**To Express or To Hide: Exploring Vocational High School Students’ Perception**

**Towards Storytelling Strategy in English Classroom**

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**Abstract**

Speaking abilities are seen as crucial abilities that students must possess. Many students, however, stay away from communicating in the target language due to a variety of causes. Because of the monotony of the educational procedure, many students are unmotivated to learn to speak. Students require a motivating alternative method to improve their speaking skills. As a result, storytelling is seen as an effective teaching approach. To share a story, storytelling combines a spoken narrative, several digital images, a soundtrack, and modern technologies. As a result, the purpose of this study is to assess vocational high school students' attitudes on the employment of storytelling strategies. This research used mixed method research with 26 participants of the XI class at one state Vocational School in Bandung. The research instruments were questionnaires and interviews. According to the findings of questionnaires and interviews, storytelling can motivate students to learn English, particularly in Speaking. Because storytelling is delivered in a captivating and intriguing manner, it can be an effective technique for teaching speaking. As an alternative approach for learning English, storytelling is recommended.

**Keywords:** English language learning, speaking skills, storytelling strategy

**INTRODUCTION**

Speaking is the most commonly utilized language skill in practically any environment. Speaking includes expressing thoughts, ideas, and feelings by using the capacity to pronounce the words to organize the words into phrases or sentences to select the words related to the issue. (Brown 2007, as cited in Parmawati, 2018). In Indonesia, the use of foreign languages is regulated in Article 29 paragraph 2, Law No. 24/2009 concerning the Flag, Language, and State Emblem and National Anthem. The article states that foreign languages can be used as instruction in educational units to support students' foreign language skills.

In using English as an international language, Indonesian students face some difficulties. Maulana et al., (2016) noted that the most common issues students have when learning speaking skills comprise a lack of vocabulary, poor pronunciation, a lack of enthusiasm to speak, and nervousness while speaking English. Furthermore, students were hesitant to speak English and share their opinions and ideas because they were worried of pronouncing words incorrectly.

English for EFL students is a challenging endeavor that requires a lot of effort to develop suitable words and express their meaning. Speaking ability demonstrates knowledge of the English language. Teaching speaking in English as a foreign language is perhaps the most emerging aspect of language skills because it involves students' mental control as a fortress of performance as well as their ability to produce verbal sentences, good pronunciation, accuracy in contact of speech, and fluency. (Arifin, 2017). Furthermore, Harmer (2015) declared that a successful conversation is dependent not just on good speakers, but also on the interaction between speakers and listeners. Furthermore, in conversations, being a good listener (having good listening skills) is just as vital as being able to talk.

According to Utami et al., (2017) in speaking, there are several aspects, such as how the speaker pronounces a word and how the speaker obeys the grammar and expresses ideas. Moreover, Speaking, according to Douglas (2004, as cited in Megawati, 2017) comprises five components: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

To solve the problem above, the strategy that the researchers proposed is storytelling. According to Megawati (2018), the storytelling strategy is a way to help students express ideas, develop, and end the story. The students listen to what the speaker says, then consider what the speaker means and comprehend its substance. Finally, the students can provide information based on what they learn from the story. Students can simply practice using the English language by employing storytelling. The teacher can potentially improve the students' speaking skills by selecting the proper strategy. Historically, the storytelling approach has been known as one of the teaching activities in second and foreign language classrooms in which students are requested to retell the story's content in different word constructions by including particular interactions between the storyteller and the listener.

Furthermore, storytelling is the social and cultural activity of sharing stories, sometimes with improvisation, theatrics, or embellishment. Anora (2020) mentions that students can briefly summarize a tale or story they heard from somebody beforehand, or they may create their own stories to tell their classmates. Storytelling fosters creative thinking, it also helps students express ideas in the format of beginning, development, and ending, including the characters and setting a story has to have, students also can tell riddles or jokes

Using various types of activities in speaking can certainly make the class more active, and in this study, the researchers used storytelling as an activity in learning to speak. Storytelling is the interactive skill of revealing the elements and pictures of a story through words and gestures while inspiring the listener's imagination. Stanley and Dillingham (2009, as cited in Hidayati, 2019) defined storytelling as an oral activity that incorporates improvisation in presenting the narrative, facial expressions, and body movement in order to capture the audience's attention by leveraging multisensory stirring emotion of an event in a story. Storytelling is an oral activity in which language and gestures are utilized in a vivid manner to construct scenes in a sequence; nevertheless, storytelling is more than just narrative. As part of class speaking exercises, storytelling is an effective teaching method that allows students to focus on story structure. (Hidayati, 2019).

Storytelling is an excellent way to enhance one's public speaking abilities. According to Iverson and Lancey (1961, as referenced in Amru, 2016), engaging students in storytelling activities promotes communication skills and shared learning experiences. Storytelling is a global language function and one of the most important components of casual communication. Students can develop listening and speaking skills in a fun and participatory setting by employing storytelling. Furthermore, Amru (2016) explains that when a teacher delivers a tale to pupils, he or she communicates with them, entertains them, and conveys information to them. Furthermore, many students still struggle with speaking in front of a class, becoming confused and losing the theme, or even losing their way of thinking, causing the conversation to become confused.

For that reason, the researchers propose one way to overcome the problem which is to use storytelling which has been proven in many studies and can be used as an alternative strategy to improve students' speaking skills.

**METHODS**

Relevant to the research objective posed in the beginning of the paper, this study uses an Embedded Concurrent Experimental Mixed Methods Design because data collection and data analysis are embedded in quantitative research design and conjunction with other qualitative data (Creswell, 2007 in Lestari & Syafryadin, 2022). An exploratory sequential mixed method design (also known as a two-phase model) collects quantitative data first, followed by qualitative data to help explain or build on the quantitative finding (Creswell, 2012). The purpose of this technique is to present a wide picture of the study issue using quantitative data and outcomes; more analysis, specifically qualitative data collection, is required to improve, extend, or explain the broad picture (Creswell, 2012).

**Research participants and Data Collection**

The participant is one class of eleventh grade students at SMKN 10 Bandung consisting of 26 students. The instruments to collect the data are sheet questionnaires and interview questions. The questionnaire consists of questions that aim to collect information from respondents about their responses toward the learning activity using story telling. According to Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun (2012), questionnaire is when the subject answers the question by writing or more generally by marking the answer sheet. The advantage of the questionnaire is that it can be sent or given to many people simultaneously, the choice items on the questionnaire include multiple-choice, true-false, matchmaking, or interpretive exercises.

Next instrument to collect data is interview questions. The interview is one of the methods chosen by researchers to collect data in qualitative research. As stated by Creswell (2018), interviews are usually used in qualitative research and take place when the researcher asks one or more participants broad and open-ended questions and records their responses. Moreover, Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun (2012) also said that interviews were conducted orally, either in person or by telephone, and the researchers would record the answers to questions. The interview was conducted to find out the responses and difficulties in using storytelling students in teaching speaking skills.

**FINDINGS**

The researchers reveal the findings regarding students' responses in learning to speak English using the storytelling strategy. The data was presented narratively from the result of questionnaires and interviews given to the participants.

* 1. **The result of the Questionnaire**

The questionnaires were provided by the researchers at the end of the study. The researchers anticipated that by using questionnaires, the students would be able to provide personal and honest responses based on their experiences. The questionnaire responses were later reinforced by data from the interview to increase the validity. The following are comments of the questionnaire results. The researcher displays a table of questionnaire percentages and explains how many percentages each statement received.

The first statement was on how students perceived their speaking abilities. Nobody said that speaking abilities were not significant in English; in fact, 88.5% of the students believed that speaking skills were vital. The student's assessment of this statement led them to the conclusion that speaking skills were the most crucial talent to improve.

The second comment is about the student's difficulty speaking English. According to the survey results, 57.8% of pupils had trouble speaking English. Furthermore, 34.6% of students are unsure whether they have a problem. 7.6% of students have no difficulty communicating in English. Based on the study results, it can be concluded that many students still face difficulty speaking English.

The third statement was related to the vocabulary aspect. 65% of students agree that limited vocabulary makes it difficult for them to speak English. Moreover, the fourth statement was related to students' self-confidence. 34.8% of students agree that they are always confident when speaking English.

However, 30.7% of students are not sure whether they are confident or not, and 7.7% of students feel insecure when speaking in English. From these results, it can be seen that although not all students agree, more than half of the students feel that they are confident in speaking English.

 The fifth statement relates to students' ability to use specific and appropriate vocabulary in making sentences. 73% of students agree that storytelling helps them choose the appropriate vocabulary for making sentences. However, 15.5% of students do not know that storytelling can help them choose the appropriate vocabulary to make a sentence. Based on these results, storytelling can help them to choose the correct vocabulary; even that was not very effective because the number of students who chose neutral was also high.

The sixth statement was related to the use of the simple past tense. Because it retells the performance of the story, they must use the simple past tense. The questionnaire results showed that 65.4% of students agreed that storytelling helped them use the simple past tense when they had to retell a story. However, 26.9% of students did not know whether it helped them. These results indicate that students still have problems using the simple past tense.

The seventh statement relates to the student's ability to remember stories. The questionnaire results showed that 57.8% of students agreed that storytelling helped them remember stories. However, 26.9% of students were not sure whether it helped or not, and 15.3% of students felt that it did not. help them. This result shows that some students cannot remember the story even though they have used storytelling.

The eighth statement is related to students' understanding of the story. As many as 77% of students found it helpful in understanding the story, while 19.2% were unsure about it. From these results, students still have difficulty understanding the story. It can be corrected later so all students can understand the story well.

The ninth statement relates to using scripts when students have to appear in front. 53.9% of students felt that they had to appear without bringing a script after using storytelling, but many students still had high anxiety. 11.5% of students are unsure if they can achieve or not if they don't bring a script. 34.6% of students feel they still need a script when they appear. From these results, it can be concluded that more than half of the students are confident in appearing without a script.

The tenth statement relates to the use of storytelling in telling stories in chronological order. Because it is a retelling show, students have to retell in chronological order to make the story easier to understand. It is also intended that the listener not miss some parts of the story. 88.4% of students agree that the media can help them tell stories in chronological order. 11.5% of students do not know whether storytelling helps them or not. From these results, we can see that although not all students were helped, most of them agreed that it helped them.

In the eleventh statement about storytelling skills, 77% of students believe their storytelling skills are improving. However, 11.5% of students are not sure whether their skills are improving or not. This shows that most students feel there is an improvement when they have to retell a story.

The twelfth statement was about students' speaking comprehension. 57% of students agreed that their speaking comprehension improved, but the number of unsure students was relatively low, 15.3%. And 7.7% of students feel that storytelling cannot help them improve their speaking skills. Based on these results, the students did not feel that their speaking comprehension improved. This can be inferred from many factors, but on the bright side, more than half of the students agreed that their skills were improved.

The thirteenth statement was about students' confidence when they have to appear in front. The questionnaire results show that 65.4% of students feel confident if they have to appear in front after using storytelling in class. However, 15.3% of students are not sure that they are confident. 4% of students feel insecure when they have to appear in front. The questionnaire results showed that more than half of the students felt confident but were ineffective in helping 4% of students.

The fourteenth statement was related to student's motivation in learning to use storytelling. 73% of students feel motivated to learn after using storytelling, but some are not motivated to learn. 23 % of students are not sure, and 4% do not feel motivated by the use of storytelling. This can be seen from the results that not all students feel motivated. Even more, than half of the students feel motivated. Many factors can cause this, but these results can be used to modify actions for subsequent teaching and learning activities.

The last statement is related to students' perceptions of storytelling compared to other media. 80.7% of students think storytelling is fun compared to other media. However, 19.3% of students are unsure if storytelling is the funniest medium when compared to similar stories. From these results, it can be concluded that the number of students who agree is relatively high, and this shows that students prefer storytelling if it is applied in class.

Based on the results and explanations of the questionnaire, not all students were satisfied with the use of storytelling in class. This can be seen in some students who choose to be hesitant to be their choice. Even storytelling can be said to be an effective strategy because more than half of the students chose to agree and strongly agree, some also chose to hesitate.

In general, based on students' perception, storytelling helps them use and pronounce some new vocabulary, use the simple past tense, and increase their understanding of certain stories. In addition, it increases students' self-confidence and motivation as well. From the results of the questionnaires, the researcher assumed that the students could give personal answers based on their experiences.

* 1. **The Result of the Interview**

The researchers conducted interviews to get more information to back up the questionnaire results. Researchers might use interviews to ask specific students about challenges they have encountered as well as their experiences in the teaching and learning process that utilizes storytelling. The researcher assigned code S1 to the first student, code S2 to the second, code S3 to the third, code S4 to the fourth, code S5 to the fifth, and so on. To minimize misunderstandings, the researcher utilized Indonesian and requested participants to respond in Indonesian.

The first question was about students' perceptions of speaking skills. All students think speaking is an important skill that must be mastered because language is used to communicate with others. This can be seen from several student statements that say that speaking skills are important

(Notes that it translated from Bahasa Indonesia).

*"Obviously, speaking skills are important, let alone English, if we understand Indonesian but we can't speak, it's useless, sorry, unless we are mute." (S1)*

*"Speaking is important when learning a language, because if you can't speak it, why can't you speak English." (S2)*

*"The ability to speak is very important because in everyday life it is exchanged information from speaking, some are from writing, but it takes a long time." (S3)*

*"It's important, whether it's English or whatever speaking ability, it will be used in life." (S4)*

*"I think it's important because it's a basic skill that will be used every day for various things. If people can speak English, it means that you are smart." (S5)*

*"Very important and we must have the ability to speak." (S6) "It is very important, the ability to speak will be used for life." (S7)*

*"It's important, Sir, in fact, in my opinion, speaking ability is the most important thing in learning English" (S8)*

The second and third questions are about students' speaking skills. Not all students have good speaking skills. Most of the interviewees had problems with their speaking skills. This can be seen from some of the students' answers.

*"I'm not very fluent when it comes to speaking because my brain can't immediately compose and speak, but if I'm prepare I can memorize, and also English vocabulary isn't as easy as reading Indonesian" (S1)*

*"I don't think English vocabulary is easy and it's not easy to remember if it's a foreign word, it's very difficult to speak, I'm not smart when I'm told to speak, sometimes I forget English." (S2)*

From those students’ answers, the students did not have good speaking skills. They also stated their difficulties like losing some English vocabulary and hard to arrange some words while they should speak.

The fourth, five and sixth question was about the students’ perception of storytelling in English. One of the simple speaking activities was telling a story. However, the interviewees stated that storytelling was one of the difficult speaking activities. It was supported by the students’ statement about storytelling.

 *"It's hard, because sometimes you don't understand the story, it's different from our experience, and sometimes you don't know what English is."(S7)*

From the students' statements above, students assume that storytelling is a difficult speaking activity. Because students not only tell stories but must understand the story well before telling it to the audience. Student also stated that the use of simple past tense is a factor that makes it difficult to tell a story. The aspect of pronunciation is also a difficult factor. This is supported by several student statements.

*"When it comes to storytelling, you have to use the simple past- tense, it's confusing if you are told to use the simple past- tense." (S4)*

*"If there are difficult words, often hesitate to speak, afraid of being wrong and strange, they will be laughed at." (S5)*

The seventh question was about limited vocabulary, which is the leading cause of difficulty in speaking English. Here are the different opinions of students.

*"I think the limited vocabulary is the cause of my difficulty in speaking English but the most problem for me is the pronunciation" (S1)*

*"Yes, it's true that limited vocabulary is the only problem for me, because I'm also confused*

*if I don't know English" (S2)*

 *"Actually, the vocabulary is easy, sir, it's just that I really like to blank out when I speak English" (S3)*

*"Yes, Sir, my vocabulary is limited, so it's difficult for me to speak in English" (S5)*

The eighth to tenth questions were about improving students' skills after learning to use storytelling strategies. Some students stated that storytelling helped them improve their speaking skills and added many new vocabulary.

*"I think my ability has increased after using strategy storytelling, I got a lot of new vocabulary, and I didn't know how to read it so I knew it, maybe what made me know was because in storytelling we had to know the story, so I know a lot. new vocabulary from here”(S3)*

*“In my opinion, it's okay to use storytelling in this school to improve speaking skills but don't do it too often because later on you will be bored and tired too, but at the beginning, it would be fun, so I can get a lot of new vocabulary."(S6)*

All interviewed students considered that the learning media helped them improve their speaking skills in telling a story. S8 stated that the characters in digital storytelling who pronounce words make students' performances better because students can pronounce words correctly. This is supported by the statement S8.

*"The key is to speak the dialogue in English, now, so you know how to read it, and the language*

*is simple and in everyday language, so it's easy to understand." (S8)*

Based on a combination of interviews and surveys, it is possible to infer that storytelling is a

strategy that can assist students in their learning process since the medium is interesting, appealing, and interactive.

# DISCUSSION

Based on the objective of the study to reveal the students' responses in learning to speak English using storytelling strategies the researcher used questionnaires and interviews to answer research questions. Students' responses about their experiences after learning to speak using storytelling strategies have different responses. Because learning to use storytelling strategies makes them happy, fun, interesting, motivated, enriching new vocabulary, and not boring. And they make the class look lively and fun. In accordance with Rahasya (2017), storytelling stimulates students’ imagination and interest in language skills, enhances vocabulary, understanding, and story sequences, and improves listening and oral communication abilities. In addition, few students have difficulty learning to use storytelling because they have to tell stories using a language they do not master.

The study discovered that after introducing storytelling in the classroom, students were motivated and interested in learning to speak English. This finding is pertinent to Hardianti's (2019) finding that storytelling can improve students' speaking conditions; most students indicate that they enjoy to share stories based on the texts they have created. Students were thrilled to tell it orally because they had previously solely focused on writing texts. This research supports Hardianti's (2019) claim that when we tell and listen to stories, we exchange experiences and better understand one other.

From the explanation above, the researchers are in opinion that the use of storytelling strategy can make students motivated, fun, enjoyable, and make classroom activities more lively. These are relevant to Rahasya's explanation (2017) that storytelling is an interactive and cooperative process. As an art, it is a fun tool to practice language learning and verbal expression skills, bind listeners together, help listeners remember, use all kinds of language conventions to bring stories to life, and make listeners forget their woes.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The researchers would like to conclude that students' responses are varied based on their experiences, such as fun, enjoyable, motivated, and even not easy to learn. This is evidenced by their responses in interviews and questionnaires. Almost all students agreed with the statements given in the questionnaires and interviews. In addition, students' answers in interviews showed that storytelling could effectively increase students' learning motivation because it is presented in an exciting form. Based on the explanation and discussion above, it can be concluded that storytelling strategies can improve students' speaking skills. And students gave positive responses to the use of storytelling strategies in teaching speaking based on their experiences.

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