Improving Students Speaking Skills Through Local Storytelling

Ajeng Pratiwi[1], Benni Ichsanda Rahman Hz[2]

[1,2] State Islamic University of North Sumatra, Indonesia

Corresponding author, email: ajeng0304202074@uinsu.ac.id

Abstract

Speaking skills are those that enable us to have productive conversations. Speaking fluently facilitates clear communication of ideas to others. One of the most significant language-learning skills that students should acquire is speaking. Storytelling is an interactive art form that activates the listener's imagination by presenting a story's elements and pictures through words and actions. Sharing and understanding experiences can be done through storytelling. Students can learn to speak English through the use of local storytelling as a teaching approach. This study aims to address the problem of teaching and adding speaking skills to both teachers and students. This study used action research and 18 participants where in cycle 1 students were given one local storytelling entitled "The Legend of Malin Kundang" and 5 interview questions as an instrument with a target score of >75. Continued in cycle 2 students were given one local storytelling entitled "The Origin of Lake Toba" and 5 interview questions as an instrument with a target score of >75. The average score in cycle 1's results was 51.3, which was below the researcher's desired value of >75. The average value attained in cycle 2 is 50.3, which is below the value of > 75 as determined by the researcher. This illustrates how the value decreased from cycle 1 to cycle 2. Local storytelling lacks the ability to improve students' speaking skills. Storytelling didn't work here, although the fact that previous studies had similar goals, so we may need to do something else to improve students' speaking skills. Teachers can also use other techniques, like project presentations, group discussions, and interviews, to improve students speaking skills.

Keywords: action research, local storytelling, speaking skills

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a language well shows how much a student has learned. (Gultom & Oktaviani, 2022; Kholis, 2021). Good speaking skills are crucial for language learning, reflecting the learner's ability to communicate effectively (Newton, 2020). Good oral communication is crucial for everyday conversations, presentations, and interviews (Robert, 2022). Speaking about current events, past happenings, or even future plans requires speakers of English to use various linguistic constructions due to the language's structure (Woolard, 2020). The ability to construct grammatically correct sentences and use appropriate vocabulary demonstrates a deeper understanding of the language (Schmitt, 2020).

Speaking skills are closely tied to listening and pronunciation (Jonathan, 2020). Students

who struggle with speaking subjects need extra help and attention. Students must make sounds from their mouths when learning about speaking (Rahman Hz & Daulay, 2021). A student's ability to understand spoken language and accurately reproduce the sounds of the language contributes to effective communication (Havrylenko, 2023). As students become more proficient in speaking, their confidence in using the language tends to grow (Soland, 2021). Confidence boosts class participation, interaction with native speakers, and willingness to take language risks (Tai & Chen, 2023). Teacher performance can be understood as a condition that demonstrates a teacher's capacity to carry out his responsibilities at the school and provides evidence of an action the teacher has taken either before or during instructional activities (Winoto et al., 2023)

Moreover, speaking skills are often associated with cultural competence (De Diego-Lázaro et al., 2020). Understanding cultural nuances and using appropriate language in different contexts is crucial for effective communication and integration into a language community (Kasneci et al., 2023). To improve speaking skills, language learners should engage in activities like conversing with native speakers, participating in language exchange programs, and joining group discussions (Jackson, 2019). Additionally, regular feedback from teachers or language partners can help students identify areas for improvement and track their progress over time (Whitehouse, 2023). To be able to respond to speech, listeners must be able to understand the message conveyed by the speaker, so both speaking and listening skills must be involved (Akib, 2022).

Storytelling is a dynamic speaking style that enhances speaking skills by engaging students in a fun and powerful way (Assauri et al., 2022). Through storytelling, students encounter new words in context, helping them understand and remember vocabulary more effectively than rote memorization (Chen, 2023). Teachers who perform well will make an effort to demonstrate greater accomplishment in order to raise the standard of instruction and, consequently, the standard of learning. (Fahimah, 2023). Stories naturally present various grammatical structures and tenses (Tilahun, 2022). Storytelling naturally reinforces grammar rules as students incorporate various grammatical elements into their narratives (Fithriani, 2020).

To that extent, in researcher's context, the students have problems with their speaking fluency. While learning English, most of them are still confused. It is therefore difficult for them to speak English. As researchers investigated It is difficult for students to learning English as a foreign language (Masic, 2021). Students struggle with English speaking due to uncertainty, limited vocabulary, fear of mistakes, lack of exposure, grammar challenges, few speaking chances, cultural differences, low motivation, and pronunciation needs (Chand, 2021). Storytelling aids researchers by honing word usage, organizing thoughts, and fostering creativity, diversity, and confidence in speaking (Marzuki et al., 2023). These approaches can collectively support students in improving their English-speaking skills with greater confidence and proficiency (Huriati et al., n.d., 2023). Based on the preliminary study held on November 27, 2023, the student's speaking skill was still low.

Storytelling helps students practice communication strategies like paraphrasing, summarizing, and elaborating ideas (Zwiers & Crawford, 2023). These skills are essential for effective communication in real-life situations (Purwanto et al., 2023). Retelling a story involves recalling details, sequence of events, and character descriptions (Coughler et al., 2023). This process of retrieval enhances memory skills, helping students retain and recall language elements more effectively (Drigas et al., 2022). Stories often evoke emotions, making language learning a more enjoyable and memorable experience (Lee, 2024). Emotional engagement can lead to better retention and a positive attitude towards language learning (Wedyan et al., 2022). Storytelling can be a collaborative activity where students work together to create a story (Liu et al., 2019). This not only enhances their speaking skills but also promotes teamwork, cooperation, and peer interaction (Homayouni, 2022).

Storytelling in language learning makes it enjoyable and effective, boosting proficiency and communication skills (Precintha, 2019). Storytelling in student speech captivates, aids memory, connects emotionally, and enhances message impact (Dhote, 2019). It likes turning boring facts into exciting stories that grab attention and help people understand and remember better (Daniel, 2021). Local storytelling is vital for entertainment, character building, preserving culture, and teaching morals to future generations (Irawan et al., 2023). Local stories improve speaking skills

by aiding in language acquisition and narrative development, crucial for effective communication (Zhang, 2022). By using local story telling with local story like Lake toba, Malin Kundang, Timun Mas, or other local stories, we can make the message or presentation more interesting, make it easier for people to understand, and improve memory, making it more effective in speaking (Siavichay, 2022).

Many researchers have looked into the use of storytelling as a teaching tool for speaking (e.g: Ramalingam & Jiar, 2022; Hidayati, 2019; Yang et al., 2022). The researcher comes to the conclusion that storytelling can help improve speaking abilities (Hidayati, 2019; Wafa, 2022; James et al., 2019). However, the investigation of the effectiveness of local storytelling in education is still limited. Students' speaking skills can be enhanced through local storytelling, and each ability has a significant increase on a particular aspect of the subject matter. And for that reason, the researcher has decided to carry out this investigation. Teaching speaking with local storytelling can be a highly effective and engaging approach, especially for language learners. Local storytelling can be a powerful tool for teaching speaking skills by making the language learning process more enjoyable, contextual, and interactive. Integrating local storytelling into teaching speaking offers a universal approach that combines linguistic and cognitive elements, making the language learning experience more comprehensive and enjoyable for learners.

The purpose of this study is to address the issue of speaking skill addition and instruction for both teachers and students. The researcher provided a better method for teaching speaking through storytelling in order to avoid the usual method, which students become bored and makes them uninterested in learning to talk. This study aims to demonstrate the potency of the researcher's methodological approach for use in instruction, particularly for English teachers worldwide. This study's research question is, do the speaking abilities of students change the significantly between before and after they get lesson in the use of storytelling technique.

METHODS

This research uses action research method. Action research is a circular or spiral method wherever a teacher finds a problem, a team of teachers or administrators solves the issue, and data collected about the results of the action that is carried out (Zuber, 2021). There are 8 steps in action research study: (1) determine if action research is the best design to use, (2) identify a problem to study, (3) locate resources to help address the problem, (4) identify information you will need, (5) implement the data collection, (6) analyse the data, (7) develop a plan for action, and (8) implement the plan and reflect (Creswell, 2019).

This study was carried out at a Medan private high school. After making a quick observation at the school, the researcher decided to focus on it. The observation allowed the researcher to pinpoint the issue that would be the focus of this investigation. It also made the researcher's decision to select the subjects stronger. There were 18 students in grade XII that participated in this study. Since grade XII is now studying speaking in class as one of the English language skills, the researcher decided to use that grade for her research. Additionally, observation shows that one of the courses with the greatest speaking deficiencies is grade XII, since students in this grade still lack a wide vocabulary. As a result, the researcher felt more strongly about selecting students in class XII as research participants.

The researcher had watched classes to learn about the difficulties students were having studying English before the cycle was put into practice in the actual classroom. The researcher used the direct cycle with the narrative approach after watching and evaluating the data in order to improve the speaking, vocabulary, and listening abilities of the students.

The researcher conducted a data analysis technique using a pre-test to assess language skills to the local storytelling intervention. This pre-test data is likely to include an evaluation of vocabulary, grammar comprehension, and speaking skills, which will then be compared to the post-test results after participation in the local fairy tale listening and storytelling experience. It is anticipated that the analysis's findings would provide light on how well the study respondents' language skills are developed by hearing local stories. Before the researcher could see whether local storytelling really helped improve students' language skills, the researcher had to check their

language scores with the subject teachers. The researcher calculated the average score of the students. This gave a clear picture of their language skills. Researchers use rubric assessment to see the improvement of learning speaking skills.

	Criteria	Fluency	Pronunciation	Vocabulary	Grammar
4	Excellent	Speaks smoothly, with little hesitation that doesn't interfere the communication	Pronunciation and intonation are almost always clear or accurate	Uses variety of vocabulary and expressions and almost never makes some errors in the word choice	Excellent of the structure and accuracy
3	Good	Speaks with some hesitation, which seldom interferes the communication	Pronunciation and intonation are clear or accurate	Uses a variety of vocabulary and expressions, but makes some errors in the word choise	Good of the structure and accuracy
2	Fair	Speaks with some hesitation, which often interferes the communication	Pronunciation and intonation are sometimes not clear and accurate	Uses limited vocabulary and expressions	Quite of the structure and accuracy
1	Poor	Hesitates too often when speaking, which often interferes the communication	Makes frequent problems with pronunciation and intonation	Uses only basic vocabulary and expressions	Lack of the structure and accuracy

In the first cycle, the researcher gave the local storytelling text to the students in learning speaking skill. The researcher's target in the observation of student activities in learning speaking skills is >75 taken from storytelling of The Legend of Malin Kundang and 5 interview questions as an instrument. In the second cycle, the researcher gave local storytelling texts to students in the learning of speaking skills. The researcher's target in the observation of students' activities in learning speaking skills is >75 taken from storytelling of The Origin of Lake Toba and 5 interview questions as an instrument. Local stories can give students a big boost to improve their language skills. Using stories can be a superpower to help students speak confidently. The aim was to find out if local stories can make a difference.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this study is to use local storytelling to improve students' speaking abilities. This study was carried out to solve issues with speaking instruction in class XII Private School in Medan. Especially the ones who lack confidence when the teacher reads loudly to them in class. Since their teacher rarely practices using media, they are terrified of making mistakes. Speaking lessons are always taught by assigning essays or multiple-choice questions to the students. In addition to lacking vocabulary and understanding grammar, students also have trouble pronouncing English words correctly. The researcher decided to use local storytelling to help students in class XII Private School in Medan to improve their speaking abilities in light of the

given conditions. The researcher requested that the teacher managing speaking interactions class provide a new atmosphere. One strategy for teaching speaking is using local storytelling, since the researcher claims that speaking English is one of the activities that can improve vocabulary, grammar, and right pronunciation. During speaking lessons, students should not be inactive instead, they should pay attention and show seriousness.

Cycle 1

Cycle one was conducted on January 25, 2024. In teacher activity, the teacher checked the attendance list; there were 18 students present out of 30 students. He informed the students about how he would handle the class for this cycle one meeting. It was about how storytelling would be implemented. Then, the teacher distributes a piece of paper to each student which contains a storytelling entitled "The Legend of Malin Kundang". Before that, the teacher read the content of the paper first and asked the students to pay attention to the text. After reading, the teacher asks the students to read individually in their respective places for 5 minutes. The teacher asks each student to read one sentence of the story and then the next person to read it. The teacher corrects each word read by the students. The teacher writes 5 questions on the board and asks the students to choose one and answer it in front of the class.

In student's activity, the students sit in their respective places. Students look at the reading text on the paper they have been given while the teacher reads the reading text. Students read it back to each other individually for 5 minutes. Each student is asked to read one sentence at a time and is connected by the next friend and so on. Students are asked to answer in front of the class one of the 5 questions that the teacher writes on the board.

In student's responses, students were a little surprised when they found out they would be answering one of the questions in front of the class individually. That's because in the first semester they had never experienced this in an English lesson. Furthermore, there were some students who lacked confidence, so they did not want to read the content of the text and answer one of the questions that the teacher had given. While in cycle one, the class was very noisy, not conducive and not paying attention.

Cycle 2

Cycle two was conducted on February 7, 2024. Actually, cycle one and cycle two were the same. First the teacher checked the attendance list; there were 15 students present out of 30 students. She informed the students about how she would handle the class for this cycle one meeting. That is about how the storytelling method will be applied. Then, the teacher distributed a piece of paper to each student containing a fairy tale entitled "The Origin of Lake Toba". Previously, the teacher read the content of the paper first and asked the students to pay attention to the content of the writing. After reading, the teacher asks the students to read individually in their respective places for 5 minutes. The teacher asks each student to read one sentence from the story and then continue to the next student. The teacher corrects each word that the students read. Five questions are written on the board by the teacher, and each student is asked to select one and provide an answer in front of the class.

In student activity, the students sit in their respective places. Students look at the reading text on the paper they have been given while the teacher reads the reading text. Students read it back to each other individually for 5 minutes. Each student is asked to read one sentence at a time and is connected by the next friend and so on. Students are asked to answer in front of the class one of the 5 questions that the teacher writes on the board.

In terms of student response, there was a slight improvement in speaking and paying attention to the lesson. More students did not improve, and some even declined. The number of students present indicates that although the classroom was more accommodating, there was a drop in student participation in the session.

The outcomes of speaking abilities in the pre-test, post-test I, and post-test II are displayed in the table below.

No	Name	Pre-Test	Post-Test 1				Average	Post-Test 2				Average
			F	P	V	G		F	P	V	G	
1	AIA	80	2	2	3	2	56.2	2	2	2	2	50
2	AST	80	1	1	1	1	25	-	-	-	-	0
3	APL	85	2	2	3	2	56.2	3	3	3	3	75
4	AWF	80	1	2	2	2	43.7	2	2	2	2	50
5	DA	80	2	2	3	2	56.2	2	2	2	2	50
6	DS	80	2	2	3	2	56.2	2	2	3	2	56.2
7	GF	80	2	3	3	2	62.5	3	3	3	3	75
8	M. FR	80	2	2	2	2	50	2	2	3	2	56.2
9	NRPW	80	2	2	2	2	50	2	2	2	2	50
10	NY	80	2	2	3	2	56.2	2	2	3	2	56.2
11	NH	80	2	2	3	2	56.2	2	2	3	2	56.2
12	NAN	80	2	2	3	2	56.2	2	2	2	2	50
13	NFO	80	2	2	3	2	56.2	3	3	3	3	75
14	SLS	80	2	2	3	2	56.2	2	2	3	2	56.2
15	SS	80	1	1	1	1	25	-	-	-	-	0
16	SAR	80	1	1	2	1	31.2	-	-	-	-	0
17	VSR	80	3	3	3	2	68.7	3	3	3	3	75
18	YR	80	2	3	3	2	62.5	3	3	3	3	75
Mean		80.2					51.3					50.3

Note.

F: Fluency
P: Pronunciation
V: Vocabulary
G: Grammar

The researcher found that there was a decrease in score from pre-test, post-test 1 and post-test 2 using learning storytelling. 18 students participated in this study. At first, they all did a pre-test, and they scored an average of 80.2. Then, the researcher conducted the first round of testing, called cycle 1. In cycle 1, the average score dropped to 51.3. After that, they did the second round of testing, which is called cycle 2. In cycle 2, the average score decreased to 50.3. Due to the decrease in score from cycle 1 to cycle 2, none of the scores reached the target set by the researcher, which was to reach over 75 in both cycles.

The researcher wanted the students to score over 75 in both cycle 1 and cycle 2. However, the results did not meet this target. In cycle 1, the average score was lower than expected, at 51.3. Then, in cycle 2, the score further decreased to 50.3, which means it has not reached the target. This means that despite their efforts, the students did not perform as well as the researcher had hoped.

Overall, the researcher tracked the students' progress through the two testing cycles. Unfortunately, neither of the two cycles achieved the target score of less than 75. The average score in cycle 1 was lower than expected, and cycle 2 was even lower and of course both average scores were far from the desired results. This suggests that more work or different strategies may be needed to help students achieve target scores in future tests.

Students speaking skills are not doing well in school for a few reasons. There are some students who are not engaged in the speaking learning activity. They are not ready to learn, so they have trouble paying attention in class. This makes it hard for them to understand new words, which makes it even harder for them to tell stories when they speak. Also, they do not get enough practice speaking, which makes things worse because they do not get better at speaking.

Therefore, if they're not adapted to this method of learning, they get anxious and perform poorly when they have to speak in front of the class. To do better in school, they need to work on speaking skills and get more comfortable with this style of learning.

It means is not appropriate with theory that presented by (Zhou, 2023; Dincer, 2020; Sama & Wu, 2019). (Zhou, 2023; Dincer, 2020; Sama & Wu, 2019) said that to enhance speaking skills, language learners should engage in activities that provide opportunities for oral practice, such as conversation practice with native speakers, language exchange programs, and group discussions. Similarly, (Safitri, 2020) theory that regular feedback from teachers or language partners can help students identify areas for improvement and track their progress over time. So, the theory of (Safitri, 2020) was not used in this study.

From (Soland, 2021) theory that as students becomes more proficient in speaking, their confidence in using language also tends to grow. In this study students were not yet proficient in speaking, so they were not confident, and this theory does not apply in this study. In (Mahdi et al., 2022) theory, students become familiar with the story and characters, they gain the confidence to express themselves more freely in the target language. It can be shown that in this study, (Mahdi et al., 2022) theory was not confirmed so it was not used in this study.

From the findings of (Syafii et al., 2021) research suggests that storytelling can improve students' speaking abilities; but this study's findings indicate that using storytelling based on local storytelling was unsuccessful in raising students' speaking abilities. Therefore, in the context of this study, it can be concluded that storytelling based on local stories is not able to improve students' speaking ability. Some of the factors affecting the results include differences in learning environment, and student characteristics. However, there are similarities between (Syafii et al., 2021) research and this study, namely having the same assessment criteria. It has the same score achievement that researchers expect. Using the same method where the previous researcher conducted research up to cycle 2 as well as this study.

CONCLUSION

The study involved 18 students trying to get better at speaking by telling stories, but their scores dropped below the target of 75 in both tests. This goes against ideas saying that storytelling practicing speaking and knowing the language well should help. Confidence and knowing the local storytelling did not seem to help either. Even though past research had similar goals, storytelling didn't work here, so we might need to try something else to help students speak better. To improve students' speaking skills, teachers can utilize other strategies such as interviews, group discussions, and project presentations. This study is limited because it was only conducted in one school with a small number of students. What was found may only apply to students in that one school and cannot be considered applicable to all students out there. More data from different schools and students is needed to make sure the results can be more generalized and applicable to different places. It would be better if this study included more schools and students. That way, the findings would reflect a wider range of experiences and could be useful in more places. By including different kinds of schools and students, we could learn more about what's being studied and make sure the results apply to more situations.

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