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TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH STORYTELLING FOR SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of storytelling on enhancing the speaking skills of tenth-grade students at SMA Gajah Mada Bandar Lampung. The research aimed to assess the influence of storytelling techniques on students' speaking abilities, focusing on vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and grammar. A quasi-experimental design was employed, utilizing pre-test and post-test assessments to measure outcomes. Fifty participants were randomly selected and equally assigned to an experimental group and a control group. Over eight weeks, the experimental group received storytelling-based instruction, while the control group followed the standard speaking curriculum. The pre-test and post-test, designed explicitly to evaluate speaking (not reading) proficiency, emphasized four criteria: vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and grammatical accuracy. Data analysis using paired-sample and independent-sample t-tests revealed a statistically significant improvement in the experimental group's speaking performance compared to the control group. The findings demonstrate that storytelling effectively enriches vocabulary, sharpens focus, fosters creativity, and strengthens speaking skills among secondary-level learners. These results suggest that integrating storytelling into language instruction can be a valuable pedagogical strategy for improving students' oral proficiency. Educators may consider adopting storytelling techniques to complement traditional speaking curricula.
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Keywords: *storytelling, speaking skills, language learning, SMA students, experimental study*

INTRODUCTION

People are inherently social beings who constantly engage and communicate with others. One of the primary ways individuals connect is through speaking, which serves as the foundational process in interpersonal communication. Verbal communication, in this regard, functions as a tool to convey opinions, desires, emotions, and intentions. In the current era of globalization, where English is often regarded as an international language, the ability to communicate effectively in English is not merely beneficial but essential—particularly for senior high school students preparing to enter global academic and professional environments. According to Aye and Phyu (2015:1), practical English-speaking skills are indispensable across all aspects of life in this modern, interconnected world.

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One pedagogical method that supports speaking development is storytelling. According to Aliyah (2011), storytelling can motivate learners, particularly children and adolescents, by cultivating their imagination, awareness, and participation in diverse communicative contexts. Storytelling provides a space where learners can verbalize their inner thoughts, emotions, and experiences, thereby reinforcing internal motivation and self-expression. Speaking is a personal and complex act, influenced by sensory input, emotional states, and intellectual responses. Consequently, the expression of ideas and emotions plays a vital role in the communication process, making storytelling a meaningful strategy for language development.

Storytelling can be defined as the act of conveying a narrative through various media such as words, visual elements, gestures, and sounds. It is more than just recounting events—it is an interaction between the storyteller and the listener, where emotions, perspectives, and values are shared. Akhyak and Indramawan (2013) describe storytelling as an art form that promotes two-way communication, while Safdarian (2013:208) conceptualizes it as a technique where students retell narratives provided by teachers using their own words. Thus, storytelling in education represents an approach where students reconstruct stories using new vocabulary and sentence structures, fostering both comprehension and production skills in English.

Public speaking and storytelling are interconnected elements of interpersonal communication. When effectively combined, these two strategies offer rich, engaging learning experiences that promote clarity, confidence, and persuasion. In educational settings, storytelling supports vocabulary enrichment, grammar mastery, and the development of language structures in a contextualized and meaningful way. According to Isbell et al. (2004), storytelling enhances oral language proficiency by providing repetitive language patterns, contextual vocabulary, and natural speech flow, which are crucial for language learners. Through narrative-based instruction, students are also encouraged to explore various forms of self-expression, thus increasing their motivation and involvement in classroom activities.

There is a growing body of research supporting the use of stories to improve English speaking skills. Yanto and Hairi (2019) found that storytelling significantly enhanced students' verbal communication abilities, especially in vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension. Anggryadi (2014) similarly observed that students performed better in speaking tasks when stories were integrated into the learning process. Moreover, storytelling's use of both verbal and visual modalities makes it adaptable for diverse learners, enhancing not only language skills but also creativity and emotional intelligence.

In recent years, the evolution of technology has further transformed storytelling pedagogy through digital storytelling. Nair and Yunus (2021), in their systematic review on digital storytelling, concluded that the integration of digital media in storytelling fosters improvements in oral fluency, pronunciation accuracy, vocabulary acquisition, and students' confidence in public speaking. Their findings suggest that modern adaptations of storytelling maintain the method's traditional benefits while aligning with technological advancements in education. Digital storytelling also allows students to engage in multimodal literacy—combining audio, visual, and text-based elements in storytelling—which enhances their critical thinking and media literacy skills (Robin, 2008; Ohler, 2013).

Additional studies have confirmed these findings. Samantaray (2014) demonstrated that storytelling has a significant impact on students' English speaking development Kalantari and Hashemi (2015), focusing on young Iranian EFL learners, found that storytelling greatly improved vocabulary acquisition and motivation. Likewise, Cameron (2001) emphasized that storytelling in language teaching helps students internalize grammatical structures and patterns naturally through meaningful contexts. Meanwhile, Haven and Ducey (2007) argue that storytelling enhances comprehension and retention, which in turn improves productive language use. Furthermore,

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Ismail et al. (2020) emphasized that storytelling-based instruction contributes positively to students' socio-emotional learning and collaboration in group activities, which are essential for holistic language development.

Collectively, these studies affirm that storytelling is a powerful and flexible pedagogical tool for developing English-speaking competence across various educational contexts and learner levels. However, while much of the research focuses on primary learners or broad EFL populations, there is still a need for research on the specific impact of storytelling on secondary school students – especially in areas like Indonesia where English is a foreign language. Students at this level often face challenges such as low self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, and so on., and insufficient practice opportunities. Storytelling may serve as a bridge to overcome these barriers by creating a safe, interactive, and meaningful context for communication.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate how storytelling can be used effectively to improve secondary school students' speaking skills, with a focus on engagement, fluency, and communicative confidence. By incorporating both traditional and digital storytelling strategies, this research seeks to offer insights into how narrative-based learning can be leveraged to build language competence and support learners' academic and personal growth in the globalized world.

METHODS

This study applied a quantitative research method, which systematically investigates phenomena by collecting and analyzing numerical data. It emphasizes structured research design and the testing of hypotheses through statistical analysis. As noted by Creswell (2019), quantitative research is used to objectively test theories by examining relationships between variables. patterns, measure associations, and draw generalizable conclusions based on empirical evidence. These factors can then be measured using instruments, resulting in several data that can be examined statistically. There are 50 students from Tenth Grade SMA Gajah Mada who enrolled in target sample was taken using random sampling technique. The researchers used a pre-test and post-test group research design. In this study, researchers needed an experimental group and a control group. The researcher administered a pretest to one of the groups assigned to the posttest following the therapy. The pretest measured students' vocabulary achievement prior to treatment, and the posttest determined students' vocabulary achievement after teaching. The researchers conducted two T-tests: a pretest and a posttest. The pretest was given to both the experimental and control classes. In terms of student treatment, both classes received the same pretest.

The purpose of the pre-test is to determine the learners' initial speaking skill level. Following the pre-test, the researcher conducted an experiment with two experimental and control class. Different teaching methods were applied in these groups. In the experimental class, storytelling was employed as the instructional method to improve students' speaking skills, while the control class was taught using traditional, manual teaching methods. At the end of the learning period, both groups underwent a post-test to evaluate the improvement of their speaking skills. The post-test aims to measure the effectiveness of different teaching methods. The instruments used for the post-test were different from those used in the pre-test. After the pre- and post-test data were collected, the researcher analyzed the scores using SPPS. Then, a table is created to display students' pre- and post-test scores for comparison.

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The research design is as follows:

Note:

T1 : pretest

T2 : posttest

Data collection in this study consisted of three instruments: observation, pretest, and posttest.

1. Pretest: measure students' initial abilities before participating in classroom learning activities conducted by the teacher. The students were given a pretest to determine their speaking ability. The researcher did a pretest in the first meeting, which was done in one meeting.
2. Posttest: this is done after students follow the lessons they follow during class lessons that the teacher has taught.A post-test was conducted to assess the student's skills and progress. It was used to determine implementation and whether there was improvement.

A post-test is a review or set of tests given after the teaching staff has given the students the learning content. The goal is to achieve the final competency, which is the pupils' mastery of the learning information that has been presented. The post-test series concludes the learning exercises. The effectiveness of a learning strategy can be assessed using the post-test results. Students are regarded as successful if their post-test scores improve. A reduction in the post-test value relative to the pre-test indicates that a learning activity has failed. Students' enhanced post-test scores show they received and retained the learning content.

- **Experimental class**

Paired Samples Statistics[a]

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Posttest	73,72	25	3,195	,639
	Prettest	53,96	25	3,182	,636

Picture : pretest and posttest results of the experimental class

- **Control class**

Paired Samples Statistics[a]

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Posttest	72,80	25	2,630	,526
	Prettest	54,84	25	2,968	,594

Group = control class

Picture : pretest and posttest results of the control class

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of data analysis show that students' speaking skills increased significantly through the use of storytelling techniques. First, student scores for the control and group trials were relatively low in the pretest. The total score of the control group is 54.84, while the experimental group is 53.96. In the pretest, most students in the experimental group experienced difficulty when speaking test in the pretest. This means that the average of the

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experimental and control groups is the same. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is rejected, and the hypothesis (H0) is accepted. It supported by the posttest results of both the control and experimental groups. The control class obtained a mean score of 72.80, while the experimental class achieved a higher mean score of 73.72. Although the difference in mean scores between the two classes is relatively small (1.5 points), statistical analysis revealed a significant effect.

At a significance level of 0.05, the Sig. (2-tailed) value is 0.000, which is smaller than the threshold value (0.000 < 0.05). This result confirms that the alternative hypothesis (H0) is accepted, while the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected. Therefore, the use of the storytelling approach has a positive impact on students' speaking skills. The results support previous studies Akhyak & Indramawan, (2013) that demonstrate storytelling as an effective method for improving various components of speaking, including fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and comprehension.

In other words, the students' speaking abilities improved from the first meeting to the next. Storytelling allowed students to participate in the teaching and learning process, resulting in an outstanding tale. The class mood improved, and everyone became more concentrated on the subject. Storytelling taught pupils how to express themselves effectively and speak English energetically and persuasively. This suggests that storytelling impacts students' speaking skills at SMA Gajah Mada Bandar Lampung.In other words, the students' speaking abilities showed continuous improvement from one meeting to the next. The implementation of storytelling enabled students to engage actively in the teaching and learning process, which resulted in the production of well-structured and expressive narratives. The overall classroom atmosphere became more positive, with students demonstrating increased focus and enthusiasm toward the subject matter. Through storytelling, students learned to articulate their thoughts more effectively and developed the ability to speak English with greater confidence, energy, and persuasiveness. These findings indicate that storytelling had a meaningful impact on enhancing the speaking skills of students at SMA Gajah Mada Bandar Lampung.

This improvement can be attributed to several key factors inherent in the storytelling approach. First, storytelling provides a familiar and meaningful context, allowing students to internalize language patterns and vocabulary naturally. Second, it encourages active participation, which increases motivation and reduces anxiety, particularly in speaking tasks. Third, storytelling integrates cognitive, emotional, and linguistic elements, offering a holistic learning experience that supports language acquisition. These aspects align with communicative language teaching principles that emphasize interaction, fluency, and real-world communication. Furthermore, the results of this study reinforce previous literature (Akhyak & Indramawan, 2013; Samantaray, 2014; Nair & Yunus, 2021), confirming the pedagogical value of storytelling in improving learners' speaking competence in various educational contexts. Therefore, incorporating storytelling into English language instruction, particularly at the senior high school level, is both relevant and effective in fostering communicative ability.

CONCLUSION

The data for this study were gathered from the collaborator's observations and a speaking test. The results demonstrated that students' speaking skills improved following the use of storytelling. The second cycle's speaking exam results demonstrated that the pupils' speaking abilities improved significantly. The pupils' activities were progressing well from the first phase to the second phase. Storytelling helped them enhance their understanding, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Thus, storytelling has the potential to boost pupils' speaking skills.

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