

Boosting Confidence and Fluency in Speaking Comprehension through Story-Relay Activity

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Abstract: This Classroom Action Research activity examines how a structured story-relay activity in recount text improves Grade 10 EFL students' self-confidence and speaking fluency. A total of 31 students from an Indonesian high school participated in two cycles of intervention. The first cycle is to check their confidence and their ability to speak, while the second is to apply the treatment of story relay. Pre- and post-intervention assessments of self-record video conducted outside the normal learning activity and will be compared. Both assessment were conducted using two validated rubrics: one measuring fluency (flow of speech, grammatical accuracy, narrative structure, and pronunciation) and the other assessing confidence (body language, eye contact, vocal volume, and expressive intonation), each rated on a four-point scale (1 = needs significant improvement to 4 = excellent). After collecting both data of pre- and post-assessment, both data will be compared to see how far the improvement after the treatment of story-relay on their confidence and ability to speak. Findings demonstrate that collaborative, form-focused narrative tasks can effectively foster both linguistic competence and learner confidence in an EFL context. The study recommends integrating story-relay activities as a regular classroom strategy to reinforce students' speaking fluency and self-confidence.

Keywords: story-relay activity; learner confidence; speaking fluency.

Abstrak: Penelitian Tindakan Kelas ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana aktivitas story-relay terstruktur pada teks recount meningkatkan rasa percaya diri dan kelancaran berbicara siswa EFL Kelas 10. Sebanyak 31 siswa dari sebuah sekolah menengah di Indonesia berpartisipasi dalam dua siklus intervensi. Siklus pertama dilaksanakan untuk mengukur tingkat kepercayaan diri dan kemampuan berbicara mereka, sedangkan siklus kedua menerapkan treatment story-relay. Penilaian pra- dan pasca-intervensi berupa perekaman video mandiri dilakukan di luar kegiatan pembelajaran reguler dan kemudian dibandingkan. Kedua penilaian dilaksanakan dengan menggunakan dua rubrik tervalidasi: satu rubrik mengukur kelancaran berbicara (alur bicara, akurasi tata bahasa, struktur naratif, dan pengucapan) dan rubrik lainnya menilai kepercayaan diri (bahasa tubuh, kontak mata, volume suara, dan intonasi yang ekspresif), masing-masing diberi skala empat poin (1 = sangat perlu perbaikan hingga 4 = sangat baik). Setelah data penilaian pra- dan pasca-intervensi terkumpul, keduanya dibandingkan untuk menilai sejauh mana peningkatan terjadi setelah penerapan aktivitas story-relay terhadap kepercayaan diri dan kemampuan berbicara siswa. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa tugas naratif kolaboratif yang berfokus pada aspek kebahasaan dapat secara efektif meningkatkan kompetensi linguistik dan kepercayaan diri pembelajar dalam konteks EFL. Studi ini merekomendasikan integrasi aktivitas story-relay sebagai strategi rutin di kelas guna memperkuat kelancaran berbicara dan rasa percaya diri siswa.

Kata kunci: aktivitas story-relay; kepercayaan diri pembelajar; kelancaran berbicara.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking confidence and oral fluency are the primary focuses of this study. Confidence, defined as a learner's belief in their ability to communicate accurately and effectively in English, underlies their willingness to take risks in spoken production (Tridinanti, 2018). Fluency, characterized by smooth, coherent delivery and minimal hesitation, serves as a visible indicator of language competence (Namaziandost, Zainabadi, & Ahmadi, 2020). By concentrating on these two interrelated constructs

confidence and speaking fluency this research targets the affective and linguistic dimensions that are most pressing in the investigated classroom context.

In the examined Grade 10 EFL class, students routinely experience anxiety when required to speak English. This finding was found by the researcher through preliminary research done while teaching them for several meetings. Many learners voiced concerns about mispronunciation, insufficient vocabulary, and negative peer evaluation, which inhibited their oral participation. Consequently, even when students possessed adequate vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, their spoken narratives were marked by long pauses, fragmented structure, and minimal eye contact. These patterns confirm that without sufficient confidence, students' speaking fluency remains constrained, reinforcing the need for intervention that addresses both dimensions simultaneously.

Within the specific classroom setting, thirty-one tenth-grade students from an Indonesian high-school in Surabaya exhibit a range of proficiency from beginner to lower-intermediate. Preliminary observations indicate that the majority of students speak only in short phrases, frequently hesitate for more than three seconds, and avoid sustained eye contact when narrating personal experiences. Teacher field notes have documented that these behaviors result in incomplete recount texts and diminished narrative coherence. In addition to that, there are students who could actually speak fluently, but could not construct the word fluently and hesitated while speaking their ideas. In sum, low self-confidence and poor fluency manifest as tangible obstacles to meaningful classroom interaction.

In order to resolve these issues, cooperative, meaning-focused activities are recommended. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) theory posits that interactional tasks reduce anxiety by shifting learners' attention from form to meaning (Wang, 2012; Wang & Liu, 2011). Specifically, the story-relay activity, a structured, collaborative storytelling exercise allows students to contribute incrementally to a shared narrative, thereby lowering individual performance pressure and fostering peer scaffolding (Poulshock & Rockelman, 2024). Through repeated retelling, students gain opportunities to refine past-tense structures and practice pronunciation in a supportive environment, making story-relay a theoretically grounded solution that can enhance both confidence and fluency.

Previous empirical studies validate the efficacy of cooperative narrative tasks. Namaziandost et al. (2020) found that EFL learners engaged in collaborative storytelling demonstrated significant improvements in oral fluency measures, including reduced pause frequency and enhanced grammatical accuracy. Similarly, Basalama, Farhan, and Santoso (2020) reported that repeated story-relay sessions led to substantial gains in speaking proficiency scores among high-school students, citing increased willingness to speak and smoother discourse production. These findings highlight narrative collaboration as a potent mechanism for cultivating oral skills.

Additional research underscores the role of affective factors in fluency development. Tridinanti (2018) identified a strong positive correlation between students' self-confidence and their measured fluency, showing that learners with higher confidence scores produced longer, more connected speeches. Sugiyanti and

Indriani (2021) documented that Indonesian EFL students who participated in low-stakes, peer-supported speaking tasks experienced measurable reductions in speaking anxiety and greater narrative complexity. Taken together, these studies provide robust evidence that interventions targeting both confidence and fluency yield more effective improvements than approaches focusing solely on linguistic form.

Based on the classroom problem and prior findings, the present Classroom Action Research aims to determine whether implementing a story-relay intervention can enhance Grade 10 students' speaking fluency and self-confidence. By comparing rubric-based pre- and post-intervention assessments for both variables, this study seeks to offer concrete pedagogical strategies for reducing speaking anxiety and promoting coherent, confident oral performance in the Indonesian EFL context.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design. CAR is a teacher-led approach intended to improve instructional practice and enhance student learning outcomes through a cyclical process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting on classroom experiences (Kunandar, 2010; Sulipan, 2010). By iteratively implementing and evaluating interventions in a real EFL classroom, this research aimed to address specific problems of verb usage, speaking fluency, and learner confidence.

Plan

In the initial planning stage, the teacher-researcher identified two core issues in the Grade 10 EFL classroom: students' inconsistent mastery of simple past-tense verbs ("Verb 2") and a prevailing lack of confidence during oral tasks. Thirty-one students demonstrated frequent errors in past-tense usage and prolonged hesitations when speaking, suggesting that both linguistic and affective barriers hindered their ability to produce coherent recount narratives. To address these concerns, a two-cycle research plan was developed. First, a game-based learning activity would diagnose students' verb-2 proficiency, and their ability and confidence to speak before treatment; second, implementing story relay in order to improve their speaking and confidence and ended with a pre-test using self-recorded video. This would establish baseline measures of speaking fluency and confidence. The detailed lesson plans, assessment rubrics (adapted from Hughes, 2003), and data-collection instruments were prepared during this phase.

Do

In the first cycle's acting phase, the teacher implemented a game-based learning activity focused on simple past-tense forms. Students worked in small groups to guess past-tense verbs by only showing base-form verbs through the 'charades' app, thereby revealing gaps in individual and group knowledge of Verb 2. Immediately following the game, each student produced a short self-recorded video outside class time, in which they narrated a familiar past experience using simple past-tense verbs. These pre-test recordings served to assess both the grammatical accuracy of verb usage and the students' oral confidence (as signaled by body language, eye contact, and vocal delivery).

In the second cycle's acting phase, the primary intervention story-relay activity was introduced. Students were reorganized into groups of four to seven members. Within each group, every student composed one past-tense sentence that extended a shared narrative. For example, one student might say, "Yesterday, I walked to the market," and subsequent members would continue with sentences like, "I bought fresh vegetables" or "Then I saw an old friend." Each group presented their collaboratively constructed story in front of the class, requiring students to read aloud, respond to peer contributions, and elaborate when necessary. At the end of the session, every student produced a post-test self-recorded video, using the same prompt and rubric criteria as the pre-test, to capture any changes in fluency and confidence.

See

During both cycles, the teacher collected quantitative and qualitative data. In the first cycle, performance in the verb-guessing game and formative google form provided immediate feedback on grammatical proficiency. Simultaneously, pre-test videos were evaluated using analytic rubrics (Hughes, 2003) that scored four fluency indicators (speech continuity, grammatical accuracy, narrative structure, pronunciation) and four confidence indicators (body language, eye contact, vocal volume, expressive intonation). The teacher also maintained detailed field notes on student behavior, noting hesitation patterns, nonverbal signals, and peer interactions. In the second cycle, similar observations were recorded during story-relay sessions, documenting students' engagement, corrective feedback exchanges, and levels of participation. Post-test videos were scored with the identical rubric, allowing direct comparison against pre-test baselines.

Reflecting

After each cycle, the teacher-researcher analyzed the collected data to evaluate intervention efficacy. In the first cycle, reflections revealed that many students continued to exhibit frequent grammatical errors and low confidence despite the game-based practice, justifying the need for a more intensive, collaborative speaking activity. In the second cycle, rubric scores and observational notes indicated measurable improvements in both fluency and confidence for all thirty-one students. The teacher reflected on which elements of the story-relay activity, peer support, incremental contributions, or repeated retelling most effectively facilitated these gains, informing potential refinements for future iterations.

The participants comprised thirty-one tenth-grade EFL students at an Indonesian high school. Their proficiency ranged from beginner to lower-intermediate, with only a few at intermediate levels. All participants voluntarily took part in both cycles of the study. To gather data, this study utilized:

1. Self-recorded video tasks (pre- and post-test) to measure speaking fluency and confidence. Videos were scored using two analytic rubrics adapted from Hughes (2003):

- a. **Fluency Rubric** : Speech continuity, grammatical accuracy, narrative structure, pronunciation (1–4 scale each).
- b. **Confidence Rubric** : Body language, eye contact, vocal volume, expressive intonation (1–4 scale each).

2. Teacher observation sheets and field-note journals to record student behavior, participation, and interaction dynamics during both game-based learning and story-relay sessions (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012).

During the first cycle, after planning and instrument preparation, students engaged in the verb-matching game. The teacher modeled a few examples before allowing groups to proceed independently. Following the game, students recorded their pre-test videos at home to ensure sufficient speaking time without class-time constraints. Scores were promptly tabulated to identify common errors and observed confidence issues.

In the second cycle, the teacher organized the story-relay intervention. Detailed instructions clarified that each student must generate exactly one past-tense sentence per turn, ensuring equal participation. Groups took turns presenting their narratives, with peer members prompting corrections and offering support. At the end of the lesson, students again recorded self-test videos, using the same rubric criteria.

A mixed-method analysis guided the interpretation of quantitative and qualitative data (Ivankova & Wingo, 2018). Quantitative data consisted of pre- and post-test scores for each student in the two rubric categories. These scores were tabulated and compared to calculate percentage improvements in fluency and confidence. Qualitative data from observation sheets and field notes were coded thematically to identify patterns of engagement, instances of peer scaffolding, and shifts in affective behaviors. By triangulating rubric scores with observational insights, the researcher evaluated the intervention's overall impact and noted areas for future refinement.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Here are the results before and after treatment of story relay, by comparing the two self record videos:

Table 1. Results of students confidence and speaking fluency before and after treatment of story relay (range 0-100)

	First Cycle (Pre-Test Results)		Second Cycle (Post-Test Results)	
NO.	Confidence	Speaking	Confidence	Speaking
1	40	45	60	55
2	30	35	45	50
3	55	58	70	75
4	38	40	55	60
5	42	38	60	65
6	58	60	75	80
7	52	50	60	65
8	40	42	55	58
9	54	56	72	78
10	50	45	65	68
11	33	35	50	55
12	56	57	74	76
13	58	60	78	80
14	46	48	60	65
15	42	38	58	60
16	52	50	68	70
17	38	40	52	55
18	48	45	65	68
19	53	50	68	70
20	32	35	50	55
21	40	42	55	60
22	57	59	75	78
23	35	38	55	60
24	45	40	63	65
25	54	58	74	77
26	58	57	76	78
27	50	55	70	75
28	48	50	65	68
29	55	59	78	80
30	50	48	65	68

31	56	58	75	77
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The classwide data reveal clear, significant gains in both speaking fluency and self-confidence following the story-relay intervention. On average, individual fluency scores rose from 48 percent before treatment to 68 percent after treatment, while confidence scores increased from 47 percent to 64 percent. These improvements roughly 20 points in fluency and 17 points in confidence underscore the activity's efficacy in promoting more assured, coherent oral performance.

Prior to the intervention, many students spoke haltingly, with frequent long pauses, basic tense errors, and uneven narrative structure concerning their speaking skills. After the story-relay cycles, most learners delivered smoother recounts: pauses were shorter and less disruptive, past-tense forms appeared with greater accuracy, and transitions between events were more logically sequenced. There are stronger

performers with pre-treatment fluency in the upper 50 percent range and advanced into the mid-70s to 80 percent range, reflecting their greater facility with narrative discourse. Meanwhile, students who started at the lower end (e.g., 35 percent) still posted solid gains, often moving into the 50–60 percent band.

Meanwhile about students' confidence, in the pre-intervention recordings a sizable number of students exhibited closed body postures, minimal eye contact, and largely monotonic delivery hallmarks of speaking anxiety. Post-treatment, most participants adopted more open gestures, sustained eye contact gained a little, and varied their vocal volume and intonation to match narrative moments. The average confidence gain of 17 points confirms that the supportive, peer-based story-relay format effectively lowered affective barriers. High-ability students improved from pre-scores in the high 50s to post-scores in the mid-70s, while even initially hesitant speakers rose from the low 30s into the mid-50s and some didn't show significant rising.

Variability and implications. Although individual gains varied stronger, students gained slightly more absolute points every one of the 31 learners demonstrated improvement in both dimensions. No post-treatment score fell below the mid-40s for fluency or the low-50s for confidence. This uniform upward trend suggests that story-relay, as a low-stakes, collaborative narrative task, can effectively scaffold fluency and bolster confidence for a wide range of proficiency levels. Embedding such activities regularly into EFL curricula is therefore recommended to sustain and deepen speaking gains over time.

The decision to conclude the action research after two cycles and, in practice, to implement only a single intervention was driven by practical constraints as well as by emerging evidence of effectiveness. With the school's final examinations scheduled immediately after the intervention period, further instructional experimentation would have risked interrupting exam preparation and compromising curricular coverage. Moreover, the significant gains observed after the first cycle met the study's objectives: every participant demonstrated higher fluency and confidence post-intervention, confirming that the story-relay approach effectively scaffolded both linguistic competence and affective readiness to speak. Consequently, additional cycles were neither feasible within the academic calendar nor necessary to verify the initial outcomes. The two-cycle framework, though brief, was sufficient to elicit consistent gains and to inform immediate instructional decision-making before the final examination period.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, AND SUGGESTION

The present study demonstrates that the structured story-relay activity decisively enhanced both speaking fluency and learner confidence among all thirty-one Grade 10 EFL students. Following the two-week intervention, every participant achieved higher fluency and confidence scores, with average gains of approximately twenty percentage points in fluency and seventeen percentage points in confidence. These results directly address the research problem by showing that collaborative,

peer-supported narrative tasks foster smoother, more accurate oral production and more assured, expressive delivery.

The findings carry clear pedagogical implications for EFL instruction in contexts where students have limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom. Integrating story-relay as a regular component of the syllabus creates a supportive, low-stakes environment that systematically reduces speaking anxiety and encourages active participation. Teachers can leverage this approach to reinforce past-tense structures, enrich narrative coherence, and cultivate positive nonverbal behaviors such as open posture, sustained eye contact, and dynamic intonation that underpin effective spoken communication.

Building on these outcomes, future classroom action research should extend the number of story-relay cycles and incorporate immediate corrective feedback on pronunciation and grammatical accuracy to amplify learning gains. Combining story-relay with complementary confidence-building techniques such as brief role-play dramatizations or structured individual presentations may further strengthen both linguistic and affective dimensions of speaking. Moreover, employing a control group and conducting follow-up assessments several weeks or months after the intervention will yield deeper insights into the relative efficacy and durability of the story-relay methodology.

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