were more readily able to respond to questions or retell parts of the story. Children who experienced greater difficulties with attention or language required more time and repeated support before responding. These observations suggest that the learning experience of slow learners cannot be represented as a single pattern. The same digital story can be experienced differently by different children because individual developmental characteristics mediate learning.

This finding qualifies the assumption that attractive digital media automatically produces a positive learning experience. Previous studies have emphasized digital technology's potential to create more engaging and interactive learning environments (Arifudin, 2025; Yadav, 2024). The observations in this study support this potential, notably regarding children's attention and opportunities for participation. However, the findings also demonstrate that visual and interactive features alone do not determine whether children will understand and respond to the material. Children's individual abilities and the instructional support surrounding the application remain important conditions shaping their experience. The findings bring the two perspectives together and

show they are not mutually exclusive. Let's Read provided a learning environment that children could engage with through stories, illustrations, listening, and interaction. At the same time, the children's responses varied considerably. Some children engaged readily with the material, whereas others required repetition, prompting, and additional explanation. The application created opportunities for a more varied learning experience, but it did not eliminate individual differences among the learners.

In addition, an important dimension of the children's learning experience was emotional response. During the observed activities, some children appeared more confident after successfully answering questions or receiving positive feedback. Successful participation could encourage them to attempt subsequent questions or communicate their understanding. In contrast, less confident children tended to remain quiet or required greater encouragement before responding. These observations suggest that children's experiences with digital learning are not exclusively cognitive; feelings of confidence, hesitation, enjoyment, and comfort can influence how they participate in learning activities. The emotional dimension is highly relevant in inclusive early childhood education because children's willingness to participate may depend on whether they feel secure enough to make mistakes and attempt responses. When children received encouragement after attempting to answer, participation could continue even when their responses were incomplete. The learning experience developed through repeated opportunities to attempt, receive feedback, and try again. This pattern confirms that the emotional climate surrounding digital learning is as important as the application's technological features. In more detail, these findings suggest that children's learning experiences with digital media should be understood as complex. The experience observed in this study connects attention to learning materials, interaction with visual and auditory information, participation in classroom activities, communication development, and emotional responses. This perspective delivers understanding of digital media effectiveness based exclusively on measurable academic outcomes. For slow learners, how children participate in and respond to the learning process is itself an important dimension of educational experience.

The findings also extend previous research on the use of Let's Read by demonstrating its potential beyond a narrowly defined literacy context. When the application was used only to develop reading-related skills, the activities observed in this study used digital stories and illustrations to introduce vocabulary, support comprehension, encourage communication, and connect learning materials with children's everyday experiences. This study contributes by demonstrating how a digital storytelling application can become part of a broader learning experience for children with special educational needs in an early childhood setting. The practical implication of these findings is that teachers should recognize that children may experience the same digital learning activity differently.

Learning activities using Let's Read should therefore allow sufficient time for children to observe, listen, respond, and repeat information. Questions can be adjusted to children's communication abilities, while stories and illustrations should be selected according to their level of comprehension. Children's participation should also be recognized in different forms, including brief verbal responses, vocabulary repetition, identification of illustrations, and attempts to retell stories. Such an approach can provide children with greater opportunities to participate without imposing identical expectations on all learners. Hence, the findings represent the learning context of Bina Mustika Kindergarten in Tarakan City and cannot be generalized directly to other inclusive early childhood settings. Second, the study focused on children's experiences during the learning process and did not quantitatively measure changes in attention, vocabulary, communication ability, or learning achievement over time. Third, children's emotional responses and levels of participation

were interpreted through classroom observations and may not fully capture children's subjective perceptions of their own learning experiences.

In sum, the children's learning experiences while using the Let's Read application included opportunities to attend to digital stories, engage with visual illustrations, participate in classroom activities, practice communication, and experience emotional responses such as confidence and hesitation. However, these experiences were not uniform. Differences in attention, language, comprehension, and communication resulted in different levels and forms of participation. The findings stress that the value of Let's Read for slow learners lies not simply in the presence of digital content, but in its capacity to provide accessible learning experiences that can be adapted to children's different ways of engaging with learning.

The Obstacles and Strategies Used to Optimize the Use of the Let's Read Application

The findings of this study indicate that using the Let's Read application to teach slow learners at Bina Mustika Kindergarten in Tarakan City involved several obstacles. These obstacles were not primarily linked to technical problems with the application, but to differences in children's attention, comprehension, language ability, memory, and confidence during learning activities.

The findings confirm that the same digital material could generate different responses among children. Some children were able to follow the story, answer questions, and recall parts of the material with relatively limited assistance, while others required repeated explanations and closer guidance. One of the main obstacles was differences in children's ability to maintain attention. According to the learning activities, some children were able to follow the story and observe the illustrations, while others were easily distracted by activities or stimuli in their surrounding environment. Difficulty maintaining attention affected their ability to follow the story sequence and understand information presented through the application. As a result, simply presenting a digital story was not always sufficient to sustain children's involvement throughout the activity.

To address this, teachers used shorter instructional segments, repetition, and direct prompts. Teachers redirected children's attention to specific illustrations, repeated key parts of the story, and asked simple questions about what had just been presented. These strategies allowed children to return their attention to the learning material without requiring them to process the entire story at once. The strategy did not change the technology itself, but adjusted how the digital material was presented and discussed. A second obstacle concerned children's comprehension and memory of the story content. Some children could identify individual parts of the story but struggled to explain the overall sequence. Others remembered notable words or images but could not retell the story coherently. These observations stress that exposure to the same story did not necessarily result in the same level of comprehension. For children who require more time to process information, the length and complexity of the material can influence their ability to retain and organize what they have learned. Teachers responded by using repetition, simplification, and step-by-step explanation.

In line with this, when children did not understand the previous material, teachers repeated key points and used simpler language. Teachers also used visual illustrations as references when asking children to recall particular events or activities in the story. This approach helped break the material into smaller units that were easier for children to process. The findings underline that repetition in this context should not be understood as merely repeating the same explanation; it involved presenting important information again in a form that was more accessible to individual children. A third obstacle was differences in children's language and communication abilities. Some children could answer simple questions and use short sentences to express their understanding,

whereas others were hesitant to speak or provided only limited responses. Difficulty communicating did not necessarily mean children did not comprehend the material.

In several situations, children appeared to recognize parts of the story but needed prompting before expressing their responses verbally. Teachers addressed this difficulty through simplified questioning and graduated prompting. Teachers formulated questions using familiar, straightforward language and gave children sufficient time to respond. When a child could not answer independently, the teacher provided clues or referred to the illustrations before asking the question again. This strategy created an intermediate level of support between independent responding and direct answers. It allowed children to attempt communication while reducing task difficulty.

Moreover, another obstacle identified in the learning process was children's confidence in participating. Not all children were willing to answer questions, retell stories, or speak in front of others even when they appeared to understand portions of the material. Some children remained silent or hesitated when they were asked to respond. This suggests that the barriers encountered during digital learning were not exclusively cognitive or linguistic. Emotional factors, particularly confidence and fear of making mistakes, also influenced participation. Teachers responded by providing verbal encouragement, praise, positive reinforcement, and individualized support. In this context, teachers did not focus only on whether an answer was correct; they acknowledged children's attempts to respond. When a child successfully answered a question or recalled part of a story, the teacher provided positive feedback and encouraged further participation. Such support created opportunities for children to experience successful participation and gradually become more willing to respond.

The findings also illustrate that individual differences required teachers to modify their strategies during the learning process. No single strategy worked the same way for every child. Some children required more repetition, while others needed additional questioning or visual cues. Similarly, some children could proceed to story retelling after listening once, whereas others needed several prompts before they could communicate what they remembered. The teachers adjusted the level of support according to children's responses during the activity. This pattern can be understood through the principle of differentiated learning in inclusive education. The objective is not necessarily to provide every child with identical instruction, but to provide appropriate support based on individual learning needs. In the context of Let's Read, differentiation occurred through adjustments in the pace of instruction, language used, questioning technique, repetition, and individual assistance. The application provided a common learning resource, while teachers adapted the learning process around that resource.

On the other hand, these findings cast more doubt on the assumption that digital media can independently overcome learning difficulties. Digital stories and illustrations offered opportunities for children to engage with learning materials, but the obstacles observed in the classroom remained connected to attention, comprehension, communication, memory, and confidence. Thus, attractive digital content did not eliminate the need for instructional adaptation, and the findings are consistent with the view that technology can support learning but does not automatically resolve differences in learners' abilities or guarantee meaningful participation. On the one hand, the findings also contribute to the discussion of inclusive education by showing that obstacles should not be understood simply as deficiencies located within individual children. Difficulties emerged through the interaction between children's characteristics and the demands of the learning activity. A story that was manageable for one child could be difficult for another because of differences in attention, language, or processing ability. As a result, optimizing the use of Let's Read required adjustments

to the learning process rather than expecting all children to respond to the digital material in the same way.

In short, this strengthens the understanding that technology integration in inclusive learning is a process of adaptation. The application provides digital content, but its educational usefulness depends on whether it connects to children's capacities and learning conditions. The strategies identified in this study repetition, simplified language, visual cues, graduated questioning, individualized assistance, and motivational support functioned as forms of pedagogical mediation between the digital resource and the learner; this helps explain why the same application can generate different learning experiences among children.

The practical implication is that optimizing the use of Let's Read requires teachers to prepare strategies for predictable learning barriers instead of relying solely on the application's features. Teachers should consider the length and complexity of stories, provide visual and verbal support, allow sufficient processing time, repeat essential information, and adjust questions to children's communication abilities. Teachers should also create an environment in which children can attempt to answer without excessive fear of making mistakes. For schools, this implies that providing digital learning applications should be accompanied by teacher development in inclusive pedagogy and technology-supported instruction.

To conclude, the findings show that the principal obstacles in using the Let's Read application were related to differences in attention, comprehension, memory, language and communication, and confidence. Teachers addressed these obstacles through repetition, simplified explanations, visual cues, graduated questioning, individualized assistance, and motivational support. The strategies demonstrate that optimizing digital media in inclusive learning is not achieved simply by providing children with access to an application. It requires continuously adjusting the learning process to the characteristics and responses of individual children. In this sense, effective use of Let's Read depends on the interaction among the digital resource, the instructional strategy, and children's diverse learning needs.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate four main points. First, Let's Read was implemented through digital storytelling, visual illustrations, vocabulary development, questioning, and story retelling. The application served as a supporting learning medium rather than a substitute for classroom instruction. Second, teachers played a central role in selecting appropriate content, adapting explanations, guiding learning activities, providing individual assistance, and maintaining children's motivation. Third, children experienced varied learning responses. Stories and illustrations provided opportunities for greater attention, participation, communication, and confidence. However, these experiences differed according to individual abilities in comprehension, language, attention, memory, and emotional readiness. Fourth, the main obstacles involved differences in children's learning characteristics rather than technological limitations. Teachers addressed these challenges through repetition, simplified explanations, visual cues, graduated questioning, individualized assistance, and positive reinforcement. These findings have practical implications for inclusive early childhood education. Digital applications should not be promoted as stand-alone solutions but integrated with instructional strategies that respond to individual learning needs. Teacher competence in selecting digital content, adapting instruction, and providing appropriate assistance is important for meaningful technology integration. In sum, this study discusses Let's Read beyond its conventional association with literacy development. It confirmed how digital storytelling can support broader learning experiences among slow learners in an early childhood inclusive setting,

notably through the interaction of digital media, teacher mediation, and children's individual characteristics. But this study is limited by its focus on one kindergarten and its qualitative emphasis on classroom experiences. It does not quantitatively establish changes in learning outcomes or determine which instructional strategy is most effective. Future research involving multiple schools, longer observation periods, and complementary quantitative measures could provide stronger evidence regarding the sustained educational value of digital media for slow learners.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used Grammarly to assist in improving grammar, clarity, and academic tone of the manuscript. After using this tool, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and took full responsibility for the content of the publication.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conducted the Research and Wrote the Manuscript.
Author 2: Supervised the research, refined the methodology, and Reviewed the Manuscript.
Author 3: Provided Academic Supervision, Validated the Findings, and Critically Reviewed and Edited the Manuscript.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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