

## Storytelling to Improve Students' Speaking Skill

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**Abstract.** *Speaking is the first way to interact with others in the social community. Furthermore, the success in learning a language at first can be seen from the ability of the learner's speaking. However, it is very hard for the beginners to speak the foreign language, especially English. There are a lot of reasons why they get difficulties in speaking, such as lack of ideas to tell, lack of vocabularies to express the ideas, lack of the chance to speak, and lack of the interesting teaching method that can motivate them to speak. Thus, this research applied storytelling in speaking class in order that the beginners are eager to speak English. This research was a collaborative classroom action research whose main purpose was to know whether or not storytelling could improve the students' speaking skill. Meanwhile, the specific purposes consisted of describing: (1) the lecturer's activities, (2) the students' activities, and (3) the students' responses when storytelling was applied in the speaking class. The subjects were 23 students of class N of the second semester of Intensive English Program of Hasyim Asy'ari University (UNHAS) Tebuireng Jombang in the academic year of 2016/2017. The data of this research were got from the observations done by the collaborator and the speaking test. The result showed that there was an improvement on students' speaking skill after the implementation of storytelling. The speaking test result in cycle two explained that the students' speaking aspects got good progress. Storytelling improved their comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Thus, it can be said that storytelling could improve students' speaking skill.*

**Key words:** *storytelling; speaking skill; intensive English program*

### A. INTRODUCTION

As social human, people always interact and communicate one another. The first way to do the interaction and communication is by speaking. In this case, the

people express their ideas and communicate what they want orally. That is why speaking is very essential, moreover speaking English. Aye and Phyu (2015: 1) state that we need an effective English speaking skill in the whole life aspects in this globalization era. Then, Sepahvand (2014: 1847) argues that there are some reasons to put speaking as the first aim of study such as personal satisfaction from being able to speak and reaching other interests or career goals. Additionally, Tahir (2015: 174) says that somebody is considered successful in learning a foreign language when he or she has the ability to speak it.

Hasyim Asy'ari University (UNHASY) has a special program called as an intensive program of foreign language consisting of Arabic and English languages. This program is for all new students, the students of the first and the second semesters. They enter two days in English program and two days in Arabic program every week. Meanwhile, the intensive English program itself has some objectives, one of which is to make the students able to speak English. However, basically the previous education background of students of Hasyim Asy'ari University (UNHASY) was the students of Islamic boarding schools where they learnt English very little. Most of them are still beginners in learning English. That is why they find that speaking English is difficult. It is supported by Bashir, Azeem, and Dogar (2011: 36) who argue that it is difficult for the beginner to comprehend anything except what the speaker says is about what the learner observes and knows. Based on the preliminary study held in February 18, 2017, the students' speaking skill was still low. According to Dewi (2016: 342), the causes of the students' low speaking skill are as follows: (1) not having enough time in practicing speaking, (2) not having enough vocabulary, (3) not having interest in speaking because of uninteresting teaching method, and (4) not being able to relate the speaking content to their real life. Furthermore, Lopez (2011: 4) states that providing speaking strategies giving the foreign language learners large chance to communicate in the language being learnt is essential. Additionally, Melendez, Zavala, and Mendez (2014: 549) say that speaking is the main

challenge for the beginners and often makes them frustration so that the speaking strategies for the beginners are needed very much. Then, Akbar (2014: 92) argues that encouraging the students to read a certain text can solve the problem of the hesitation and the weakness of speaking. Dealing with this, this research applied storytelling in speaking class of class N of intensive English program. The novelty of this research compared to the previous studies was that the students retold the content of the reading text in their module by using their own words.

This research had the main purpose to know whether or not story telling could improve speaking skill of students class N in the second semester of intensive English program of Hasyim Asy'ari University (UNHAS) Tebuireng Jombang in the academic year of 2016/2017. Describing the lecturer's activities, the students' activities, and the students' responses during the implementation of storytelling in speaking class of class N of intensive English program became the specific purposes.

### ***Previous Studies***

Several previous studies have been conducted by the former researchers telling about the use of storytelling in teaching English. First, According to Akhyak and Indramawan (2013: 18) in the study entitled "Improving the students' English speaking competence through storytelling", storytelling implemented in teaching speaking could improve the students' fluency, grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and content. Next, a study entitled "Use of storytelling method to develop spoken English skill", found that storytelling technique has great effects on students' learning of English language (Samantaray, 2014: 44). Then, the study entitled "A story-telling approach to teaching English to young EFL Iranian learners" by Kalantari and Hashemian (2015: 221) explained the storytelling approach was effective to teach vocabulary. Besides, Julia (2015: 24) in the study entitled "Telling tales: Using storytelling to teach EFL kindergarten students in Taiwan" explained that there was an improvement on the teaching and learning

quality and students' enjoyment when the storytelling was implemented. It was followed by the study entitled "Using the storytelling technique to improve English speaking skills of primary school students" by Fikriah (2016: 87) that presents the students' English speaking skills was effectively improved through storytelling.

### ***Speaking***

Speaking is the way of people to express and communicate ideas to others orally. According to Gert and Hans in Efrizal (2012: 127), speaking is speech or utterances produced by the speaker with an intention of being known and then, the listener processes the sayings in order to know the speaker's intention. Irawati (2014: 26) defines speaking as an activity to produce sayings in the form of words and sentences orally in order to communicate with others. Meanwhile, Khorashadyzadeh (2014: 12) states that speaking needs not only the learners' understanding about the way to produce the linguistic competence such as grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary but also comprehension about sociolinguistic competence such as when, why, and how to speak. Bahadorfar and Omidvar (2015: 9) say that speaking skills can be categorized as good speaking skill when the listener can understand the words produced by the speaker. Additionally, Ur in Akhyak and Indramawan (2013: 20) says that the successful speaking activity has the characteristics as follows:

1. The language learners talk so much
2. All the participants of speaking activity get the opportunity to
3. The language learners are highly motivated and have interest in the speaking
4. The language produced is at the acceptable level.

### ***Storytelling***

Storytelling is to retell the story having read or heard by using the storytellers' own words based on their understanding about the story. According to Zaro and Saberri in Akhyak and Indramawan (2013: 20), storytelling is an activity

involving the interaction between storyteller and audience and between an individual and the listener in the certain level. Next, Safdarian (2013: 208) defines storytelling as the way of the students to retell stories in a different word construction after being told the stories by the teacher. Then, Ebrahiminejad, Azizifar, Gowhary, and Jamalinesari (2014: 43) say that storytelling is one teaching method by using short stories. According to Ling in Julia (2015: 14), storytelling as a learner-centered method helps the students to use the information and delivers the messages to others. Thus, it can be said that storytelling is a teaching method in which the students are asked to retell the content of the stories in different word constructions by involving a certain interaction between the storyteller and the listener.

Meanwhile, Samantaray (2014: 42) describes the procedures of storytelling as follows: (1) the teacher hangs different written stories with colorful papers on the white board, (2) the teacher asks the students to make groups of five, (3) the teacher asks every group take a paper from the white board, (4) the teacher asks them to develop a story in 15 minutes, (5) the teacher asks them to retell their story based on the group discussion, and (6) the teacher gives award to the group considered as the best group. Additionally, Fikriah (2016: 96) presents the procedures of storytelling as follows: (1) the students are asked to sit in the groups, (2) then, the students make a story based on a sequence of pictures having some key sentences given by the teacher, and (3) the teacher asks the students to tell the story based on the result of their discussion in front of the class

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

This research was a collaborative action research. It consisted of four steps. They were planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. The researcher collaborated with a collaborator. The researcher was the lecturer of intensive English program in class N. Meanwhile, the collaborator was another lecturer of intensive English program from other class. The collaborator was given a lesson

plan of speaking class by using storytelling method for class N. The collaborator was also given observation sheets in the form of field notes to report the lecturer's activities, students' activities, and students' responses during the lecturer taught speaking using storytelling method in class N. The cycles of this research consisted of two cycles which contained two meeting of each cycle. Meanwhile, the subjects of the research were 23 students of class N in the second semester of English intensive program of Hasyim Asy'ari University (UNHAS) Tebuireng Jombang in the academic year of 2016/2017. Actually class N consisted of 43 students but only 23 students who always joined the class without being absent.

### ***Techniques of Collecting Data and Data Analysis***

Observation and speaking test became the techniques of collecting data used in this research. The collaborator did the observation by writing everything happening in the class on the field notes in every meeting of the cycle. Then, the speaking test was held in the following meeting after every cycle had finished. There were two techniques of data analysis of this research. They were descriptive analysis and statistical analysis. The observation data written by the collaborator were analyzed by using descriptive analysis to know the lecturer's activities, the students' activities, and the students' responses during the lecturer taught speaking by using storytelling in class N. Then, to know the improvement of the students' speaking skill and the percentage of the students who passed the passing grade, the researcher used statistical analysis. In doing the statistical analysis, the researcher compared the number of students getting minimally the criterion score of 4 of every speaking aspect in pre-test, post test I, and post test II to know the improvement of students' speaking skill. The criteria of the success of this research itself was when 75 % of the students got the criterion score of 4 of every speaking aspects as the passing grade.

The scoring rubric of speaking skills used in this research was adapted from the speaking rubric of Maulany (2013: 35). The table below presents the scoring rubric of the speaking aspects.

Table 1 The Criteria of Speaking Aspects

Criteria	Comprehension	Vocabulary	Grammar	Fluency	Pronunciation
5	Appears to understand everything without difficulty	Speaks in L2 with accurate English words	Produces complete and accurate sentences	Speaks in L2 very fluently and effortlessly	Speaks in L2 Intelligibly and has few traces of foreign accent
4	Understands nearly everything at normal speed, although occasional repetition may be necessary	Speaks mostly in L2 with few L1 words	Produces some phrases instead of complete sentences with consistent and accurate word order or produces consistent omitted sentence	Speaks in L2 less fluently due to few problems of vocabulary/ selection of word.	Speaks mostly in L2 intelligibly with mother tongue accent
3	Understands most of what is said at slower than normal speed with many repetitions	Produces 4-6 English words	Produces inconsistent and incorrect sentences/ phrases	Speaks mostly in L2 with some long pauses and hesitancy	Speaks mostly in L1, but produces 1-3 English words and pronounce them in intelligible mother tongue accent
2	Has great difficulty understanding what is said, often misunderstands the Qs	Produces 1-3 English words (brands or place names such as KFC, Roppan, etc. do not count as English word/vocabulary) due to	Answers mostly in L1, with 1-3 English words/phrases	Speaks mostly in L1, Tries to speak in L2 but so halting with so many pauses and "er.."	Speaks mostly in L1, but produces 1-3 English words, Needs some repetition in pronouncing the words to understand them

		very limited vocabulary			
1	Unable to comprehend the material so that unable to express/respond the questions correctly	Vocabulary limitations so extreme as to make conversation in L2 virtually impossible so that the student speaks in L1 all the time	Unidentified because of speaking in L1 all the time	Unidentified because of speaking in L1 all the time	Unidentified because of speaking in L1 all the time

### C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### *Cycle One*

Cycle one consisted of two meetings. They were held in February 19, and February 20, 2017. Meanwhile, the post-test of cycle one was held in February 25, 2017.

#### *The Lecturer's Activities*

Actually, what the lecturer did in the first meeting and the second meeting of cycle one was the same. After checking the attendance list, she told the students about how she would handle the class for that meeting. It was about how storytelling would be applied. Then, she did what she had written in her lesson plan about teaching speaking by using storytelling method. Below were the steps the storytelling that the lecturer did.

1. The lecturer asked the students to sit in the groups of five
2. The lecturer got the students to pay attention to the reading text in their module while she was reading and translating the reading text
3. The lecturer had the students to discuss about the content of the reading text by using their own words in seven minutes



4. The lecturer asked every group to present their discussion result in three minutes
5. The lecturer gave the review of the presentations done by the students dealing with the speaking aspects.

The lecturer was walking around the class during the discussion while she was answering the questions from the students about the vocabularies. She also asked the students to write down the names of the members of the group. As soon as the time for discussion was over, she directly had the groups to present their discussion result. Unfortunately, in the first meeting, there were only 39 students joining the class. So there were 8 representatives of the groups coming forward to retell the result of their groups' discussion. Then, the second meeting was with 33 students. So that, there were seven groups, two of which consisted four students. It means that there were 7 representatives of the groups coming forward to retell the result of their groups' discussion.

#### *The Students' Activities*

Since the first meeting of the class, the students joining the class always followed the lecturer's instructions. Here are the descriptions of the students' activities relating to the storytelling method applied by the lecturer.

1. The students sat in the groups of five
2. The students were paying attention to the reading text in their module while the lecturer was reading and translating the reading text
3. The students discussed about the content of the reading text by using their own words in seven minutes
4. The representatives of the groups presented their discussion results in three minutes
5. The students listened and paid attention to the review given by the lecturer.

While discussing, the students submitted the papers containing the names of the groups' members. In the first meeting, there were 4 of 43 students not attending the class. In the second, meeting, there were 10 of 43 students who were absent. Then, 3 students came late in the first meeting and 1 student came late. In the second meeting, some students complained that their time to discuss was so fast. It was because they did not finish discussing yet when the lecturer had them present their discussion result. They requested the extended time.

### *The Students' Responses*

The students were little surprised when they were asked to retell the content of the story in front of the class in the first meeting. It was because in the first semester they always got the explanation from the lecturer. Next, there was one of the groups' representatives who was very nervous when telling the content of the reading text in front of the class. It made him forget some words to say. Then, he was replaced by other member. Meanwhile, most of the students were very noisy in the second meeting because they did not finish making the story of the content of the reading text. They felt that their time was not enough. Almost all of them laughed when the lecturer corrected the pronunciations. They found the new words with their unfamiliar pronunciation in the reading text.

### *Cycle Two*

Cycle two consisted of two meetings. They were held in February 26, and March 4, 2017. Meanwhile, the post-test of cycle two was held in March 5, 2017.

### *The Lecturer's Activities*

Basically, the lecturer's activities in cycle one and cycle two were the same. First, she checked the attendance list. Then, she told the students about how she would handle the class for that meeting, especially the extended time for discussion stage before the students presented their discussion result. She gave addition time for five minutes. So, the time for discussion was twelve minutes. Then, she applied

the storytelling method. The followings were what she did in the class dealing with the storytelling she used.

1. The lecturer asked the students to sit in the groups of five
2. The lecturer got the students to pay attention to the reading text in their module while she was reading and translating the reading text
3. The lecturer had the students to discuss about the content of the reading text by using their own words in twelve minutes
4. The lecturer asked every group to present their discussion result in three minutes
5. The lecturer gave the review of the presentations done by the students dealing with the speaking aspects.

As usual, the lecturer was walking around the class during the discussion while she was motivating the students seeming lazy and answering the questions from the students about the vocabularies. She also modeled the pronunciation of words being asked by certain groups. Unfortunately, it was also still as usual. Every meeting there was students not joining the class or being absent from the class. In the first meeting, there were 32 students joining the class. So there were 6 representatives of the groups coming forward to retell the result of their groups' discussion. Then, the second meeting was with 35 students. It means that there were 7 representatives of the groups coming forward to retell the result of their groups' discussion.

#### *The Students' Activities*

Although there were always the students not joining the class at every meeting, the students joining the class always followed the lecturer's instructions. Below are the students' activities related to the storytelling implemented by the lecturer in the class.

1. The students sat in the groups of five

2. The students were paying attention to the reading text in their module while the lecturer was reading and translating the reading text
3. The students discussed about the content of the reading text by using their own words in twelve minutes
4. The representatives of the groups presented their discussion results in three minutes
5. The students listened and paid attention to the review given by the lecturer.

While discussing, the students submitted the papers containing the names of the groups' members. In the first meeting, there were 11 of 43 students not attending the class. In the second, meeting, there were 8 of 43 students who were absent. Other students came on time in this cycle.

#### *The Students' Responses*

The students were very respectful to the lecturer's decision about the extended time. All of them used their time seriously. They discussed the content of the reading text having just read and translated by the lecturer with high motivation. There was no complaint anymore in this cycle. They showed their interest in the speaking class by giving a clap to the group having presented their discussion result.

#### *Results of Speaking Test*

The following table presents the result of speaking test in pre-test, post-test I, and post-test II.

Table 2. Results of Speaking Test

Speaking Aspect	Pre-Test					Students Passing the Passing Grades	Post-Test I					Students Passing the Passing Grades	Post-Test II					Students Passing the Passing Grades
	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5	
Comprehension	0	5	10	5	3	34.7 %	0	3	7	5	8	56.5 %	0	1	2	9	1	86.9 %
Fluency	6	7	5	5	0	21.7 %	0	5	5	7	6	56.5 %	0	2	3	9	9	78.2 %
Vocabulary	4	3	6	7	3	43.5 %	0	4	4	10	5	65.2 %	0	0	4	1	8	82.6 %
Grammar	10	6	4	2	1	13 %	0	5	6	8	4	52.1 %	0	2	3	1	7	78.2 %
Pronunciation	7	6	4	4	2	26 %	0	6	5	5	7	52.1 %	0	1	2	1	8	86.9 %

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the percentages of students passing the passing grade of each speaking aspect in post-test I was less than 75%. So that it could be said that cycle one was unsuccessful. Meanwhile, the percentages of students passing the passing grade of each speaking aspect in post-test II could reach 75%. It means that cycle two was considered successful. The students' speaking skill got improvement in all aspects of speaking, such as comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

#### D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the results of the research above, the conclusions can be drawn as follows:

1. Storytelling could improve speaking skill of students of class N in the second semester of intensive English program of Hasyim Asy'ari University (UNHAS) Tebuireng Jombang in the academic year of 2016/2017.
2. The lecturer's activities in cycle one the students' and cycle two were generally the same. She did what she wrote on her lesson plans. Then, She

was walking around the class when the discussion session while asking the names of the students in every group. She was also answering the students' questions about vocabulary and pronunciation in this activity. In cycle two, she extended the time for the discussion. The time for discussion became twelve minutes. It was done because some students complained about not having enough time for discussion.

3. The students' activities were in good progress from cycle one to cycle two. They followed what the lecturer instructed. When cycle one, they complained about not having enough time to discuss. It did not happen in cycle two because they already the addition time from the lecturer. The students generally always asked the lecturer about the vocabulary and the pronunciation of the words that they did not know.
4. The students' responses also were little bit different between cycle one and cycle two. In cycle one, most of them were little surprised when they were asked to retell the content of the reading text in their module. It was because they were used to getting explanation without being asked to speak in front of the class about the content of the reading text they had in their module. In cycle two, they were highly motivated to do their discussion and showed interest in the topic given. They gave their clap to the group having presented their discussion result.

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