

ENGLISH STORYTELLING TRAINING: ENHANCING STUDENTS' SELF-CONFIDENCE AND SPEAKING FLUENCY

^{1st}Mohammad Sofyan Adi Pranata ^(✉), ^{2nd} Aisyah Dita Zhaqila, ^{3rd} Vaza Maulida, ^{4th} Endang Susmiati

^{1,2,3,4} Universitas Nurul Jadid
sofyanadi@unuja.ac.id

Abstract— *This English storytelling training program was implemented at SMK Fauzul Hasan, a rural vocational high school in Probolinggo Regency, to improve 10th-grade students' self-confidence and fluency in speaking English. The program addressed key problems such as limited speaking practice, fear of making mistakes, low motivation, and the dominance of theoretical instruction. A creative storytelling approach was applied through four stages: preparation, interactive training sessions, continuous mentoring via the English Speaking Club, and evaluation. Learning activities involved visual media, practice in expression, pronunciation, and intonation, as well as narrative development based on pictures and short stories. The results showed a significant improvement in students' speaking performance, with 55% of students able to speak confidently and coherently for one minute after the training, compared to 30% before its implementation. Student participation increased, and the English Speaking Club proved effective for sustaining practice. Despite challenges such as limited time, inadequate facilities, and varied proficiency levels, the program demonstrated that storytelling is an effective and engaging strategy for enhancing speaking skills and fostering an active learning environment in rural vocational schools.*

Keywords— *storytelling, self-confidence, speaking skills, creative learning, rural vocational school*

1. Introduction

Speaking skill is one of the most essential competencies for students of vocational high schools (VHS), particularly in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as it plays a crucial role in preparing learners for both the workplace and higher education [1]. However, students in rural areas often face greater challenges in developing English speaking proficiency due to limited learning resources, insufficient exposure to English, and socio-economic constraints [2]. This condition is evident at SMK Fauzul Hasan, a vocational high school located in Pesawahan Village, Tiris District, Probolinggo Regency, Indonesia. As a rural school with limited facilities, most students come from low- to middle-income families, resulting in minimal access to English learning opportunities outside the classroom [3].

Preliminary observations revealed that tenth-grade students at SMK Fauzul Hasan experienced significant difficulties in speaking English fluently and confidently. Low self-confidence, fear of making grammatical and pronunciation errors, and limited opportunities for authentic speaking practice were identified as the main obstacles hindering students' speaking development [4]. In addition, English instruction was predominantly focused on theoretical aspects such as grammar memorization, with a lack of interactive and communicative speaking activities [5]. The absence of creative learning media, including English storybooks, audio-visual materials, and storytelling props, further contributed to students' passive participation and difficulty in constructing spontaneous and well-structured oral narratives [6].

These challenges, rural vocational students possess considerable potential to improve their speaking skills when supported by engaging and student-centered learning approaches.

[✉] Corresponding author

Storytelling has been widely recognized as an effective pedagogical method in EFL contexts, as it integrates language use with creativity, imagination, and meaningful communication [1], [2]. Through storytelling, learners are encouraged to express ideas, emotions, and experiences in a less threatening and more enjoyable learning environment. The use of simple media such as pictures, short stories, role-play, and collaborative group activities can reduce speaking anxiety, foster interaction, and enhance students' confidence in public speaking. Nevertheless, the implementation of storytelling in rural schools may encounter specific constraints, including teachers' limited training in public speaking pedagogy and the lack of English-rich environments outside the classroom [3], [6].

In response to these issues, this community service program focuses on implementing English storytelling training for tenth-grade students at SMK Fauzul Hasan. The program aims to enhance students' speaking fluency, self-confidence, and motivation through interactive and creative learning activities. Furthermore, this initiative is expected to serve as a starting point for developing more effective, contextual, and sustainable English teaching practices in rural vocational schools, thereby contributing to improved educational quality and students' future employability.

1 Method

This study adopted a descriptive community-based intervention design to examine the implementation of English storytelling training in an EFL vocational school context. The program was conducted at SMK Fauzul Hasan, a rural vocational high school in Probolinggo Regency, Indonesia, and involved tenth-grade students as the primary participants. The intervention was implemented in four sequential stages. The first stage was a one-week preparation phase that included a needs analysis through informal interviews with English teachers and students, the development of instructional materials focusing on basic storytelling techniques and functional vocabulary, and the preparation of simple instructional media such as pictures and short videos. The second stage consisted of a two-week training phase with four interactive sessions, covering the introduction of storytelling concepts, guided practice in pronunciation, intonation, expression, and narrative structure, the integration of visual media, and a final storytelling performance to assess students' speaking practice in an authentic context.

Following the training sessions, a one-week post-training mentoring phase was conducted to support the sustainability of learning outcomes. This phase included weekly speaking tasks, the establishment of an English Speaking Club to provide continuous opportunities for practice, and the distribution of supplementary learning materials for independent study. Data were collected throughout and after the program using multiple instruments, including pre-tests and post-tests to measure changes in speaking fluency and confidence, student questionnaires to capture participants' perceptions of the training, and teacher observations to document behavioral and performance changes. The implementation involved collaborative participation from students and English teachers, with teachers acting as facilitators and monitors of student progress. The program was delivered by a multidisciplinary team consisting of an English education coordinator, a visual media specialist, and an educational psychology facilitator under the supervision of a faculty advisor. This methodological approach aligns with JELT's emphasis on contextualized EFL pedagogy, classroom-based intervention, and practical implications for English language teaching.

2 Findings And Discussion

2.1 Finding

The English storytelling training program was implemented over a three-week period at SMK Fauzul Hasan, following the structured stages outlined in the Methods section. The results presented in this section focus on observable outcomes derived from classroom observations, pre-test and post-test data, student questionnaires, and teacher feedback, without interpretative elaboration.

During the initial phase, which emphasized the introduction of storytelling concepts and ice-breaking activities, students demonstrated a noticeable increase in participation and willingness to speak. Classroom observation data showed that approximately 85% of the students actively

engaged in interactive speaking games such as *Two Truths and a Lie* and *Word Chain*. Students began to produce short English utterances spontaneously, respond to peers, and volunteer answers, indicating a reduction in initial speaking anxiety. Several students who were previously passive during English lessons started to participate verbally, although their speech remained limited in length and grammatical accuracy.

In the second phase, which focused on basic storytelling techniques and the use of visual media, students' speaking performance improved in terms of organization and fluency. Based on observational checklists and task performance records, around 70% of students were able to present stories with a clear narrative structure consisting of a beginning, middle, and end. In addition, approximately 65% of the students were able to speak continuously for one to two minutes without relying on written notes. Students' use of visual prompts, such as picture cards, facilitated idea generation and supported narrative continuity during storytelling practice. Group-based activities also increased peer interaction and collaborative learning, as students actively supported each other during practice sessions.

The final phase involved individual storytelling performances and post-program evaluation. Performance assessment revealed that 48% of students showed clear improvement in performative aspects, including voice projection, eye contact, facial expression, and body language. Although some students still exhibited signs of nervousness, such as hesitation and limited vocabulary use, overall speaking confidence improved compared to pre-training observations. Quantitative data from the speaking pre-test and post-test showed an increase in the number of students able to speak fluently and coherently for at least one minute, from 30% before the program to 55% after the program. Questionnaire results indicated that 80% of students perceived storytelling as a more enjoyable and effective method for learning English speaking than conventional memorization-based approaches. Teachers also reported increased student participation and more active use of English during classroom activities.

2.2 Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that English storytelling training can effectively enhance both speaking fluency and self-confidence among EFL learners in a rural vocational school context. The gradual increase in student participation observed during the initial phase confirms that affective factors play a central role in oral language development. The reduction of speaking anxiety through ice-breaking activities supports Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which posits that language acquisition is facilitated when learners experience low anxiety, high motivation, and positive emotional engagement [7]. In this study, interactive games created a low-stress environment that encouraged students to take risks in speaking English, a condition that is particularly crucial for rural EFL learners who often associate English speaking with fear of error and negative evaluation [2], [4].

The improvement in students' narrative organization and speaking fluency during the second phase highlights the pedagogical value of storytelling as a structured communicative activity. Storytelling provides learners with a meaningful discourse framework that integrates linguistic form, meaning, and use, aligning with communicative language teaching principles that emphasize authentic language use [1], [5]. Bruner's narrative theory suggests that humans naturally construct meaning through stories, making narrative-based instruction cognitively accessible and pedagogically effective [8]. The finding that 70% of students were able to deliver logically structured stories indicates that storytelling supports discourse-level competence, which is often neglected in grammar-oriented EFL instruction.

The use of visual media as scaffolding further contributed to students' speaking development. From a cognitive processing perspective, Paivio's Dual Coding Theory explains that information presented through both verbal and visual channels is more easily processed and retrieved [9]. In this study, picture-based prompts reduced students' cognitive load during speech production, enabling them to focus on fluency, pronunciation, and expressive delivery rather than idea generation. This finding corroborates previous EFL studies demonstrating that visual storytelling enhances oral production by supporting learners with limited vocabulary and low confidence, particularly in under-resourced learning environments [3], [6].

The increase in students' speaking duration and performative confidence during individual storytelling performances further underscores the effectiveness of storytelling-based instruction. The ability to speak for one to two minutes without textual support represents a meaningful achievement for vocational students at the beginner to lower-intermediate level. Although grammatical inaccuracies persisted, the observed gains in fluency, intonation, and expressiveness

align with fluency-oriented pedagogy, which prioritizes meaningful communication over immediate grammatical accuracy [10]. Nation and Thornbury argue that fluency develops through repeated opportunities for extended speech in supportive contexts, a condition that storytelling activities successfully provided in this program [10], [11].

Students' positive perceptions of storytelling, as reflected in questionnaire responses, suggest that affective engagement significantly influences sustained speaking development. Enjoyable and meaningful learning experiences enhance intrinsic motivation, which is essential for long-term language learning, especially in contexts where exposure to English outside the classroom is minimal [1], [5]. Teacher observations further indicate that storytelling allows for a more holistic assessment of speaking ability, encompassing confidence, interaction, and communicative intent rather than isolated grammatical accuracy. This supports sociocultural perspectives on language learning, which emphasize interaction and social mediation as key drivers of development [12].

Several limitations were identified. The relatively short duration of the intervention constrained the depth of skill internalization for some learners. According to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, learners require sustained scaffolding to gradually internalize new skills [12]. Longer-term implementation and differentiated instruction would likely yield more equitable outcomes across varying proficiency levels. Additionally, limited access to audio-visual resources restricted opportunities for multimodal input and pronunciation modeling, which are known to support oral proficiency development [9], [11].

Thus, the coherence between the program objectives, methodological design, and observed outcomes confirms that storytelling is a theoretically grounded and contextually appropriate approach for improving EFL speaking skills in rural vocational schools. By integrating affective support, narrative structure, visual scaffolding, and communicative practice, storytelling addresses both linguistic and psychological dimensions of speaking development. These findings strengthen existing EFL research advocating learner-centered and communicative methodologies [1], [2], [5] and offer practical implications for teachers working in under-resourced educational settings.

3 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that English storytelling training is an effective pedagogical approach for enhancing speaking fluency and self-confidence among EFL students in a rural vocational school context. Through a structured and staged intervention, students showed measurable improvement in their ability to speak English coherently for extended periods, increased willingness to participate in speaking activities, and greater confidence in public oral performance. The findings confirm that storytelling, supported by interactive activities and visual scaffolding, can successfully address both linguistic and affective challenges commonly experienced by vocational EFL learners with limited exposure to English.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to EFL pedagogy by reinforcing the relevance of communicative and narrative-based approaches in under-resourced educational settings. The integration of affective support, narrative structure, and multimodal input aligns with established theories of language acquisition and fluency development, demonstrating that meaningful communication and learner engagement are critical components of successful speaking instruction. Practically, the study offers evidence-based implications for English teachers, suggesting that storytelling can serve as an accessible and adaptable strategy to promote active speaking practice without requiring advanced technological resources.

This study is limited by its short intervention period and the variability of students' proficiency levels. Future research is recommended to explore longer-term implementations, comparative instructional designs, and more diverse learner populations to further validate the effectiveness of storytelling-based instruction. Overall, this study highlights storytelling as a promising and sustainable approach for improving EFL speaking skills and fostering confident language use among vocational students in rural contexts.

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