

The Influence of Story Telling on Elementary School Children's Speaking Ability

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ABSTRACT

This quasi-experimental study investigated the effect of the storytelling technique on the English-speaking skills of elementary school students. A purposive sampling method was used to select 29 fifth-grade students each from two classes: Class 5A served as the experimental group, and Class 5B as the control group. The experimental class was taught using the storytelling technique, while the control class received conventional instruction. A pre-test and post-test design was employed to assess students' speaking abilities, focusing on pronunciation and vocabulary. Data were collected through an oral test consisting of five descriptive questions. The results showed a significant improvement in the experimental group's speaking performance. The average pre-test score in the experimental group was 23.67, which increased to 66.40 in the post-test, while the control group's post-test score averaged 57.22. A t-test analysis revealed a statistically significant difference between the groups ($t = 2.26 > t_{table} = 1.673$). These findings suggest that the storytelling technique is effective in enhancing elementary students' English-speaking abilities, particularly in pronunciation and vocabulary development.

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1. Introduction

Over the past decade, technological advances in communication tools such as telephones, the internet, and digital media have significantly influenced how English is taught and learned (Hartono, Mukhaiyar, Rusdinal, & Ananda, 2020). As language is central to communication, English learners are expected to master four essential language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these, speaking is often regarded as the most challenging skill, particularly for non-native speakers, as it requires both fluency and the ability to use language appropriately in various social contexts (Gunawan, 2023). In addition to verbal communication, speaking involves non-verbal cues such as tone, stress, and intonation, all of which are crucial for conveying meaning effectively. Hence, speaking proficiency is a core component in mastering English for global communication.

Speaking enables learners to express themselves, engage in social interactions, and understand the intentions of others (Akhyak & Anik, 2013; Megawati, 2018). Given that English functions as a second language in many countries, including Indonesia, the ability to speak English fluently is essential for students to compete and thrive in a globalized society. To meet these demands, the Indonesian government has incorporated English into the national education curriculum, not only at the secondary and high school levels but also in elementary schools starting from Grade 4 (Kusuma Wardani & Mardiyani, 2018). According to the Independent Curriculum, fifth-grade students are expected to express ideas meaningfully in both simple transactional and interpersonal contexts. This requires instructional methods that are both engaging and effective in developing students' speaking abilities.

In practice, however, many students still struggle with speaking English. A preliminary interview conducted with an English teacher at SDN 1 Aceh Barat Daya (Personal communication, May, 2025) revealed several recurring challenges faced by students in the classroom. The teacher explained that most students had a limited vocabulary, which made it difficult for them to express their thoughts clearly in English. Additionally, students frequently struggled to choose appropriate words or sentence structures when trying to communicate, often relying on single-word answers or code-switching into their first language. Another significant issue was low self-confidence, particularly when speaking in front of classmates. Many students were afraid of making mistakes or being laughed at, which led to hesitation, silence, or complete withdrawal during oral activities. The teacher also noted that traditional teaching methods such as rote memorization and textbook-based instruction did little to engage students or encourage them to actively use the language in authentic ways. These classroom realities highlight the urgent need for creative, interactive, and student-centered teaching strategies that can build students' confidence, expand their vocabulary, and foster a more positive attitude toward speaking English. Storytelling, with its potential to create an enjoyable and low-pressure learning environment, was identified as a promising technique to address these specific challenges and enhance students' speaking skills.

One such strategy is the storytelling technique, which has gained recognition as an effective method in teaching speaking skills. Storytelling involves narrating events using expressive language, gestures, and voice modulation, making the learning process more engaging and memorable (Soleimani & Akbari, 2013). According to Arunraj (2017), storytelling not only facilitates comprehension but also enhances emotional engagement, making it easier for students to absorb new information. Stories help learners make sense of events and experiences while also encouraging them to express ideas freely (Tanner, 2016). By integrating storytelling into classroom activities, teachers can create a more dynamic and participatory learning environment.

Several studies support the positive impact of storytelling on students' speaking abilities. Kaet, Bouk, and Pale (2023) demonstrated that storytelling significantly improved students' pronunciation and vocabulary mastery. Similarly, Lohing, Ibrahim, and Sujarwo (2022) reported that using storytelling techniques helped eleventh-grade students overcome

speaking anxiety and become more confident speakers. At the elementary level, Cahyanti and Nuroh (2023) emphasized the effectiveness of digital storytelling in enhancing students' vocabulary and pronunciation. Hartono et al. (2020) further noted that storytelling activities expose learners to authentic language use, encouraging spontaneous communication and strengthening overall speaking performance.

Despite these promising findings, a closer examination of the literature reveals that most existing studies have focused on secondary or senior high school students, or on digital storytelling environments. Very few have addressed the implementation of traditional storytelling techniques in elementary school settings, particularly in rural Indonesian contexts like SDN 1 Aceh Barat Daya. Moreover, limited research has explored how storytelling can be used specifically to address the core speaking challenges identified in early education classrooms such as low confidence, restricted vocabulary, and difficulty in using correct grammar. This gap highlights the need for further classroom-based research that investigates the impact of storytelling on young learners' speaking skills within the framework of the Indonesian Independent Curriculum.

Specifically, storytelling offers notable benefits for improving pronunciation and fluency. As Kaet, Bouk, and Pale (2023) explain, repeated exposure to natural spoken language through stories helps learners internalize stress, intonation, and rhythm. This imitation process enables students to gradually develop more accurate pronunciation. Hartono et al. (2020) also found that storytelling encouraged continuous speech and reduced hesitation, promoting greater fluency. Through regular speaking practice in a low-pressure context, learners become more comfortable using English spontaneously and with confidence.

In addition to pronunciation and fluency, storytelling enhances vocabulary acquisition and grammatical accuracy. By engaging with rich and contextually meaningful language in stories, students encounter new vocabulary in ways that are easier to remember and apply (Lohing et al., 2022). Cahyanti and Nuroh (2023) observed that students who engaged in digital storytelling were more likely to use varied and accurate vocabulary. Moreover, because stories often contain clear and repetitive grammar patterns, students are able to absorb correct sentence structures subconsciously. This type of contextualized learning helps reinforce both vocabulary and grammar, making storytelling an effective all-around strategy for improving speaking skills.

Given the demands of the curriculum, the challenges faced by students, and the research gap identified, this study aimed to examine the influence of storytelling on the speaking ability of fifth-grade students at SDN 1 Aceh Barat Daya. The central research question guiding this study was: Can the storytelling technique improve the speaking ability of students at SDN 1 Aceh Barat Daya? Accordingly, this study was conducted under the title: "The Influence of Storytelling on Fifth Grade Elementary School Students' Speaking Ability at SDN 1 Aceh Barat Daya."

2. Methodology

This study employed a quasi-experimental research design using a pre-test and post-test control group approach. This design was selected to determine the effectiveness of the storytelling technique in improving the speaking abilities of elementary school students. A quasi-experimental method was appropriate because the researcher worked with intact classrooms without randomly assigning individual students to either the control or experimental groups, which is common in educational settings (Creswell, 2012).

The population consisted of fifth-grade students at SDN 1 Aceh Barat Daya, totaling 58 students divided into two classes. Using purposive sampling, the sample was selected based on the teacher's recommendation and the similarity of academic ability between classes. Class 5A was designated as the experimental group, while Class 5B served as the control group, with each group comprising 29 students.

The experimental group received instruction through the storytelling technique as the primary method for speaking activities. Storytelling lessons were integrated into regular English classes and delivered over four weeks, with two 40-minute sessions per week. Students were encouraged to listen attentively, retell, and perform stories using appropriate pronunciation, vocabulary, and sentence structures. The story used during the intervention was "The Wolf and the Lamb." Conversely, the control group continued with conventional teaching methods, such as rote memorization, textbook-based drills.

Data were collected through oral speaking tests administered as both pre-tests and post-tests to measure students' speaking progress. The test questions were adapted from Yulian (2018) and designed to prompt students to produce short descriptive speech on familiar topics. The pre-test focused on the topic "Daily Activities Yesterday", while the post-test covered "Weekend Activities." Each student was given 15 minutes to prepare and deliver their responses, with time provided beforehand to write and practice their sentences at their own desks. Students were expected to speak in at least five complete sentences during their performance.

To evaluate students' speaking ability, a scoring rubric also adapted from Yulian (2018) was used. The rubric assessed four key components of speaking: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and fluency, with a total score of 100 points. The same rubric was consistently applied in both the pre- and post-tests to ensure uniformity in assessment criteria.

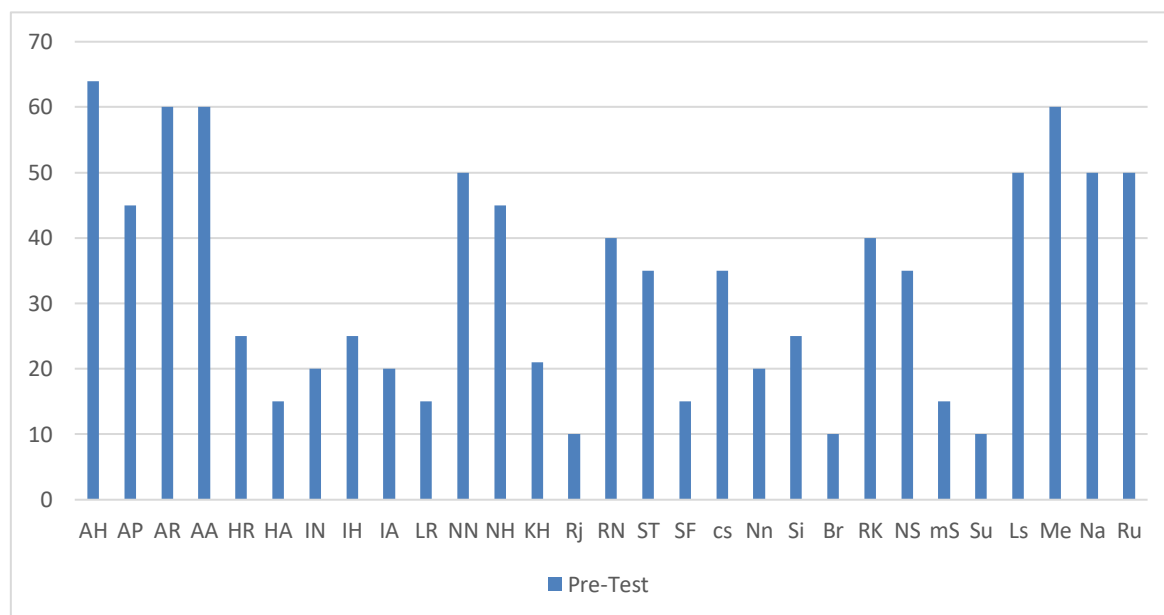
To enhance reliability and objectivity, each student's performance was independently rated by two experienced English teachers. The inter-rater reliability was calculated and found to fall within an acceptable range, confirming the consistency and fairness of the scoring process.

Finally, to evaluate the improvement in students' speaking abilities, paired sample t-tests were conducted to compare the pre-test and post-test scores within both the experimental and control groups. This statistical test is appropriate because it measures the difference in scores for the same students over time, assessing whether the storytelling intervention

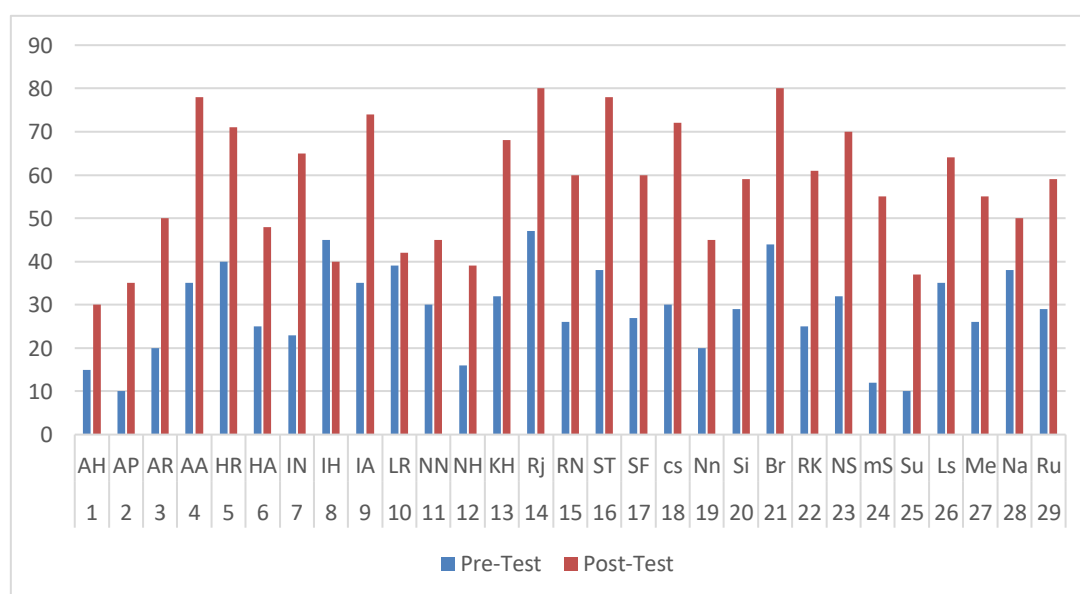
significantly enhanced speaking skills. The significance level was set at 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). Particular attention was given to improvements in pronunciation and vocabulary as key indicators of the effectiveness of the storytelling technique.

3. Results

This research was conducted at SDN 1 Blangpidie Aceh Barat Daya, the research was started May 26th 2025 and finished on June 4th 2025.



Based on the graph presented above, the experimental class consisted of 29 students. During the pre-test, the highest score achieved was 60, while the lowest was 10. In contrast, the post-test results showed an improvement, with the highest score rising to 95 and the lowest increasing to 40. This data showed an increase in overall scores after the learning treatment using storytelling techniques.



Based on the graph above, the control class consisted of 29 students. The highest pre-test

score recorded was 47, while the lowest was 10. Following the conventional learning process, the post-test results showed an increase, with the highest score reaching 85 and the lowest rising to 30. These results indicated an overall improvement in student performance, despite the absence of the storytelling technique during the learning process.

To evaluate the effect of the storytelling technique, a paired sample t-test was conducted to compare the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group. The results showed a statistically significant improvement in speaking performance after the storytelling intervention, $t(28) = 2.26$, $p < 0.05$. The mean post-test score increased to 66.40, reflecting notable gains in students' vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. This indicates that the storytelling technique had a meaningful impact on improving students' speaking abilities.

In contrast, although the control group ($n = 29$) also demonstrated improvement rising from a pre-test high of 47 to a post-test high of 85 the gains were less pronounced. The post-test mean of the control group was 57.22, compared to 66.40 in the experimental group, further supporting the positive influence of the storytelling technique.

4. Findings and Discussion

One of the most notable improvements observed in the experimental group was in pronunciation. For example, before the storytelling intervention, several students struggled to pronounce simple past tense verbs such as “played”, often omitting the final /d/ sound or pronouncing it incorrectly. After participating in storytelling activities that included repeated listening and speaking practice, students were able to pronounce such words accurately and fluently. This aligns with findings from Kaet, Bouk, and Pale (2023) and Cahyanti and Nuroh (2023), who emphasized that storytelling enhances students' phonological awareness and exposure to authentic spoken language patterns.

Storytelling also contributed significantly to students' vocabulary development. As stories introduced new words in meaningful contexts, students were more likely to remember and use them correctly. This supports Lohing, Ibrahim, and Sujarwo's (2022) conclusion that storytelling can enrich students' lexical knowledge and reduce anxiety, making it easier for them to engage in speaking activities.

Beyond pronunciation and vocabulary, improvements in grammar and fluency were evident. Before the intervention, students commonly made errors in past tense construction, for instance, saying “I am playing football yesterday” instead of “I was playing football yesterday”, or “I go to school” instead of “I went to school.” These mistakes highlight a limited understanding of verb tense usage. After being exposed to grammatically accurate language through repeated storytelling, students began to demonstrate more accurate sentence construction. For example, they correctly used forms like “I studied in the classroom” rather than “I study in the classroom” when describing past events.

These findings align with Hartono et al. (2020), who noted that storytelling supports natural language acquisition by providing meaningful contexts that allow students to

internalize grammar rules implicitly. Likewise, Soleimani and Akbari (2013) emphasized that storytelling engages learners both emotionally and cognitively, making the process of acquiring grammar more intuitive and effective.

Additionally, students in the experimental group showed increased speaking confidence, especially during post-test performances. Initially, many were hesitant to speak in front of peers, often using only single words or relying on their first language. After practicing storytelling in a supportive environment, students became more willing to speak in full sentences and even volunteered to share their stories. This improvement reflects what Lohing et al. (2022) and Tanner (2016) describe as the affective benefits of storytelling, which reduce anxiety and promote expressive use of language.

Overall, the findings of this study provide strong evidence that the storytelling technique is effective in improving elementary students' speaking skills, particularly in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and confidence. This supports a growing body of literature that advocates for more interactive and student-centered approaches in EFL classrooms. By embedding language learning in meaningful narrative contexts, storytelling enables students not only to learn English more effectively but also to use it more confidently and creatively.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrated that the storytelling technique significantly improved the speaking skills of fifth-grade students at SDN 1 Aceh Barat Daya. Compared to the control group, students in the experimental group showed notable progress in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and fluency. Storytelling helped students pronounce words correctly, use proper past tense forms, and gain confidence in speaking English. These findings align with previous research highlighting storytelling as an effective, engaging method for language learning. Therefore, incorporating storytelling into English instruction is recommended to enhance students' speaking abilities in a fun and meaningful way.

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