

STORYTELLING TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' SPEAKING ABILITY

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Abstract

Storytelling is a kind of teaching method which can help students learn to speak English. This study describes the implementation of storytelling to improve students' speaking ability. The objective of the study is to investigate whether there is an improvement in the use of storytelling and to find out students' opinions towards the implementation of storytelling in teaching speaking. This study was undertaken with 31 students in junior high school. This study employed a classroom action research, it was done in two cycles and every cycle consists of four stages, including planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The data were collected through observation, students' test, and interview with the students. The data analysed by using qualitative and quantitative. The result of the study revealed that storytelling has successfully improved eighth-grade students' speaking ability which can be seen from the mean scores of preliminary (48.25), test in cycle 1 (56.51), and test in cycle 2 (64.77). There were some students' opinions towards the implementation of storytelling. The students became active and confident to speak English and they have been engaged in learning activities.

Keywords: Improving, Storytelling, Speaking Ability, Students' Opinions, Classroom Action Research

INTRODUCTION

One of the basic competencies which should be mastered by the students is speaking (Akhyak & Anik, 2013). Through speaking, students can understand what people say and what people trying to tell them (Megawati, 2018). In this case, many of students faced difficulties in learning English, such as: (1) the students are lack of vocabulary; (2) the students have difficulty in choosing words; (3) the students are difficult to say the words in English; (4) the students were lack of motivation to learn English. Improving speaking skills requires time and effort. There are a number of factors that influence the difficulties in practicing speaking such as students' passiveness and shyness to get involved in class activities (Yuniwati, Wijaya, & Rosnija, 2013;

Apriyani, 2016). Students who do not get used to speaking English in the class lack of confidence. Al Hosni (2014) pointed out that there are some problems faced by learners in speaking activities, (1) Students have no motivated to express themselves; (2) Students also think that if they make mistakes when speaking in front of their classmates, they will be embarrassed. So students preferred not to speak to avoid such situations. In order to overcome these problems, teachers should provide more opportunities for students to demonstrate their capacities and speak English in the classroom.

Storytelling is one of the most important methods of teaching (Arunraj, 2017). Storytelling is the art of telling stories through the use of words and actions in order to engage an audience (Soleimani & Akbari, 2013). Stories bring meaning into our lives (East, Jackson, O'Brien, & Peters, 2010) and give way to make sense of experience (Tanner, 2016). As a method, storytelling is not only providing benefits for students, but also supporting daily life skills, especially in speaking (Mokhtar, Halim, & Kamarulzaman, 2011). Storytelling is the art to tell stories Storytelling guides teachers to tell personalized stories to the learners in their foreign language (Velasquez & Rodriguez, 2015). The use of telling stories are very motivating, challenging, (Widyawati, 2015; Arunraj, 2017), entertaining and stimulating children's imaginations (Purwatiningsih, 2015) so it helps engage the students in the class. When we tell and listen to stories, we share experiences and understand each other (Mokhtar, Halim, & Kamarulzaman, 2011). Telling stories can support learning and helping the students to become active (Jones & Chapman, 2017) because using stories in class can provide effective ways of language learning (Hsu, 2015).

There are a lot of studies related to investigating the use of storytelling. Widyawati (2015) showed that the use of telling stories using past experience is more effective to improve speaking ability. Some studies related to storytelling mostly use narrative text. For example, Mokhtar, Halim, & Kamarulzaman (2011) conducted research using the storytelling of narrative texts in Penguin Readers. The result shows that storytelling is effective in enhancing communicative skills. Besides that, Lee (2012)

also used the narrative text by using PowerPoint slides of Little Beauty. The result shows that storytelling can improve the condition of students' speaking and also helped children concentrated better. Then, Soleimani & Akabari (2013) also used The Three Bears storybooks. The result shows that storytelling engaged students in meaningful activities where the language is used to communicate. Other than that, Agosto (2016) conducted research using visualization The Runaway Pumpkin story. The result shows that storytelling enhanced literacy benefits such as cognitive engagement and critical thinking. All the researchers above examined storytelling using narrative texts while only a few studies examined storytelling using recount text. Therefore, this study examines the use of storytelling for speaking students' abilities in recount text. Since the previous studies show that storytelling is a good method to improve students' speaking ability in pre-school students (Soleimani & Akbari, 2013), college students (Caminotti & Gray, 2012), healthcare education (Haigh & Hardy, 2011) and profession field (East, Jackson, O'Brien, & Peters, 2010). To fill this gap, this study finds out students' speaking ability in the secondary level toward storytelling.

Thus, this action research is a method to investigate whether there is an improvement in the use of storytelling in developing students' speaking ability and to find out students' opinions toward the implementation of storytelling in teaching speaking. To address these goals, the following research question guided this study.

- (1) How does storytelling improve students' speaking ability?
- (2) What are the students' opinions toward the implementation of storytelling in teaching speaking?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

This study was conducted in one of junior high school in Bandung. The participants of the study were 31 students, consisted of 16 females and 15 males with average age 13 to 15 years old. These students are eighth-grade selected based on the focus of

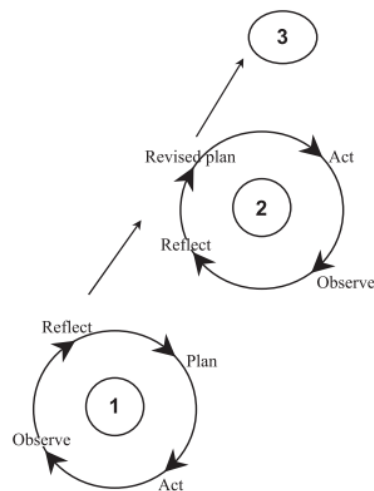
researchers who use simple past tense material in secondary schools. Thus, the participants of this study are an English teacher and one class of eighth-grade students. The teacher is one who plays an important role to motivate students in improving speaking ability.

Data collection and analysis

Since this study was focused on teaching and learning in the classroom with the students, the method of the research was Classroom Action Research (CAR). The data were collected through observation, test, and interview with the students. The observation focused on the students’ learning activities to confirm the suitability between planning and implementing as an evaluation and reflection for the researcher. Then, the test was given to measure the progress of students’ speaking abilities before and after teaching using storytelling in order to know the improvement of students’ speaking. Meanwhile, the interview was given to the students as significant participants in the research. It was aimed to find out the students’ opinions towards the implementation of storytelling.

This action research was conducted in two cycles. Every cycle consists of four activities, including planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Cycle 1 consisted of four meetings and cycle 2 consisted of two meetings.

Figure 1. The spiral of action research cycle by Kemmis and McTaggart



Source: Zuber-Skerritt (2001, p.15)

a. The Preliminary Observation

The preliminary observation was done before I started the action research. It was aimed to find the students' problem in teaching and learning speaking. I conducted a pre-test to measure the students' speaking ability by reading a short paragraph of recount text. Besides that, I observed the students during teaching and learning in order to know the students' attitudes in the classroom.

b. Cycle 1

1. Planning

In this stage, the teacher provided a lesson plan, teaching material, teaching media, research instrument and also observation sheet. It was aimed to guide class instruction before the implementation of storytelling.

2. Acting

In this stage, the teacher implemented the lesson plan and given a treatment related to storytelling. In the pre-activity, the teacher greets and checks student attendance. The teacher also explained the teaching objectives. Then, the teacher shows some picture of vacation places. In the main activity, the teacher explains the material about recount text and gives a text about someone's experience. Furthermore, students identify the text and should understand the organizational structures of recount text, such as orientation, events, and reorientation. The teacher asked the students to retell the story in front of the class. In post activity, the teacher evaluates the whole learning outcomes.

3. Observing

In this stage, the teacher observed and documented learning activities during the implementation as a reflection.

4. Reflecting

In this stage, the teacher analyzed the process of teaching to determine whether or not the result of the cycle is clear.

c. Cycle 2

This cycle also consisted of four stages including planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The teacher recalls the activities related to the recount text and gives the next treatment. The students construct their own experience and practiced it in front of the class without the text.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data analysis, the result of this study was divided into three sections: preliminary, cycle 1, and cycle 2. In the preliminary, the researcher observed the students' activities during the learning process in the classroom before the implementation of storytelling. Data collected through observation showed that the students were not confident to speak. They preferred to speak in *Bahasa Indonesia* than English. Other than that, they seemed shy and did not share their ideas, they were hesitant to mention the correct words in English, and they smiled or became silent when the teacher asked the questions. Sometimes, they did not fully participate in the material, but they were talking to each other. In speaking activities, they had difficulties in pronunciation, grammar, and comprehension.

In cycle 1, the teacher has introduced storytelling to the students. The material was explained before the students practiced storytelling. It is recount text and focused on the simple past tense. Then, the students discussed the example of their personal experience stories about the holiday. Some pictures were shown by the teacher to support the material. The data showed that the students were enthusiastic to respond to the material provided by the teacher. They tried to speak English and followed the learning process well. The ability of students' speaking was better than the previous meeting. In cycle 2, the material was the same as cycle one, but it was more challenging because they had to create their own experience and shared it in front of the class. The data showed that after the implementing of storytelling, the students' speaking ability improved well.

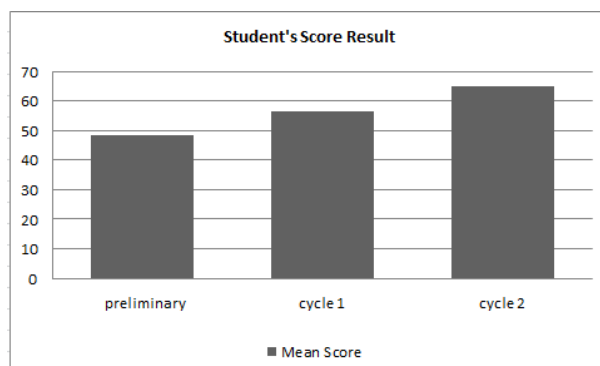
The improvement of students' speaking ability toward storytelling

This study found that storytelling could improve students' speaking ability. The data of students' speaking ability were collected by conducting a speaking test. The total score of speaking was counted by summing up the five aspects of speaking including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The criteria of success for speaking if a student has a total score 25 (5 for each aspect). It was gained by summing up the result of the total score multiplied 100 and divided a maximum score. Hence, the maximum score would be 100 for speaking ability. Based on the preliminary study, pre-test conducted by students before the implementation of storytelling. After storytelling was implemented in the class, students' pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, grammar, and comprehension from preliminary, cycle 1 to cycle 2 was improved. The table score below was the result of the students' speaking test.

Table 1
Result of Speaking Test

Test	Mean Score	Percentage
Preliminary	12.06	48.25 %
Cycle 1	14.12	56.51 %
Cycle 2	16.19	64.77 %

Figure 1
Graphic of Speaking Test Result



From the graph above, it showed that there was an improvement of students' speaking test before and after the implementation of storytelling. The data showed that the mean score preliminary was 12.06. There were only 48.25% of students who got the score passed the maximum score. The mean score cycle 1 was 14.12. There were only 56.51% of students who got the passed the maximum score. The mean score cycle 2 was 16.19. There were only 64.77 % of students who got the passed the maximum score. It could be concluded that students' speaking scores increased from the preliminary to cycle 1 and to cycle 2.

In preliminary to cycle 1, most of the students seemed difficult to pronounce the words and still hard to correct the error. Besides, they were still confused to arrange the words into correct sentences because they lack vocabulary to create the story. When students read their story, they were hesitant to say the words and mostly said: "mmm, euuh". Students had a lot of errors in grammar so they just wrote the stories without understanding the contents. Based on the analysis and reflecting of cycle 1, it could be found that the process of implementing storytelling still needs to be improved to gain better improvement. Therefore, the teacher decided to continue to cycle 2. By providing some treatment with the practice of telling a story, the improvement of students' speaking increased. It could be seen from the result of the percentage score cycle 1 (56.51%) to cycle 2 (64.77%). Most of the students became active to speak English as supported by the statement of Jones & Chapman (2017) telling stories can support learning and helping the students to become active. Other than that, most students could decrease pronunciation mistakes so they seem confident to speak in front of the class. The finding is relevant to Latif (2013) that the implementation of storytelling in the speaking class can motivate the students to speak confidently without being nervous. From the result, students' speaking ability got improvement in all aspects of speaking, such as comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. The finding of this study was in line with the result of related study done by Zuhriyah (2017). It asserts that storytelling could improve students' speaking ability.

Students' opinions toward the implementation of storytelling in teaching speaking

The interview was aimed to find out the students' opinions towards the implementation of storytelling. The interview question consisted of 10 items. Number 1 to number 2 was to know about the students' interest in teaching and learning English. Number 3 to number 4 was to know about students' understanding related to recount text. Number 5 to 10 was to know the students' ability after teaching and learning storytelling. Based on the data interview, this study found that students have positive attitude toward storytelling in teaching speaking. Semi-structured interview guides were designed for students. From thirty-one students, seven students were randomly selected to be interviewed as representations of this research. Students' opinions can be interpreted as follows:

Most of the students agreed that they love to learn speaking English. It is supported by the students' answer from the interview:

“Fun, we can be familiar with the foreign language.”

(Interview, Student 2)

“Fun, it was interesting.”

(Interview, Student 4)

“Fun, that's not bad.”

(Interview, Student 5)

“Fun, we can learn another language besides *Bahasa Indonesia*.”

(Interview, Student 6)

This study found that students love and want to learn speaking English after the implementation of storytelling in the class. The finding is relevant to Lee (2012) that storytelling can improve the condition of students' speaking.

Most of the students agreed that they love to share their stories based on the recount text they have made. It is supported by the students' answer from the interview:

“Yes, especially when I can create my own recount text and then tell it to others.”

Since previously students were only focused on writing texts, they were happy to tell their stories orally. The finding is relevant to Mokhtar, Halim, & Kamarulzaman (2011) that when we tell and listen to stories, we share experiences and understand each other.

Most of the students answered that they were more confident to speak English after practiced their story even though there were still many errors in speaking. It is supported by the students' answer from the interview:

“I have to do it. I have to be able to speak English.”

(Interview, Student 2)

“I dare to speak English, *inshaallah*.”

(Interview, Student 3, Student 4, Student 6)

This study found that the use of storytelling could help students to speak English bravely. Therefore, storytelling can increase students' confidence in speaking. It is asserted to Murni & Siambotan (2012) that after being given treatment related to storytelling, students more confident in practicing their English.

Through storytelling, the students could motivate to speak because they have practiced speaking about their own experiences. Thus, the data showed that storytelling could improve students' speaking ability. It was because the activity is interesting and has many benefits for students and also the teacher in teaching speaking. The teacher helped students to make their own stories and shared it with their friends. It is relevant to Craig, Hull, Haggart, & Crowder (2001) that teachers can help children share and appreciate their stories.

CONCLUSION

There was a result of speaking students from cycle 1 to cycle 2 in this research. It shows students' speaking skills improved. The implementation of storytelling has successfully improved eighth-grade students' speaking ability in junior high school. The use of storytelling in teaching speaking improves students' pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, grammar, and comprehension. Students became active and confident to speak English after practicing storytelling in front of the class. From the

observation sheet, students have been engaged in learning activities. They were interested to follow the teachers' instruction when the lesson takes place. From the interview, most of the students love to learn and speak English after the implementation of storytelling. They were able to get used to speak English not only in recount text learning but also in other material. Based on the results of the study, storytelling is a good method to be implemented in teaching speaking. The way students make and share their stories with others, it makes them dare to speak English. Besides storytelling, other methods are also recommended to be applied in speaking. For the teachers and students, it would be better if the use of storytelling is designed to be more interesting in teaching and learning. In addition, the use of media to support storytelling is also very important to be developed.

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