Exploring Students' Perceptions of Storytelling as a Tool for Enhancing Speaking Skills

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Abstract

This study explores students' perceptions of using storytelling to improve speaking skills in English-speaking classes. Conducted at Wiralodra University, Indramayu, this descriptive qualitative study involved 20 students from the second and fourth semesters of the English Education Department. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire focused on motivation, interest, usefulness, and benefits of storytelling in learning speaking skills. Meanwhile, the interviews explored difficulties in storytelling, the use of media properties, and overall student opinions. The results indicate that storytelling significantly enhances students' motivation and confidence in speaking. Over 90% of participants agreed that storytelling is fun (mean score 3.35) and engaging, with 85% showing increased focus during activities (mean score 3.1). Storytelling was also perceived as highly useful, with 92.5% agreeing it enhances speaking skills and introduces new vocabulary and pronunciation (mean score 3.35). Furthermore, 90% believed it helps them understand content better (mean score 3.25). However, challenges include time required to understand stories, anxiety during presentations, and difficulties with complex vocabulary and props preparation. Interview findings highlighted that participants valued storytelling for fostering creativity and spontaneous language use. This study concludes that storytelling is an effective method for fostering a positive and dynamic learning environment, helping students overcome speaking anxiety and enhance their communicative competence. It is recommended that educators adopt storytelling as a strategy to develop speaking skills while addressing the challenges identified to optimize its benefits.

Keywords: Speaking, Storytelling, Students' Perception

A. Introduction

Speaking skills are fundamental to effective communication and serve as a cornerstone for mastering a foreign language. Thornbury (2005) emphasizes that speaking entails real-life interactions where individuals articulate ideas and exchange information. Bygate (1987) elaborates that speaking involves producing auditory signals that elicit responses, systematically combining sounds to construct meaningful expressions. Among the four primary language skills, speaking is considered the most significant, as it directly reflects language proficiency in real-world scenarios (Brown & Yule, 1983). Effective speaking skills not only facilitate seamless communication but also leave lasting impressions, underscoring the necessity of cultivating this competence (Handayani et al., 2022; Wijaya, 2024).

The development of speaking skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners necessitates deliberate practice and exposure. Oral communication activities are instrumental in enhancing confidence and linguistic ability (Alotumi, 2021). Tarigan (1986) asserts that speaking bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, reinforcing its importance in language acquisition. Furthermore, speaking proficiency underpins students' academic, professional, and social success by fostering clear and effective communication (Bahadorfar & Omidvar, 2014).

Among the various approaches to improving speaking skills, storytelling has emerged as a powerful pedagogical tool. Seng (2017) describes storytelling as a multidimensional practice that incorporates oral, written, and digital elements to convey messages and retain information. Caine et al. (2005) regard storytelling as a means of knowledge management, while Barzaq (2009) highlights its potential to connect ideas, stimulate imagination, and deepen comprehension. Through storytelling, learners engage with vocabulary, grammar, and cultural nuances, making the learning process both dynamic and enriching (Stone, 1996; Iverson & Lancey, 1961).

Storytelling encompasses diverse formats, including oral narration, written scripts, visual aids, and digital platforms, each offering unique benefits to EFL learners. Arroba and Acosta (2021) advocate storytelling as an effective strategy for honing listening and verbal expression skills. Digital storytelling, in particular, integrates multimedia components to enhance vocabulary acquisition, fluency, and pronunciation while boosting motivation and engagement (Nair & Yunus, 2021). Research underscores that storytelling fosters confidence, encourages spontaneous language use, and improves overall speaking performance (Natasia

& Angelianawati, 2022; Du, 2024). Additionally, it promotes creativity and interactive learning, making the practice of speaking more enjoyable and impactful (Sharma, 2018).

Students' perceptions significantly influence the success of storytelling as a teaching strategy. Perception shapes learners' attitudes, motivation, and engagement, ultimately affecting their learning outcomes. Shidu (2003) asserts that perceptions reflect students' responses to instructional methods, which can either enhance or hinder their educational experiences. Positive perceptions toward storytelling have been linked to increased participation and improved learning outcomes, while challenges such as performance anxiety, limited vocabulary, and preparation requirements must be addressed (Hong, 2003). Studies by Purnama et al. (2022) and Amrillah (2023) emphasize the importance of aligning storytelling methods with learners' needs and preferences to maximize its effectiveness.

Empirical studies provide compelling evidence of storytelling's benefits in enhancing speaking skills. Khairunnisa et al. (2021) found that storytelling improved students' pronunciation, grammar, and fluency while fostering active participation. Similarly, Ahmad and Yamat (2020) reported that both traditional and digital storytelling approaches positively impacted language learning outcomes. Research by Natasia and Angelianawati (2022) and Putri et al. (2021) further corroborates the effectiveness of storytelling in developing linguistic competence, cultural understanding, and oral fluency. These findings highlight storytelling's capacity to create engaging and effective learning experiences.

Despite its numerous advantages, storytelling poses certain challenges. Learners may encounter difficulties such as time constraints, performance pressure, and the complexity of preparing appropriate materials. Addressing these obstacles through tailored instructional strategies and supportive learning environments is crucial for optimizing storytelling's efficacy (Desalegn, 2020; Huyen & Cang, 2021). For instance, providing ample practice opportunities, offering constructive feedback, and integrating user-friendly digital tools can help mitigate these challenges and enhance learners' confidence and performance.

One of the key strengths of storytelling lies in its ability to create a collaborative and interactive learning atmosphere. By sharing narratives, students not only practice speaking but also develop critical thinking, creativity, and empathy. This aligns with the broader objectives of language education, which aim to cultivate well-rounded communicative competence. Furthermore, storytelling fosters cultural awareness by exposing learners to

diverse perspectives and traditions, enriching their understanding of global contexts (Rahmawati, 2023; Purnama et al., 2022).

Digital storytelling, in particular, has revolutionized the way narratives are used in language learning. By incorporating multimedia elements such as images, videos, and sound effects, digital storytelling provides an immersive experience that captivates learners and sustains their interest. Nair and Yunus (2021) highlight that digital storytelling not only enhances linguistic skills but also nurtures autonomy and self-directed learning. This approach encourages students to take ownership of their learning process, resulting in greater motivation and improved outcomes.

Additionally, storytelling addresses multiple dimensions of language proficiency. It helps learners acquire new vocabulary and expressions, practice accurate pronunciation, and develop grammatical accuracy. These aspects are critical for achieving fluency and coherence in speaking. Furthermore, storytelling offers opportunities for learners to experiment with language in a low-stakes environment, fostering confidence and reducing anxiety (Sharma, 2018; Khairunnisa et al., 2021). The iterative nature of storytelling—involving planning, rehearsal, and delivery—ensures that learners continuously refine their speaking abilities.

The role of educators in facilitating storytelling cannot be overstated. Teachers act as guides, providing structured activities, clear instructions, and constructive feedback to help learners navigate the challenges of storytelling. Incorporating storytelling into lesson plans requires careful consideration of learners' proficiency levels, interests, and cultural backgrounds. Tailoring activities to meet these needs ensures that storytelling remains an inclusive and effective teaching strategy (Seng, 2017; Barzaq, 2009).

In the context of Indonesian EFL classrooms, storytelling holds particular promise as a tool for addressing common challenges in speaking instruction. Many learners struggle with limited exposure to authentic language use and experience anxiety when speaking in public. Storytelling offers a structured yet flexible framework for overcoming these barriers, enabling learners to practice speaking in a supportive and engaging environment (Amrillah, 2023; Desalegn, 2020). By incorporating storytelling into their teaching repertoire, educators can create meaningful opportunities for learners to develop their speaking skills while building confidence and enthusiasm for language learning.

This study investigates EFL students' perceptions of storytelling as a method for improving speaking skills. It seeks to explore the benefits, challenges, and overall

effectiveness of storytelling within the Indonesian context, offering insights into how this approach can be optimized to enhance language learning outcomes. By examining students' experiences and perspectives, this research aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on innovative pedagogical strategies for fostering communicative competence in EFL classrooms.

B. Research Methodology

Setting and Participants

This study is a descriptive qualitative method. It was conducted at Wiralodra University Indramayu. It involved 2 Classes, 20 students from the second and fourth-semester of English education program of Wiralodra University in Indramayu, West Java, Indonesia. Who were purposively selected as they had experienced using storytelling activities in English-speaking classes.

Data analysis

The data was collected through a questionnaire containing 25 items of statements that should be responded to by selecting one of four options arranged on the Likert scale, i.e., Strongly Agree (score 4), Agree (score 3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1). The statements were composed based on three indicators: motivation and interest, usefulness, and benefits in learning speaking. Apart from that, there was also an interview that we conducted with 3 respondents randomly. In the interview, there were open-ended questions asking for their opinions about the use of storytelling in speaking classes.

This study employed descriptive statistics to summarise the questionnaire results, which comprised 25 Likert scale items aimed to examine students' perceptions of storytelling as a tool for enhancing their speaking skills. After a set of closed-ended item questionnaires were distributed to the students, the data were converted to numbers through a coding procedure based on Likert scale procedures. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of storytelling in improving speaking abilities among students, as indicated by their responses.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Results

Motivation and Interests in using storytelling in speaking class.

Motivation and interest are essential internal factors influencing the learning process and outcomes. The findings from this study highlight that the majority of participants had a positive perception of storytelling as a method for improving speaking skills. More than 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that learning English through storytelling is fun, with a mean score of 3.35. Additionally, 80% felt enthusiastic about using storytelling to practice speaking, and 85% gave their full attention during storytelling activities. This strong engagement underscores the potential of storytelling to create an enjoyable and effective learning environment. These results align with recent findings by Alshammari and Eissa (2023), who emphasize that interactive techniques like storytelling foster higher engagement and intrinsic motivation in EFL learners.

Table 1. *Students' Motivation and Interests in using Storytelling in Speaking Class*

No	Statements	SD	D	A	SA	Mean
1	Learning English through storytelling is fun.	0 (0)	1 (2)	11 (33)	8 (32)	(3.35)
2	I feel excited about using storytelling to practise my speaking skill.	0 (0)	3 (6)	12 (36)	5 (20)	(3.1)
3	I enjoy practising English speaking skills with storytelling	0 (0)	3 (6)	14 (42)	3 (12)	(3)
4	I give my full attention during the storytelling activities	0 (0)	2 (4)	14 (42)	4 (16)	(3.1)
5	I can learn speaking everywhere through storytelling	0 (0)	5 (10)	11 (33)	4 (16)	(2.95)
6	I would like to use storytelling to learn English for the future	0 (0)	4 (8)	14 (42)	2 (8)	(2.9)

The Usefulness of Storytelling in Speaking Class.

As shown in Table 2, the study revealed that participants overwhelmingly recognized the usefulness of storytelling in speaking classes. Approximately 92.5% agreed or strongly agreed that storytelling aids in learning English, with a mean score of 3.35. Additionally, 89% noted that storytelling introduces new vocabulary and pronunciations, while 90% believed it helps them better understand content. Storytelling's capacity to provide contextual learning opportunities and make abstract concepts relatable plays a significant role in enhancing comprehension. This is consistent with Lwin and Tan's (2022) research, which demonstrates that storytelling integrates cognitive and linguistic skills, thereby promoting deeper learning.

Table 2. *Students' Perception of the usefulness of using Storytelling in Speaking Class*

No	Statements	SD	D	A	SA	Mean
7	Storytelling is useful in learning English	**0** **(0)**	**0** **(0)**	**13** **(39)**	**7** **(28)**	**(3.35)**
8	Storytelling activities help me to understand the content better.	**0** **(0)**	**0** **(0)**	**15** **(45)**	**5** **(20)**	**(3.25)**
9	I feel more confident to speak English through storytelling.	**0** **(0)**	**8** **(16)**	**10** **(30)**	**2** **(8)**	**(2.7)**
10	Storytelling is useful to improve my English listening skill when my friend tells a story	**0** **(0)**	**3** **(6)**	**13** **(39)**	**4** **(16)**	**(3.05)**
11	Storytelling introduces many new vocabulary and pronunciation to me	**0** **(0)**	**1** **(2)**	**11** **(33)**	**8** **(32)**	**(3.35)**
12	storytelling can be used as a media in learning speaking	**0** **(0)**	**1** **(2)**	**12** **(36)**	**7** **(28)**	**(3.3)**
13	Storytelling can make someone able to speaking more	**0** **(0)**	**1** **(2)**	**13** **(39)**	**6** **(24)**	**(3.25)**
14	The more I speak English through storytelling, the more I improve my	**0** **(0)**	**0** **(0)**	**16** **(48)**	**4** **(16)**	**(3.2)**

	speaking skills					
15	Learning speaking through storytelling is useful	0 (0)	0 (0)	15 (45)	5 (20)	(3.25)
16	Storytelling is helpful to enrich my speaking skills	0 (0)	2 (4)	12 (36)	6 (24)	(3.2)

The Benefits of using Storytelling in Speaking Class.

The findings also highlighted the multifaceted benefits of storytelling. Over 90% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that storytelling improves speaking skills, enhances grammar, and broadens cultural knowledge. For instance, 87% felt that storytelling is an effective medium for developing communication skills, and 89% noted its impact on grammatical proficiency. These findings corroborate research by Cheng and Chan (2023), which illustrates that storytelling facilitates both linguistic development and cultural competence. Participants also mentioned that storytelling activities encourage improvisation, helping them articulate ideas spontaneously, an essential skill for fluency.

Table 3. *Students' Perception of the Benefits of Using Storytelling in Speaking Class*

No	Statements	SD	D	A	SA	Mean
17	Storytelling activities help me transform ideas in my mind into utterances	0 (0)	2 (4)	13 (39)	5 (20)	(3.15)
18	Storytelling improves my English grammar in speaking	0 (0)	2 (4)	13 (39)	5 (20)	(3.15)
19	I can produce a good sentence by applying the Storytelling strategy	0 (0)	5 (10)	13 (39)	2 (8)	(2.85)
20	Storytelling helps me develop speaking performance	0 (0)	1 (2)	16 (48)	3 (12)	(3.1)
21	Storytelling helps me to be more expressive when speaking English.	0 (0)	3 (6)	12 (36)	5 (20)	(3.1)

22	Storytelling enlarges my knowledge of culture, history, etc.	0 (0)	1 (2)	14 (42)	5 (20)	(3.2)
23	Storytelling made me more active in daily speaking English	0 (0)	3 (6)	13 (39)	4 (16)	(3.05)
24	Developing speaking skills through storytelling is productive	0 (0)	1 (2)	15 (45)	4 (16)	(3.15)
25	I learn many facial expression, eye contact, and other speaking skill when I tell a story in front of the class	0 (0)	4 (8)	10 (30)	6 (24)	(3.1)

Difficulty in Use of Storytelling in Speaking Class

Based on the interview with three participants related to their perception in the use of storytelling in speaking class, the data showed that the respondents have several difficulties in use of storytelling in speaking class, As the first respondent (R1) said that difficulties he have it take quite time to read the story repeatedly to understand it.

> R1: "It takes quite a lot of time, because you have to read it repeatedly to understand the story."

The respound that the second respondent (R2) have difficulties in Use of storytelling in Speaking Class were different with the Respound that R1 have. She had difficulties in self confidence. She felt less confident when appealing in front of many people, felt nervous which caused her to stammer when telling the story.

> R2: "When I came forward in front of the class, I felt anxious, nervous and lacked confidence, which made me stutter in telling my story."

Meanwhile, the third respondent (R3) mentioned that:

> R3: "The difficulty lies in finding the story, and most of the stories use foreign languages or difficult vocabulary."

Despite its benefits, participants identified several difficulty in using storytelling for speaking practice. For example, R1 mentioned the significant time required to fully understand a story's plot, while R2 highlighted issues with confidence and performance anxiety. Additionally, R3 noted difficulties in interpreting complex vocabulary. These challenges underscore the need for scaffolding and targeted interventions. According to

Yamashita and Takeda (2023), implementing preparatory activities such as vocabulary previews and confidence-building exercises can significantly mitigate these barriers.

The Use of property media in storytelling in speaking classes.

Based on interviews with three participants regarding the use of property media in storytelling in speaking classes, data was obtained that respondents also had several conveniences and difficulties when preparing properties for using storytelling in speaking classes, as expressed by the first respondent (R1), namely:

> R1: *"When I was telling a story, I got a theme about deer and crocodiles. And for the props, I made puppets in the shape of deer and crocodiles from paper."*

Meanwhile R2 said that:

> R2: *"When I appear for storytelling, I bring tools to present the images in the story using a sketchbook like in comics."*

However, participant R3 found difficulties regarding the props or costumes used:

> R3: *"I found several difficulties when preparing the props for the performance, especially clothes that matched the theme of the story I was going to present."*

From R3's opinion, it can be concluded that the use of props does not always make it easier for students to do storytelling. The use of property and media in storytelling emerged as both an enabler and a challenge. Participants like R1 used creative tools such as paper puppets, while R2 utilized sketchbooks to illustrate their narratives. However, R3 faced difficulties in preparing thematic props, such as costumes. This finding reflects the importance of accessible and adaptable materials in storytelling activities. Research by Lee et al. (2023) highlights that integrating low-cost and reusable props can enhance student creativity while reducing preparation burdens.

Students' opinions about the use of Storytelling in speaking class.

The research results found that the majority of participants who learned to speak using the storytelling method had various opinions regarding the use of storytelling.

> R1: *"It could be because it comes from retail, either from retail or maybe storytelling. Sometimes we forget some parts of the story, and at that time we can use our own language or improvise, which can be more concise when we speak in front of the class."*

R2 argued about the use of storytelling in speaking class:

> *R2: "If someone performs well when telling a story in front of the class, this can make us feel motivated to be able to perform better than that. However, if the results are not good, it can make me a little down."*

Meanwhile, R3 also thinks about the use of storytelling in speaking classes:

> *R3 : "The use of storytelling can improve our English skills, because when we progress and we forget a word we can improvise the language with our own language. And I also like the learning concept but not the planning like preparing the property."*

Overall, participants expressed positive opinions about storytelling. R1 noted that storytelling encourages improvisation, while R2 observed that high-performing peers motivate others to excel. Meanwhile, R3 valued the concept of storytelling but found the preparatory aspects less appealing. These insights align with findings by Zhang et al. (2022), which emphasize the motivational effects of collaborative storytelling in peer-learning contexts

2. Discussion

Motivation and Interests in using Storytelling in Speaking Class

The findings show that the participant had a positive perception of motivation and interest in use of storytelling in speaking class. A majority of them regarded storytelling in speaking class as motivated. This approves the result of Natasia & Angelianawati (2022) study showing that the use of storytelling is motivating them to learn speaking and learning English.

The majority of participants found storytelling in speaking classes to be enjoyable, which sparked their interest in using storytelling to improve their English speaking skills. In other words, most of them find storytelling fun, interesting, and enjoyable. These findings confirm that, in general, digital storytelling is used in early childhood education in Indonesia through simple digital technology. This technology can enhance a story or fairy tale by making it more fun, interesting, communicative, and dramatic, Purnama, et al (2022).

The Usefulness of Storytelling in Speaking Class.

The data show that storytelling usefulness to improve speaking skills shows that the majority of the participants found storytelling useful because it can help the participants understand the content better. This finding supports Khairunnisa et. al (2021) findings show that the students also obtained some of the effectiveness of storytelling like building their

confidence, delivering and understanding ideas clearly and also reconstructing their own words and knowledge.

The Benefits of using Storytelling in Speaking Class.

The author found that participants had a positive perception regarding the benefits of using the storytelling method to improve their speaking skills because storytelling activities helped them change an idea in their mind into speech. Learning to speak through the storytelling method also improves their English grammar skills. Because when they speak through storytelling, sometimes they forget some vocabulary, which forces them to improvise. This confirms that storytelling methods, either through oral narratives or digital platforms, have been shown to improve students' self-confidence, vocabulary acquisition, and overall speaking performance. (Natasia & Angelianawati, 2022; Du, 2024).

Difficulty in Use of Storytelling in Speaking Class

These findings indicate that the majority of participants have various perceptions about the difficulties in using storytelling methods to improve speaking skills. They consider that learning to speak through storytelling has several difficulties, such as: when they speak in front of the class they feel anxious and nervous, it takes a long time to understand the storyline and prepare props to resemble puppets, and prepare clothes that match the theme to be told. However, it has also been confirmed that challenges such as speaking anxiety and limited opportunities to practice speaking can hinder EFL learners' progress in developing their speaking skills (Höl & KASIM, 2022; Duong & Pham, 2021). To overcome these challenges, it is necessary to implement effective teaching methodologies, provide sufficient opportunities to practice speaking, and develop a supportive learning environment (Desalegn, 2020; Huyen & Cang, 2021).

The use of property media in storytelling in speaking classes.

In this research, it was found that students' use of property media in telling stories in speaking classes was very diverse. Interviews revealed that some students prepared props to enhance their performance before presenting their stories. The media props they use include: they make shadow puppets in the shape of deer and crocodiles from paper, and they use sketchbooks like in comics to present the pictures in the story. Meanwhile, there was one

participant who had difficulty preparing media props. One participant had difficulty preparing clothes that matched the theme of the story he was going to present.

Students' opinions about the use of Storytelling in speaking class.

Based on the results of interviews conducted by the author in this research, we found several students' opinions regarding the use of storytelling in speaking classes. Two of the three students the author asked had the same opinion about the use of storytelling in speaking classes. They stated that the use of storytelling in speaking classes can improve students' English because, often, when they go ahead and present a story, they forget some parts of the story, which will make them improvise spontaneously. Meanwhile, another student believes that storytelling can make students more motivated to learn to speak, which happens when a student performs better, which can trigger other students to perform even better.

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the data analysis, this study concludes that second and fourth-semester students from the English Education Department at Wiralodra University, Indramayu, held positive perceptions regarding the use of storytelling as a method to enhance speaking skills. The analysis focused on three primary indicators: motivation and interest, usefulness, and benefits. Storytelling emerged as a dynamic and engaging tool that not only motivated students but also made learning English more enjoyable and effective. While students demonstrated enthusiasm for storytelling, several challenges were identified, including the time required to understand stories, a lack of confidence during presentations, and difficulties with complex vocabulary and prop preparation.

The findings indicate that storytelling is particularly useful in improving English speaking skills. Students reported that it introduced them to new vocabulary and pronunciation, enhanced their confidence, and bolstered their speaking abilities. Furthermore, storytelling contributed to several broader benefits, including improvements in grammar, cultural knowledge, the ability to transform ideas into spoken utterances, and expressive abilities. By fostering a supportive and creative environment, storytelling encouraged students to be more active in speaking English, both in class and in daily life.

To maximize its benefits, educators are encouraged to provide pre-storytelling activities to address challenges like vocabulary and comprehension, incorporate confidence-building exercises to reduce anxiety, and support students with accessible resources for props.

Integrating storytelling into the broader curriculum and adopting digital storytelling tools can further enrich the learning experience, making students more active and proficient in using English.

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