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Integrating Local Folktales into Storytelling Practice to Foster Students' Speaking Performance in Junior high school  
[Mengintegrasikan Cerita Rakyat Lokal ke dalam Praktik Bercerita untuk Meningkatkan Kemampuan Berbicara Siswa di Sekolah Menengah Pertama]

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**Abstract.** This study aimed to investigate the impact of integrating local folktales into storytelling activities in fostering junior high school students' speaking performance. Students' speaking skills were still relatively low because of limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, and inadequate opportunities to practice speaking English. The research applied a quantitative method using a pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design. The participants were 30 eight-grade students selected through purposive sampling. The data were collected through speaking test conducted before and after the implementation of storytelling activities integrated with local folktales. Students' speaking performance were assessed based on fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehensibility. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a paired sample t-test. The findings indicated that the students' mean score improve from 71.93 in the pre-test to 88.70 in the post-test. Furthermore, the significance value of the paired samples t-test was 0.000, which was lower than 0.05. These findings demonstrate that integrating local folktales into storytelling activities significantly enhanced students' speaking performance. Therefore, the integration of local folktales into storytelling activities can be considered an effective strategy for improving students' English speaking ability.

**Keywords** – local folktales, storytelling activities, speaking performance, EFL students'.

**Abstrak.** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki dampak pengintegrasian cerita rakyat lokal ke dalam kegiatan bercerita dalam meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara siswa SMP. Kemampuan berbicara siswa masih relatif rendah karena keterbatasan kosakata, kurangnya kepercayaan diri, dan kurangnya kesempatan untuk berlatih berbicara bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kuantitatif dengan desain pra-eksperimental satu kelompok pretest-posttest. Partisipan penelitian adalah 30 siswa kelas delapan yang dipilih melalui purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes berbicara yang dilakukan sebelum dan sesudah implementasi kegiatan bercerita yang terintegrasi dengan cerita rakyat lokal. Kemampuan berbicara siswa dinilai berdasarkan kelancaran, pengucapan, kosakata, tata bahasa, dan pemahaman. Data yang dikumpulkan dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan uji t sampel berpasangan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nilai rata-rata siswa meningkat dari 71,93 pada pretest menjadi 88,70 pada posttest. Selanjutnya, nilai signifikansi uji t sampel berpasangan adalah 0,000, yang lebih rendah dari 0,05. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pengintegrasian cerita rakyat lokal ke dalam kegiatan bercerita secara signifikan meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara siswa. Oleh karena itu, pengintegrasian cerita rakyat lokal ke dalam kegiatan bercerita dapat dianggap sebagai strategi efektif untuk meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara bahasa Inggris siswa.

**Kata Kunci** – Cerita rakyat lokal, kegiatan bercerita, kemampuan berbicara, siswa EFL.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is categorized as one of the essential productive skills in learning English. Through speaking activities, learners are able to communicate their thoughts and emotions orally in real communicative situations. Possessing good speaking ability enables learners to interact not only with native speakers but also with people from diverse international backgrounds [1]. In today's globalized world, speaking has gained increasing prominence as it serves as the primary medium of international communication and contributes, including employment in global environments [2]. Speaking competence is therefore important not only in classroom interaction but also in everyday communication, as it reflects an individual's capacity to interact and express ideas effectively. Speaking functions as a medium for conveying ideas, and fluency becomes a crucial elements that determines the comfort and effectiveness of communication [3] Within English language learning, speaking skills as it indicates the learner's ability to use the language actively and communicatively.

However, based on the results of an initial survey conducted at one of the Junior High School in Sidoarjo, it was found that students' English speaking skills were still relatively low. Many students are still not confident when speaking, afraid of making mistakes, and limited in the use of vocabulary. In addition, speaking activities in class are still rarely done because learning is still limited. Furthermore, speaking practice in the classroom is rarely

conducted due to restricted learning activities. These conditions indicate that students face various challenges in learning English, particularly in terms of confidence and vocabulary limitations. This condition is consistent with previous findings that low speaking performance is influenced by insufficient practice opportunities and students' low self-confidence in using English [4]. Consequently, students have limited chances to engage in meaningful and communicative speaking practice.

To address these issues, teachers are required to apply learning strategies that can stimulate students' interest and self-confidence while creating an engaging and enjoyable learning environment. One approach that can be implemented is storytelling. Storytelling serves as it encourages students to express ideas and thoughts orally through narratives [5]. In storytelling, students retell stories they have read or heard using their own words, beginning with recalling the storyline, reorganizing ideas, internalizing meanings, and finally delivering the story orally [6]. During this process, students utilize vocal variations such as volume, rhythm, intonation, as well as body movements to make their storytelling more expressive. Through this activity, students not only practice speaking, but also learn to express meaning, feelings, and imagination more naturally. Through this activity, learners not only develop speaking ability but also practice expressing emotions, meanings, and imagination naturally. Previous research indicates that storytelling can attract students' attention, boost their confidence, and significantly improve students' speaking performance [7]. In addition, the integration of familiar cultural materials such as Indonesian folktales in English instruction has been proven to enhance students' English competence in the EFL context [8]. Therefore, storytelling is both engaging and effective in developing students' speaking ability.

However, most previous storytelling studies have employed foreign fairy tales and general stories, which often limit students' emotional connection with the content. For this reason, the present study introduces an innovation by incorporating local folktales into storytelling instruction. Local folklore embodies moral values, wisdom, and cultural identity that closely relate to students' daily lives, thereby fostering stronger emotional engagement. Folklore-based materials are considered more engaging, motivating, and effective for learners and have potential to enhance the quality of speaking activities [9]. Hence, the use of local folklore in storytelling not only enhances speaking skills but also cultivates students' appreciation of local culture.

The implementation of local folklore-based storytelling in this study is grounded in the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which prioritize meaningful and active language use in real communication contexts. Speaking activities in CLT are not merely focused on structural repetition but emphasize functional language use. CLT promotes dynamic classroom interaction as students are encouraged to use language purposefully [10]. Interaction-rich activities in CLT support students' understanding through problem solving and information exchange [11]. Furthermore, CLT places strong emphasis on fluency and the use of language in authentic situations [12].

Consistent with communicative learning principles, constructivist theory posits that meaningful learning emerges when students build their understanding through hands-on experience, social interactions, and authentic tasks connected to what they already know [13]. Learning environments centered on students, particularly those that highlight discussion and inquiry, demonstrate the implementation of constructivist ideas [14]. In practice, this theory supports classroom activities that prompt learners to actively investigate information, exchange experiences, and link their prior knowledge to the material, thereby deepening their learning. Consequently, integrating local folktales into storytelling but also strengthens constructivist learning by offering culturally familiar contexts that promote active and creative knowledge construction.

This research seeks to examine the impact of using local folklore-based storytelling on the English-speaking performance of students at Junior High School. Employing a quantitative approach, the study assesses how far this method enhances students' fluency, confidence, and communicative competence. The results are expected to provide empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of folklore storytelling in speaking instruction and to serve as a resource for teachers in designing more engaging, contextual, and culturally enriched learning activities. Therefore, this study addresses the following research question:  
How does local folklore-based storytelling affect the English speaking performance of junior high school students?

## II. METHOD

### Research Design

The research employed a quantitative pre-experimental approach using a one-group pretest-posttest design. The researcher observed one class and collected the data before and after the treatment was given. Pre-test and post-test activities were administered to assess students' speaking performance before and after storytelling activities based on local folktales were implemented. As explained by Sugiyono [15] this design allows researchers to identify changes that occur within the same group after a treatment is applied. The design of the study is

presented in Table 1:

Table 1. One Group Test

Class Pre-Test Treatment Post Test

A 01 X 02

Information:

A: The class that is treated X: Research treatment

01: Describe the pre-test 02: Describe the post-test

The study collected data from eight-grade students of SMPN 1 Sukodono through speaking tests conducted in the pre-test and post-test sessions. The pre-test was designed to identify students' initial speaking ability, while the post-test measured their improvement after the storytelling treatment. During the pre-test, students were asked to orally describe pictures related to descriptive text material. The activity assessed several speaking components, including vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and confidence in speaking English. The descriptive test material required students to identify and describe people, place, or objects using appropriate language features as well as the generic structure of identification and description.

During the treatment process, storytelling activities using local folktales were carried out as the instructional strategy. The teacher told several local folktales and demonstrated how to describe the characters, setting, and events appearing in the stories. After listening to the folktales, students practiced speaking by describing selected parts of the stories based on the teacher's example. Storytelling was chosen because it can create a more enjoyable classroom environment and encourage students to improve their speaking skills through familiar and meaningful learning contexts.

#### Participants

The participants in this study were eight-grade students of SMPN 1 Sukodono. The population consisted of all eight-grade students from classes VIII A to VIII J, with approximately 36 students in each class, resulting in a total population of around 360 students. The sample of this study consisted of 30 students from class VIII J. The researcher used purposive sampling because the sample was chosen based on criteria relevant to the research objectives. Based on the English teacher's recommendation, class VIII J was selected because the students still needed improvement in speaking ability compared to several other classes in the same grade. Therefore, the class was intentionally selected to examine the effectiveness in improving students' speaking ability, especially in descriptive text material. This study applied a single-group pre-experimental design since the purpose was to measure students' speaking improvement before and after the treatment without involving a control group.

#### Data Collection

The data collection procedures were based on the principles of performance-based speaking assessment as proposed by Brown [16]. Speaking ability should be assessed through meaningful oral performance tasks that allow learners to produce language in communicative contexts. In this study, students' speaking ability was measured through oral storytelling tasks administered as pre-test and post-test.

During the pre-test, students were asked to describe a picture orally to measure their initial speaking performance. After that, the students participated in storytelling activities using local folktales through teacher modeling, guided practice, and individual speaking practice. In the post-test session, students were again asked to describe pictures orally in order to measure their speaking improvement after the implementation of storytelling activities using local folktales. The speaking tasks provided opportunities for students to demonstrate their oral language proficiency in terms of vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and confidence.

#### Pre-Test

The pre-test was conducted to identify students' initial speaking ability in storytelling before the treatment was implemented.

#### Pre-test questions:

"Look at the picture of Timun Mas given by the teacher carefully. Describe the character orally in front of the class. Your description should include physical appearance, clothes, and personality or impression. Speak clearly for about 1-2 minutes using your own words."

#### Post-test

The post-test was administered to measure students' speaking improvement after the storytelling treatment using local folktales. Similar to the pre-test, students were asked to describe a local folktale character orally based on a picture provided by the teacher. However, the picture used in the post-test was different from the pre-test.



Post-Test questions:

"Look at the picture of Keong Mas given by the teacher carefully. Describe the character orally in front of the class. Your description should include physical appearance, clothes, and personality or impression. Speak clearly for about 1–2 minutes using your own words."

#### Assessment Criteria

Students' speaking performances were assessed using an analytic scoring rubric adapted from [16].

Table 2. Assessment Criteria

Aspect Score 4 (Excellent) Score 3 (Good) Score 2 (Fair) Score 1 (Poor)

Fluency Clear pronunciation and intonation; speech is very easy to understand. Minor pronunciation errors but do not affect understanding. Several pronunciation errors that sometimes make understanding difficult. Frequent pronunciation errors; speech is hard to understand.

Pronunciation Uses correct simple present and simple sentence structure consistently. Few grammatical errors but meaning is still clear. Frequent grammatical errors that sometimes affect meaning. Use Very limited grammar control; sentences are unclear.

Vocabulary Uses varied and appropriate adjectives (e.g., brave, kind, beautiful, smart). Uses simple and appropriate vocabulary with some repetition. Limited vocabulary; relies on very basic words. Very poor vocabulary; unable to describe the character.

Grammar Speaks smoothly with minimal hesitation; ideas flow naturally. Some hesitation but can complete the description. Frequent pauses and hesitation; struggles to continue speaking. Very hesitant; unable to produce continuous speech.

Comprehensibility Complete description covering all 3 aspects: appearance, clothes, and personality. Describes 2–3 aspects but lacks detail. Only mentions 1–2 aspects with very limited explanation. Content is irrelevant or does not match the picture.

Students' performances in both the pre-test and post-test were evaluated by two raters, namely the English teacher and the researcher. Both raters assessed students' performance independently using the same rubric to ensure objectivity and consistency. The final score was obtained by averaging the scores from both raters, increasing the reliability of the assessment.

#### Treatment

Treatment is a series of procedures used by the researcher to provide learning activities aimed at improving students' speaking skills in descriptive text through storytelling using local folktales. The treatment was conducted in one meeting according to the research schedule.

Topic: Storytelling Activity Using Local Folktales (Timun Mas)

#### Learning Activities:

The researcher explained descriptive text, including its purpose, generic structure, and language features.

The researcher introduced storytelling using local folktales as a learning activity and explained how storytelling can help students improve their speaking ability.

The researcher told the story of Timun Mas as a storytelling model while students listened carefully to the pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and storytelling expression demonstrated by the teacher.

The researcher distributed students' worksheets (LKPD) related to the storytelling activity and guided students to identify important information about the folktale characters.

Students worked in groups to practice storytelling based on the local folktale discussed during the lesson.

Each group presented the storytelling performance in front of the class by retelling the folktale orally, following the example previously demonstrated by the researcher.

The researcher provided feedback and corrections related to students' pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, content, and confidence during the speaking performances.

#### Data Analysis

The students' speaking scores from both the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. First, descriptive statistics such as the mean and standard deviation were calculated to observe the general distribution of students' speaking performance before and after the treatment. Next, the Shapiro-Wilk test was applied to check whether the data followed a normal distribution. When the data were normally distributed, a Paired-Samples T-test was employed to determine whether there was a significant difference in students' speaking skills before and after the use of storytelling based on local folktales. In contrast, when the data did not meet the normality assumption, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used as a non-parametric substitute. The interpretation

of the results relied on the significance value (Sig. or p-value). A p-value lower than 0.05 indicated that the treatment significantly affected students' speaking ability, whereas a p-value higher than 0.05 suggested that the treatment did not lead to a significant improvement in students' speaking performance.

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

Table 3. Paired Sample Statistics of Pre-test and Post-test

| Paired Samples Statistics |         |    |                |                 |
|---------------------------|---------|----|----------------|-----------------|
|                           | Mean    | N  | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
| Pair 1 pretest            | 71.9333 | 30 | 3.81407        | .69635          |
| posttest                  | 88.7000 | 30 | 6.25410        | 1.14184         |

Based on the pre-test results, the students' speaking ability before receiving treatment through storytelling was still relatively moderate. The data showed that the total number of participants was 30 students. The mean score of the pre-test was 71.93 out of a maximum score of 100, which can be categorized as sufficient achievement. The standard deviation was 3.81. The lowest score was 65, while the highest score was 81. These findings indicate that many students still experienced difficulties in speaking performance, particularly in pronunciation, vocabulary usage, grammatical accuracy, fluency, and confidence in expressing their ideas. Some students also had difficulties in organizing their ideas into clear spoken descriptions. Therefore, the students' speaking ability in the pre-test still needed improvement.

Based on the post-test results, the students' speaking ability improved after the implementation of storytelling as a learning medium. The data showed that the total number of participants remained 30 students. The mean score increased to 88.70 out of a maximum score of 100, which indicates good achievement. The standard deviation was 6.25. The lowest score was 77, while the highest score was 98. These results indicate that students showed better speaking performance after learning through storytelling. They became more confident, more fluent, and more accurate in expressing their ideas. In addition, students demonstrated better pronunciation, vocabulary selection, and grammatical usage during speaking activities. Storytelling also helped students organize their ideas more systematically and speak more naturally. Thus, the use of storytelling gave a positive contribution to students' speaking ability.

Significant difference between students' speaking ability before and after using storytelling through local folktales in descriptive text. Because the normality test showed that the data were normally distributed, the next test conducted was the paired sample t-test to find out the significant difference between pre-test and post-test. The paired sample t-test was conducted to analyze whether there was a statistically significant difference between students' scores before and after the treatment. The test compared the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test obtained from the same group of students. The result showed that the post-test mean score was higher than the pre-test mean score, indicating an improvement in students' speaking ability after the implementation of storytelling. In addition, the significance value was lower than 0.05, which means that the difference between the two tests was statistically significant. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis was accepted, while the null hypothesis was rejected. These findings indicate that storytelling through local folktales was effective in improving students' speaking ability in descriptive text.

Table 4. Paired Differences Between Pre-test and Post-test

| Paired Samples Test       |           |                |                 |                                           |                 |
|---------------------------|-----------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Paired Differences t df   |           |                |                 |                                           |                 |
|                           | Mean      | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|                           | Lower     | Upper          |                 |                                           |                 |
| Pair 1 pretest - posttest | -16.76667 | 5.72763        | 1.04572         | -18.90540 -14.62793                       | .000            |

The table showed that the mean difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was -16.76667, indicating that the post-test scores were higher than the pre-test scores. The standard deviation was 5.72763, while the standard error mean was 1.04572. The lower difference was -18.90540, while the upper difference was -14.62793. The result of the paired sample t-test showed that  $t = -16.034$  with  $df = 29$  and the significance value was 0.000. From the data above, it showed that the value of Sig. (2-tailed)  $0.000 < 0.05$ . Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of Storytelling through local folktales in descriptive text was effective in improving students' speaking ability at the eighth grade of junior high school.



## Discussion

The findings of this study showed that the use of storytelling through local folktales gave a significant effect on students' speaking performance in descriptive text. It was proven by the result of the paired samples t-test which showed that the significance value was 0.000, lower than 0.05. This indicates that there was a significant difference between students' speaking scores before and after the treatment. The mean score increased from 71.93 in the pre-test to 88.70 in the post-test. Therefore, storytelling through local folktales was effective in improving students' speaking performance. The improvement occurred because storytelling provided students with meaningful speaking practice and helped them express their ideas more systematically in communicative situations [16]. Previous studies also revealed that storytelling activities could encourage students to speak English more actively and improve their speaking performance through retelling activities [17]. In addition, storytelling can improve students' pronunciation, fluency, and accuracy in speaking English because students practice speaking more consciously and interactively [18].

In addition, storytelling through local folktales also helped students reduce anxiety and build confidence during speaking activities. Before the treatment, many students were hesitant and afraid of making mistakes when speaking English. However, after participating in storytelling activities, students became more confident because they were supported by familiar story content and clear speaking models from the teacher. As a result, students showed better participation and became more active during classroom interaction. This finding is relevant to previous studies which reported that self-confidence and speaking practice significantly influence students' oral performance in the classroom [4]. Other studies also found that storytelling activities increased students' participation and enthusiasm in speaking classes because students became more interested and engaged during the learning process [19].

The findings of this study are also consistent with previous research which found that storytelling can improve students' speaking ability, motivation, and classroom participation [7]. However, this present study focused not only on storytelling activities in general, but also on integrating local folktales as culturally relevant learning materials. Therefore, this study provides a new contribution to the teaching of speaking, especially in descriptive text at junior high school level. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that storytelling through local folktales is an effective teaching strategy to improve students' speaking performance while also strengthening students' appreciation of local culture [9]. Furthermore, previous studies explained that storytelling techniques can help junior high school students develop speaking skills more effectively because students become more confident in expressing ideas orally [20].

## IV. CONCLUSION

The result of this study showed that students gained positive improvements after the implementation of storytelling through local folktales. Most students showed better speaking performance in the post-test compared to the pre-test. The mean score increased from 71.93 in the pre-test to 88.70 in the post-test. In addition, the result of the paired samples t-test showed that the significance value was 0.000, which was lower than 0.05. It means that there was a significant difference before and after the implementation of storytelling activities. The use of storytelling through local folktales helped students improve their speaking performance, especially in fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, content, and self-confidence.

This research provides a meaningful contribution to English language teaching, especially in teaching speaking at junior high school level. By integrating local folktales into storytelling activities, teachers can create a more active, communicative, and culturally meaningful learning environment. Students not only improve their speaking performance, but also develop greater motivation and participation during the learning process. For future research, it is recommended to use a control group design in order to compare the effectiveness of storytelling activities more comprehensively. Future researchers may also explore other local folktales or different English learning materials to enrich speaking instruction in EFL classrooms.

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