

University EFL Students' Experiences of Storytelling in Developing Speaking Skills

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the experiences of EFL students at Klabat University in using storytelling to develop English speaking skills. This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of EFL students in storytelling-based speaking classes, focusing on how these activities influenced their confidence and anxiety. Conducted at Klabat University with third- to fifth-semester English Language Education students selected via purposive sampling, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and documentation, including syllabi and recorded presentations. Data were analyzed using Colaizzi's phenomenological steps, with validity ensured through member checking, triangulation, and ethical safeguards such as informed consent and anonymity. Storytelling activities have been found to enhance students' confidence and reduce anxiety in speaking English by providing a structured and supportive learning environment. Students gradually gain courage, improve self-control, and develop fluency in both verbal and nonverbal communication, while perceiving mistakes as part of the learning process rather than threats. Overall, storytelling fosters not only better speaking performance but also the development of students' professional identities and comprehensive self-confidence through repeated practice, social support, and reflection.

Keywords

EFL Students, Speaking Skills, Storytelling, University



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INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills are one of the key competencies that students must master when learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in higher education (Boncea, 2023; Jambari et al., 2021). Speaking is not just the linguistic ability to construct sentences correctly, but also the ability to express ideas, convey messages clearly, and interact effectively with others (Amelia et al., 2022; Dewi, 2023). In an academic context, speaking skills are highly urgent because they are an indicator of student success in academic communication, class presentations, group discussions, and future professional interactions. Students who can speak fluently and confidently tend to have a greater opportunity to participate actively in

class, express opinions effectively, and build a professional identity as future educators or language practitioners (Cadiz-Gabejan, 2021).

However, developing speaking skills for EFL students often faces quite complex challenges. Many students experience anxiety that impacts their ability to express themselves, in addition to limited vocabulary, pronunciation problems, and a lack of confidence (Hilliard et al., 2020). This anxiety often manifests itself as tension when speaking in front of a class, a fear of making grammatical or pronunciation errors, and concerns about peer or lecturer judgment. As a result, students tend to avoid active participation, speak softly, or rely entirely on written text, thus hindering the development of effective speaking skills. These challenges emphasize the importance of pedagogical strategies that focus not only on linguistic aspects but also on students' psychological and affective factors, so they can learn to speak more comfortably, confidently, and productively.

One pedagogical strategy that is gaining increasing attention in English language teaching is storytelling, or the use of narrative as a learning medium (Brini et al., 2020; Wu & Chen, 2020). Storytelling not only emphasizes sentence structure but also facilitates students' ability to convey messages through meaningful, personal, and contextual stories (Auron et al., 2025). This activity allows students to practice speaking repeatedly in a more relaxed and safe environment, reducing anxiety, increasing self-confidence, and strengthening verbal and nonverbal communication skills. Furthermore, storytelling also stimulates students' cognitive abilities, such as plot planning, appropriate vocabulary use, and intonation and expression management, resulting in a more structured and communicative speaking experience. Although numerous quantitative studies have examined the effectiveness of storytelling in improving students' speaking skills, studies that explore students' lived experiences in depth are relatively limited. Many studies focus primarily on performance measures or test scores, without exploring the meaning of students' subjective experiences while participating in storytelling activities. A phenomenological approach, which emphasizes understanding subjective experiences and participants' perspectives, is relevant to fill this research gap. By understanding how students interpret their experiences, researchers can gain richer insights into how storytelling influences self-confidence, anxiety management, communication skills, and identity formation as language learners.

Klabat University was chosen as the research context because storytelling-based speaking instruction has been implemented in the English Language Education study program at this institution, providing an appropriate setting for examining student experiences in depth. The research focused on middle-semester students with considerable experience in speaking classes, enabling them to reflect on their learning process and provide rich narratives about their journey of developing speaking skills through storytelling. Based on these considerations, this study has two main objectives. First, to explore and describe EFL students' experiences in using storytelling to improve their speaking skills. Second, to interpret the meaning of these experiences in the context of English language learning in higher education, thereby providing a more holistic understanding of how storytelling

influences students' cognitive, affective, and social aspects. The contribution of this study is twofold. From a theoretical perspective, this study enriches phenomenological studies in the context of EFL learning, particularly in exploring students' subjective and in-depth experiences. This study also offers insights into the psychological and social dynamics that emerge during storytelling practices, which can serve as references for further research. From a practical perspective, the findings of this study are expected to provide a basis for lecturers to design more effective speaking teaching strategies, utilizing storytelling as a medium capable of reducing anxiety, increasing self-confidence, and building authentic communication skills. Thus, storytelling is not only a method for teaching language but also a means to develop EFL students' professional identity and interpersonal skills. The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the experiences of EFL students at Klabat University in using storytelling to develop English speaking skills.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with phenomenological methods to understand EFL students' experiences in storytelling activities (Sulistiyo, 2023). The phenomenological approach was chosen because the focus of this study was to explore students' lived experiences, specifically how they experienced increased confidence and reduced anxiety when speaking English. In this way, the researcher was able to capture the in-depth subjective meaning of students' experiences during storytelling-based speaking classes, following the principles developed by phenomenologists such as Moustakas, Colaizzi, and van Manen.

The study was conducted at Klabat University, with participants majoring in English Language Education, specifically in their third to fifth semesters who had previously taken storytelling-based speaking classes. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, with a sample size of approximately 6 to 10 students, adjusted to achieve data saturation. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and documentation in the form of syllabi, storytelling assignments, and recordings of student presentations, providing a comprehensive understanding of their experiences. Data analysis was conducted following Colaizzi's phenomenological steps: thoroughly reading transcripts, identifying significant statements, formulating meaning, grouping them into themes, and describing the essence of students' experiences (Praveena & Sasikumar, 2021). Data validation was conducted through member checking to enhance credibility. Data validity was also guaranteed through source triangulation, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Research ethics were maintained by obtaining informed consent, maintaining the confidentiality of participants' identities, and ensuring their anonymity in the research report.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Storytelling as a Means of Increasing Self-Confidence

Based on in-depth interviews with fourth- and sixth-semester students in the English Language Education Study Program at Klabat University, storytelling was interpreted as a learning experience that significantly contributed to increased confidence in speaking English. This confidence did not emerge instantly, but rather developed through practice, social interaction, and self-reflection during the storytelling activity. Most participants revealed that before participating in the storytelling activity, they felt hesitant and afraid of speaking in front of the class. This fear was related to concerns about grammatical errors, pronunciation, and peer judgment. One fourth-semester student stated:

“Before storytelling, I was always nervous about speaking in front of the class. I was afraid of making grammatical mistakes and being laughed at. But when I tell a story, I feel more prepared because I already have a storyline that I understand.”

This statement indicates that the structure of the story provides a framework that helps students feel more in control when speaking. Students no longer speak spontaneously without direction, but instead follow a narrative flow they have developed beforehand. This reduces anxiety and increases confidence when performing. A sixth-semester student also shared a similar experience:

“Storytelling makes me feel like I have something to say, not just a speaking assignment. Because it's my story, I feel more confident.”

This quote demonstrates that a sense of ownership of the story contributes to increased confidence in performing. Students feel in control of the material they present, leading to a natural growth in self-confidence. Interviews indicate that the increase in self-confidence occurs gradually. At the beginning of the storytelling session, some students still exhibited signs of hesitation, such as a low voice, limited eye contact, and excessive use of notes. However, after several practices, behavioral changes began to emerge. One sixth-semester student explained:

“At first, I was still reading the text, but after several storytelling sessions, I started to make eye contact and rely less on the text. That made me feel more confident.”

This statement indicates a transformation in the way students present themselves. Self-confidence is not only measured internally but also manifests in performative aspects such as intonation, facial expressions, and body language. Observations during the storytelling session corroborate the interview data. During the initial session, some students appeared to speak softly and frequently paused to remember vocabulary. However, in subsequent sessions, there was an improvement in fluency, more natural use of gestures, and stronger eye contact with the audience. Fourth-semester students tended to rely more heavily on text, while sixth-semester students were more flexible and improvisational in their storytelling. This suggests that academic experience and frequency of practice contribute to the development of self-confidence. Furthermore, the classroom atmosphere during storytelling sessions appeared more supportive than during formal presentations.

Students often applauded and responded positively after their peers finished. This positive social environment contributed to a sense of safety that fostered self-confidence.

Documentation analysis of video recordings of storytelling presentations revealed consistent changes in student performance. In the initial recordings, facial expressions appeared tense and pauses were quite long. In subsequent recordings, students appeared more expressive, used varied intonation, and were able to convey stories more coherently and communicatively. Several of the collected storytelling scripts also demonstrated an increase in sentence structure complexity and a greater willingness to use new vocabulary. This indicates that self-confidence impacts not only the performative aspect but also the courage to experiment linguistically. Phenomenologically, students interpreted storytelling as a practice space that allowed them to "learn without fear." This growing confidence stems not only from improved language skills, but also from feeling valued and listened to. One participant stated:

"I feel like storytelling isn't just speaking practice, but also confidence training as future teachers."

This statement demonstrates that the storytelling experience transcends the academic context and begins to shape students' professional identities as future English language educators. Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, it can be concluded that storytelling is interpreted as a pedagogical experience that creates a safe, structured, and personal space so that it allows students to develop the courage to appear, increase self-control when speaking, and build self-confidence gradually through a reflective and interactive process.

Anxiety Reduction in Speaking English

Based on in-depth interviews with fourth- and sixth-semester students in the English Language Education Study Program at Klabat University, storytelling was interpreted as a learning experience that significantly helped reduce anxiety in speaking English. Anxiety, which previously manifested as fear of making mistakes, excessive nervousness, and even going blank when speaking, gradually decreased as students engaged in storytelling activities. Most participants admitted that before participating in storytelling activities, they often experienced anxiety when speaking in front of a class. This anxiety encompassed cognitive and physiological symptoms, such as a blank mind, a pounding heart, sweaty hands, and a fear of making grammatical or pronunciation errors. One fourth-semester student revealed:

"When I'm presenting normally, I often go blank. I've studied, but when I'm in front of the class, I suddenly forget everything. I'm afraid of making grammatical mistakes and being judged as not being good at English."

This statement indicates that anxiety is not solely due to a lack of ability, but rather to psychological pressure during the performance. Students feel they are in an evaluative situation, which makes them tense. A sixth-semester student also shared a similar

experience:

"I used to feel like every time I spoke, my friends were paying attention to my mistakes. It made me overthink before and during my speech."

This anxiety reflects the fear of negative evaluation, which is quite dominant in the context of speaking lessons. Interview data indicates that storytelling provides a different learning environment than formal academic presentations. Students feel storytelling is more personal and expressive, thus reducing the pressure to appear "perfect." A fourth-semester student stated:

"Because storytelling is like telling a story, I don't focus so much on grammar. I focus more on conveying the message. That makes me more relaxed."

A sixth-semester student added:

"Storytelling feels more natural. I don't feel like I'm being tested, but rather like I'm sharing a story. So my anxiety decreases."

This quote suggests that a change in perception of speaking contributes to a decrease in anxiety. When the activity is interpreted as "sharing a story" rather than "being assessed," psychological pressure is reduced. Interview results indicate that the reduction in anxiety occurs gradually. During the first session, some students still showed signs of nervousness. However, after several storytelling practices, they reported a decrease in anxiety intensity. A sixth-semester student explained:

"I was still nervous at first, but because I practiced storytelling a lot, I gradually got used to it. Now, speaking isn't as bad as it used to be."

A fourth-semester student also said:

"I'm still nervous, but I don't get as lost as I used to. If I forget a word, I can improvise."

This statement indicates an improvement in my coping mechanisms when dealing with speaking situations. Students are beginning to be able to manage their anxiety and continue communicating even when they make mistakes.

Classroom observations revealed behavioral changes indicating a decrease in anxiety. In the initial meeting, several students appeared to avoid eye contact, held their texts with trembling hands, and spoke with an unsteady voice. Some students were also seen taking deep breaths before beginning their stories. However, in subsequent meetings, these signs began to diminish. Students appeared calmer when standing in front of the class, their pauses became more controlled, and their facial expressions appeared more relaxed. Some students were even able to respond spontaneously to questions or comments from their peers without showing panic. Sixth-semester students generally showed a higher level of comfort than fourth-semester students, but both showed a pattern of decreasing anxiety after several storytelling practices.

Analysis of documentary footage of storytelling videos revealed significant changes in emotional performance. In the initial recordings, several students spoke at a fast pace—a common indication of nervousness—and displayed tense facial expressions. In subsequent

recordings, their speaking tempo became more stable, their facial expressions more natural, and their intonation more varied. Written reflection documentation from students also supported these findings. Several students wrote that they were "more comfortable speaking," "less afraid of making mistakes," and "enjoyed speaking more." These reflections indicate a change in internal experiences consistent with observation and interview findings. Phenomenologically, students interpreted storytelling as a habituation process that helped them normalize errors in speaking English. Mistakes were no longer viewed as threats, but as part of the learning process. One sixth-semester student stated:

"I realize now that mistakes are normal. The important thing is that my message gets across. Storytelling helps me think that way."

This statement indicates a significant mindset shift. Anxiety, previously stemming from perfectionism and fear of judgment, began to be replaced by an orientation toward communication and meaning. Based on the integration of interview, observation, and documentation data, it can be concluded that storytelling is interpreted as a learning experience that gradually reduces speaking anxiety through creating a safe space, changing perceptions of errors, and getting used to performing in front of an audience. Anxiety reduction does not occur instantly, but rather through a process of repetition, social support, and internalization of positive experiences in speaking English.

Discussion

Storytelling as a Means of Increasing Self-Confidence

Based on research results, fourth- and sixth-semester students in the English Language Education Study Program at Klabat University consistently perceive storytelling as a pedagogical experience that fosters confidence in speaking English. This confidence develops gradually through repeated practice, social interaction, and self-reflection. Before participating in storytelling activities, many students felt hesitant, afraid of making mistakes, and worried about peer judgment. However, as they engaged in storytelling, the clear narrative structure provided a framework that helped students feel more in control when speaking. Students no longer spoke spontaneously without direction, but instead followed a prepared storyline, thereby reducing feelings of panic and increasing their confidence in performing.

This phenomenon aligns with Self-Efficacy Bandura, (1997), which asserts that self-confidence develops through successful experiences (mastery experience), peer observation (vicarious experience), and social persuasion (Bandura, 1997). Storytelling provides students with gradual experience in telling stories, allowing them to experience small, cumulative successes, receive praise or positive feedback from lecturers and peers, and observe peers who successfully speak fluently (Bolkan et al., 2020; Storr, 2020). This aligns with data findings that students gradually become more confident, able to maintain eye contact, and reduce reliance on text. Furthermore, Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis asserts that low anxiety and high motivation allow language input to be received more effectively (Lin, 2008).

A supportive and judgment-free classroom environment, as reflected in classroom observations, creates a "safe space" so students feel comfortable expressing themselves. This lowers affective barriers and strengthens their courage to speak.

From the perspective of Sociocultural Theory by Vygotsky, social interaction and scaffolding play a crucial role (Alkhudiry, 2022). Data shows that students receive emotional and academic support from peers and lecturers, which helps them overcome nervousness. Storytelling is not just an individual exercise, but a social process that allows students to learn from their peers' experiences and build collective self-confidence. Narrative Theory by Bruner, (1986) reinforces this understanding, as students not only learn to speak but also construct linguistic identities through narrative (Bruner, 1987). The sense of ownership of the story and the experience of self-expression confirms that storytelling is more than just language practice, but also training to become communicators and future English teachers.

Empirically, this study demonstrates that storytelling plays a significant role in increasing students' confidence in speaking in front of the class. With repeated practice, students not only demonstrated improved performative skills, such as more intense eye contact, natural use of gestures, and greater intonation variation, but also developed more mature self-control when speaking. Beyond just performance, this experience also influenced students' internal self-confidence and the formation of their professional identity as future English teachers, as they felt valued, heard, and took ownership of the stories they told. In other words, storytelling serves as a reflective and safe space, where success in English speaking is measured not solely by linguistic perfection, but by the ability to express oneself, manage nervousness, and experience social recognition. Through a combination of repeated practice, supportive social interactions, and internalization of positive experiences, students developed a strong sense of communication, a sense of being heard, and having value, fostering a deep and lasting sense of confidence.

These research findings align with various major theories explaining the mechanisms by which student self-confidence develops through storytelling. From Bandura's Self-Efficacy perspective, students gain success experiences gradually (mastery experience), witness the success of their peers (vicarious experience), and receive positive support and feedback from lecturers and peers (social persuasion), which directly strengthen their confidence in speaking English. Krashen's Affective Filter perspective emphasizes the importance of affective states in language learning; a safe classroom atmosphere free from assessment pressures reduces anxiety levels, allowing for optimal language input and improved speaking performance. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory highlights the role of social interaction and scaffolding, where peer and lecturer support creates a collaborative environment that facilitates courage to perform and strengthens self-confidence. Furthermore, Bruner's Narrative Theory emphasizes that students interpret storytelling not merely as linguistic practice, but as a process of building their identity as communicators and future English teachers. The integration of these four perspectives demonstrates that storytelling combines individual experiences, psychological states, social interactions, and

narrative meaning to support the development of overall self-confidence.

While Self-Efficacy Theory provides a powerful framework for understanding the development of self-confidence, it tends to emphasize individual experiences and under-explores social dynamics within the classroom. Krashen's Affective Filter explains the psychological influences on language input but does not explicitly address the mechanisms of social interaction that are also important in storytelling. Vygotsky emphasizes social construction but under-explains how personal identity and internal narratives influence self-confidence. Thus, an integration of multiple theories is necessary to capture the complexity of the phenomenon: the interplay between individual, social, and narrative factors.

Additional perspectives such as Flow Theory Csikszentmihalyi, (1990) and Positive Psychology Seligman, (2011) can provide additional insights (Passmore & Oades, 2022; Tse et al., 2020). Flow theory explains that students who focus on stories can experience optimal learning, reduce self-consciousness, and increase courage. Positive psychology emphasizes the importance of positive experiences and social rewards in building self-confidence. This perspective enriches the understanding of storytelling as a holistic experience that not only hones linguistic skills but also affects affective and motivational aspects. Based on the synthesis above, it can be concluded that storytelling combines individual, social, and narrative dimensions. Self-efficacy explains students' internal processes in developing self-confidence, affective filters explain the psychological mechanisms that enable optimal performance, sociocultural theory explains the role of social interactions, and narrative theory highlights the evolving meaning of identity. This integration forms a strong conceptual framework for understanding how storytelling holistically enhances speaking confidence.

The findings of this study have important theoretical implications for the development of English as a foreign language (EFL) learning. The results indicate that the development of students' self-confidence does not solely depend on linguistic abilities, but is also influenced by a combination of personal experiences, supportive social interactions, and narrative engagement in learning activities. Storytelling emerges as an effective pedagogical model because it allows the simultaneous integration of cognitive, affective, and social dimensions, allowing students to develop self-confidence holistically. Based on these findings, the study paves the way for the development of a new conceptual model, which can be called "Narrative-Based Confidence Development." This model combines repeated practice to provide successful experiences (mastery experience), a supportive classroom environment that encourages positive interactions (social persuasion), and personal meaning through ownership of stories (narrative identity). This model not only offers a strong conceptual framework for further research in the EFL context but can also be developed into a systematic story-based speaking teaching strategy, providing practical guidance for educators to continuously build students' courage and confidence.

Anxiety Reduction in Speaking English

Based on student experience, storytelling has proven to be an effective learning strategy in reducing English speaking anxiety. Students reported that feelings of nervousness, overthinking, and fear of making mistakes gradually decreased as they engaged in storytelling. This decrease in anxiety occurred gradually; initially, students still showed signs of nervousness, such as an unstable voice, limited eye contact, and a reliance on text. However, after several practice sessions, they began to demonstrate more relaxed performance, were able to express themselves more naturally, and even responded spontaneously to their peers' questions. This experience demonstrates that storytelling not only helps students focus on the message they want to convey but also accustoms them to facing and normalizing mistakes, thereby reducing psychological stress and making them feel more comfortable when speaking.

This phenomenon aligns with Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Anxiety Theory, which emphasizes that anxiety in speaking a foreign language arises from communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety (Fattahi Marnani & Cuocci, 2022). Storytelling creates a safe and supportive environment, reduces evaluative pressure, and allows students to experience positive speaking experiences. Furthermore, Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis explains that low anxiety and high self-confidence facilitate a more effective language learning process. Storytelling lowers affective barriers, allowing students to focus more on the message and interaction rather than grammatical errors (Lin, 2008). From the perspective of Self-Efficacy Theory Bandura, (1997), anxiety reduction is also related to mastery experience, social persuasion, and observational learning (Bandura, 1997). Students gain gradual success through repeated practice, receiving positive feedback from peers and instructors, and observing their peers' success. Thus, they build self-confidence that allows them to approach speaking situations with greater calm and confidence. Sociocultural Theory Vygotsky, (1978) further supports these findings, as social interaction and collaborative support in the classroom create a sense of security, which is a key factor in managing anxiety (Tzuriel, 2021).

Empirically, this study shows that storytelling significantly contributes to reducing students' anxiety in speaking English. This is reflected in changes in performative behavior, including better voice control, more intense eye contact, and more relaxed facial expressions. Furthermore, students also experienced an increase in their ability to deal with mistakes and stress, allowing them to continue communicating despite errors, indicating the development of mature coping mechanisms. Furthermore, students interpreted the storytelling activity positively, viewing it as an opportunity to share stories rather than simply an evaluative situation. This perception reduced psychological tension and created a more comfortable speaking experience, allowing students to build confidence and speaking skills gradually and sustainably.

Storytelling serves as a habituation and safe space that allows students to normalize mistakes, manage tension, and build confidence (Aura et al., 2021; Rose & Johnson, 2025). This experience demonstrates that anxiety reduction occurs not only due to improved

language skills but also due to a shift in mindset: the focus shifts from "having to be perfect" to "communicating meaningfully." Thus, storytelling is not simply a language technique, but a learning experience that supports students' affective and psychological well-being. Foreign Language Anxiety Theory asserts that fear of negative evaluation is a major cause of student anxiety; storytelling activities reduce this stress through safe and supportive experiences (Russell, 2020). Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis emphasizes that language input is received more effectively when anxiety is low, which is consistent with improved student performance. Self-Efficacy Theory explains how successful experiences, social support, and peer observation enhance students' ability to cope with anxiety. Meanwhile, Sociocultural Theory emphasizes the role of social interaction and scaffolding in shaping positive and collaborative learning experiences.

Although these theories are powerful in explaining anxiety reduction, each has limitations. Foreign Language Anxiety Theory emphasizes internal phenomena but under-explains the social and narrative dimensions. Krashen focuses on input and affective filters but does not specifically outline how practical experiences, such as storytelling, shape coping mechanisms. Self-Efficacy Theory focuses more on the individual, so it needs to be combined with social and collaborative perspectives to encompass the classroom context. Thus, theoretical integration is necessary to understand anxiety reduction holistically. Additional perspectives such as Flow Theory Csikszentmihalyi, (1990) explain that students who focus on stories experience optimal learning experiences, reducing self-consciousness and increasing engagement (Tse et al., 2020). Positive Psychology Seligman, (2011) emphasizes positive experiences and social recognition as important factors in building affective well-being and reducing anxiety (Passmore & Oades, 2022). This approach enhances the understanding that storytelling is not simply a linguistic exercise, but an experience that combines affect, motivation, and social interaction.

Based on the synthesis above, storytelling combines individual, social, and cognitive dimensions. Self-efficacy explains the development of internal anxiety-coping skills, the affective filter highlights the role of psychological conditions, sociocultural theory emphasizes social support, and the narrative/flow perspective highlights optimal engagement and experience. This integration forms a comprehensive conceptual framework for understanding how storytelling reduces speaking anxiety comprehensively. The findings of this study have theoretical implications that emphasize the importance of the interaction between students' personal experiences, a supportive social environment, and affective management in the process of reducing English speaking anxiety. Storytelling has proven to be an effective pedagogical model because it integrates practical exercises, the creation of a "safe space" in the classroom, and the habit of dealing with mistakes constructively, allowing students to manage their nervousness and maintain fluent communication. Based on these findings, this study paves the way for the development of a new conceptual model, namely "Narrative-Based Anxiety Reduction." This model combines gradual speaking practice, social support from lecturers and peers, and repeated positive experiences to shape students'

coping skills in speaking. The model not only provides a theoretical framework that can be tested in other EFL research but also offers practical strategies that can be adapted in speaking learning contexts that emphasize psychological and affective aspects, so that students can develop courage and comfort in speaking continuously.

CONCLUSION

Storytelling activities have been shown to significantly contribute to increasing students' confidence and reducing their anxiety in speaking English. Students gradually develop the courage to speak in front of the class, the ability to control themselves when speaking, and fluency in verbal and nonverbal expression. This development is evident through increased fluency, the use of more natural gestures, more intense eye contact, and the ability to convey messages coherently and communicatively. A supportive classroom environment, positive interactions with peers, and a safe learning atmosphere encourage students to feel valued and comfortable, allowing them to express themselves more boldly. Storytelling also helps students reduce nervousness, fear of making mistakes, and overthinking, enabling them to face psychological pressure with better coping mechanisms. Mistakes are no longer seen as threats, but rather as part of the learning process, allowing students to express themselves naturally and enjoy speaking. Overall, storytelling is interpreted as a structured, personal, and reflective learning experience that not only improves speaking performance but also shapes students' professional identities as future English teachers. Through repeated practice, social support, and internalization of positive experiences, students experience a comprehensive increase in self-confidence, both performatively and psychologically.

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