

## DEVELOPING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH STORYTELLING: STORY-BASED PEDAGOGY IN INDONESIAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EFL CONTEXT

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### Abstract

This research is motivated by the importance of English as one of the means of communication in applying 21st-century skills. Therefore, English needs to be taught as early as possible so that children can get used to communicating in English. However, in the implementation of English learning in the Indonesian primary school context, teachers find difficulties in improving students' speaking skills. Therefore, this research was carried out to overcome obstacles in the English learning process, especially in speaking skills. The implementation of Story-Based Pedagogy (SBP) in 5th-grade elementary school was proposed to overcome the obstacles. This research aimed to identify the implementation of SBP to improve the speaking skills of 5th-grade elementary school students in English lessons. Action research was employed in this study, with a descriptive qualitative research design. This study involved 29 5th-grade primary school students. The result of the study showed that all the students improved their speaking skills. The students' improvement in speaking performance was prominently shown in their English vocabulary mastery, pronunciation, fluency, and confidence.

**Keywords:** English for Young Learners; Story-Based Pedagogy; storytelling; speaking skill

### INTRODUCTION

In this era, one of the benchmarks for one's success is the ability to actively participate in world affairs. There are several skills that must be mastered by students in the 21st century, these skills are often called 4Cs, namely: (1) critical thinking and problem solving, (2) communication, (3) collaboration, and (4) creativity and innovation (Widodo & Wardani, 2020). These skills strongly encourage students to have a professional attitude and can be rewarded for having important skills in the 21st century. In the four skills above mentioned communication and collaboration skills. Formal education is currently in the stage of teaching 21st-century skills, commonly called the 4Cs. In its implementation, it does not always run smoothly, there are obstacles that are often experienced. Efforts to overcome the existing obstacles in improving children's English skills are the need for interesting learning models to deliver language lessons and train children to have the skills needed. This speaking skill teaching activity can be made interesting by implementing the story-based pedagogy (SBP) learning model. Story-based pedagogy learning model is one way to carry out storytelling activities (Storytelling). For this reason, the researcher applies the story-based Pedagogy model to determine the process of learning speaking skills in learning English in 5th-grade elementary school. This study aims to identify the application of SBP to improve the speaking skills of 5th-grade elementary school students in English lessons.

The focus of discussion in this study is speaking skills. Speaking and listening skills are the skills that human beings do from the early stage of life. Listening is the first skill that humans learn. the continuous listening process is carried out through words that are often spoken by the people around (Prihatin, 2017). At the elementary school level, children will learn other language skills besides listening and speaking, namely reading and writing skills. Ruiyat et al. (2019) stated that speaking skills are very important and needed by children, with the speaking skills they have, children can prepare themselves to proceed to the writing and reading stages.

Teaching language skills in Indonesian schools begins with skills of Bahasa Indonesia, then children are taught foreign language. One of the foreign languages taught at schools in Indonesia is English. Teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia is considered important because it has an important role in the advancement of technology, information, knowledge, and Lauder's economy (Khomsin & Rahimmatussalisa, 2021). However,

according to data released by the English Proficiency Index (EPI) in 2016, Indonesia has an English proficiency order under other Asian countries (Khomsin & Rahimmatussalisa, 2021). This low level of English proficiency has an impact on the global acceptance of innovation by countries. Thus, it is very important for Indonesia to improve English language skills starting from an early age.

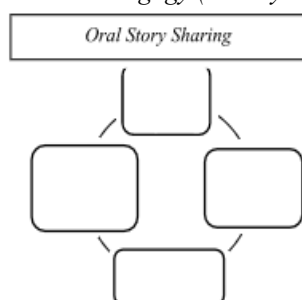
The beginning of holding English subjects in Indonesia has been officially required since the enactment of the national curriculum in 1975 for junior and senior high school students (Ishanah, 2004, p. 186). Meanwhile, at the elementary school level, English began to be included as local content in the 1994 curriculum (Depdikbud RI, in Ishanah, 2004). English subjects are not compulsory subjects but English subjects are widely recommended (Karsidi, 2007; Kismadi, 2004). Then, in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of Indonesia No. 57 of 2014 concerning the 2013 Curriculum for Elementary Schools/Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, it is stated that there are general subjects in group B that aim to develop attitude competencies, knowledge competencies, and skills competencies of students with local content in them. This local content can be developed by the local government/education unit. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2020) the 2013 curriculum will begin to be replaced with the newest national curriculum, known as Kurikulum Merdeka In that curriculum, English learning becomes a highly recommended subject. This new curriculum is going to be implemented nationally in 2024. Elementary schools in Indonesia should start to prepare for the provision of English subjects for their students.

Teaching English in elementary schools must be fun and interactive (Listia, 2008). The use of interesting learning media alone is not enough if it is not accompanied by appropriate teaching techniques (Yansyah et al., 2021). One of the activities that are suitable for elementary school children that can be interesting and appropriate to apply is storytelling activities. Based on the results of research, children's first experience in contact with literacy activities is often obtained through listening to fairy tales (Ananthia, 2010, 2012; Brewster et al., 2002; Collin, 1999; Damayanti, 2008, 2017). Moreover, storytelling is also liked by children because it is a teaching technique that makes children learn without teaching them, and storytelling is widely used by teachers to teach English learning with the aim of improving children's language skills (Yansyah et al., 2021).

For the material to be conveyed well, ways are needed to overcome it. In telling stories, stories should be told repeatedly, and use stories with simple sentences. Brewster and Ellis (2014, p.9) state "...storybooks can provide an ideal introduction to the foreign language as they present language in a repetitive and memorable context...". Thus, learning English as a foreign language (EFL) would be more fun and meaningful. Therefore, the selection of stories to be delivered is different from stories/fairy tales in Indonesian. The selection of this story has several criteria so that the story can be said to be feasible and suitable to be used as a medium to convey material to children. Brewster and Ellis (2014) state that there are nine criteria in choosing stories for children, including: 1) level, 2) literacy device, 3) content, 4) layout, 5) educational potential, 6) motivation, 7) value, 8) global issues, and 9) language. Accordingly, Ananthia (2020) states that a good story should have a simple plot or a simple plot that is easy for children to understand with simple narrative sentences.

After choosing or creating the right story, the next step is to choose the right learning model. The Story-Based Pedagogy learning model is a modification of Reading to Learn (R2L) Pedagogy. Reading to Learn (R2L) Pedagogy is a text-based learning model to improve the multiliteracy skills of children and adolescents in the context of learning foreign languages. Reading to Learn (R2L) Pedagogy provides teachers with skills to speed up reading learning in the classroom and close students' skill gaps with reading activities. This reading activity can direct students towards writing activities (Rose & Acevedo, 2006). Meanwhile, Story-Based Pedagogy is a development of listening and listening skills into speaking skills. This Story-Based Pedagogy model consists of 4 stages, which were developed from the second cycle of Reading to Learn Pedagogy (Damayanti, 2017), namely: 1) preparing for storytelling, 2) demonstration of storytelling, 3) Joint Retelling, and 4) Storytelling performance. A series of stages can be continued according to the needs of the expected improvement assessment.

**Figure 1**  
*Story-Based Pedagogy (Damayanti, 2017, p.235)*



The implementation of Story-Based Pedagogy can be applied to learning English in elementary schools, with storytelling techniques that make learning interesting. In sorting stories for storytelling, it can be adjusted according to story criteria and the age of the child. The implementation of Story-Based Pedagogy is expected not only to convey stories that contain elements of education to children but also to improve students' English skills. Listening skills, reading skills, writing skills, and speaking skills are very much needed for children's language development in the era of globalization so that children can communicate fluently as well as provisions to prepare themselves to become a superior generation and be able to compete with the global community. For the delivery of stories in this Story-Based Pedagogy learning model, it can be equipped with storytelling techniques. Storytelling is one of the teaching techniques to communicate creatively in learning English (Oktanisfia & Susilo, 2021).

Through storytelling, students will gain knowledge of vocabulary (vocabulary), word structure (grammar), and pronunciation (pronunciation), and can pour their imagination into a story so that children can express themselves. Storytelling can greatly affect children's English learning in understanding foreign languages through simple dialogues in a story, it requires sufficient vocabulary, and storytelling is useful for increasing children's vocabulary and stimulating children's verbal abilities (Ariani & Hariyono, 2019; Rambe et al., 2021). ). Storytelling activities can not only improve children's English language skills but also improve children's character, soft skills, and speaking skills through storytelling techniques applied in classroom learning. Oradee (2013) states "speaking skills can be developed through communicative activities", and that speaking skills are abilities that can develop through communicative activities such as role-playing, picture puzzles, problem-solving, and storytelling.

## **METHODS**

The research method used in this research is classroom action research (CAR). In this study, the researchers used the Kemmis and McTaggart models. This model is flexible which in its implementation can be adapted to the conditions in the study. This action research was employed in this study with the 5th-grade students at one of the private schools in Kabupaten Bandung as the research participants. The research instrument was in the form of a speaking-skills assessment with indicators of being able to speak in the good and correct language, vocabulary mastery, voice and intonation, pronunciation, and self-confidence. Besides, the aspects of telling the stories were also assessed in this study. Students were measured for their story mastery, facial expressions, interactivity, and attitude in the process of telling the stories.

The presentation of data in classroom action research is presented in a qualitative descriptive manner. The data is presented with a clear picture through narrative text in the form of field notes, matrices, graphs, networks, and charts.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The vocabulary of children when this research was carried out was proven to increase and children could use it when communicating in class. In the target vocabulary listed in the first and second stories of this study, children have 12 new vocabularies, namely living room, dining room, kitchen, bedroom and garage, kitten, dog, bird, little, big, scared, and run. These vocabularies are not all new vocabulary for students. There are students who say "that's not new to me" when they convey the target vocabulary in the first story. But what becomes new vocabulary for the child is not the target vocabulary but additional vocabulary in the narrative or dialogue in the story, such as "pet" and "backyard". Therefore, it can be said that not all children have the same initial knowledge and the same amount of vocabulary. Meanwhile, there were students who directly ask the vocabulary used when the teacher gives instructions, as it can be seen from the transcribed teacher–student interaction, as follows:

Teacher: "Read this together"

Student: "apa artinya bu? Together itu apa? Kalau 'read' kan membaca".

The interaction was an example of how the students listened to the use of English words in a contextual situation. This strongly proves the theory presented by (Brewster et al., 2002) regarding children's language acquisition will be maximized depending on the stimulus given when they were children. This is because students who ask about the meaning of "together" and students who already know the target vocabulary in the first story have different language teaching backgrounds at home. Ananthia (2020) opinion regards the story must contain repetition, it can be proven by increasing students' vocabulary because there is repetition in the dialogue of the first story character. Students use repeated sentences in the story.

Teacher: "do you understand?"

Students: "No, I don't"

In the closing activity when the teacher conveys what must be prepared at the next meeting.

There are some students who already have good self-confidence since the first meeting. The confidence of these students continues to increase, making it easier for teachers to take attendance and assessments. These students are also always actively raising their hands when asked questions and also participate in game activities. However, behind the active and confident students there are students who are active and confident in negative things. There are students who cannot be silent and always go in and out of class when the teacher is talking and on the second day of cycle II the student fights with his friend. This incident was very time consuming because the teacher and homeroom teacher had to make the situation conducive again. At the end of the class, the teacher asked the students to make up. The importance of classroom management can be used to overcome events such as not conducive to class and disrupted learning. Classroom management is intended to create a conducive learning environment for both students so that learning objectives can be achieved effectively and efficiently. When the class is disturbed, the teacher tries to return it so that it does not become an obstacle for the teaching and learning process. Then, this prominent self-confidence is always shown by the same few students, thus closing the opportunity for other students to look active. To overcome this, the teacher always prioritizes students who are trying to be active and confident in some activities so that the teacher can assess the average ability of students in class.

Not all vocabulary that students have mastered at the beginning of learning can be spoken by students with the right pronunciation. Most students pronounce the vocabulary they already know incorrectly. Therefore, with the guidance of the teacher, students can improve this. Students listen to how the teacher recites the corrected vocabulary, then students can improve their pronunciation after listening to the examples given by the teacher, this is proof that from the continuous listening process humans can speak (Prihatin, 2017). Then the new vocabulary that students encounter in the first and second stories makes students confused at the beginning of the pronunciation, so an example must be given first so that students can pronounce it according to the proper pronunciation. This vocabulary learning is carried out gradually from easy vocabulary to more difficult vocabulary.

The learning process in the opening activity, the teacher greets and asks students how they are using English, all students can answer using English as well and with the right pronunciation. The teacher enters the preparing stage by starting with a question that is relevant to the content of the story from the learning media that will be delivered. At this stage students can answer the teacher's questions but lack confidence or are still hesitant in their pronunciation. As for those who understand what is being asked but do not have sufficient vocabulary to answer or have low self-confidence for fear of not being able to pronounce it correctly, they answer using Indonesian.

The target vocabulary is the key vocabulary that appears in fairy tales, which is a collection of words from a certain classification that is equivalent/similar which is the purpose of the vocabulary that must be mastered by children after the fairy tale is delivered (Ananthia, 2020). In this study, the target vocabulary is living room, dining room, kitchen, bedroom and garage, kitten, dog, bird, little, big, scared, and run. All the vocabulary is used according to the learning theme, namely "Object Around Us". It is intended that students can know English from objects that are around the student's environment either inside or outside the home.

Students can retell stories because learning media in the form of story books have been distributed to each student. So that they can reread the stories and pictures in the storybook, it really helps students to understand the storyline. Damayanti and Febrianti (2020, p.626) suggested that "...low level or young students, images can be a good starting point to arouse their interest in the picture book activity..." This picture story book media can help students understand the storyline easily and students can participate in retelling activities together.

In this independent storytelling stage, students practice what they have learned in the previous two meetings. Students make their own word structures, although they are not the same as narratives in books, but students can make sentences and understand the content of the story and convey it individually, according to what Saodi et al. (2021) said that with storytelling students can use language structures and sentences as well as know the meaning system of a sentence.

Fostering students' speaking skills by implementing SBP using storytelling techniques has resulted to effective and creative English learning. This finding is in accordance to Oktanisfia and Susilo's (2021) statement that state storytelling is one of the techniques for teaching creative communication in English learning. Integrated with the implementation of picture story book learning media, the implementation of the SBP model becomes smoother because the selected media is in accordance with the age of 5th grade elementary school children. Picture story books are interesting learning media and can be connected to real things that make students easy to understand.

## CONCLUSION

The learning process uses the Story-Based Pedagogy model in learning English to improve the speaking skills of students in grade 5 SD. Learning is divided into activities, namely preliminary activities, core activities with four stages, namely, preparing and sharing stories, join retelling and independent storytelling, and activities Closing. This research was conducted in two cycles, with the learning process by implementing Story-Based Pedagogy using storybook learning media. The story book in the first cycle is entitled "Finding Jimmy's Ball" and the second cycle story book is entitled "The Three Little Kittens", both of which have the theme "Object Around Us". Research in cycles I and II can run well. There is no child who does not produce improvement in each indicator. All children in the process can find out what things they need to improve in the previous cycle.

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