IMPROVING YOUNG LEARNERS' SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH THE POWER OF STORYTELLING

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Abstract: This study investigates the impact of storytelling on enhancing young learners' speaking skills using a pre-experimental design, specifically a one-group pretest-posttest format. The participants, selected through purposive sampling, were elementary school learners assessed on key aspects of speaking proficiency, including fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, using a speaking assessment rubric. The research procedure comprised three stages: a pretest to evaluate baseline speaking skills, a storytelling intervention conducted over several sessions, and a posttest to measure improvements. Data analysis involved descriptive and inferential statistics, with normality confirmed through the Shapiro-Wilk test for both pretest (p = 0.072) and posttest (p = 0.087). The results demonstrated a significant improvement in learners' speaking skills, with a mean difference of 14.69 between pretest and posttest scores. The standard deviation of 8.70 reflected moderate variability, and the 95% confidence interval (11.55 to 17.82) confirmed the reliability of the findings. The t-test yielded a highly significant result (t = 9.549, p < 0.001), indicating that the observed improvement was not due to random chance. Furthermore, Cohen's d effect size of 1.69 suggests a very large effect, highlighting the strong impact of storytelling on speaking skills development. These findings underscore storytelling as a powerful pedagogical tool, fostering significant improvements in learners' speaking proficiency by providing an engaging, immersive learning environment. The results support the recommendation to incorporate storytelling into communication-based learning strategies, enabling learners to develop confidence and structure in their speaking abilities.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills in English are one of the essential competencies that learners need to expert in the context of learning foreign language. Brown (2014) stated that speaking involves not only the mastery of vocabulary and grammar but also the ability to express ideas clearly and effectively. However, many educators found challenges in developing learners'

speaking skills, especially among young learners. Some of the main challenges include learners' lack of self-confidence when speaking in public, limited vocabulary, and lack of interest in conventional, often boring, teaching methods. As a result, their speaking skills feels difficult to develop optimally.

In an effort to address these issues, educators have started to turn to more creative and engaging methods, one of which is storytelling. Storytelling has long been recognized as an effective method for stimulating children's imagination, enriching their vocabulary, and encouraging verbal interaction among learners. As a form of learning based on stories, storytelling not only captures learners' attention but also provides a clear context for language use (Harmer, 2007). Through stories, learners can associate words or expressions with mental images they create, thus facilitating the understanding and usage of language in everyday conversation.

Previous studies have shown that storytelling can help educators in developing learners' speaking skills. Isbell et al. (2004) in their research revealed that storytelling can enhance the complexity of oral language and story comprehension in children learning a language. Additionally, storytelling has proven to improve speaking skills naturally through an enjoyable and non-coercive approach. This is because stories often contain narrative elements that motivate learners to speak more, either by retelling a story they have heard or by discussing various aspects of the story. Another study by Ellis & Brewster (2014) also supports this finding, showing that storytelling can enhance speaking skills in a more contextual and meaningful way. Stories provide opportunities for learners to use language in authentic social contexts, which in turn enriches their understanding and speaking abilities.

However, despite the many studies revealing the benefits of storytelling, there are also several challenges in its implementation. One major challenge is selecting stories that are appropriate for the learners' age and language proficiency level (Vest, 2020). Stories that are too difficult can make learners feel frustrated, while stories that are too easy may not provide enough challenge for their language development. Moreover, teachers' ability to manage storytelling sessions interactively also affects the method's effectiveness. Wright (2008) argued that teachers need to use various techniques, such as open-ended questions or role-play activities, to encourage learners to actively participate and speak more during storytelling sessions. Some studies also suggest that the effectiveness of storytelling can be enhanced when combined with other learning strategies, such as group discussions, writing activities, or the use of visual media.

This study aims to further explore how storytelling can be effectively implemented to improve speaking skills in young learners. The research will also investigate how various elements of storytelling, such as story selection, storytelling techniques, and the interactions occurring during the sessions, contribute to the development of learners' speaking skills. Additionally, this study will analyze the challenges teachers may face in implementing this method and strategies that can be applied to overcome them. It is expected that the findings of this research will provide deeper insights into the use of storytelling in language teaching and offer practical guidelines for educators to improve young learners' speaking skills through an enjoyable and effective method.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Speaking Skills in Young Learners

Speaking is one of the most crucial skills in language acquisition, particularly for young learners who are in the formative stages of language development. It involves not only the ability to articulate sounds but also the capacity to organize thoughts, use appropriate vocabulary, and communicate effectively in diverse contexts (Syakur et al., 2020). Research highlights that young learners often face challenges in speaking due to limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, and insufficient practice opportunities. These barriers necessitate innovative teaching methods that are engaging and provide ample opportunities for interaction.

One of the foundational studies on young learners' speaking development emphasizes the importance of interactive and meaningful communication activities. It suggests that traditional rote learning and mechanical drills fail to provide the contextual and social dimensions necessary for effective language acquisition (Mukhtorova & Akhmadjonova 2023). Consequently, there is a growing consensus that pedagogical approaches for young learners should be immersive, dynamic, and tailored to their developmental needs.

2. The Role of Storytelling in Language Learning

Storytelling is an ancient art form that has been utilized in educational contexts for centuries. Krishnan & Shah (2020) suggested that storytelling is particularly effective in language learning as it combines auditory, visual, and emotional elements to create a holistic learning experience. Storytelling engages multiple senses and cognitive processes, which enhances retention and comprehension. According to Wright (2008) storytelling allows learners to experience language in context, making it easier for them to acquire vocabulary, syntax, and pronunciation.

Studies have shown that storytelling is not only an enjoyable activity but also a powerful pedagogical tool. Safdarian & Ghyasi (2013) demonstrated that storytelling significantly improves oral language complexity and narrative skills in young children. Furthermore, stories provide a natural context for introducing new vocabulary and grammatical structures, which can be reinforced through repetition and discussion.

3. Benefits of Storytelling for Speaking Skills

According to Koropec (2021), there are several benefits of storytelling for enhancing speaking skills have been documented in the literature. First, storytelling encourages active participation and interaction, which are critical for developing speaking skills. By engaging in storytelling activities, learners are motivated to use the language in meaningful ways, whether by retelling stories, asking questions, or discussing characters and events. Second, storytelling fosters creativity and imagination, which are essential for language production. Learners are encouraged to create mental images of the story, helping them to internalize the language and use it creatively. Research by Harmer (2007) underscores the role of imagination in helping learners develop fluency and confidence in speaking. Third, storytelling helps to reduce anxiety and build confidence. Many young learners are hesitant to speak due to fear of making mistakes. Storytelling provides a low-pressure environment where learners can practice speaking without fear of judgment. This psychological safety promotes risk-taking and experimentation with language, which are crucial for language development.

4. Techniques for Implementing Storytelling

Effective storytelling requires careful planning and execution. Teachers must select stories that are appropriate for the learners' age, language proficiency, and interests. Stories should be engaging, culturally relevant, and rich in linguistic input. One effective technique is to use visual aids such as pictures, props, or digital media to enhance comprehension and engagement (Utami et al., 2023). Visual aids help young learners connect the story's content with its linguistic elements, making it easier for them to understand and remember.

Another technique is to involve learners actively in the storytelling process. This can be achieved by asking open-ended questions, encouraging learners to predict what will happen next, or inviting them to act out parts of the story (Safdarian & Ghyasi, 2013). Such interactive activities not only make storytelling more enjoyable but also provide opportunities for learners to practice speaking.

5. Challenges in Using Storytelling

Despite its numerous benefits, the implementation of storytelling in language teaching is not without challenges. One major challenge is the selection of appropriate stories. Stories that are too simple may fail to challenge learners, while those that are too complex may overwhelm them (Matamit et al., 2020). Another challenge is the teacher's proficiency in storytelling (Mu et al., 2015). Effective storytelling requires not only linguistic competence but also the ability to convey emotions, use gestures, and maintain learners' attention. Teachers who lack these skills may struggle to deliver stories effectively.

Time constraints and curriculum demands also pose challenges. Wright (2008) stated that many teachers find it difficult to allocate sufficient time for storytelling activities within a packed curriculum. To address these challenges, teachers need to integrate storytelling into their lesson plans strategically and align it with learning objectives.

6. Previous Studies on Storytelling and Speaking Skills

Several previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of storytelling in enhancing speaking skills. For instance, a study by Ellis & Brewster (2014) found that storytelling activities significantly improved young learners' speaking fluency and accuracy. The study also highlighted the importance of repetition and reinforcement in helping learners internalize new language structures.

Another study by Mukhtorova & Akhmadjonova (2023) examined the impact of storytelling on learners' confidence and motivation to speak. The findings revealed that storytelling not only enhanced learners' speaking skills but also increased their willingness to participate in oral activities. These findings are supported by Harmer (2007) who emphasized the motivational and affective benefits of storytelling in language learning.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a pre-experimental design, specifically a one-group pretest-posttest format, to examine the impact of storytelling on young learners' speaking skills. The population includes elementary school learners, with a purposive sampling technique used to select a representative group. A speaking assessment rubric evaluates key aspects of speaking proficiency: fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

Table. 1 Speaking Fluency Assessment Rubric (adapted from TFU Foreign Language Assessment Rubrics)

Categories	0– inadequate	1 – needs improvement	2 – meets expectations	3 – exceeds expectations
Vocabulary	Uses only simple vocabulary and expressions. Sometimes uses inadequate vocabulary, which hinders the student from responding properly.	Uses limited vocabulary and expressions and makes frequent errors in word choice. Does not try to use new words learned in class or expand vocabulary and expressions.	Uses varied vocabulary and expressions learned in class, and makes only a few errors in word choice.	Uses appropriate expressions and a wide range of vocabulary learned in and out class.
Grammar	Uses only basic structures and makes frequent errors.	Uses a variety of structures with frequent errors, or uses basic structures with only a few errors.	Uses a variety of sentence structures but makes some errors.	Uses many different structures depending on contexts with only a few grammatical errors.
Pronunciation	Frequent problems with pronunciation and intonation. Voice is too quiet to hear. Hard to understand.	Pronunciation, rhythm and intonation errors sometimes make it difficult to understand the student.	Pronunciation, rhythm and intonation are almost clear and accurate, but only occasionally difficult to understand.	Pronunciation, rhythm and intonation are almost always clear and accurate.
Overall fluency	Speaks with much hesitation, which often interferes with communication.	Speaks with some hesitation, which sometimes interferes with communication.	Speaks with some hesitation, but it doesn't usually interrupt the flow of conversation.	Speaks smoothly with little hesitation and doesn't interrupt the flow of conversation. Speaks with confidence.

The research procedure is divided into three stages: a pretest to gauge initial speaking abilities, a storytelling intervention conducted over several sessions to immerse learners in interactive stories, and a posttest to measure improvements in speaking skills. Data analysis involves both descriptive and inferential statistics to evaluate the significance of observed changes. Storytelling, as supported by Wright (2008). It provides an immersive and engaging context for language learning, helping learners to internalize linguistic structures naturally and confidently. This methodology ensures a structured approach to exploring storytelling's pedagogical potential for enhancing speaking skills.
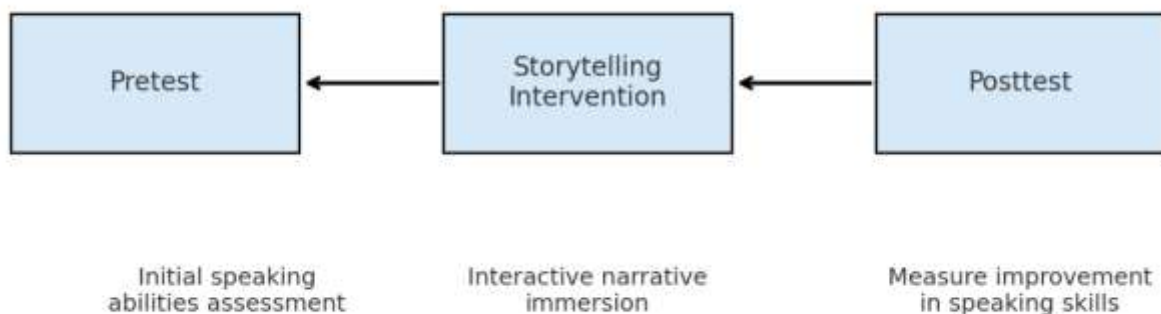

Pretest — Initial speaking abilities assessment
Storytelling Intervention — Interactive narrative immersion
Posttest — Measure improvement in speaking skills

Figure 1. Ilustration the Research Procedure

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS
In this section, the researcher will present two results of data analysis: descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.
Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are used to present data in a concise and structured manner, making it easy to understand. According to Creswell & Creswell (2023), descriptive statistics is a method used to describe or provide an overview of collected data without the intention of making broader conclusions or generalizations. This type of statistics does not test hypotheses but rather provides an overview of the existing data.

Tabel. 2 Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	57,9588	32	10,69062	1,88985
Posttest	72,6563	32	9,24439	1,63419

The descriptive analysis results show increasing in the mean score from the Pretest to the Posttest. The mean score for the Pretest is 57.9688 with a standard deviation of 10.69062, while the mean score for the Posttest increases to 72.6563 with a standard deviation of 9.24439. This increase of 14.6875 indicates a positive change after the treatment or intervention was applied. Furthermore, the smaller standard deviation in the Posttest suggests that the scores are more concentrated around the mean, reflecting more consistent results compared to the Pretest. The standard error of the mean is also smaller in the Posttest (1.63419) compared to the Pretest (1.88985), indicating that the Posttest mean is more accurate in representing the population. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the treatment or intervention had a positive impact on improving the outcomes. Further analysis, such as a paired t-test, is needed to confirm whether this difference is statistically significant.

Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics aim to make broader conclusions from the collected data. According to Creswell & Creswell (2023), inferential statistics is a data analysis technique used to draw conclusions about a population based on data obtained from a sample. This includes testing relationships between variables, assessing effects, and generalizing research findings from a sample to a population. As such, this method relies on probability theory and specific statistical distributions.

Tabel. 3 Test of Normality

Shapiro-Wilk			
	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Pretest	0,939	32	0,072
Posttest	0,942	32	0,087

Table 3 shows the results of the normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk test indicate that the Pretest data have a normal distribution, with a significance value ($p = 0.072 > 0.05$). For the Posttest data, the Shapiro-Wilk test also shows a normal distribution ($p = 0.087 > 0.05$). The Shapiro-Wilk test was used because it is more reliable for small sample sizes ($n = 32$).

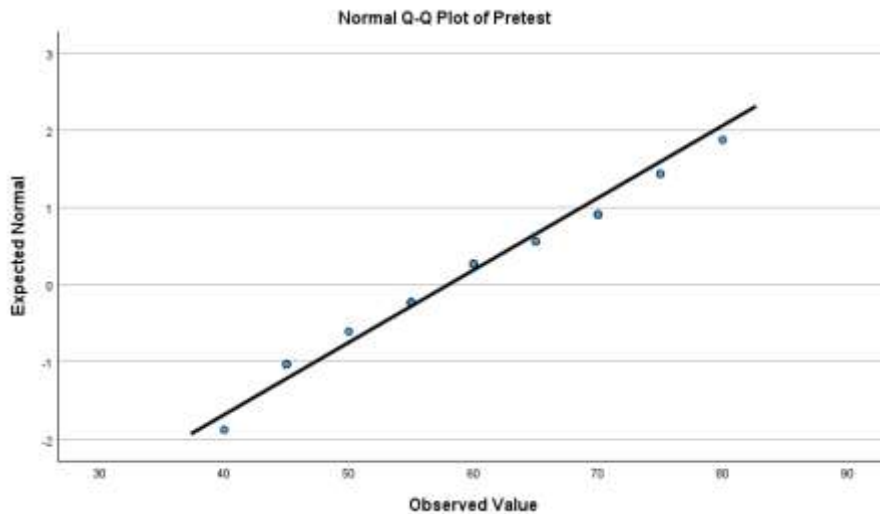Based on these results, the normal distribution of the data can also be observed in the Q-Q plot visualization.

Figure 2. Normal Q-Q Plot of Pretest

Based on Figure 2, it can be observed that the points approach the diagonal line. It can be concluded that the pretest data is close to a normal distribution.
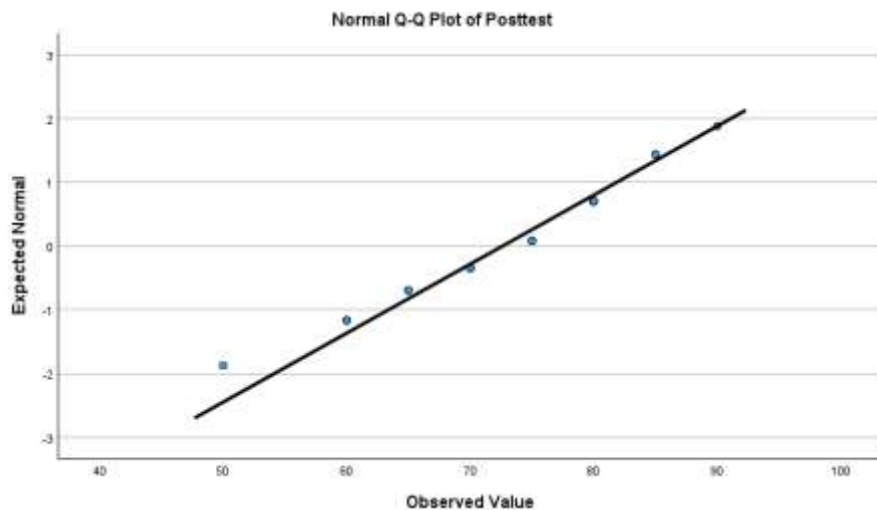

Figure 3. Normal Q-Q Plot of Posttest

Based on Figure 3, it can be observed that the points approach the diagonal line. It can be concluded that the posttes data is close to a normal distribution.

Tabel. 4 T-Test

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig.
				Lower	Upper			
Pretest - Posttest	14,68750	8,70090	1,53812	17,82451	11,55049	9,549	31	<,001

Table 4 shows the results of the analysis indicate a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores, with a mean difference of 14.6875. The standard deviation of 8.7009 indicates a moderate variation in scores among respondents, while the standard error mean of 1.53812 suggests that the estimation of the mean difference is fairly precise. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from 17.82451 to 11.55049, indicating that these results are highly reliable. The test statistic t value of 9.549 with degrees of freedom (df) of 31 shows that the effect of the difference is highly significant. A p-value < 0.001 provides strong evidence that this difference is not due to random chance.

This significant difference indicates a substantial change between the pretest and posttest scores, most likely influenced by the intervention or treatment applied in the study. Since the posttest mean is higher, this suggests an improvement in performance, understanding, or other outcomes relevant to the study's objectives. These findings provide a strong basis for concluding that the treatment was effective. However, further analysis is necessary to ensure that the results align with the study's context and objectives, including considering external factors that may have influenced the scores.

Effect Size

Effect size is a quantitative measure that describes the strength of the relationship between variables or the size of an effect in a study. According to Cohen (2008), effect size measures the difference between two means in terms of standard deviation units. Unlike p-values, which only indicate whether an effect is statistically significant, effect size provides information about the practical significance of the findings. The following is the formula of Cohen's *d.*

$$d = \frac{\text{Mean Difference}}{\text{Standard Deviation of Differences}}$$

Based on the calculation using Cohen's d, the effect size was found to be 1.69, indicating a very large effect of the storytelling method on improving learners' speaking skills. This value far exceeds the threshold for a large effect (0.8), as described by Cohen. With an average improvement of 14.69 and a standard deviation of 8.70, storytelling has been proven to have a significant and substantial impact on enhancing learners' speaking abilities.

Practically, this result shows that storytelling is not only effective in increasing the learners' average scores but also has a strong influence on their overall speaking proficiency. This finding supports the idea that storytelling can be an exceptionally effective teaching method for developing speaking skills, especially in communication-based learning. Therefore, the implementation of storytelling is recommended as a strategic approach to help learners speak more confidently and with better structure.

Discussion

The results of this study show that the storytelling method significantly helps improve learners' speaking skills. The average score difference between before (pretest) and after (posttest) the intervention was 14.69, indicating a very noticeable improvement. Furthermore, the effect size (Cohen's d) of 1.69 demonstrates a very large impact, far exceeding the threshold for a large effect. With a t-value of 9.549 and a p-value of less than 0.001, these findings confirm that the improvement was not just a coincidence but was truly influenced by the storytelling method.

This result is also supported by other data, such as a standard deviation of 8.70, indicating a reasonable variation in scores, and a 95% confidence interval (11.55 to 17.82), which reinforces the reliability of the findings. In other words, storytelling had a consistent and significant impact across the learners.

Practically, this result shows that storytelling is not only enjoyable but also highly effective in helping learners improve their speaking skills. Through storytelling, learners not only learn to speak more fluently but also gain confidence, expand their vocabulary, and construct sentences better. This activity creates an engaging and active learning atmosphere, making it easier for learners to understand and practice speaking skills.

This study used a pretest-posttest design on a single group of elementary school learners. Before the intervention, learners were assessed on their fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. After several storytelling sessions, a posttest was conducted to observe their progress. The results showed a significant improvement, affirming that storytelling is a highly effective teaching method, especially in communication-based learning.

In conclusion, storytelling is a powerful tool for helping learners improve their speaking abilities. With its engaging and interactive approach, this method not only enhances learners' scores but also builds their confidence in speaking. Therefore, this method is highly recommended for use in teaching, particularly in programs focused on developing speaking skills.

CONCLUSION

Storytelling method has a significant impact on improving young learners' speaking skills. Based on the statistical analysis, there was a significant improvement between the pretest and posttest scores, with a mean difference of 14.69, and a Cohen's d effect size of 1.69, indicating a very large effect. Storytelling has proven to be effective because it provides an engaging, immersive, and enjoyable learning context, allowing learners to speak more confidently and with better structure.

This study confirms that storytelling enhances essential aspects of speaking skills, including fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Through this approach, learners are motivated to actively participate in speaking activities, such as retelling stories or discussing story elements. These findings support the implementation of storytelling as a strategic method in communication-based learning, especially for young learners.

However, the implementation of storytelling requires careful planning, such as selecting stories appropriate to the learners' proficiency levels and employing interactive

delivery techniques. Therefore, storytelling can serve as a highly effective approach to improving learners' speaking skills in language learning.

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HALAMAN INI SENGAJA DIKOSONGKAN