

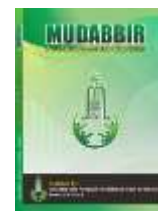


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Exploring Students' Perceptions of Storytelling As A Strategy For Enhancing Speaking Skills

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Abstract

This study investigates students' perceptions of the use of storytelling as a technique to improve speaking ability in English. The research was conducted with 22 students of the English Education Study Program at STAIN Mandailing Natal during the fifth semester. Data were collected through a questionnaire (8 closed-ended) and semi-structured interviews. The findings reveal that students perceived storytelling as an effective strategy to enhance fluency, vocabulary mastery, confidence, and communicative competence in everyday situations. Storytelling also increased classroom engagement and motivation. Furthermore, the interview data demonstrated that storytelling encouraged students to express opinions more easily and confidently, reduced speaking anxiety, and facilitated vocabulary retention. The study concludes that storytelling is not only an enjoyable and creative method but also a pedagogically significant technique that can bridge classroom learning with real-life communication.

Kata Kunci: *Storytelling, Speaking Skills, Students' Perception, Language Learning.*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is widely recognized as one of the most important skills in second language acquisition. It is the skill most directly associated with communication, yet it is also one of the most challenging to develop. Many students encounter difficulties such as lack of confidence, limited vocabulary, and fear of making mistakes, which hinder their ability to communicate fluently in English.

To address these challenges, language teachers have explored a variety of techniques. One promising method is **storytelling**, a traditional yet powerful pedagogical tool. Storytelling provides a meaningful context for practicing language, combining creativity, cultural elements, and communicative practice. As argued by Harmer (2007), engaging tasks enhance student motivation, while Thornbury (2005) emphasizes that fluency emerges from extended opportunities to produce meaningful speech.

Previous studies, such as Mokhtar et al. (2010), Ghounane (2010), and Amru (2016), have highlighted the effectiveness of storytelling in improving speaking skills, particularly in terms of vocabulary and pronunciation. However, little research has been conducted in the specific context of Indonesian students in small regional institutions. This study aims to fill that gap by examining students' perceptions of storytelling as a technique for speaking practice and investigating how it influences their ability to communicate in everyday English.

Based on this gap, the present research seeks to answer the following question: What are students' perceptions of the storytelling technique in enhancing their speaking skills in English language learning? and How does the use of storytelling techniques influence students' ability to communicate in English in everyday situations?. This study aims to find out students' perceptions of the storytelling technique in enhancing their speaking skills in English language learning and to know how the use of storytelling techniques influences students' ability to communicate in English in everyday situations.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach supported by quantitative data from questionnaires. The design allowed for a comprehensive exploration of students' perceptions, integrating both numerical data and rich descriptive accounts. The participants were 22 students enrolled in the fifth semester of the English Education Study Program at STAIN Mandailing Natal. A saturated sampling technique was used, as the population was relatively small and homogeneous.

Data were collected using two instruments: a questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire is a closed-ended questionnaire with 8 items on a five-point Likert scale. The items are:

1. The storytelling technique helps me improve my English speaking skills.
2. I feel more confident speaking English after using the storytelling technique.
3. Storytelling makes English language learning more engaging and enjoyable.
4. By using storytelling, I can more easily remember vocabulary and expressions in English.
5. Storytelling provides an opportunity for me to practice speaking freely in English.
6. I feel that the storytelling technique helps me understand the context of the language in everyday conversations.
7. Storytelling helps me speak English more fluently.
8. I believe storytelling is an effective technique in improving my English speaking skills.

Semi-structured interview with 5 guiding questions answered by all 22 students. This instrument used to answer the second research question. In this study, the researcher conducted interviews using some questions there are:

1. What is your opinion about learning to speak English through storytelling? Do you find it enjoyable or beneficial?
2. Does the storytelling technique make you more confident in speaking English especially in daily situations? Please explain.
3. After using the storytelling technique, do you find it easier to express your opinions or tell stories in English? Why?
4. How does the storytelling technique help you remember and use English vocabulary?
5. Does learning through storytelling make you more active or enthusiastic to speak English in class or in daily life?

Interviewed can be done via telephone and lasted approximately 10–15 minutes and was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to ensure that participants could express their opinions clearly without language barriers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the closed-ended questionnaire showed overwhelmingly positive perceptions of storytelling:

1. Speaking Improvement: 81.9% of students agreed or strongly agreed that storytelling improved their speaking skills.
2. Confidence: 77.3% reported feeling more confident after storytelling activities.
3. Enjoyment: 86.3% agreed that storytelling made learning enjoyable and less monotonous.
4. Vocabulary Retention: 90.9% believed that storytelling helped them remember vocabulary better.

5. Fluency: 95.5% confirmed that storytelling improved their fluency.

No participants expressed disagreement across all items. Neutral responses accounted for less than 20%, showing that perceptions were strongly positive overall.

The interview data provided deeper insights into how storytelling influenced students' communication.

1. Opinions about storytelling as a learning technique:

Nearly all participants described storytelling as enjoyable and beneficial. They highlighted increased engagement, creativity, and meaningful learning. For example, P1 said storytelling made speaking "more alive," while P7 called it "the best way to combine speaking and creativity."

2. Impact on confidence:

Most participants reported that storytelling reduced nervousness and fear of mistakes. P4 explained, "I am not afraid of being wrong anymore because I often practice storytelling." Others emphasized that following a storyline helped them relax and speak with greater assurance.

3. Ability to express ideas:

Students indicated that storytelling improved their ability to structure speech. P3 noted that they had learned to organize ideas into clear sequences, while P17 explained that they could now express opinions more quickly and coherently.

4. Vocabulary learning:

All participants emphasized vocabulary gains. P9 reported remembering words better when they were tied to story events, while P19 stated that vocabulary from storytelling felt "more practical and useful in real conversations."

5. Motivation and enthusiasm:

Storytelling encouraged students to be more active both inside and outside the classroom. P11 said they were now eager to share opinions, and P22 highlighted that English speaking had become enjoyable rather than a burden.

The findings consistently demonstrate that storytelling is a powerful tool for enhancing speaking ability.

1. Fluency and Confidence

Storytelling provided repeated opportunities for extended speech, resulting in improved fluency. Students also reported greater confidence, reflecting Brown's (2007) theory that communicative tasks lower anxiety and increase self-assurance.

2. Vocabulary Development

Contextual learning within stories significantly improved vocabulary retention. This aligns with Nation (2001), who argued that vocabulary is best acquired when words are embedded in meaningful contexts.

3. Motivation and Engagement

Students consistently described storytelling as engaging and enjoyable, which increased their motivation to speak more frequently. Harmer (2007) supports the idea that engaging methods sustain long-term learner motivation.

4. Comparison with Previous Studies

The results corroborate Mokhtar et al. (2010) in Malaysia, who found storytelling effective for communication; Ghounane (2010) in Algeria, who highlighted vocabulary and pronunciation benefits; and Amru (2016), who emphasized fluency and enthusiasm. This study adds further evidence from the Indonesian higher education context.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that storytelling is highly effective in supporting English speaking skills. Students perceived it as enjoyable, engaging, and beneficial for fluency, vocabulary retention, confidence, and motivation. More importantly, storytelling helped students transfer classroom learning to everyday communication, making English speaking a more natural and less intimidating skill. Future studies may explore the integration of technology through digital storytelling or the comparison between traditional and modern storytelling methods in language learning.

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