



Students' Perception of Using Storytelling Technique to Improve Speaking Performance at SMPN 143 Jakarta Utara

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Abstract

Speaking is an essential skill to master in every foreign language learning. It even can be used to measure a foreign language learner's success. However, learning to speak a foreign language, particularly English, is extremely difficult for beginners and to help them using storytelling is highly recommended (Haven, 2000; Caine, et al., 2005). However, learners' perception is one of the most important success factors in any learning technique, including storytelling, because they are among the main stakeholders of learning. This study aims at exploring students' perception of storytelling techniques use to improve speaking. Involving 74 students of SMPN 143 North Jakarta, the data was collected using a set of questionnaires. The results show that the participants had a positive perception of the use of storytelling technique. They found the technique interesting, beneficial, and easy to use.

Keywords:

EFL, speaking, storytelling

INTRODUCTION

Among the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) speaking is always considered one of the skills that students should acquire when learning a language

due to a variety of reasons. First, it empowers students to communicate with others effectively and appropriately. Second, among the four language skills, speaking is the most effective to use in communication because a majority of communication is done through speech. Third, speaking performance is the main factor upon which every student's language mastery is judged in real-life situations (Brown & Yule, 1983, as cited in Bahadorfar & Omidvar, 2014).

Despite its' high importance, many students, especially those who learn English in a foreign language (EFL) context, encounter difficulties to master speaking. Zhang (2009) stated that speaking remains the most difficult skill to master for the majority of English learners. This is clearly shown by the fact that many students who have learned English for many years still meet difficulties to speak in real-time situations when it is demanded. Bueno, Madrid, and McLaren (2006, p. 321) accentuated that "Speaking is one of the most difficult skills language learners have to face."

The problem is caused by some interrelated factors. First, the fact that speakers must produce sentences on the spur of the moment makes it hard for the learners to be proficient in speaking the target language. For foreign language learners, it is quite difficult to produce sentences without having appropriate pronunciation, and an adequate vocabulary. and learning the grammatical structures. Second, many students have low self-confidence and fear of making mistakes. Consequently, when the teachers do not use proper strategies to create interesting, interactive, and lively sessions, speaking classes remain to be silent. Third, many EFL students lack practice because class time is their only chance to practice spoken English. Soon they finish the class, they almost have no opportunity to speak in English. Widiaty and Cahyono (2006) posited that in addition to their linguistic and personality factors, the problems faced by EFL learners to develop speaking skills are also due to the types of classroom tasks provided by the teachers. Therefore, teachers have a significant role in fostering students' speaking competence by examining the underlying factors, conditions, and components of speaking class effectiveness, encouraging the students to use often English through the maintenance of good relations with the students, and providing interesting activities that enhance students' interaction.

In terms of learning activities for promoting speaking skills, various educators and researchers suggest that teachers should avoid an overemphasis on meaning-based and monotonous interactions. Assel (2014) asserted that learning activities in EFL classes should be effective, i.e., manipulative, meaningful, and communicative, involving learners in using English for a variety of communicative purposes. More specifically, the activities should (1) be based on realistic or naturalistic source materials; (2) empower learners to manipulate and practice specific features of language; (3) let learners rehearse, in class, communicative skills they need in the real world; and (4) stimulate psycholinguistic processes of learning.

One of the highly recommended activities to use in speaking classes is storytelling which is essentially an activity for narrating a story or presenting it in the written medium (or media), through a reenactment or series of reenactments (skits, plays, dramatization), or recorded on film and stored electronically in a digital form, or through a combination of oral, narrative, music and performance art forms such as art or dance (Seng, p. 28). According to Caine et al. (2005) storytelling is the primary way that people access, express, and retain information and knowledge. Another definition was offered by Barzaq (2009, p. 7) who suggested storytelling as "a knowledge management technique, a way

of distributing information, targeted to audiences and a sense of information” She added that stories provide a natural connection between events and concepts and storytelling can be enhanced using visual aids which can spark learners’ interest and imagination in developing their listening and oral skills.

Stories have long been used as a rich resource for literacy and foreign language learning. Short stories, a form of literary genres that tells about human experiences, for instance, offer good examples of vocabulary and grammatical structures use in contexts and cultural information about the target language for students to learn (Pardede, 2021b). When students and teachers interactively engage with stories, they will not only extend their language proficiency but also advance their emotional involvement with the target language (Sivasubramaniam, 2006), and thus students’ interest to learn. As such, through storytelling, EFL learners experience a larger chance to improve their linguistic knowledge and deepen their understanding of the culture and people of the target language represented in the story. Pardede (2021a, p. 246) stated that “... storytelling is central to the human cognitive system as it captures human social interaction core”. According to Grugeon and Gardner (2000) listening to and telling stories can effectively cover skills such as “speak clearly and confidently” and “listen, understand and respond to others”. Wright (2002) believed that storytelling is very potential to promote learners’ linguistic awareness and competence. McDrury and Alterio (2003) posited that the practice of reflective learning through storytelling will produce more meaningful, challenging, and stimulating learning. Finally, Juraid & Ibrahim (2016) stated that storytelling encourages less willing EFL students to engage more actively in classroom skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Thus, storytelling can sharpen students' speaking and listening skills in English, practice pronunciation, increase vocabulary, phrases, and idioms in English, and increase self-confidence in using English. In this way, the students will experience speaking English more in fun and communicative ways.

Despite the high recommendation to employ storytelling in EFL classrooms, its implementation should also include consideration of learner's perception. Since learners are among the main stakeholders of learning, their perception is one of the most important success factors in any learning activity implementation, including storytelling. Students' perceptions of storytelling activities and materials highly affect their level of motivation and engagement.

Although some studies have been conducted to explore students' perceptions of the use of storytelling in English classrooms, the number is still limited. Syahria's (2016) study, involving 37 students of the first-semester undergraduate students of the English Department in a university in Surabaya revealed that the participants had positive attitudes toward the storytelling technique and it gave a spark to their motivation. The findings showed that storytelling did not only facilitate to develop the participants' pronunciation skills but also promoted their writing, listening, and speaking skills and boosted their vocabulary.

Seng (2017) involved 34 primary teachers and 116 primary students to explore their perceptions of storytelling as a language teaching and learning resource. The results showed that both teachers and students had a positive perception of storytelling. The collected data indicated that a majority (98.3%) of the students enjoyed listening to or reading stories, and 81.0% enjoyed acting out stories. It is concluded that the teacher

participants considered storytelling as a plausible pedagogical resource for primary school children.

Male and Resvina's (2019) action research involving 30 eighth graders of Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP) 3 PSKD Jakarta showed that the use of storytelling improved the participants' listening skills. The observation results showed that an interactive and interesting teaching atmosphere was more likely achievable through the storytelling application. Based on the findings, it was suggested to consider the application of storytelling in EFL learning in Indonesian contexts.

Considering the crucial importance of perception as one of the most important success factors in learning and the scarcity of studies focusing on the perception of EFL students of storytelling techniques in Indonesia, especially in speaking classes, the problem to explore in this study is EFL students' perception of the use of storytelling in speaking class. The research question to be addressed is "What are the students' perceptions on using storytelling techniques to improve speaking performance at SMPN 143 Jakarta?"

This study is expected to provide beneficial information and contributions to English teachers, students, and other researchers. To teachers, the findings are expected to encourage teachers to use storytelling strategies in the classroom to make it more appealing to students. To other researchers, the result of this study can hopefully provide a basis to conduct further studies.

METHODS

Setting and Participants

This study is a survey research employing a descriptive qualitative method. It was conducted at SMPN 143 Jakarta. It involved 74 eighth graders consisting of 29 males and 45 females who were purposively selected as they had experienced using storytelling activities in English-speaking classes.

Data Collection

The data was collected through a questionnaire containing 35 items of statements that should be responded to by selecting one of the four options arranged on the Likert scale, i.e., Strongly Disagree (score 1), Disagree (score 2), Agree (3), and Strongly Agree (4). The statements were composed based on four indicators: motivation and interest, usefulness, benefits, and ease of use of storytelling in learning speaking. The questionnaire reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha Test resulting in a high degree of internal consistency ($r=0.975$) which indicates that the questionnaire is a reliable instrument. The collected data was analyzed using a descriptive statistic.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

Motivation and Interests in Using Storytelling to Improve Speaking Performance.

Interest is an essential internal factor affecting the learning process and outcomes. Renninger and Hidi (2016), stated that interest is "a powerful motivational process that energizes learning and guides academic and career trajectories". In general, the higher a learner's interest, the higher his learning achievement will be.

As shown in Table 1, in terms of interest, a majority of the participants had a positive perception of using storytelling to improve speaking. A majority of them highly regarded

the fun aspect of learning to speak using storytelling. More than 90% of them agreed and strongly agreed with this item. This is supported by the item stating that 86.5% of them agreed and strongly agreed to keep on using storytelling to develop my speaking English in the future, 79.7% of them agreed and strongly agreed that developing speaking skills through storytelling is interesting, and more than two-third agreed and strongly agreed that they enjoy speaking English with storytelling.

In terms of motivation, almost 80% of them agreed and strongly agreed that the use of storytelling motivates them to learn to speak, 79.7% of them agreed and strongly agreed that storytelling motivates them to learn to speak, and 74.4% agreed and strongly agreed that learning English through storytelling is motivating. However, only 63.5% of them agreed and strongly agreed that they always employ storytelling to enhance their speaking skills.

Table 1. *Students' Motivation and Interests in Using Storytelling to Improve Speaking Performance.*

No	Statements	SD	D	A	SA	Mean
		F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	
4	Learning English through storytelling is fun.	3 (4.1)	4 (5.4)	37 (50)	30 (40.5)	3.27
6	I am interested in learning to speak through storytelling	4 (5.4)	18 (24.3)	28 (37.8)	24 (32.4)	2.97
9	I feel excited about using storytelling to practice my speaking skill.	2 (2.7)	14 (18.9)	39 (52.7)	19 (25.7)	3.01
12	I will keep on using storytelling to develop my speaking English in the future.	4 (5.4)	6 (8.1)	41 (55.4)	23 (31.1)	3.12
14	I enjoy speaking English with storytelling.	4 (5.4)	14 (18.9)	37 (50)	19 (25.7)	2.95
18	I use storytelling in learning speaking because it is related to my assignment.	5 (6.8)	13 (17.6)	38 (51.4)	18 (24.3)	2.93
22	Learning English through storytelling is motivating.	2 (2.7)	17 (23)	40 (54.1)	15 (20.3)	2.91
27	Developing speaking skills through storytelling is interesting	4 (5.4)	11 (14.9)	37 (50)	22 (29.7)	3.04
28	Storytelling motivates me to learn to speak.	5 (6.8)	10 (13.5)	36 (48.6)	23 (31.1)	3.04
33	I always develop my speaking skill through storytelling	6 (8.1)	21 (28.4)	31 (41.9)	16 (21.6)	2.77

The Usefulness of Storytelling Use to Improve Speaking Performance

As shown in Table 2, a majority of the participants had a positive perception of the usefulness of using storytelling to improve speaking. A majority of them (75.1%), agreed and strongly agreed that developing speaking skills through storytelling is useful. According to 86.5% of them, agreed and strongly agreed with this statement because storytelling introduces many new vocabulary and pronunciation. Thus, 83% of them believed that the more they speak English through storytelling, the more they improve their speaking skills. Due to their high acceptance of storytelling's usefulness to improve speaking, 78.3% of them thought storytelling motivates to improve speaking skills.

Table 2. Students' Perception of the Usefulness of Storytelling Use to Improve Speaking Performance

No	Statements	SD	D	A	SA	Mean
		F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	
2	Storytelling is useful in learning English.	5 (6.8)	5 (6.8)	36 (48.6)	28 (37.8)	3.17
5	The more I speak English through storytelling, the more I improve my speaking skills.	3 (4.1)	9 (12.2)	33 (44.6)	29 (39.2)	3.18
7	I feel more confident to speak English through storytelling.	5 (6.8)	24 (32.4)	30 (40.5)	15 (20.3)	2.74
16	Storytelling motivates to improve speaking skills.	3 (4.1)	13 (17.6)	36 (48.6)	22 (29.7)	3.04
25	Using storytelling facilitates me to learn speaking.	5 (6.8)	10 (13.5)	40 (54.1)	19 (25.7)	2.98
26	Storytelling introduces many new vocabulary and pronunciation to me.	4 (5.4)	6 (8.1)	33 (44.6)	31 (41.9)	3.22
29	Developing speaking skills through storytelling is useful	4 (5.4)	7 (9.5)	39 (52.7)	24 (32.4)	3.12

Benefits of Using Storytelling to Improve Speaking Performance.

Table 3 shows that a majority of the participants had a positive perception of the benefits of using storytelling to improve speaking performance. More than four-fifth of them agreed and strongly agreed storytelling enlarges their knowledge of culture, history, etc.). More than 83% thought learning to speak using storytelling makes other people understand them better when they speak, 78% of them believed Storytelling helps them develop speaking performance, and 78.4% believed storytelling enables them to be more productive in speaking. Despite these, only 66.2% of them thought storytelling activities made me more active in daily speaking English, and less than half (40.6%) of them made storytelling a part of their speaking learning activity.

Table 3. Students' Perception of the Benefits of Using Storytelling to Improve Speaking Performance.

No	Statements	SD	D	A	SA	Mean
		F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	
1	Storytelling activities made me more active in daily speaking English	6 (8.1)	19 (25.7)	31 (41.9)	18 (24.3)	2.82
13	Storytelling activities help me transform ideas in my mind into utterances.	3 (4.1)	16 (21.6)	39 (52.7)	16 (21.6)	2.97
15	Storytelling is a part of my speaking learning activity	10 (13.5)	34 (45.9)	19 (25.7)	11 (14.9)	2.41
17	Storytelling improves my English grammar in speaking	4 (5.4)	14 (18.9)	38 (51.4)	18 (24.3)	2.94
19	I can produce a good sentence by applying the Storytelling strategy.	3 (4.1)	12 (16.2)	46 (62.2)	13 (17.6)	2.93
20	Storytelling helps me develop speaking performance.	5 (6.8)	11 (14.9)	33 (44.6)	25 (33.8)	3.05

Table 3. (cont.)

No	Statements	SD	D	A	SA	Mean
		F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	
21	After learning to use storytelling, I believe people understand me better when I speak	3 (4.1)	9 (12.2)	39 (52.7)	23 (31.1)	3.10
24	Storytelling helps me to be more expressive when speaking English.	9 (12.2)	8 (10.8)	40 (54.1)	17 (23)	2.87
30	My speaking in English become much better after using stories.	7 (9.5)	18 (24.3)	35 (47.3)	14 (18.9)	2.75
31	Developing speaking skills through storytelling is productive	2 (2.7)	14 (18.9)	37 (50)	21 (28.4)	3.04
32	Storytelling can help me speak more like a native speaker.	6 (8.1)	14 (18.9)	38 (51.4)	16 (21.6)	2.86
35	Storytelling enlarges my knowledge of culture, history, etc.)	3 (4.1)	10 (13.5)	33 (44.6)	28 (37.8)	3.16

Ease of Use of Storytelling to Improve Speaking Performance.

Ease of use refers to an individual belief describing how easily he/she can use something (a tool, product, etc.) to do their work better and/or easier. As shown in Table 3, a majority of the participants had a relatively positive perception of the ease of using storytelling to improve speaking performance. More than two-thirds of them (77%) agreed and strongly agreed that storytelling is an efficient tool to improve speaking skills; 71.4% agreed and strongly agreed that storytelling facilitates them to practice speaking English everywhere; 68.9% agreed and strongly agreed that they can practice speaking English any time through storytelling. Despite the relatively positive perception of these statements, however, only 54% of the participants agreed and strongly agreed that could tell a story well without looking at notes.

Table 4. Students' Perception about the Ease of Using Storytelling to Improve Speaking Performance.

No	Statements	SD	D	A	SA	Mean
		F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	F(%)	
3	I can practice speaking English every time through storytelling.	7 (9.5)	16 (21.6)	32 (43.2)	19 (25.7)	2.85
8	Storytelling is an efficient tool to improve speaking skills.	5 (6.8)	12 (16.2)	32 (43.2)	25 (33.8)	3.04
10	I can tell a story well without looking at notes.	9 (12.2)	25 (33.8)	26 (35.1)	14 (18.9)	2.60
11	I can practice speaking English everywhere through storytelling.	3 (4.1)	18 (24.3)	38 (51.4)	15 (20.3)	2.87
23	I feel less nervous when I tell a story.	9 (12.2)	29 (39.2)	23 (31.1)	13 (17.6)	2.54

Discussions***Motivation and Interests in Using Storytelling to Improve Speaking Performance.***

The findings reveal that the participants had a positive perception of motivation and interest in using storytelling to improve speaking. A majority of them regarded that storytelling use motivates them to learn to speaking and learning English through storytelling is motivating. This approves the result of Krismawaty's (2018) study showing that the use of storytelling increased students' motivation and performance in speaking class.

A majority of the participants found learning speaking using storytelling fun so they enjoyed speaking English with storytelling and regarded developing speaking skills through storytelling as interesting. In other words, a majority of them perceived storytelling as fun, interesting, and enjoyable. This finding confirms Pardede's (2011) finding revealing that students found short stories interesting to use both as materials for self-enjoyment and of as components language skill classes. It also supports the idea that materials and activities that derive from literacy texts and movies are great aids to learning because they appeal to the learner's "imagination, increase motivation and, above all, create a rich and meaningful context (Brown, 2003, p. 182).

The usefulness of Storytelling Use to Improve Speaking Performance

The data concerning storytelling's usefulness to improve speaking skills show that a majority of the participants found storytelling useful because it introduces many new vocabulary and pronunciation. This finding supports previous studies' findings revealing that storytelling introduces or revises new vocabulary and grammatical structures. It is also in line with Dodson's (2000) idea that the frequent repetition of vocabulary and pronunciation allows certain language items to be acquired while others are being overly reinforced. As stories generally contain natural repetition of key vocabulary, pronunciation, and structures, learners are helped to remember many details, and this enables them to gradually learn to anticipate what will happen next in the story. Repetition also encourages participation in the narrative.

Having such a feature, storytelling is so useful that the more learners speak English through storytelling, the more they improve their speaking skills. The finding also suggests that the participants' belief in storytelling's usefulness to improve speaking, in turn, motivated them to use it to improve speaking skills. Therefore, this finding supports Hardiyanti's (2019) finding showing the use of storytelling in teaching speaking improves students' pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, grammar, and comprehension. Using it, students became active and confident to speak English after practicing storytelling in front of the class.

Benefits of Using Storytelling to Improve Speaking Performance.

The findings show that the participants had a positive perception of the benefits of using storytelling to improve speaking performance as the majority of them believed storytelling use enlarges their knowledge of culture, history, etc., learning to speak using storytelling makes other people understand them better when they speak, storytelling helps them develop speaking performance, and storytelling enables them to be more productive in speaking. These benefits were possible because storytelling provides contextual linguistic, cultural, social, and historical knowledge which facilitates the learners to build creativity and self-confidence in speaking. This finding supports Almond (2005) who stated that storytelling can build students' confidence, contextualize language and develop students' empathy on other characters based on. It also clarifies Donahue's (2009) idea that learning is more effective when it takes place in social environments providing authentic social cues about how knowledge is applied. In this context, stories

play the role of a tool to pass on knowledge in a social context.

Ease of Use of Storytelling to Improve Speaking Performance.

The finding shows that a majority of the participants had a relatively positive perception of the ease of using storytelling to improve speaking performance. They thought storytelling is an efficient tool to improve speaking skills and it facilitates them to practice speaking English any time and everywhere since they found they could use storytelling quite easily.

Students' Perception of Each Indicator

Based on the four indicators of the questionnaire related to students' perceptions of using storytelling to improve speaking performance (motivation and interest, usefulness, benefits, ease of use) described in the previous section, it can be concluded that the level of perception on each scale of the indicator varies. Seeing from the mean scores, the aspect of usefulness is the most positive, followed by motivation and interest, benefits, and finally, ease of use (see Table 5). Since the total mean score is 2.93 (out of 4), it can be said the students' perception of the whole indicators investigated on the use of storytelling to improve speaking performance is positive.

Table 5. *Students' Perception of Each Indicator*

No.	Indicators	Mean
1.	Motivation and Interest	3
2.	Usefulness	3.06
3.	Benefits	2.9
4.	Ease of use	2.78
	Total	11.75
	Mean of total	2.93

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

Based on the data analysis, the researcher found that the eighth graders of SMPN 143 Jakarta Utara had a positive perception of using storytelling to improve speaking performance is positive. Among the four indicators studied (motivation and interest, usefulness, benefits, and ease of use) the aspect of usefulness is the most positive, followed by motivation and interest, benefits, and finally ease of use, Since the total mean score is 2.93 (out of 4), it can be said the students' perception of the whole indicators investigated on the use of storytelling to improve speaking performance is positive.

Since this study involved only a limited number of participants from a single school, and the data was collected only using a questionnaire, further studies are expected to involve a larger number of participants from various schools and the data are collected using a combination of methods (interview, observation, etc.).

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