

Enhancing Students' Speaking Abilities through Paired Storytelling Strategies

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Abstract: Enhancing Students' Speaking Abilities through Paired Storytelling Strategies.

This study examined how using storytelling as a teaching strategy affected students' ability to communicate more clearly. The participants included thirty students from SMP Muhammadiyah 3 Yogyakarta, chosen through purposive sampling and split into experimental and control groups. The experimental group received storytelling instruction over four consecutive sessions, while the control group did not. Both groups were assessed on their speaking skills before and after the intervention. Results showed that the experimental group's post-test mean score was 96.0, compared to a pre-test mean score of 72.0. Specifically, the control group's mean post-test score was 64.0, an increase from the pre-test score of 60.0. The oral proficiency scores from each indicator demonstrated that students in the experimental group improved after being taught using paired storytelling, while the control group's scores did not improve. A one-group t-test demonstrated that post-test scores were significantly higher than pre-test scores for both groups, with t-values of -34.708 for the control group and -6.433 for the experimental group, both significant at the 0.000 level, well below the 0.05 threshold. These findings suggest that implementing storytelling in EFL classes can effectively improve students' speaking skills.

Keywords: speaking skill, storytelling, improvement.

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■ INTRODUCTION

Oral communication skills are essential for today's foreign language learners, especially those taking English classes. Students must be prepared to compete in today's globalized world, where competition is fiercely growing. To study English, students must become proficient in all four skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Speaking is the most crucial of the four abilities for communication. A vital component of the language acquisition curriculum is communication skills.

To effectively communicate through spoken language, students must speak. Even in casual talks, it may be difficult for students who are not

proficient in a foreign language to describe who they are, how they feel, and what they think. Speaking is a two-way interaction between the speaker and the listener. Speaking is communicating with someone else by sending a message to them, who then has to interpret the informational message. In line with Sembiring and Ginting (2019), students verbally communicate their ideas, opinions, and desires. When someone speaks, they employ their words to have an instrumental action. Fundamentally, speaking is an instrumental act in which speakers impart information and modify the listeners' state of knowing as cited by Clark (2006).

As a result, developing your speaking abilities in English is critical since it will help you in your future professional and everyday communication. Speaking abilities support students in directing their self-reflection and realizing their potential. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has made it easier for higher education learners to study and advance in other nations, allowing them to do so more quickly (Laningan, 2012).

One of the most significant current discussions in speaking is that many students still need help with their speaking abilities. They always believe that speaking is a complex activity, which makes them feel shy about speaking up, particularly in front of the class. Students sometimes experience anxiety and decreased grammar, pronunciation, and speaking confidence. Since most students still need help with vocabulary, they frequently use the same term repeatedly when speaking, which hinders effective communication.

Low learning motivation is the other issue that students are dealing with, as seen by their behaviour in the classroom. When the teacher began to present the content, some students paid less attention, but a lot still needed to show more interest in the learning task. Additional factors include students' unfavourable attitudes regarding learning a foreign language. They appeared nervous during the lesson and lacked the confidence to speak up. The majority of them were averse to making mistakes when speaking. The results indicated that students' inability to learn how to communicate was impacted by their lack of encouragement. According to Dewi (2016: 342), there are four reasons why students have low speaking skills: (1) they do not have enough time to practise speaking; (2) they do not have enough vocabulary; (3) they do not find speaking interesting because of their teaching style; and (4) they cannot connect the speaking material to their everyday lives.

Student-centred instruction is being prioritized in EFL classrooms instead of teacher-centred instruction. In tandem with this change, language teachers have employed various tools to give their students the information and abilities necessary to become self-sufficient learners (Abdel-Hack & Helwa, 2014). The selection of proper media dramatically impacts the effectiveness of speaking for students. One technique to help with speaking improvement is storytelling.

Storytelling is a particularly effective method for helping knowledge stick in your mind. This method improves vocabulary memory and linguistic intelligence, creating a more engaging and joyful learning atmosphere. Students gain confidence and fluency in their English language skills as they work together and exchange stories in pairs. Storytelling about nature may foster optimistic outlooks and a desire to learn more through engaging, demanding, and inspiring content (Yildirimand, 2014). Furthermore, studies have shown that employing storytelling as a teaching strategy might improve students' speaking abilities. Syafryadin, Salsniawati (2019) stated that teaching students how to tell stories enhances their speaking skills and learning activities. Other studies have demonstrated that storytelling is a very successful and efficient method on improving the speaking ability of intermediate EFL learners (Zare-Behtash, 2016).

This study focused on paired storytelling this is one of the student centered methods that can increase students' motivation in learning, especially students in junior high school as attest by Hava (2021) in his research. The interrelationship between teaching methods and paired storytelling is critical for developing speaking skills. Swari (2022) pointed out that paired storytelling involves students working together to create and narrate stories, fostering collaboration and interaction. In communicative language teaching, paired storytelling aligns with

the method's focus on real-life communication and active language use. Refers to research conducted by Alfatihah et al., (2022), they elucidated that paired storytelling can also be a key component of project-based learning (PBL), where students work on extended projects such as creating a storybook. It provides a practical application for classroom learning, making abstract concepts more concrete.

Incorporating paired storytelling into various teaching methods enhances the overall effectiveness of language instruction. For instance, in communicative language teaching, students benefit from the natural use of language as they collaborate on storytelling tasks, enhancing their communicative competence. The social constructivist approach is well-supported as students engage in storytelling, learning through peer interaction, and negotiation of meaning (Syafii et al., 2021). Aligned with research by Sitanggang et al. (2023), they highlighted that the direct method benefits from storytelling as it allows immersion without translation, ensuring that students think and express themselves directly in the target language. Overall, paired storytelling offers a versatile and engaging way to practice and enhance speaking skills across different teaching methodologies.

There are numerous pedagogical approaches available for teaching speaking skills, allowing educators to select the most appropriate strategy based on students' specific requirements and the challenges students encounter during the process of acquiring speaking proficiency. Although the use of storytelling techniques to improve students' speaking skills is becoming more popular, thorough research on the long-term efficacy and generalizability of these techniques for use with various student populations and educational environments is still lacking. Understanding the long-term effects and flexibility of storytelling techniques may be helpful for teachers seeking research-based strategies to support oral communication abilities.

Therefore, this research aims to explore and demonstrate the effectiveness of paired storytelling as a pedagogical tool in addressing and overcoming the common challenges faced in developing speaking proficiency. The urgency stems from the belief that incorporating paired storytelling in teaching can revolutionize students' speaking abilities in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Consequently, this present research aims to explore the full potential of paired storytelling in enhancing students' speaking abilities, thereby providing deeper insights into its relevance in modern language education among students at SMP Muhammadiyah 3 Yogyakarta.

■ METHOD

The researcher sought to determine any changes in the student's speaking abilities following treatment with paired storytelling using an experimental design and quantitative methodology. A type of research known as quantitative research focuses on gathering and evaluating numerical data. The researcher aimed to assess the increase in students' speaking abilities following paired storytelling instruction by employing quantitative approaches. This study uses an experimental research design. In order to determine the students' starting abilities, a pre-test was given to them prior to treatment in this study includes spoken assessment, and a post-test was administered following treatment. There will be four administrations of the treatment. This study will take place from April 3rd to April 30, 2024.

The population of this study were First grade students SMP Muhammadiyah 3 Yogyakarta during the second semester 2023/2024 academic year consisting of students divided into four classes which each class consist of approximately 30 students. Sample Random Sampling (Sugiyono, 2012: 81) is the name given to the probability sampling approach. In contrast, the experimental and control groups were not

randomly chosen. Each group was given a final test following a different type of therapy (the experimental group employed storytelling, while the control group did not). Thus, the students in classes VII C (bilingual class) as the experimental group and VII D (bilingual class) as the control group of SMP Muhammadiyah 3 Yogyakarta made up the research sample. Thirty samples from class VII A and thirty further samples from class VII D in total.

The two types of variables employed in this study were independent and dependent. In contrast to the independent variable, the dependent variable depended on another variable. The study's independent variable was the application of storytelling as a method. The dependent variable was speaking, which storytelling could help with

After determining the population and sample, the researcher started selecting the materials that would be given for the treatment. The research adopted and searched for interactive materials on the internet. The next step was determining the pre-test during the first meeting to assess the students' prior knowledge and speaking abilities before receiving treatment from the teacher in both the control and experimental groups. This study consisted of four meetings. Data on the students' speaking abilities were gathered using speaking exams before and after storytelling was incorporated into the curriculum.

In the control group, the researcher divided the students into two groups and asked them to describe a picture presented by the teacher based on the materials given by the teacher, while in the experimental group, the teacher only used textbooks. The researcher recorded the scores that the students received on this initial test. Following that, storytelling was used to treat the students over four sessions in the control group. The final phase of the study involved administering

a post-test. Following the treatment, the researcher conducted the post-test using the same procedures as the pre-test in both classes.

Supporting information above the research instrument utilized in this study was a speaking exam, wherein students were provided with an image by the teacher and tasked to describe every detail while also transforming it into a brief story to present in front of the class. The oral proficiency score categories defined by Brown (2001) were used to assess several indicators examined by the researcher in this study. These include grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and pronunciation, all essential elements for measuring students' speaking abilities that consist of fourth scores indicator for each of the elements.

Reliability and validity are crucial requirements in any study (Creswell, 2018). According to Cohen et al. (2018), research validity is particularly critical because the credibility of a study can impact the utility of its instruments. Maintaining a high-content index necessitates ensuring the validity and reliability of research. Consequently, both validity and reliability aspects are thoroughly examined in this study, with a specific focus on quantitative validity. To evaluate the validity and reliability of the instrument used, three trained professionals verified its appropriateness. Additionally, the Split-Half Method (odd-even) was employed in this study, and the Pearson Product-Moment method was used to calculate the coefficient of reliability between the odd and even groups.

In analyzing the data gained, the researcher using some steps to analyze students' score. The first step was scoring students pre-test and post-test will be measured using the oral proficiency score categories that Brown (2001) developed. The second step was classified students score by using scoring rubric that consist of five categories as follow:

Table 1. Classification score rubric

Classification	Scale	Rating
Excellent	5	90-100
Very Good	4	80-89
Good	3	70-79
Fair	2	60-69
Poor	1	≤ 59

$$\text{Student score} = \frac{\text{Total correct answer}}{\text{The maximum score}} \times 100$$

The individual mastery was calculated by using the following formula: After that the researcher tabulating the result of the test and finding the mean score of pre-test and post-test from both classes using The Statistical Programmed for Social Sciences (SPSS) and the repeated measure t-test.

■ RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data from this research demonstrates that the experimental group exhibited significant improvement after implementing storytelling as a treatment. The post-test mean score for this group

was 77.46, with a standard deviation of 10.63. The thirty students in the experimental group showed a marked increase in speaking skills, with post-test scores ranging from 64.0 to 96.0, compared to pre-test scores ranging from 40.0 to 72.0. However, with a post-test mean score of 51.86 and a standard deviation of 5.40, the control group—which received no treatment—exhibited very modest improvement. The statistical distinction between the experimental and control groups suggests that the story telling significantly enhanced the speaking abilities of the experimental group.

The pre-test was given to students to test students' speaking ability before being given treatment using paired storytelling learning models. While the post-test was given after the treatment to be able to know the comparison of students' speaking ability. The results below are a form of evaluation of the effectiveness of using paired storytelling as a learning technique to help students speak better by conducting a thorough analysis with the aim of improving speaking proficiency among English learners at the junior high school level. The results of students' speaking scores of Experimental Class in the pre-test and post-test are as follows:

Table 2. The percentage of students pre-test and post-test score of experimental class

No	Classification	Score	Pre-test		Post-test	
			F	P	F	P
1	Excellent	90-100	-	-	5	16.67%
2	Very Good	80-89	-	-	7	23.33%
3	Good	70-79	2	6.67%	9	30%
4	Fair	60-69	8	26.67%	9	30%
5	Poor	<59	20	66.67%	-	-
Total			30	100%	30	100%

Based on the table above, none of the 30 students who took the pre-test scored in the 80-100 range, which would classify them as “Very Good” or “Excellent.” However, 2 students (6.67%) fell into the “Good” category. Additionally, more than half of the participants (66.67%) received low scores, placing them in the “Poor” category, with the remaining students classified as “Fair.” In the post-test scores, 5 students (16.67%) achieved “Excellent” ratings, and 7 students (23.33%) were classified as “Very Good.” The number of students in the “Good” and “Fair” categories was the same, with 9 students (30%) in each category.

The table demonstrates a marked improvement in student performance from the

pre-test to the post-test. Significant shifts from the “Poor” category to higher categories (“Fair,” “Good,” “Very Good,” and “Excellent”) highlight the effectiveness of the intervention. Overall, the data suggests substantial progress in the students’ abilities, with a notable decrease in lower scores and an increase in higher scores.

Meanwhile in similar to the experimental class, pre-tests and post-tests were also administered to the control class to assess the students’ speaking abilities. However, they did not receive the special treatment given to the experimental class. The students’ speaking scores in the pre-test and post-test are as follows:

Table 2. The percentage of students pre-test and post-test score of control class

No	Classification	Score	Pre-test				Post-test			
			F	P	F	P	F	P		
1	Excellent	90-100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	Very Good	80-89	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	Good	70-79	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	Fair	60-69	2	6,67%	3	10%				
5	Poor	<59	28	93,33%	27	90%				
Total			30	100%	30	100%				

Based on the previous table, the pre-test results of control class students show that the majority of students (93.33%) got a score in the “Poor” category, and only a small portion (6.67%) got a score in the “Fair” category. Then the results of the post-test, there was a slight increase, with the remaining 3 students (10%) getting a score in the “Fair” category, up from 2 students (6.67%) in the pre-test. The number of students in the “Poor” category slightly decreased

from 28 (93.33%) to 27 (90%). Similar to the pre-test, no students scored in the “Good,” “Very Good,” or “Excellent” categories.

The table highlights that while there was a small improvement in student scores from the pre-test to the post-test, the majority of students remained in the “Poor” classification. The intervention showed some positive impact, as seen by the slight increase in the number of students moving from “Poor” to “Fair”.

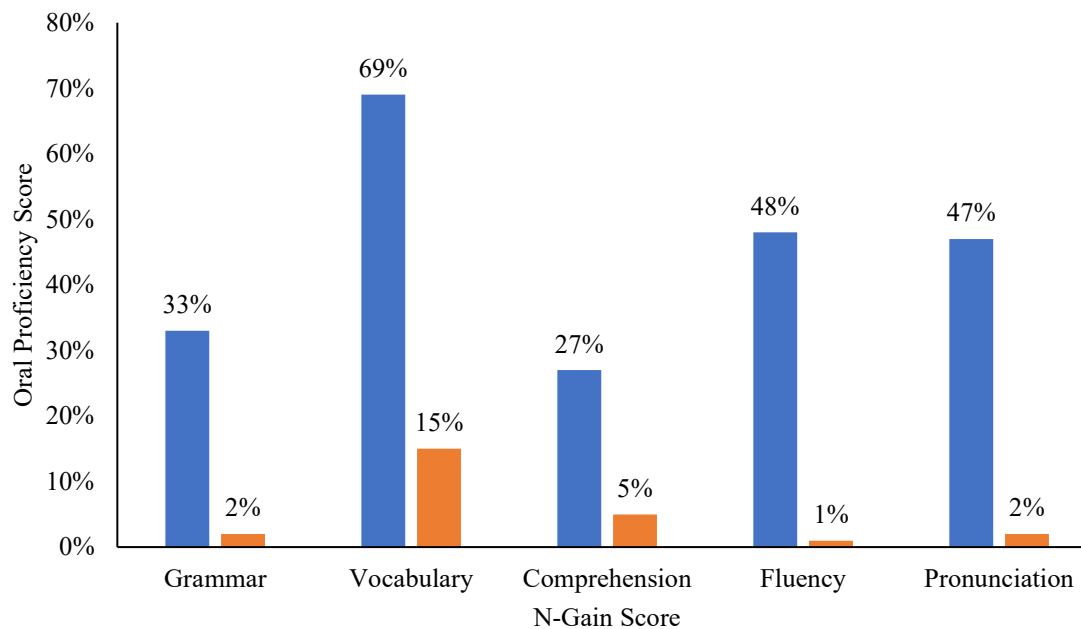


Figure1. Students' difficulty of learning indicators

Difficulties in Learning Speaking

Students' difficulties in speaking were seen from the results of the N-Gain score. To start with, figure 1 shows the most difficult indicators of each learning indicator in speaking skills.

The outcomes of the speaking test serve as evidence. First, Figure 1 displays the students' scores for each learning indicator related to the speaking skill material in both classes. Examining the first learning indicator, which is grammar, Figure 1 illustrates that grammar indicators are the most challenging after vocabulary, which can be confirmed by the results of the N-gain-score of students in the control class, which did not receive any treatment and did not show a significant increase even after the post-test. In contrast, the experimental group showed a significant increase in their grammar scores after receiving treatment using storytelling to improve their speaking skills. It also proves by a previous study by Tiana, Jimmy & Lestari (2023) with this result as they also found students difficulties related to grammar.

Meanwhile, for the second learning indicator the most difficult indicator, students' vocabulary in the experimental class improved by 69% after receiving the treatment, while students in the control group achieved a total score of 15%, this also proves by the finding of Santoso (2014) he stated that students still have lack of vocabulary mastery that influenced students speaking skill. For the comprehension indicator, students in the experimental class improved by 27%, whereas students in the control group still had a poor score, with only a 5% increase. In the fourth indicator of oral proficiency, students' scores improved by 48% after the treatment, while students in the control class only achieved a 1% increase. Lastly, for the pronunciation indicator, students in the experimental class scored 47%, whereas those in the control class scored only 2%. In line with the study by Bakar & Abdullah (2014) stated in his study that pronunciation is one of a crucial aspect of speaking that need to be improve. From the data above it can conclude that the highest cause of student's difficulties of speaking was the

lack of student's vocabulary, followed by fluency and pronunciation.

Based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistical test, the pre-test and post-test data for the experimental class and the control class had a $p < 0.05$ which indicates that the data of the two groups were normally distributed. The pre-test result for the experimental group is 0.27, and the post-test normality value is 0.10. The pre-test and post-test results for the control group are 0.07 and 0.27, respectively. Since all test

results exceed 0.05, H_0 is accepted. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Paired Sample t-test was used to test the hypothesis. The hypothesis was accepted if $\text{sign} < p$, where $p = 0.05$.

Students score after being taught by the method

The data on the scores of students' speaking abilities were obtained from the significance of each indicator as follows:

Table 3. Paired samples test of indicator 1

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Post									
Pair 1	Experimental - Post Control	.933	.907	.166	.595	1.272	5.635	29	.000

Table 4. Paired samples test of indicator 2

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Post									
Pair 1	Experimental - Post Control	1.433	.568	.104	1.221	1.646	13.814	29	.000

Table 5. Paired samples test of indicator 3

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Post									
Pair 1	Experimental - Post Control	1.200	.961	.176	.841	1.559	6.837	29	.000

Table 6. Paired samples test of indicator 4

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Pair 1	Post Experimental - Post Control	1.367	.999	.182	.993	1.740	7.490	29	.000

Table 7. Paired samples test of indicator 5

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Pair 1	Post Experimental - Post Control	1.433	1.006	.184	1.058	1.809	7.802	29	.000

Based on the table above, a paired sample t-test was conducted to compare the post-test results of the experimental and control groups. The test revealed a significant difference in students score of each indicator of speaking skills for the two groups, indicated by a p-value of 0.000. The alternative hypothesis of each indicator is accepted, and the null hypothesis is rejected since the p-value is less than the conventional thresholds ($p < 0.01$ or $p < 0.05$).

The result of this study is in line with some previous research. This study corroborates the findings of Ramalingam & Mathiyazhagan (2022), which showed that significant improvements were observed in students' comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency in speaking skills after participating in digital storytelling sessions. Digital storytelling may be an effective pedagogical approach to enhance students' speaking abilities in the classroom and beyond, thereby improving their mother tongue as a second language in schools.

Elenein (2019) also found that the study suggested using digital storytelling to enhance students' oral performance at primary and secondary schools. The study's results indicated that digital storytelling significantly improved the oral communication skills and performance of the experimental group of fifth-year EFL primary students. Digital storytelling motivated fifth-year primary students to learn more actively, communicate creatively, and engage in daily oral communication.

This study aligns with the findings of Juraid & Ibrahim (2016), who conducted a previous study. The results of their study revealed that using storytelling to develop the oral and interpersonal communication skills of English Majors at Taibah University yielded "beyond expectations" outcomes. This demonstrates that using the storytelling method in teaching VII grade students, specifically those in VIIA and VII B at SMP Muhammadiyah 3 Yogyakarta, significantly affects their speaking skills.

■ CONCLUSION

This study aimed to ascertain if paired storytelling could help students improve their speaking skills. The experimental and control groups' post-test outcomes improved above their pre-test results, as indicated by the problem formulation, study objectives, hypothesis testing, and analysis results. The standard deviations provided additional insights, and the mean values increased significantly. For example, the mean value in the control class (VII B) rose from 60.0 to 64.0, while in the experimental class (VII A), it increased from 72.0 in the pre-test to 96.0 in the post-test. The use of paired storytelling as an instructional technique in the classroom has been shown to enhance students' speaking skills. Paired storytelling as a tool in the classroom has been shown to effectively enhance students' speaking skills. The utilization of paired storytelling in seventh grade of SMP Muhammadiyah 3 Yogyakarta demonstrated superior efficacy compared to conventional teaching methods employed in other classes, as evidenced by the contrasting result of scores seen between the experimental and control groups.

These results confirm the effectiveness of the researcher's methods in enhancing the speaking abilities of students at SMP Muhammadiyah 3 Yogyakarta, demonstrating the impact of storytelling. The implementation of the paired storytelling technique during the learning process has been found to effectively stimulate students' confidence in participating in class discussions. Consequently, students who are originally likely to be passive in their learning turn into engaged participants. The paired storytelling technique facilitates active student engagement in the learning process by promoting cooperative learning between pairs of students. Furthermore, the utilization of the paired storytelling technique introduces an innovative aspect to the learning process and is highly enjoyable. Therefore, teachers can utilize the paired storytelling technique as a method to enhance students'

English-speaking skills. However, the study has several limitations. The intervention period is relatively brief, consisting of only four sessions: one pre-test session, two treatment sessions, and one post-test session. This limited duration may not fully capture the long-term effects and sustainability of the storytelling intervention on students' speaking skills. A longer treatment period and follow-up assessment would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the intervention's impact. Future research should consider extending the intervention period, increasing the sample size, and using a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods to validate and expand upon the findings of this study.

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