



# Exploring the Potential of Storytelling in Reducing Speaking Anxiety among Students at a Junior High School

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## **Abstract**

This study aims to determine whether the storytelling method has the potential to reduce students' speaking anxiety among students at Junior High School. This research uses a mix method. The data source of this research is 22 students from class IXB of MTs Muhammadiyah 1 Sorong. After collecting the data, the researcher analyzes it using Krinis's anxiety level scale formula. Data collection techniques use questionnaires, observations, and interviews. Interviews were given to 5 ninth-grade students who experienced panic anxiety. Research analyzing data, according to Miles and Huberman, includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions. The results showed that first, there were 6 (27.15%) students experiencing mild anxiety levels, 9 (40.92%) students experiencing moderate anxiety, then 6 (27.15%) students experiencing severe anxiety levels, and the last 1 (4.5%) student experiencing panic anxiety levels. Secondly, based on these results, the teacher uses storytelling to reduce students' anxiety when speaking by providing a story theme. Then, students practice it in front of the class.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Speaking is one of the most essential skills to develop; it is considered one of the most challenging aspects of language learning. This causes some Indonesian students to fear and feel anxious about speaking English. The researcher found several problems students face, including a lack of vocabulary that prevents them from speaking English well and from expressing their thoughts. Lack of vocabulary, fear of mispronunciation, and embarrassment. This makes students anxious when speaking English in front of others. According to Idrus, a person who is afraid of making mistakes can experience language and speech failure. Low English-speaking ability is influenced by various factors, including students' lack of English skills, vocabulary, classroom communication practices, and understanding of English (Idrus, 2022).



Classroom communication practice can be influenced by many things, such as anxiety. Dita argues that communication anxiety can appear in most everyday communication situations or even be part of a generalized anxiety trait that occurs in many aspects of an individual's life and learner personality traits such as shyness, for example, being embarrassed when speaking in front of others or embarrassed when what is said is wrong (Anggraeny, 2020). Anxiety can be a feeling of stress and trembling that may be a typical human response to stressful or unusual circumstances. Each individual will elicit diverse responses (lynn, 2019). Shiri stated Anxiety is mostly a reaction to danger or threat; this can be found in body dialect or communication; as an illustration, feelings of anxiety, panic, humiliation, stammering, or tension are signs of stress (Shiri, 2012). According to Ruffins, psychological symptoms of anxiety among students include feeling nervous before tutorial classes, panicking, going blank during exams, feeling helpless while performing tasks, or lack of interest in difficult subjects. In contrast, psychological symptoms include sweaty palms, cold, nervousness, panic, rapid breathing rate, pounding heartbeat, or abdominal pain Anxiety can be a subjective feeling of tension, fear, anxiety, and stress associated with the excitement of an alarming framework. Students feel inferior and awkward when speaking English in front of the class (Ruffins, 2021).

Yuliawati explains that it is important to convey this to language learners who are struggling to learn a foreign language. She understands how frustrating and uncomfortable it can be when learning a foreign language. Therefore, to address this issue, researchers use storytelling methods to reduce students' anxiety when speaking in front of the class (Yuliawati, 2020). Mokhtar argues that several aspects of language can be improved through storytelling. One aspect that can be improved through storytelling is students' communication skills. The use of storytelling can also reduce speaking anxiety. The results showed that there were some improvements in students' communication skills, especially in speaking and vocabulary. After several exercises, students knew when and where to use words and phrases (Mokhtar, 2021).

Lee Anne Bell states that storytelling is a practice in which content (facts, information) is transformed and brought into a narrative form that we call a "story." and brought into a narrative form that we call a "story." Stories generally have a clear beginning, middle, and end (chronology)(Bell, 2020). The researchers assume that speaking anxiety will become a problem if it is not overcome. With this assumption, the researcher is interested in conducting an evaluation study; by conducting this research. The research concern to show the effectiveness of storytelling to reduce the anxiety in junior high school level especially at MTs Muhammadiyah 1 Sorong with focusing to show the strength of storytelling in reducing the levels of student speaking anxiety and to



investigate how storytelling methods can reduce the students' speaking anxiety.

## METHOD

This study used mixed methods to explore the potential of storytelling in reducing speaking anxiety. In this study, researchers combined several types of methods to get clearer results. According to Creswell, mixed methods involve collecting, analyzing, and "mixing" quantitative and qualitative data to understand the research problem better. Qualitative data to better understand the research problem. In this study, the researcher used an explanatory design, starting with quantitative data collection and analysis and ending with qualitative data collection and analysis (Cresswell & Crewell, 2012).

The Researchers conducted this research at MTS Muhammadiyah 1, Sorong Regency, which is located on Jalan Axis Sp4. There is one class IX at MTS Muhammadiyah 1 Sorong district, which contains 22 students. This research was conducted in odd semesters of the 2023/2024 academic year. Population can be a generalization place consisting of objects or subjects that have certain qualities and characteristics set by researchers to study and then draw conclusions. So, the population is not just individuals but more than one object being studied, including all the characteristics or properties possessed by that subject. Based on the previous, it can be captured that what is meant by population in this study is all students of class IX B MTs Muhammadiyah 1 Sorong, totaling 22 people (Sugiyono, 2015). The sampling technique used is total sampling, where the number of samples is the same as the population. According to Sugiyono, if the population size is less than 100, the entire population is made the research sample.

The type of questionnaire used by the researchers in this research is FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale), developed by Horwitz et al. This questionnaire contains 36 questions consisting of five options indicating the scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) (Horwirtz et al., 1986). And has been validated by Liu (2006). The researchers also use an interview method to find out in more depth and detail about the variables that cause students' anxiety levels and find arrangements to overcome the anxiety and the results of using the storytelling method. The researcher discussed the causes and arrangements by meeting with several students. The type of meeting conducted in this consideration was a web meeting. Ten questions focus on student anxiety, namely question no. 1-5 adapted from Pradilla (Paradilla, 2020). Besides that, Researchers conduct observations to find out how the condition of students' anxiety levels is when telling stories and what they feel when speaking in front of them. For this reason, the researcher made observations to find information. The researcher had to become a member of this activity and enter the class to encourage the emergence of information. This observation was conducted to obtain information about students' anxiety



levels when speaking in front of the class for five meetings. In addition, the researcher used documentation, teaching, and learning preparation to obtain data. In the midst of perception, the researcher recorded things related to what the researcher observed.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### ***Finding***

The findings of this study present the results of research using Digital Storytelling. The following are the results of students' speaking ability in reducing students' anxiety when speaking in front. A further explanation of the data analysis is provided below.

### **Quantitative Data**

According to Videbeck, anxiety has four levels: mild, moderate, severe, and panic (Videbeck, 2019). In this study, the anxiety level of ninth-grade students ninth - grade students at MTs Muhammadiyah 1 towards speaking activities was assessed using the FLCAS questionnaire. A total of 22 students in the 2023/2024 school year were selected as respondents. They were asked to answer 36 questionnaire items using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire scores were then converted based on the FLCAS scoring criteria. For positively framed questions, "strongly agree" responses scored 1, "agree" scored 2, "disagree" scored 3, and "strongly disagree" scored 5. Conversely, for negatively framed questions, responses of "strongly agree" got a score of 5, "agree" got a score of 3, "disagree" got a score of 2, and "strongly disagree" got a score of 1. The collected questionnaire data was processed, and the findings are presented in Table 4.1, as listed in the research report.

**Table 4.1. List of Respondents**

*Source : Reseacher's FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) data*

Student Number	Score	Category
1	91	Severe anxiety
2	102	Panic anxiety
3	77	Mild anxiety
4	89	Moderate anxiety
5	80	Moderate anxiety
6	79	Mild anxiety
7	81	Mild anxiety
8	90	severe anxiety
9	91	Severe anxiety
10	95	Severe anxiety
11	83	Moderate anxiety
12	82	Moderate anxiety



13	83	Moderate anxiety
14	90	severe anxiety
15	86	Moderate anxiety
16	85	Moderate anxiety
17	90	severe anxiety
18	81	Moderate anxiety
19	89	Moderate anxiety
20	75	Mild anxiety
21	75	Mild anxiety
22	85	Moderate anxiety

**Table 4.2. Anxiety Level Result**

*Source : Researcher's FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) data*

<b>Score of Student's Speaking Anxiety</b>	<b>Category of Speaking Anxiety</b>	<b>Result</b>
33 - 82	Mild anxiety	Six respondents (27.15%)
83 - 89	Moderate anxiety	Nine respondents (40.92%)
90 - 98	Severe anxiety	Six respondents (27.15%)
99 - 108	panic high anxiety	One respondent (4.5%)

Based on the data from the questionnaire results above show that six students got a score between 33-82, which means they are at a Mild level of anxiety, and nine students got a score between 83-89, which indicates that they are at a moderate level of anxiety, then six students get a score between 90-98 which indicates students are at the severe level of anxiety, then one students get scores between 99-108 students which means students are in the panic anxiety category. While the overall student score is calculated from the total number of student scores and then divided by the number of students, the overall average student score is 85.

The data above shows that around 27.15% of students have a mild level of anxiety. It can be said that students at this level have a high level of confidence in speaking. They tend not to consider speaking as something scary; in fact, they really enjoy it. Then, not much different from before, around 40.92% of students still fall into the category of students with moderate anxiety. Although not as low as students in the previous category, students at this level rarely feel nervous or worried when speaking. However, sometimes they experience anxiety, but it does not occur excessively. Furthermore, around 27.15% of students have anxiety levels that are not too high and not too low, and this can still be



said to be normal anxiety in speaking. Then, about 4.5% of students have a level of anxiety that is classified as panic; students at this level tend to experience excessive anxiety when speaking, especially when speaking in front of a crowd.

### **Qualitative Data**

The results of this qualitative data were obtained from interviews with five students using the method of analysis or selection of students who experienced the most panic anxiety at Mts Muhammadiyah 1 Sorong district. Then, interviews were conducted with five students who had been selected to help answer research questions. Based on the results of these interviews, the data were categorized into four themes: fun activities, meaningful activities, high motivation, and no pressure / less pressure in learning.

#### **1) Fun activities**

Fun activities refer to engaging and enjoyable learning experiences designed to enhance students' skills and knowledge. These activities are often structured and interactive, aiming to create a positive and pleasant learning environment. The data shows that students feel that digital stories have an element of fun that makes them more interested in learning. For example, students said

*"I really like using the storytelling method; it is very fun because we are trained to tell stories and trained to speak in front." "I like using the storytelling method because it can train those of us who are nervous about speaking in front to become less nervous and more confident." (14/4/2024)*

(UAU) can feel pleasant about applying the storytelling method because it can make students active. Each student is trained to speak so that it can reduce anxiety in themselves. Fun learning strategies or fun activities are strategies that are used to create an effective learning environment and facilitate the learning process.

(UAU) It can be seen that when he was doing storytelling, he was very happy and enjoyed what he was telling when telling the story. According to Farrakhan, the characteristic of fun activities is that students are encouraged to be fully active in the activity, as is the case with using the storytelling method. Where students actively express what they want to say.

#### **2) Meaningful activities**

Meaningful activities are those that have a clear value and purpose. Examples include improving communication skills and improving students' speaking skills; students are free to tell what they want to know so that the storytelling process becomes meaningful and produces a positive impact. The data shows that students feel that digital stories are meaningful, which makes them more eager and active to learn. For example, students said

*"After learning to use the storytelling method, I, who used to be unconfident, am now more confident and not afraid to speak in front*





*of people. "This means a lot to me and results in progress for me when speaking in front" (14/4/2024).*

The storytelling method must be applied correctly in order to produce meaningful learning. According to Donas Ahmad in his journal, meaningful learning is learning that is fun and has the advantage of obtaining various information so that, in the end, it can improve students' abilities.

(RH) After doing storytelling, he feels that this method is very meaningful and can be used as an effective teaching method to improve students' ability to speak. According to Dewi Apriliantika, they direct students to the material to be studied and recall-related material so that they can create meaningful knowledge.

### 3) High motivation

High Motivation is a concept that aims to build high motivation in a person. This concept is specifically designed to help individuals improve their abilities and potential to achieve their goals and objectives. I feel that digital stories make students highly motivated, making them more enthusiastic and active in learning. For example, the student said

*"After using storytelling, I am no longer afraid and feel nervous that before I always felt afraid and nervous when speaking in front." then, "Now I am confident, not shy anymore because I am used to speaking in front, with this method it can motivate me to continue practicing speaking, fear is reduced slowly after using the storytelling method." (14/4/2024)*

It can be seen that after doing storytelling, he has high motivation because storytelling can increase students' interest in continuing to practice and learn to speak. High motivation is the term most often used to explain success or failure after using a method. Almost all experts also agree that motivation theory is related to the factors that encourage students' behavior or feelings after using the applied method. Learning motivation is a condition that exists in an individual where there is an urge to do something in order to achieve a goal.

### 4) Less pressure

Less-pressure learning is a learning process that creates a relaxed atmosphere that is free from pressure, safe, interesting, and arousing interest in learning. In this context, students are more directed to have high motivation in learning by creating a pleasant situation and developing full involvement in learning. I feel that storytelling makes students feel less pressured and relaxed and not pressured. For example, a student said

*"when learning to tell stories, I don't feel the slightest pressure. I am free to speak what I want to say. This method is very suitable as a fun learning tool." Then, student CH said, "When telling stories, I feel relaxed. No pressure makes me anxious anymore. The application of this method greatly increases my interest in learning and encourages me to continue practicing and learning." This method is very suitable for learning." (14/4/2024)*

(Dewi and Pratama 2020) Less Pressure is a condition from within and the surrounding environment that forces a person to achieve goals in



learning activities. (WFH) showed that when storytelling, he didn't feel any pressure at the last meeting because he felt trained and used to telling stories in front of him.

The results of the interview show that students feel happy when using the storytelling method, do not feel pressured, and feel more confident after using it. Students are free to tell stories according to what they want to tell, and they become brave enough to speak in front of and do not feel nervous anymore. The most important thing for students to do is to practice and learn. From the interview results, it was found that the students were very interested in using the storytelling method, and they also realized that the main cause of their speaking anxiety was a lack of self-confidence. Therefore, this is the main step that must be taken to reduce students' anxiety. By learning and continuously practicing speaking in front of the class, it is possible to reduce students' anxiety and make students more confident when speaking in front of the class.

Then, the researcher conducted observations; the first meeting was on October 18, where the researcher gave a text containing a story and distributed it to students one by one to practice telling stories. After that, the researcher told one student at a time to tell stories, and then the researcher directly observed the process when students were telling stories. Out of 22 students, there were ten students: CM, RH, ASD, UAU, NFZ, SW, TNE, NK, DAR, and WVF wrong pronunciation. Five students, RDSA, DNM, WF, NDA, SNA, and NRW, experienced slight stuttering and slight anxiety. Seven students, AZZ, DCK, DIP, ADS, DAW, AZ, and AS, experienced pronunciation errors and forgot vocabulary. The second meeting on October 20, out of 22 students, the researcher found 15 students CM, RH, ASD, UAU, NFZ, SW, TNE, NK, DAR, WVF, RDSA, DNM, NDA, SNA, NRW in the category of not yet fluent or stopped, and seven students AZZ, DCK, DIP, ADS, DAW, AZ, AS in the category of somewhat fluent and improper pronunciation. The third meeting on October 25, out of 22 students, researchers found 14 students CM, RH, ASD, UAU, NFZ, SW, NK, DAR, WVF, RDSA, DNM, NDA, SNA, NRW in the category of somewhat fluent and not anxious, and eight students AZZ, DCK, DIP, ADS, DAW, AZ, AS, TNE in the category of fluent and not anxious only experienced pronunciation errors in 1 or 2 words only. In the fourth meeting on October 27, out of 22 students, researchers found five students with CM, RH, ASD, SW, and RDSA in the fluent and slightly anxious category.

## **Discussions**

In this section, the researcher discusses the research findings, namely the level of anxiety experienced by students in speaking and the potential of storytelling to reduce student anxiety.

### **The level of anxiety experienced by students**

Based on the considerations, the analyst will talk about the discoveries of the analyst, specifically the level of uneasiness. The primary finding is based on the survey results; according to the video,





uneasiness has four levels: mild, moderate, severe, and panic found in course IX B students. The survey found that six respondents experienced mild anxiety, nine respondents experienced moderate anxiety, six respondents experienced severe anxiety, and one respondent experienced panic anxiety (Videbeck, 2019).

a. Mild Anxiety

Mild restlessness is defined as the feeling that something is diverse and requires unusual consideration. Diverse and requires special attention. Mild anxiety regularly prompts individuals to form changes or lock-in exercises that aim to help students stay centred on learning. The characteristics of individuals who experience mild anxiety are more often unable to sit still, slightly fidgeting, facial wrinkles, lip trembling, and heart palpitations. In the survey conducted, some experienced moderate anxiety; this shows that some students experience mild anxiety.

b. Moderate anxiety

According to Videbeck, it states that "Moderate anxiety can be a feeling of unease because something is not right so that a person becomes anxious or agitated." Moderate anxiety allows one to focus on what is important and put everything else aside. Thus, one will make special considerations and do things more carefully. Moderate anxiety allows a person to focus on what is important and pushes others to the side. So that a person experiences selective attention and does something more focused. The characteristics of individuals with Moderate anxiety are feeling awkward, voice changing, and sweating. In the survey, several students experienced moderate unease, which implies that most students in the lesson tend to have the same sense of unease.

c. severe anxiety

According to Videbeck, severe anxiety greatly reduces the convenience zone; a person who tends to focus on things that are interesting and specific and cannot think of anything else. Individuals who experience serious anxiety can be seen from the behavior or sentiment that constantly wants to be free, very restless, restless, confused, trembling, etc. In the survey, severe anxiety appeared. This shows that students tend to engage in restlessness and unfocusedness.

d. Panic anxiety

Panic anxiety Agreeing with Videbeck, panic anxiety can be a kind of anxiety related to the fear of losing control. The person experiencing panic anxiety is unable to do anything; this survey appears to be about the details of dealing with panic anxiety. This suggests that the person is likely to experience high anxiety under certain circumstances.

### **The potential of student storytelling**

The second researcher's findings are based on the results of interviews and observations. From the results of student interview



answers, the researcher found the cause of student anxiety when speaking, which often occurs because students feel afraid of being wrong and embarrassed.

According to Spielberger in Slameto, fear or fear of being wrong is state anxiety, which is a temporary emotional state/condition in a person characterized by feelings of excessive tension and worry. Sometimes, it is related to certain situations, such as situations during exams or speaking tests (Spielberger, 2019). Meanwhile, Gunarsah states, "A threat causes fear, so someone will avoid the situation. Anxiety itself can be caused by danger from outside or from within a person. Danger within a person arises when there is something that cannot be accepted, for example, thoughts, feelings, desires (Gunarsah, 2001).

According to Carducci, shyness is caused by anxiety and behavioral inhibition that occurs when someone is nearby. Forms of shyness can be silence, feelings of embarrassment, red face, stuttering, and stress. Meanwhile, according to Dingman, shyness occurs when someone does not do something best for themselves for fear of negative results. Shyness can also be described when someone is talking in front of many people they don't know (Dingman & Bloom, 2020). The findings from the observation of the first meeting were in the category of not yet fluent, embarrassed, and afraid, for fear of being given negative comments or laughed at by friends.

According to Koisawalia et al. Sandaran and Kia stated that any feature of the language, such as linguistic items, grammar, vocabulary, sentence construction, etc., could be presented through stories. Sentence construction, etc., can be explained through stories. Stories and fairy tales help children develop listening comprehension and literacy (Sandaran & Kia, 2019). Because stories engage the listener through feelings, memories, values, and perceptions, it increases general comprehension. Improves general comprehension.

The third research finding is based on the results of interviews and observations. From the results of student interview answers, researchers found that the cause of student anxiety when speaking often occurs is that students feel wrong in pronunciation or lack of vocabulary, which makes them nervous and less fluent when speaking.

According to Robin, Digital Storytelling can be an effective learning tool for students to reduce anxiety. By using Digital Storytelling, students are facilitated more opportunities to improve their speaking ability (Robin, 2020). According to Shafiee, through storytelling, the child will release fears, anxieties, pain, and anger. Storytelling is the best way to divert anxiety in children (Shafiee et al., 2019).

Based on this explanation, the researcher agrees that digital storytelling can be an effective learning tool for reducing speaking anxiety. From the observation of the first meeting, students are still not fluent and still afraid, embarrassed, and wrongly said. Compared to the fifth meeting, the number of students decreased compared to the first meeting. With Demian, the difference between students from the first and fifth meetings is significantly different (Yamac & Ulusoy, n.d.). It can be



concluded that Digital Storytelling is effective in reducing student speaking anxiety in class IX B MTs Muhammadiyah 1 Sorong district in the 2023/2024 academic year.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that speaking anxiety can transfer from one person to another; most students tend to experience the characteristics of immediate anxiety, which reflects their general tendency to feel anxious when speaking in front of others. Anxiety can occur because stress, humiliation, and fear of negative comments have a noteworthy influence. The use of storytelling can help instructors create a stable learning environment, help students overcome discomfort, and develop their speaking ability well. Students should be aware of the causes of anxiety in speaking English. Teachers must try to find out and understand the source of personal anxiety. Reducing speaking anxiety can be done by telling stories to practice speaking so that it is smooth and not anxious when speaking. Create a learning environment that can increase students' enthusiasm for learning and develop English speaking skills so that they do not feel anxious anymore. Provide opportunities for students to practice, so that they are more fluent and accustomed, and provide good feedback using more methods to overcome speaking anxiety. For further research, explore the causes and factors that affect anxiety and explore more deeply the potential methods that can be used to reduce anxiety and more respondents are the greater gap to develop the study about this topic.

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