



Storytelling Training Program to Enhance Reading Interest and Storytelling Skills for Elementary and Junior High School Students at Localish Reading Corner

Wida Mulyanti^{1*}, Risma Julistiana²

^{1,2}Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Perjuangan Tasikmalaya, Indonesia, 46115

E-mail:* widamulyanti@upi.edu

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Abstrak: Program pengabdian masyarakat ini merupakan program pelatihan bercerita melalui kegiatan mendongeng cerita rakyat bagi anak-anak usia SD dan SMP di Rumah Baca Localish. Kegiatan pelatihan ini adalah program lanjutan dari Program PkM ART (Ask, Read, and Tell) yang dilaksanakan tahun lalu. Pada program ini, Tell (bercerita) mulai diajarkan, anak tidak hanya mampu bercerita, tapi tahu bagaimana caranya bercerita. Praktek pengembangan masyarakat (community development practice) adalah metode yang digunakan pada program ini. Sementara langkah-langkah yang digunakan dalam proses pembelajaran yaitu: orientasi, pelatihan, umpan balik, dan kelanjutan. Pre-test dan post-test dilaksanakan untuk mengetahui keberhasilan program. Dari hasil test tersebut, dapat disimpulkan bahwa keterampilan bercerita anak usia SD dan SMP di Rumah Baca Localish Kampung Cantilan Desa Sukarame meningkat setelah mengikuti program ini. Anak tidak hanya bisa bercerita tapi mampu menyampaikannya dengan terstruktur, ekspresif, interaktif, dan kreatif. Minat baca meningkat dilihat dari meningkatnya permintaan tambah buku pada sesi membaca.

Abstract: This community service program is a storytelling training program through folklore storytelling activities for elementary and junior high school age children at the Localish Reading Corner This training activity is a continuation program of the ART PkM Program (Ask, Read, and Tell) which was implemented last year. In this program, Tell (telling stories) begins to be taught, children are not only able to tell stories, but know how to tell stories. Community development practice is the method used in this program. Meanwhile, the steps used in the

learning process are: orientation, training, feedback, and continuation. Pre-test and post-test are carried out to determine the success of the program. From the test results, it can be concluded that the storytelling skills of elementary and middle school aged children at the Localish Reading Corner in Kampung Cantilan, Sukarame Village improved after participating in this program. Children can not only tell stories but are able to convey them in a structured, expressive, interactive and creative manner. Interest in reading has increased as seen from the increasing demand for additional books in reading sessions.

Keywords: elementary and middle school children, folklore, fairy tales, interest in reading, storytelling skills

issues and focus of service, devotion objectives, service research methods / approaches / strategies, and service results that have an impact on society.

Introduction

The Localish Reading Corner is a community-based reading hub situated in Kampung Cantilan, Sukarame Village, Tasikmalaya Regency. This area was chosen for a previous initiative due to the absence of English instruction in local elementary schools. Under the 2013 curriculum, English was categorized as an elective subject, whereas it had been compulsory under the 2006 KTSP curriculum. In 2020, the Ministry of Education and Culture announced plans to reintroduce English as a mandatory subject in elementary education through the Merdeka Curriculum (Putra, 2020). Given that some children had progressed to junior high school by the time of this program, its target participants were expanded to include both elementary and junior high school students.



Picture 1. Cantilan Village

During the initial stage of the program, activities were centered on Basic English instruction, as the participants had not yet received formal English education at school. To support this, children were introduced to Graded Reader books,

particularly those at the preparatory level, enabling them to build foundational English skills necessary for engaging in future sessions (Mulyanti & Hakim, 2021). Subsequent programs focused on storytelling activities featuring Indonesian folk tales from diverse ethnic backgrounds, each aiming to enhance vocabulary development, improve speaking abilities, and instill values of local wisdom (Mulyanti, Hakim, & Solihati, 2022; Mulyanti, Hakim, & Wati, 2023; Mulyanti & Julistiana, 2024). In the current phase, the emphasis is placed on storytelling practice and reading activities, with the primary goal of improving children’s storytelling abilities and fostering a stronger interest in reading.

Previous studies and community engagement efforts—such as those by Pratiwi (2016), Slattery and Willis (2001), Paul (2003), Oktanisia and Susilo (2021), Swantika, Harissandi, and Anwar (2023), and Ate et al. (2024)—have shown that storytelling is an effective pedagogical approach for increasing reading motivation. It has also been recognized as a suitable technique for encouraging EFL learners to enjoy both reading and writing activities. Drawing from these findings, the program team adopted storytelling training as a strategic method to support children's English development, with a particular focus on enhancing their storytelling competencies.

Method

This community service activity adopts a community development approach, which involves several key stages: forming a team, setting goals, identifying the target population, conducting needs assessment and analysis, prioritizing problem-solving strategies, planning and executing the activities, carrying out reflection and evaluation, and finally identifying new needs and establishing future objectives (Vincent, 2009).



Picture 2. Community Service Implementation Method

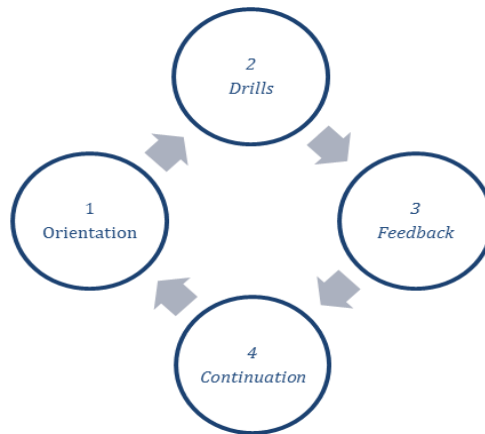
Prior to the training implementation, a pretest was administered to assess participants' baseline storytelling abilities. The training program itself was delivered over four sessions, with each session comprising two main components: a storytelling workshop and a reading activity. This initiative aimed to enhance both the storytelling skills and reading interest of elementary and junior high school students participating at the Localish Reading Corner in Kampung Cantilan, Sukarame Village. The pretest was conducted during participant registration. Sessions one and two were held on October 19, 2024, while sessions three and four took place on October 26, 2024. In total, 30 participants attended. At the conclusion of the training, a posttest was administered to evaluate learning progress. Each session lasted for approximately 150 minutes (2.5 hours) and was facilitated by a team consisting of two instructors, two field assistants, and two partner organization facilitators.

The instructional process followed the stages outlined in O'Galperin's learning model (as adapted by Sudipa, Rajeg, & Laksmi, 2014). The training comprised four phases:

1. Orientation, In this initial phase, instructors introduced the material, explaining the main topic, core competencies, instructional methods, evaluation procedures, and intended learning outcomes.
2. Drills, During this phase, participants engaged in progressive storytelling exercises aimed at improving their delivery.
 - *Modeling*: Participants were exposed to strong storytelling examples via video, audio, or live demonstration, focusing on expressive voice, gestures, and facial expressions.
 - *Segmentation Practice*: Stories were divided into sections (e.g., introduction, conflict, resolution), allowing participants to practice each part separately with focused guidance.
 - *Introduction*: Practicing effective opening delivery.
 - *Conflict*: Conveying tension with proper emotion.
 - *Resolution*: Articulating moral conclusions with clarity and emphasis.
 - *Repetition Drills*: Students repeated sections multiple times to improve fluency, focusing on pronunciation, intonation, and expressive movement.
 - *Improvisation*: Participants were challenged to create spontaneous stories based on given keywords or images, promoting quick thinking and creativity.
3. Feedback, constructive feedback was provided on each participant's performance, highlighting areas of strength and suggestions for improvement—such as clarity

of speech, expressiveness, and appropriateness of gestures. Verbal praise was also given to reinforce motivation.

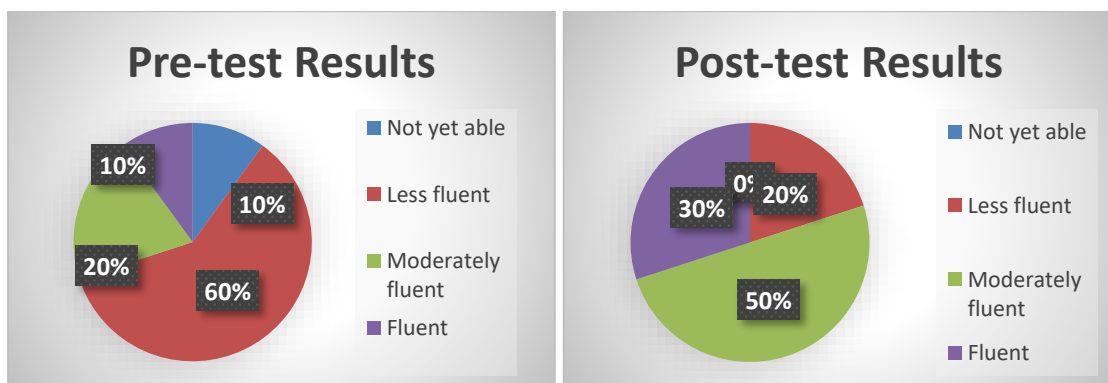
- Continuation, In cases where participants did not yet demonstrate adequate progress, previous stages could be repeated. This final phase also served as an evaluation checkpoint. If learning outcomes aligned with the program’s competencies, the activity was deemed successful and eligible for continuation in the following year.



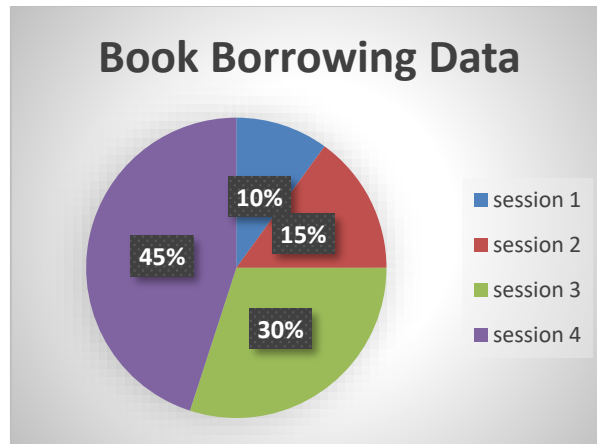
Picture 3. Learning Steps

Results and Discussion

The diagram below shows the results of the pretest and posttest at the beginning and end of the program:



Participants' reading interest is measured by the book borrowing data in each session. The data is as follows:



Session One, the training activity in the first session was orientation and drilling. The first storytelling drill was **modeling**. In this training, modeling involved providing good examples of storytelling. Modeling is based on the premise that students actively construct knowledge (Rexhepi, 2021). During this activity, the instructor performed live storytelling in front of the participants with engaging intonation, facial expressions, and gestures. The story told was *Sakadang Monyet Jeung Sakadang Kuya* (The Monkey and the Turtle), presented without any media to allow participants to focus on intonation, expressions, and gestures. This story had been used in previous programs with the help of puppet media (monkey and turtle). A familiar story was intentionally chosen to ease the training process.

Session Two, The drilling activity in the second storytelling training focused on segmentation (practice in parts). The story was divided into several sections. For narrative texts, the division was based on the generic structure of narrative texts: orientation, complication, and resolution (Derewianka & Jones, 2016). Participants were trained to present each section with a focus on the following aspects:

- ✓ Orientation : Practice delivering the opening sentence with engaging intonation.
- ✓ Complication: Practice conveying the conflict with appropriate emotions.
- ✓ Resolution: Practice delivering the moral message with a firm tone.

Session Three, the drilling activity in session three was repetition drills. Participants were asked to repeat the same part of the story until it was fluent, with a focus on:

- ✓ Pronunciation: Ensure every word is clearly pronounced.
- ✓ Intonation: Practice adjusting the tone of voice to match the mood of the story.
- ✓ Expression and gestures: Use facial expressions and body movements that support the story.

Participants were guided to retell *Monyet dan Kura-kura/ Sakadang Kuya jeung Sakadang Monyet/ The Monkey and The Turtle* in Indonesian, in Sundanese, and in English.

Session Four, the fourth session included improvisation drills and providing feedback. In the improvisation exercise, participants were given keywords or images and asked to create a short story spontaneously. This activity helped them think quickly and creatively. After all drilling sessions were completed, the trainer provided feedback. The feedback used was corrective feedback, along with rewards in the form of praise when participants performed the exercises well. Constructive feedback was given regarding strengths and areas for improvement, such as voice volume, story clarity, and the appropriateness of expressions for the story.

Each session consisted of two activities. The training activities lasted 90 minutes, and the reading activities lasted 60 minutes. Below is the documentation of the storytelling training program:



Picture 4. Activities in the Storytelling Training Program

From the results of pre-test and post-test, a comparison of storytelling skills before and after the program implementation can be observed. In the pre-test, only 10% (three participants) could tell stories fluently, while after the program, this increased to 30% (nine participants). The number of participants who were moderately fluent in storytelling also increased, from 20% (six participants) to 50% (15 participants). This improvement led to a decrease in the number of participants who were less fluent in storytelling, as many shifted to being moderately fluent or fluent, dropping from 60% (18 participants) in the pre-test to 20% (six participants) in the post-test. Additionally, participants who could not tell stories at all dropped to zero from the initial three participants (10%). Therefore, it can be concluded that the storytelling training program successfully improved participants' storytelling skills.

Moreover, data on book borrowing increased from the first session to the last session. The number of books borrowed in the first session was 10%, the second session 15%, the third session 30%, and the fourth session 45%. This indicates that the storytelling training program successfully increased participants' reading interest.

Conclusion

The storytelling training program was successfully implemented and effectively improved participants' storytelling skills and reading interest. This activity is expected to motivate children and teenagers in Kampung Cantilan, Sukarame Village, to continue learning and preparing themselves to compete globally.

It is recommended to involve parents in the training process so they can continue supporting their children after the program ends and it is encouraged to make storytelling activities a regular part of their routine to further promote children's reading interest and skills. This program can be further developed by incorporating digital media, such as video platforms, to facilitate interactive storytelling.

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