The Magic of Storytelling: Does Storytelling through Videos Improve EFL Students' Oral Performance?

Tgk Maya Silviyanti*[1]
Diana Achmad[1]
Fathimath Shaheema[2, 3]
Nurul Inayah[1]

[1]Department of English Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh 23111, INDONESIA
[2]Curriculum Developer, National Institute of Education, Ministry of Education, Malé 20125, MALDIVES
[3]School of Teacher Education, College of Education, Health and Human Development, University of Canterbury, Christchurch 8041, NEW ZEALAND

Abstract

This study aimed to examine the EFL (English as a foreign language) students' oral presentation of storytelling. The students performed retelling of narratives such as fables, legends, myths, and fairy tales using their smartphones and video recorder. The participants of the study were 19 students enrolled in the Drama in ELT (English Language Teaching) course at Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, Indonesia. It employed participant observation and interviews to collect data. The results of the study revealed that for non-language aspects, the lowest score was for 'dress code' (M=2.1), meaning that the students did not make any efforts to dress and use props that were related to the stories they were telling. While for the language aspects, the lowest score was for 'communicative abilities with the audience' (M= 1.2). This shows that even though the participants recorded their performance, and there was no audience watching them directly, they still faced barriers and a lack of confidence when presenting the storytelling. The interviews further supported the findings from the observation such as not being able to use appropriate props for their performance, lack of eye contact, switching

* Corresponding author, email: tgk_maya@unsyiah.ac.id

voices, use of gestures, difficulty in remembering the script, and needing somebody else to do the recording for them. Therefore, the students need more practice in front of audiences to overcome the problems in the future to ensure that the use of storytelling can improve their oral performance.

Keywords: Drama, EFL students, narrative, storytelling, oral performance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Storytelling is one element of drama in English Language Teaching (ELT) subjects. Storytelling is the act to tell a story and build a connection with the audience (Saiful, 2020). Sometimes storytelling can be considered difficult to be performed. Since the function of storytelling is to deliver knowledge, information, and culture (Razmi et al., 2014), it is believed to provide meaningful output as students engage in the negotiation of the meaning process because storytelling consists of dialogues (Bakhtin, 1986, as cited in Rahimi & Yadollahi, 2017).

In Indonesia, storytelling is taught in English language lessons (Mu'tashim & Syafi'i, 2018) from junior high school to the university level. Storytelling is integrated into speaking lessons (Ananthia, 2011), and storytelling competitions are held every year. Mastering storytelling skills enhance students' speaking performance (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2018; Yan & Zhao, 2019). At the university level, storytelling is one of the components studied by the students majoring in English language teaching at any Faculty of Teacher Training and Education throughout the country. The students are teacher trainees who would be certified as teachers when they graduate. At Universitas Syiah Kuala, specifically, during their study, these students are enrolled in the Drama in ELT course, which is one of the compulsory subjects of the Teacher Training Program. By the end of the course, the students are expected to have the knowledge and skills that are necessary for effective storytelling and oral presentation.

A study by El Enein (2011) on the EFL Palestinian university students' difficulties when giving an oral presentation focused on the analysis of eye contact, organization plan, coherence, cohesion, and use of equipment. The participants gave oral presentations directly in front of the audience. The results showed that the students did not make eye contact with the audience; this is one of the major difficulties faced by Palestinian students. In addition, the students did not act cheerfully to entertain the audience, and they were unable to use the technological tool and failed to use transitional or signaling words in their oral presentation. They faced challenges that limited them from successfully performing well. The students did not involve the audience or attract their attention, and the reluctance to maintain eye contact is a signal that they were not confident.

Another study by Rachmawaty and Hermagustiana (2015) also found that retelling stories are an effective technique that can improve university students' speaking fluency since they can employ multiple strategies during the retelling process. These strategies included rearranging texts, removing unfamiliar words, memorizing, and slowing down in speech. Rachmawaty and Hermagustiana (2015)

suggested these strategies as an example of strategic competence, which the students' employed to negotiate the story's substance. The findings also revealed that storytelling had a positive impact on the development of oral ability in college students, such as vocabulary and comprehensibility.

In the English Education Department at Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, Indonesia, the performance of storytelling was delivered in a 'traditional way' or without any digital media as today's modern technology service provides. Before the pandemic of COVID-19, the students performed storytelling activities on stage, in front of an audience. The audience was sitting and watching their performances directly. The students, who presented stories, had to be confident and use effective oral presentation skills. The success of the performance depended on the students' ability to retell stories with proper voice modulation, body language, and engagement with the audience. However, oral presentation during the pandemic has been switched to online mode. This is due to the government's lockdown or quarantine rules as an effort to restrict the number of persons who may be exposed to the COVID-19 virus, including the activities in educational institutions (Abidah et al., 2020). Our pre assumption was that as the students did not perform in front of an audience, they would not be shy or nervous. However, no evidence performing the online mode would make students feel confident and have no barriers. This study, therefore, tried to investigate the students' performance of storytelling using a video recorder. We developed two research questions as follows:

1. Does storytelling conducted through video recording enhance the students' oral performance?
2. What are the difficulties that the students face in performing recorded storytelling?

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review consists of some overviews of storytelling in English language teaching, the benefits, oral presentation, and previous studies.

2.1   Storytelling in English Language Teaching

There are several definitions of storytelling depending on its type, way, and function. Traditionally, storytelling is the act of passing out a story to a listener (Anderson, 2010). In English language learning, storytelling is related to students' effort to perform a story to other students in good English (Akhyak & Indramawan, 2013; Samantaray, 2014).

There are several benefits of storytelling. For instance, storytelling enhances students' competencies in reading practice (Anggraini et al., 2021). Stories are also a means of delivering language to students. According to Saunders (1997), there are at least ten benefits of a story, some of which are that it increases language awareness, helps students build empathy as well as community, teaches us that our gesture, act, and choice bring consequences in the future, and teaches us to be human. Furthermore, Paul (2012) stipulates that when a teacher reads a story, students who listen to it can improve their vocabulary including syntax and sentence structure.

Gill (2013) states that when performing a kind of drama, students can experience paralanguage and use expressive voices. The story will give positive emotions that can enhance students' long-term memory in language learning (Zlesakova, 2005). Furthermore, the use of creative props (Stadler & Ward, 2010), can additionally gain the audience's interest in listening to the story (Mujahidah et al., 2021). Storytelling in EFL classes has been found to improve students' four language skill competencies (Atta-Alla, 2012), especially in speaking performance (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2018; Yan & Zhao, 2019), build vocabulary, comprehension, story sequencing, and improve listening and communication skills (Samantaray, 2014).

2.2   Telling Narrative Genre Story

The term narrative may mean differently in various contexts. In the online Merriam-Webster dictionary, the narrative is categorized into nouns and adjectives based on its meaning. For nouns, the narrative is defined as 'something that is narrated'. For adjectives, the narrative is defined as 'having the form of a story or representing a story' (Merriam-Webster, 2022). However, in the Indonesian curriculum, the narrative genre is one type of text genre that aims to amuse or entertain the readers and this genre is one of the texts studied at schools (Jaya, 2017). The text begins with orientation (introduction), followed by several events, and ended with a resolution/coda (Hastuti et al., 2020). Meanwhile, Eggins and Slade (1997) mention five elements of telling a story, especially narrative and anecdote, i.e., (1) abstract, (2) orientation, (3) remarkable events, (4) reactions, and (5) coda. An abstract is a part of the introduction or beginning of the story, orientation emphasizes 'who, what, when, and where' followed by some events introducing an end with a coda or how the story ends. The events in the narrative story are listed by sequences (Norrick, 2000).

In the national curriculum for junior and senior high school year 2013 (*Kurikulum 2013* or *K13*, literally translated as Curriculum 2013) in Indonesia, the narrative genre is introduced at the junior high school level (Tachia & Loeneto, 2018). There are some types of narrative text: myth, fairytale, fiction, and bedtime stories (Anrasiyana, 2021). In learning a narrative text, students are required to have the ability to understand the purpose of the text, its organization, and its language features.

2.3   Oral Presentation Aspects

The oral presentation is one way to develop students' competence in speaking. Hammad (2020) claims that oral presentation should improve students' speaking performance and reduce their anxiety. Accordingly, Liu et al. (2018) further believed that cooperative group work would bring out better results in lessening students' anxiety in language learning. In relation to speaking, for Karimy and Pishkar (2017), the correct pronunciation is the key to success for listeners to understand the words that speakers are saying. They add that the other aspects of speaking such as stress, rhythm, and intonation are much more important so that the message delivered by speakers is understandable. Wright (1995, p. 16) claims that "the potential varieties of human voices include: pitch, volume, rhythm, softness/ harshness, pace, and

pauses. Making use of these varieties depends on a story, the personality of the teller, and the listeners". However, he further states that not many people make sufficient effort in telling a story, and thus produce monotone activities only (Wright, 1995).

The intonations of words produced differentiate written and spoken activities (Norrick, 2000) and thus make the oral presentation interesting. The presenter should prepare what they will use such as personal preparation and visual aids (Malderez, 2010). However, students who are not practicing spoken English may find it difficult to give an oral presentation (Harun et al., 2016), and students should have this communication skills such as speaking clearly and using proper expressions when telling a story (Samantaray, 2014) so that the oral presentation run smoothly.

2.4   Storytelling through Video Recorder

For decades, the oral presentation has always been done in classrooms. Harun et al. (2016) agree that presenting a topic in a classroom may give benefits to students, one of which is that it gives a chance for students to communicate with others naturally. On the other hand, Putri (2018) argues that using storytelling is not a new idea and she agrees that storytelling presentation can be done through digital storytelling (DST). The term DST emphasizes more on the use of digital technology to create a story such as using PowerPoint, images, and sound embedded. These terms may be slightly different from a video recorder, in which the students themselves present the story without using any of those tools.

Li and Peng (2018) agree that presentation by video also gives some benefits for students: (1) video is a reflective tool that enables students to reflect on their performance, (2) students' authenticity of the performance is shown, (3) video recorded can be played many times and enable students to watch and learn from it, (4) video can be shared via internet or WA or any suitable platforms, and this enables group discussion, and (5) students can learn new approaches in learning.

Asma (2021) further revealed that speaking activities using a video camera through smartphones can reduce students' anxiety, especially EFL students. As evidenced in the study, the Indonesian students' anxiety decreased because they were given more time before performing by recording with their video cameras, thus better prepared, and their self-confidence was boosted. They were also challenged by using the smartphone video camera method as an innovation in the speaking class.

In terms of storytelling activities, they must follow certain guidelines. Brewster et al. (2002, p. 22) mention several guidelines for EFL students:
- starting the story from a short or an easier one,
- attracting audiences' attention by making sure that everyone is watching and listening to the storyteller,
- reading or telling the story slowly so that everyone can understand,
- asking questions or giving some comments,
- participating, repeating, and paraphrasing the sentences,
- using gestures, mime, facial expressions, and
- using different tones and volumes of speaking.

Adapting several of these steps should gradually enhance students' ability to perform better.

2.5 Previous Studies

A study on storytelling to enhance students' speaking performance was conducted by Li and Peng (2018) involving 30 university students in China. The students were asked to make oral presentations using videos. The results showed that doing presentations with videos was interesting and fun for the students. They were also confident to do the task. However, the study also revealed that the students had difficulties recording videos, and they were worried about their self-image; therefore, the activity was very time-consuming. This study claims that even though no audience was watching the presentation directly, the students were still concerned about their self-image which affected their self-confidence.

Another study was by Zuhriyah (2017), who conducted collaborative action research investigating the use of storytelling to improve students' speaking skills. The samples were 23 students studying in the second semester at the Intensive English Program at Hasyim Asy'Ari University, Indonesia. The result revealed that after the second cycle, students' speaking performance improved in comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation aspects. A similar study was also conducted by Akhyak and Indramawan (2013) to implement storytelling for speaking practice for college students at Pangeran Diponegoro Islamic College (STAI), Indonesia. The results of their study revealed that storytelling improved the students' vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and content. The study also highlights that storytelling enhances the students' motivation and enthusiasm.

Zuhriyah (2017), however, only studied the language aspects, while the study by Li and Peng (2018) focused on the non-linguistic aspects, such as self-image and time–consumption in doing the storytelling task. In the meantime, Akhyak and Indramawan (2013) concentrated more on motivation. The current study, however, looks into both aspects: language and non-language aspects as both should be integrated into students' oral performances.

3. METHOD

The study used a qualitative approach to collect data. The following is a description of the research participants, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

3.1 Participants

A total of 19 students studying at the Department of English Education, Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, Indonesia, were the participants of this study. We selected the samples purposively, in which all students enrolled in the Drama in ELT course during the pandemic of COVID-19 in the year 2021, a compulsory course for the English major students at the university. At the time of data collection, the participants were in their fourth to the sixth semester of study. The rationale for choosing the students as the sample for the study was that they were students majoring in English, and were being trained to be teachers once they graduate from the university. Therefore, they should have the knowledge and skills necessary to perform storytelling activities. Storytelling is an integral part of oral language skills

and teacher trainees need to develop the skills necessary to be competent teachers (Vitali, 2016).

3.2   Instruments

Data were collected from the videos that the participants uploaded on the Edmodo platform. Each student sent a video as a part of their final exam. The students themselves became the subject of the data. The data were collected from the students' oral performances which included their language performance and non-language performance.

The second instrument used for data collection was interviews. Four interviews were conducted with two male and two female students through WhatsApp. The students were asked four questions related to the barriers that the students faced while performing storytelling activities such as whether or not they had problems preparing props (El Enein, 2011), gestures (Brewster et al., 2002), and using the right pitch, volume, rhythm, softness/ harshness, pace, and pauses (Wright, 1995) on their performances. The students were coded as S1, S2, S3, and S4.

3.3   Data Collection Procedure

The students were assigned to retell a story in a narrative genre in 4-10 minutes. They could select any type of narrative story: a fable, legend, myth, or fairy tale. They were instructed to retell the story which included the element of the narrative genre: abstract, orientation, events, reactions a coda (Eggins and Slade, 1997). Each student recorded his or her performance by using a video recorder, or from his or her mobile phone. They were asked to perform their storytelling in interesting and interactive ways. They had the flexibility to choose their own setting and place to suit the story being told.

The teacher set some instructions for students when they recorded their oral performance. Those were:
(1) the recording should not 'play and pause'. So the video would show students' real time spent including when they uttered fillers, such as 'ums', 'uhs' and 'ers', or kept silent because they tried to memorize the script.
(2) the video should not be edited, and
(3) must use props relevant to the story.

3.4   Data Analysis

The students were informed about the criteria used to assess their storytelling activity. The components in the criteria are the language and non-language aspects.

3.4.1 Non-language aspects

Since storytelling is part of the drama, the teacher assessed not only the students' English ability but also aspects of storytelling assessment such as dress code, voice modulation, eye contact, gesture, confidence level, and overall performance. These assessment criteria were adapted from Harun et al. (2016). Table

1 shows the rubric used to assess the storytelling activity performed by the participants of the study.

Table 1. Rubric for non-language aspect assessment (Harun et al., 2016).

Criteria	1	2	3	4
Dress code	Do not wear appropriate dresses for the characters.	Use and wear one or two costumes.	Use and wear one or two costumes or some properties to support the characters in the story.	Use and wear costumes based on all characters in the story. The properties are also used to support the characters in the story.
Voice modulation	Flat, the voices of the characters are not different.	There is a slight rising and falling of voice intonation but the teller can only switch to two voices of the characters.	Using more than two voice tones between characters and the intonation is almost perfect.	Excellent pronunciation, excellent use of rising and falling tone, able to switch voices of all characters.
Eye contact, movement	No eye contact and no gesture.	Very limited eye contact and gesture.	Maintain eye contact and use many gestures based on the story.	Maintain eye contact at all times, use movements and gestures and sometimes greet the audience.

(a) Dress code

In telling narrative stories, the storytellers should prepare the properties based on the story (El Enein, 2011). For example, Pinocchio's style is different from other narrative stories. When someone is presenting Pinocchio, they should also wear a costume that reminds the audience of Pinocchio such as a long nose and hat. The more complete the props were used, the better the score that a student would achieve.

(b) Voice modulation

The human's capability in speaking includes pitch, volume, rhythm, softness/ harshness, pace, and pauses (Wright, 1995). Non-verbal language such as gesture, posture, expression, and others are important for students to engage with the story and audience (Healtfield, 2015). As these aspects would make the story more interesting, they were included in the assessment. For example, a storyteller should switch voices and sounds according to the characters in a story. Cinderella, for example, is a famous story that consists of more than one famous character, there is also a fairy godmother, a prince, the stepmother, and the stepsisters. Students with talent should be able to switch voices when they speak on behalf of Cinderella, the prince, or other characters in the story. The more characters are represented, the more different voices a student should use. It is also important to use high and low tones when telling a story. The ability to convey emotions such as anger, excitement,

happiness, and sorrow (i.e., emotive narratives) is also essential to make the story more interesting and engage with the audience (Namaziandost et al., 2020).

(c) Eye contact, gesture, and movement

Storytelling requires the storyteller to use eye contact (El Enein, 2011), gestures, and body movement (Brewster et al., 2002; Samantaray, 2014). Facial expression and gestures are effective ways to deliver meaning to audiences (Lipman, 1999). The study teller can move, turn around, sit, stand, jump and use other actions to attract the audience. Silviyanti et al. (2020) add that students can use their gestures, mimes, and facial expressions when they have difficulty saying sentences.

3.4.2 Language aspects

For the language aspects, the assessment criteria were adapted from Saeed et al. (2019) who establish a speaking rubric for advanced levels ranging from 1 to 4 scales: (1) bad, (2) fairly bad, (3) good, and (4) excellent. Table 2 presents the criteria of language assessment used in the present study.

Table 2. Language assessment (Saeed et al., 2019).

Aspects	1	2	3	4
Communicative Ability	• not able to communicate effectively with the audience.	• has difficulty communicating effectively with the audience.	• can communicate satisfactorily with the audience.	• can communicate effectively with the audience very well.
	• hardly able to demonstrate good interactive ability in carrying out the discussion and maintaining eye contact.	• has difficulty demonstrating good interactive ability in carrying out the discussion and maintaining eye contact.	• can demonstrate interactive ability in carrying out the discussion and maintain eye contact satisfactorily.	• can demonstrate interactive ability in carrying out the discussion and maintain eye contact very well.
Fluency	• He/she hardly pronounces the individual words correctly. • He/she is hardly able to express stress and intonation correctly	• He/she has difficulty speaking fluently and smoothly. • He/she has difficulty speaking without pausing for too long.	• He/she speaks fluently and smoothly satisfactorily. • He/she speaks without any pausing for too long satisfactorily.	• He/she speaks fluently and smoothly very well. • He/she speaks without any pausing for too long very well.
Pronunciation	• He/she hardly pronounces the individual words correctly. • He/she is hardly able to express stress and intonation correctly.	• He/she has difficulty pronouncing the individual words correctly. • He/she has difficulty expressing stress and intonation correctly.	• He/she pronounces the individual words satisfactorily. • He/she is satisfactorily able to express stress and intonation correctly.	• He/she pronounces the individual words very well. • He/she can express stress and intonation very well.

Table 2 continued…

Grammar	• He/she hardly uses a range of accurate and correct grammar	• He/she has difficulty using a range of accurate and correct grammar	• He/she uses a range of accurate and correct grammar satisfactorily	• He/she uses a range of accurate and correct grammar very well
Vocabulary	• He/she hardly uses a wide range of vocabulary effectively. • He/she hardly uses appropriate vocabulary.	• He/she has difficulty using a wide range of vocabulary effectively. • He/she has difficulty using appropriate vocabulary	• He/she uses a wide range of vocabulary satisfactorily. • He/she uses appropriate vocabulary satisfactorily.	• He/she uses a wide range of vocabulary effectively and very well. • He/she uses appropriate vocabulary very well

4. RESULTS

The results of the students' oral performance and interviews were separated into two sections. The results from the students' oral presentations are presented based on the calculation of the mean score of each criterion. Meanwhile, the results from the interviews are presented in excerpts.

4.1 The Students' Storytelling Oral Performance through Video

The results reveal that the students have difficulties in performing storytelling through the video. Table 3 shows the mean of each category.

Table 3. Mean score of the students' oral performance.

Aspects	Assessment category	Mean	Meaning
Non-language	Dress code	2.1	Fairly bad
	Voice modulation	2.3	Fairly bad
	Eye contact, movement, and gesture	2.6	Fairly bad
Language	Communicative performance	1.2	Bad
	Fluency	3	Good
	Pronunciation	3.2	Good
	Grammar	3.2	Good
	Vocabulary use	3	Good

Surprisingly, from eight aspects of the assessment, four categories were either bad or fairly bad (i.e., dress code, voice modulation, eye contact, movement, gesture, and communicative performance). For non-language assessment, the dress code had the lowest point (M = 2.1), which means that almost all students did not use appropriate dress related to the story they performed. For example, some students performed 'Little Red Riding Hood', but they wore their daily dress, not the costumes that portrayed the characters in this story. Some students brought a hat and a veil to show the differences between the two characters they performed (i.e., the grandma and the little girl). Unfortunately, this is not enough for a drama performance.

For voice modulation, M = 2.3 (fairly bad). Although voice variation is one of the essential components of effective storytelling, the majority of the students could not use voice variation. The students did not change their voices as they presented different characters in a story. Next, the mean score for eye contact while telling the stories was not any better (M = 2.6). For non-language assessment, the scores of all criteria were still low.

For linguistics assessment, the communicative criteria received the lowest score (M = 1.2). The participants did not have any form of communicative interaction with the audience. For example, they did not either greet the audience when they first opened their speech or greeted the audience in the middle or at the end of their performance. They acted as if they performed alone, and nobody watched them. One reason for this is that they did not perform it on stage in front of their audience, so they ignored the audiences who watched the recorded version.

For fluency (M = 2.8), the average score shows that it is relatively almost good. However, from the video, we found that the students had memorized the content of the story. Sometimes, the students forgot what they had memorized, but they still attempted to continue the story. The mean for grammar also reveals the same level of performance (M = 2.9). Finally, the students showed that they had an adequate vocabulary and, even though some of the participants had to pause the story for several seconds, they tried hard to use their own vocabulary to tell the story.

4.2 Difficulties in Performing Recorded Storytelling of a Narrative

4.2.1 Not able to use appropriate props

From the interviews, it was revealed that the participants did not have the appropriate dress and other materials that were related to the story they were telling.

(1) I tried my best, but I think I didn't wear the perfect clothes that matched the characters of the story. The reason is I'm a little bit overwhelmed when I have to change the clothes in a short time because the character changed very often and quickly. So, I made it simple by using a specific thing for every character so that the audience can differentiate them. (S1)

(2) No, I don't. Because the story that I choose (the wolf and the crane) is a bit hard to be represented with dress and accessories because the story is related to animals' behavior. (S2)

(3) I don't think I have worn the proper dress and accessories in that storytelling video. Because it is so hard to find dresses and accessories I could use when I'm not in my house. I mean, as someone who lives far from my parents, I can only use stuff I have in my room (dormitory). But I do believe, I already did my best. (S3)

(4) Yes and no. For costumes, I don't have any costumes that are relevant to represent the story, but I think I have used related stuff such as plates and swords that support the story I told. (S4)

The students' claims were in line with the fact that the dress code and properties used was the lowest score for the non-language assessment. However, the videos showed that the students have tried to use some properties to support their performances. There were some props used such as hats, stones, and others, that they could use within reach in their own homes or dormitory.

4.2.2 Lack of eye contact, switching voices, and use of gestures

The second result found was about their difficulties to fulfil the assessment criteria (see Table 2).

(5) For me, the most difficult thing was maintaining eye contact, using gestures, and movement. Because when I told the story I had to remember the plot of the story so I did not focus on maintaining eye contact with the audience and neither doing gestures or moving. But I think voice switching between characters is not a big problem for me. (S4)

(6) Based on my own experience, the most difficult aspect is voice switching between characters, because I have to explore and try to find some new sounds from my own voice. I have a deep voice that makes it harder to explore, especially when there are so many characters in one story. When I'm trying to focus on the storyline inside my head, at the same time I have to think to which character I should use this kind of voice. But for me, eye contact, gesture, and movement are not really difficult. When I understand the storyline, I try to get into every character, next, eye contact, gesture, and movement will automatically follow each character. (S1)

(7) Voice switching between characters is the easiest because it's so simple to do and effective. And dress code is more difficult because it needed extra effort to make it look real. After all, it's a story about an animal. (S2)

(8) The easiest aspect is voice switching. I sometimes do dub in my room, for fun, and I'm used to reading storybooks to my little brother which needs me to switch my voice from one character to another. The most difficult one is eye contact, gesture, and movements. Actually, I was a theatre performer in my previous high school and used to do well in maintaining eye contact, gestures, and movements on stage. But in this situation, which was recorded by phone only, it was so hard because I had a small space. (S3)

Almost all of the students admitted that maintaining eye contact, doing movements, and using gestures were difficult. From the video, we observed that most students just stood still when they told the story. They faced the camera, but their eyes looked somewhere else, and they did not move. It seems that the participants were reluctant to perform as they realized their video would be watched by their lecturers. However, three interviewees admitted that switching voices among characters was not very difficult. But from the performance via recorded videos, we observed that the students could only do two kinds of different voices for two characters. It was difficult for them to change to the third or fourth voice. Therefore, it was noted that the voice of the third character was the same as the first character. We believe that this is a skill that not everybody has because a talented storyteller can have different voices after receiving specific training.

4.2.3 Difficulty in remembering the script

The third result that we found was about students' difficulty when telling narrative stories.

(9) I had difficulty remembering the script. I'm not good at memorizing things. I needed to do a few practices before the final video, but when I was recording the final one, I knew I missed some stuff. (S3)

(10) I do, keeping eye contact, making the gesture, moving, switching voices, and remembering the dialogue in the story altogether at the same time are a bit difficult because they needed extra effort and focus to make the storytelling look good. (S2)

(11) I don't think that I have any difficulties in telling a story that I already know. But, if I tell a new story, it will be a little bit hard for me to remember and stay focused on the storyline without making too many improvements and I sometimes forget what to say. (S1)

(12) I find it difficult to recall the story because I was nervous. (S4)

Some students reported that the challenge they faced was recalling the story they have memorized. We observed from the video that some students tried to recall when they forgot the story. Some kept silent for a while then continued telling the story after they remembered.

4.2.4 Need somebody else to do the recording

Unlike the barriers that the students faced above, they did not have any problems with their mobile phones because all of the students had good smartphones. However, another problem found was that they needed somebody else to record their performance and set the place to suit the setting of the story. This is as elaborated by S1 in (13).

(13) Honestly, it was difficult for me to find someone who would record the video, because the work was time-consuming, and I had to retake the video if I did mistakes since I could not record it by myself. And it was also difficult to set and describe the unreal places. I mean my story is about the forest, but I recorded it in my backyard. I described that the atmosphere was frightening and dark, yet, I recorded the story when the weather was very sunny. But I have learned that storytelling was a great experience for me because I learned many new things. (S1)

5.   DISCUSSION

The results of the study reveal that the students of the English Education Department did not obtain good scores for their performances. Overall, students were reluctant to do the actions even though they just recorded the acts and did not perform directly in front of an audience. This result contradicts Hammad's that oral presentation should reduce students' anxiety. However, in this class, students still had barriers even though they acted alone, and recording their performance did not help them in doing better performance. This finding also contradicts Rachmawaty and Hermagustiana (2015). Most of the participants in this study just stood in front of the camera and started telling stories. Some participants avoided looking at the camera and some did not make any movements when performing. This is similar to the Palestinian EFL students when performing storytelling (El Enein, 2011). Others did not use any gestures or movements such as nodding their heads, turning around, walking around, and others.

Participants failed in almost all categories of assessments. The lowest part of the non-language criterion was for the dress code. The props used were also not enough to support the performance, meanwhile, the literature notes that props give a positive effect on the use of descriptive language in storytelling (Stadler & Ward, 2010) and gain the interest of the audience (Mujahidah et al., 2021). Therefore, this

led to the students' failure to successfully perform narrative stories in terms of non-language aspects. This finding is supported by the students' interviews. They admitted that they did not have good props for the narrative stories they told. Actually, to overcome this problem, students can work in groups to prepare handmade props. Members of groups can help other members and this will not be very costly. Furthermore, to improve the students' performance, they are expected to perform with the real audience for engagement and improve their speaking practice (Brewster et al., 2002). Students working cooperatively would gain greater knowledge, increase their performance and reduce their anxiety (Liu et al., 2018). However, since the course was conducted during the pandemic of COVID-19, the students were not able to work in groups due to the social restrictions ordered from the government (Abidah et al., 2020).

Another weakness noted among the participants was on maintaining eye contact, using gestures, and making movements. Tatsuki (2015) agrees that eye contact and gesture, as well as voice tone, are important. Maintaining eye contact with the audience means that students are confident to perform (El Enein, 2011). This means that teacher educators should create opportunities for their students to develop storytelling skills and encourage them to involve the audience during storytelling performances (Yan & Zhao, 2019). This includes encouraging students to greet the audience by asking a question such as, 'Do you know who Cinderella is?', 'Are you happy with Pinocchio's action?' and so on. By asking some questions, students will not neglect the audience even though the audience is not present directly in front of them (Karanian, 2016).

For language aspects, students obtained relatively good scores for fluency, vocabulary, and grammar. This means that the mistakes that occurred during the storytelling did not affect the message being delivered, and overall, the presentation went smoothly. However, since the participants are the students of the English Education Department, they still need a lot of practice to improve their speaking ability. Teachers can use storytelling practice by following steps suggested by Brewster et al. (2002) such as selecting a story from a short one or an easier one. When they improve their speaking performance, the student can choose to tell longer stories. So, time spent should be applied from 1-3 minutes talk to 3-5 minutes talk and continue to 5-10 minutes talk.

We suggest English teachers use storytelling practice following the procedure suggested by Brewster et al. (2002). We also suggest following several steps: 1. working in group/pair, (2) selecting a story, (3) creating props, (4) practicing in groups, (5) practicing in front of audiences, (6) recording performances, and (7) watching students' performances together and giving peer and teacher feedback. We believe that there is a need to conduct action research following the steps proposed by Brewster et al. (2002) because it will reveal more valuable insight into English language learning development. Furthermore, the Department of English Education at Universitas Syiah Kuala and elsewhere could improve students' oral presentation skills and performance skills by incorporating a storytelling competition into compulsory courses.

6.   CONCLUSION

To conclude, the students who took part in the storytelling activity did not do very well in their non-language aspects but relatively well in their language aspects. In terms of non-language aspects, their eye contact, gesture and movement, dress code, voice modulation, and communicative performance needed improvement. Despite there were improvements in their fluency, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary used during the Drama in ELT course, the self-alone performance was found to not assist the students in reducing their anxiety or improving their confidence.

The obstacles faced by the students in conducting storytelling through videos were not able to use appropriate props for their performance, lack of eye contact, switching voices, use of gestures, difficulty in remembering the script, and needing somebody else to do the recording for them. These barriers could have been resolved if the task was done in groups. However, due to the COVID-19 social restriction throughout the country, group work was not possible at the time of the research.

The findings of this study have to be seen in light of some limitations. It is limited to only one class consisting of 19 students, and therefore, the results cannot be generalized to all EFL students. Therefore, future studies with a larger sample size are encouraged, and perhaps even from different EFL contexts to complement the findings from this study.

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