

# Storytelling in the online class at the English education department: Students' perceptions and experiences

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## ABSTRACT

Due to Covid-19, virtual learning at all education levels was implemented. Storytelling is one of the courses conducted online. The aim of this study is to find out the students' perceptions on the importance of storytelling in the online class, their experiences on the tasks supportive in the online class of storytelling, and on the learning outcomes resulted from the online storytelling class. This research is qualitative. The data were collected from a storytelling class in an English Education Department in Yogyakarta. They were obtained from a semi-structured interview with 22 students who have attended in storytelling online class. The data from the interview were classified based on the research questions. They were displayed in narrative texts to support the answers to the research problems. The results show that the students have positive perceptions on storytelling in the online class. They also share their experiences on the tasks supporting the storytelling such as the students' video recording for storytelling and creating new stories as beneficial. In relation to the learning outcome, the students view that it is advantageous to enhance speaking skills and it results in the learning outcome such as a story book and storytelling video. This study can be taken into account to improve teaching learning quality, and policies in developing the teaching English for young learner program in the English Education Department.



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## 1. Introduction

Everything has changed since the Covid-19 pandemic happened. Work from home, pray at home, and study at home for all of the degrees were implemented by the government to prevent the infection of coronavirus ([Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia, No. 21, 2020](https://www.pemerintah.go.id/)). The regulations were carried out for all of the fields, including education. To implement the regulations, all education levels implemented virtual learning or online learning. Moore and Kearsley (2012) stated that online learning is teaching in different places and it is still connected by technology as well as institutional material or organization. Students and lecturers should utilize technology to organize the class in the pandemic era. Although it is a virtual class, students and lecturers can interact with each other, and learning activities can still be held. Therefore, it is expected that students can obtain the knowledge and lecturers can do their duty to teach students.

There are interactions among students and lecturers by using the platform such as Google meeting. Storytelling is an activity to tell a story and it can use some properties for teaching and entertaining the audience. Cameron (2001) claims that storytelling is not just a verbal activity, however, the audience should be engaged as well. Therefore, online learning activities in storytelling classes between the lecturer and students should be interactive. Students can engage with virtual classmates and their lecturer. The learning activities could be presentations, asking and answering questions, telling stories, playing games, and so on.

However, the storytelling online class did not always run well because of some barriers. There are obstacles in facing online classes such as connection problems, the device, and other problems because online learning is something new for everyone since the pandemic was getting worse and the regulations from the government came out. Internet disconnection affects the learning process; it can distract the students and the lecturer when they have the teaching and learning session in the online class. When the class is held into asynchronous learning, usually the lecturer sends the material in Google Classroom and students should learn the material. In this case, students need lecturer's further explanation about the material and this is classified into another problem of storytelling in the online class. Another problem happening in the researchers' observed class is about cooperation among students when the assignment is making a story in group working. The communication and discussion become a little bit hard because some students are in different places and they should interact via the online mode which they have not yet been accustomed to. In relation to storytelling in the online class, the interaction between the teacher and students can also be hindered by the students' reluctance to participate, technical problems, their lack of sufficient sources related to their stories and about the extended time-taking aspect of the activity process (Karakoyun, & Kuzu, 2016).

Even though those mentioned phenomena happen in the virtual class, it does not mean there is no benefit of the storytelling online class for the students. The storytelling class facilitates the students in enhancing students' speaking skills (Kallinikou & Nicolaidou, 2019; Hidayati, 2019; Abdelmageed & El-Nagggar, 2018). The lecturer facilitates storytelling in an online class with a lot of efforts. The lecturer explains the theory of storytelling to the students and also gives assignments that can support their ability in mastering storytelling material such as creating a story, public speaking, confidence, and others. Davies (2007) stated that the benefits of storytelling can be associated with vocabulary improvement, spelling, and understanding of people and cultures (Davies, 2007). Further, as Kuforiji and William (2011) stated, students found that online storytelling is a fun activity in class. Students enjoy learning English while designing appropriate lessons and activities. Another fact is supported by Apsari and Satriani (2016) who found out that digital storytelling can establish students' ability, enhance students' reading comprehension, increase students' cooperation skills, increase students' participation in the class, and enhance students' writing interest.

Therefore, considering what has happened in the storytelling online, it is important to reveal the students' perceptions and their experiences in relation to storytelling in the online class. According to Thoha (2010), perception is fundamentally a cognitive experience that everyone has when it comes to comprehending information about the world, whether by sight, hearing, sensation, or scent. A study on the perceptions and preferences of 8th grade students in digital storytelling in English has been conducted by Okumus (2020). It was found that the perceptions of the participants toward the use of digital storytelling in English lessons were positive before and after the implementation process with no significant difference between them pre and post-tests. Some other relevant studies on the perceptions also indicate positive findings in relation to digital storytelling (Amelia & Abidin, 2018). In another research setting, Çetin (2021) proves that digital literacy levels of pre-service teachers differ significantly after the digital story creation process. Digital story assessment scale shows that digital stories got high-level scores. Pre-service teachers' opinions show some difficulties in digital story creation process and highlight the positive contribution of the process of digital storytelling in educational settings. Then, since there is a variety of learning tasks in the storytelling class itself, it is also important to investigate the students' experiences on it and on the learning outcome as an effect that provides a measure of the usefulness of distinct method or strategy choices in the story telling online class. Learning outcome is a performance that is stated as a capability that has been achieved (Andrini, 2016).

## 2. Method

This research is descriptive qualitative (Creswell, 2012). The time for interviewing participants was from July to December 2021. The setting was at an English Education Department in a university in Yogyakarta. There were 22 students as the participants. They were pre-service teachers. They attended the storytelling online class. The course of storytelling is elective. The course materials include the theory related to storytelling such as how to generate ideas, story elements and structures, media and storytelling, challenges, story reading and storytelling practice, and assessment in storytelling. In the storytelling online class, the students were facilitated to create a story for kids learning English. The students worked in groups in outlining, planning the story elements and developing the story, they practiced telling it online in groups and in the final examination each of them was required to perform storytelling online individually by submitting their recorded story telling video.

The data were collected through a semi-structured interview which was conducted in Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia). Due to pandemic Covid-19, the researchers used WhatsApp to share the research questions to participants. There are three research questions. These relate to the students' perceptions of the importance of storytelling for pre-service students, their experiences related to the tasks supportive for storytelling online class, and the learning outcome of storytelling online class. In this case, the participants were allowed to respond in the forms of text, audio or video. The majority of participants sent directly messages in texts, some sent an audio for their answers, and only two participants sent their video as their response to the questions.

In analyzing the qualitative research data, the researchers did three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1992). The data collected were classified based on the students' perceptions of the storytelling in the online class, their experiences related to the tasks supportive for the storytelling online class, and to the learning outcomes of the storytelling online class. The data were analyzed with the constant comparative method (Creswell, 2013). Each information taken from the collection data is compared to the categories emerging (Creswell, 2013). The themes appeared were put under 3 categories: the students' perception on storytelling in the online class, their experiences on supportive task and learning outcomes in the online storytelling class. They were displayed in narrative texts to support the answers to the research problems.

## 3. Findings and Discussion

The results are organized into the students' perceptions and their experiences related to storytelling in the online class. The findings are divided into their perceptions on storytelling in the online class, their experiences on the tasks supportive in an online class of storytelling, and on the learning outcome resulted from the online storytelling class.

### 3.1. The students' perceptions on the storytelling in the online class

#### 1) *Storytelling online class can enhance speaking skills*

The result of this study indicates that the participants generally view that storytelling online class is very important for students. Almost all participants genuinely think that storytelling has a lot of benefits such as enhancing students' speaking skill. Not only that, getting audiences' attention is needed by storyteller because it can help the audience to understand a story properly. This opinion was said by Dewa:

*"...storytelling itself is important because of several reasons. First, it can enhance English skills especially our ability in speaking. In storytelling, we are required to speak English fluently and to pronounce the words clearly in order to get audiences' attention to our story and also to understand the story that we told." (15 July 2021)*

Then, another opinion comes from Rais who also confirms the benefit of storytelling for students, he said:

*“In my opinion, storytelling is important for PBI students because through storytelling we can learn to support us in teaching such as enhancing confidence...” (3 December 2021)*

Indeed, the English Education students should have mental capacity to be prepared and confident to speak up in front of their students. In this case, storytelling in the online class can be a good way to prepare the English Education students to become more confident.

#### 2) *Storytelling online class can stimulate creativity*

In this case, several participants such as Tari, Dwi, and Rais have the same arguments about storytelling online class that can affect their creativity. They said “...storytelling is very important for PBI students for training creativity in making and delivering the story.” Because creating a story was the assignment, when the students created a story and they should think about the characters, plot, theme, setting, and other story elements that should be made different from the existing stories. Thus, the students could develop their creativity and imagination as well. The same thing comes from Dewa who said:

*“Storytelling can help develop our imaginations. We are telling a story and also create the story. The story can be based on our experiences or a story that is adapted from another story. However, in our storytelling class, we should create our own. This enables us to use our imagination and our thought to make a great story.” (15 July 2021)*

He concurs that storytelling can gain the imagination. He also thinks that creating a new story by his own thought is challenging. In addition, imagination is not as easy as one might think because Dewa said that creating new story by their imagination should have references from other stories or their experiences to make story more interesting.

#### 3) *Storytelling online class is utilized as a teaching technique*

The result of this study informed that storytelling is an effective technique for teaching English. In this case, Baha said “In my opinion, storytelling is very important for FKIP students. Storytelling is one of the techniques that can be used effectively in teaching.” Not only Baha who feels storytelling is very important, other participants have the same thought about utilizing storytelling as a learning technique. Dhani said:

*“Based on my experience, it is very important because storytelling can be applied for teaching. We can share some values in an interesting way. In addition, no matter what age is, storytelling is good for children or adult. Storytelling can be told in an interesting way, simple, and not boring one. Furthermore, it can be a fun learning technique.” (14 July 2021)*

The data from the interview confirms the students’ positive perception on storytelling in the online class. Besides helping the students in developing their speaking, storytelling in online class can stimulate their creativity and can be employed as one of the teaching techniques in teaching young learners. It is also stated that storytelling is appropriate for the audience from different ages. It depends on the storyteller who adjusts how to convey a story or a message to the audience.

### **3.2. The students’ experiences on the tasks supportive for the storytelling online class**

The students interviewed mentioned some learning tasks in the online storytelling class and how beneficial the tasks are for them.

#### 1) *Creating a new story*

Almost all participants agree that creating a new story helps them learn English language. Tari said “The activity for exercise and assignment is creating a story...” and here are other students’ opinion, they said:

*“Based on my experience, we are divided into a group of four or five students. In the group, we create a story. Then, we tell our story by using animation such as pictures, PowerPoint and so on.” (Dewa, 15 July 2021)*

*"I think the assignments absolutely can improve the students' ability in storytelling, they can be in the form of creating an own story by developing an idea, making new characters, plot, and vocabularies..." (Lina, 13 July 2021)*

Dewa and Lina clearly said that creating new stories in an online class was necessarily needed for the students. It is not only creating new stories; Dewa also mentions that using animation for the tool is good for the task of storytelling in an online class. Regardless of the argumentation of Dewa, Lina adds a different idea. Lina believes that creating story means to evolve idea because it can result in a new story and it should have all of the stuffs in story such as characters, setting, and so on. Creating new stories can help students' creativity and increase more vocabularies.

On the other hand, another argument comes out from other participants. Ayu said "...giving freedom to the students to tell about their experiences or creating a story." Students want to have their own creativity for making a new story or telling their own evidence to all of audiences. It is reinforced by Risma who tells "Create a story and then develop it in the form of a video." Not only recreating a new story, applying into video is also good for students' activity in storytelling online class. Students need to know the steps how to create story correctly and also some information about the tools that can be used to support in creating and practicing storytelling.

#### 2) Using storytelling video

In this case, there are still learning tasks supportive to the storytelling online class. Practicing a storytelling is another task that is mentioned by Okta and Rais, they said:

*"Activities to explore roles and stories, practice how to start storytelling properly and correctly, and how to create an atmosphere and storytelling that can attract the attention of the audience." (Okta, 21 September 2021)*

*"Supporting activities can be in the form of storytelling practices and then sharing it online, through G Meet/Zoom, Instagram Live, or YouTube which can be accessed easily for a wide range of audiences." (Rais, 3 December 2021)*

Then, other participants said that for students' activities may be in the form of viewing the storytelling video and then trying to retell the story, or creating another storytelling video from the tale created and then publishing it to social media like YouTube.

#### 3) Having a book collection and joining a storytelling event

There are several tasks supporting the storytelling online class. For instance, the idea arrives from Ria informed "...and also giving a collection of stories to students to enrich the storytelling material." In this case, Ria believes that lecturer should provide the class with more references of the story, it could be books or the other things, for students in order to enrich the students' knowledge about story.

Nevertheless, Hana has a different opinion about the task supportive for storytelling online class, she said "...joining storytelling competition and joining webinar about storytelling..." The statement is very clear that is delivered by Hana, joining competition and webinar support the learning activity for the storytelling online class. From those activities, the students obtain a lot of knowledge and experiences that can be applied in real life. Another argument is claimed by Dhani:

*"...suddenly, for volunteering activity can be a part of communities that have related with storytelling or children communities in order to use storytelling method for learning activity." (14 July 2021)*

The excerpt indicates that Dhani has his own views about the task that can be applied in storytelling class. Joining for volunteering activity that has connection with children issues is a good task for the students to strengthen their skill in storytelling.

### 3.3. The students' experiences on on the learning outcomes resulted from the online storytelling class

The findings confirm several learning outcomes that can be realized in the storytelling online class. The outcome that the students made vary, they created a collection of story for young learners, produced a video of storytelling, and they uploaded it to social media such as YouTube channel.

After creating the story, the following learning outcome was recording a video of storytelling. Such a video is advantageous. Baha stated the following:

*“The outcome resulted from the online storytelling learning can be used as an example for future students. Then, if it is not good, then the suggestion can be given regarding how to deal with the shortcomings of the outcome. For the results that can be made, in my opinion, it can be in the form of making a storytelling video, the outcome that can be watched and heard.” (21 July 2021)*

The excerpt above implied that it can be used as an example for new generations for learning activity. If it is not good, the suggestions can be made on how to address the product's flaws. It can be argued that the end result is an outcome that can be seen and heard which is a video. Then, Okta reinforces *“making videos can be a motivation for other students...”* students' recording a video might motivate the next class to become better and it can be a reference to analyze what students should make for their storytelling video. Dwi agrees with Baha and Okta about the outcome which is a video, it can be an example for the others or the following students, Dwi said *“then the lecturer can also choose interesting videos as examples for the next class.”*

Another opinion was stated by Lina, Ria, and Aghis. They shared this idea *“...make interesting videos with subtitles.”* Recording video interestingly can attract viewers' attention to watch the storytelling video. The video with subtitles can help the viewers to understand more what the content is. There is another idea from Hana, she said *“Creating podcast activities in the context of storytelling and applying digital storytelling that can be applied in learning English...”* in this case, Hana suggested to use technology to support the outcome of storytelling online class for instance recording a podcast discussing storytelling and she also proposed the implementation of digital storytelling for students' learning experience such as creating a story by using PowerPoint to present or perform in front of the virtual class.

### 3.4. Discussion

Students have their own perceptions and experiences on storytelling in their online class. Most of the students interviewed perceive positively that storytelling online class is very important for them. In this case, storytelling has some educational benefits, such as improving vocabulary, spelling, listening and speaking skills while the imagination is stretched when the audience listens to a story, understanding people and cultures, among others (Davies, 2007). In addition, students feel they improve their skill in speaking and also enhance their public speaking. According to Khaerana and Nurdin (2018), storytelling is a great way to improve students' speaking fluency and accuracy. Storytelling is not just understanding how to tell a story but also gaining the audience's attention.

In addition, storytelling can enrich vocabularies for the student and they argue that storytelling helps student adjust the intonation in the story because intonation connects with both vocabulary and pronunciation. Thus, the argumentation is in line with Safira et al. (2020) who asserted that applying storytelling in teaching can improve students' pronunciation and vocabulary. In addition, it could effectively engage students' understanding of vocabulary in terms of spelling, pronunciation, grammatical words, and word meaning. Moreover, students should have the mental capacity to prepare and speak in front of an audience and it was reinforced by Hava (2021) who asserts that students' self-confidence and personal usage of English improved as a result of digital storytelling. In this case, telling stories in an online lesson might help English Education students to gain confidence. Furthermore, students can improve self-confidence in real situations (Nguyen et al., 2020).

Students' creativity also increases in this learning process. Creativity, listening skills, and knowledge could all benefit from digital storytelling media (Budianto, et al., 2021). Students writing a story have to consider the characters, plot, theme, place, and any other story elements. Storytelling has the ability to stimulate the imagination. Therefore, the opinion about storytelling can drill students' creativity. The finding confirmed about the level of creativity in students' stories was found to be directly related to their motivations in language acquisition (Liu, et al., 2018).

On the other hands, based on Wilkin (2014), older children and adults learn words through the telling of stories, and they may have a larger vocabulary than they realize. Eventually, Sarica and Usluel (2016) assert that digital storytelling can be utilized in a variety of lessons and can be created with a variety of tools. It depends on the storyteller who adjusts how to convey a story to audiences.

Next, it is about the tasks in a storytelling class. There is a variety of tasks of storytelling. According to Dougherty (2012) a lecturer can test the students or engage them in amusing activities. However, students learn when purposes are clear and relevant, and they are encouraged to think. Many, but not all, typical academic work assignments have well-developed ideas among students, and these concepts are diverse in relation to different tasks (List et al., 2019). That is why students have their own perception about the assignments that can support the online learning activity.

In this recent research, creating new story is one of the tasks that students do in the class. Not only creating a story, the students should practice telling stories effectively and learn how to create an atmosphere when delivering stories that will keep the audience's attention. However, when students practice storytelling in front of an audience, such as lecturers or classmates, students will receive feedback that can help students improve their presentation. The students engage their audience when they are presenting a story. They visualize students' stories in their heads after connecting with them, but they must first connect with students as the audience. If they appear confident and enjoy every bit of the story, then the rest of the class will as well (Davies, 2007).

Then, due to Covid-19, the storytelling class is implemented into virtual. Therefore, recording a video of a storytelling activity is an ideal project for the students in a storytelling online class. Watching storytelling video is also a part of the task of storytelling online class. Students think that watching storytelling videos on social media is good because, as technology progresses, storytelling will certainly be packaged in a more interesting manner. They agree that YouTube can be used to view storytelling videos. It is confirmed by Sakkir, et al. (2020) that YouTube has the potential to be a useful, innovative, and authentic teaching tool. Students are attracted by the utilization of YouTube in the EFL classroom. There is another task from the storytelling online class that is giving a collection of stories to students to enrich the storytelling material. This is similar to what Asrowi et al., (2019) stated that the proposed e-book has been proven to improve the learning results of students in terms of knowledge.

Further, the ideas on joining storytelling competition and webinar, as this study revealed, support the learning activity in the storytelling online class. The statement also reinforces the previous research. Students have a good attitude toward English and participate in English competitions to test their skills (Jabu, 2021). After students learn in storytelling class, they can obtain either benefits of learning it or make a learning product after attending the storytelling online class (Andrini, 2016). A study by Smyrnaiou, Georgakopoulou, and Sotiriou (2020) proves that stories that the students produced digitally increases scientific creativity among students. Thus, if the teacher can facilitate the students to use certain themes for their story, the storytelling will not only improve the students' skills in language performance, and enhance self-confidence, but also develop their knowledge and potentials in other subject matters.

#### 4. Conclusion

Due to pandemic covid-19, storytelling class is implemented into online learning. The students' perception is important because it can determine the advisability of storytelling online class for students. Based on the research, it can be concluded that the students have a positive perception on storytelling used in language teaching. Increasing speaking skills, self-confidence, enriching vocabulary, improving pronunciation, drilling creativity, training communication skills, and using as learning methods. Then, a variety of tasks supporting learning storytelling are such as watching a video storytelling, creating video of storytelling, creating stories and another task such as joining competition of storytelling. Completely, in relation to learning outcome, the students think that the outcomes are advantageous, they can be in the form of books, audio or video storytelling.

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- Author contribution** : Asep Amrillah was responsible for the entire research project. He initiated the writing of the manuscript and the collaboration with the second author. Nur Fatimah participated in the data analysis and she reviewed as well as revised the manuscript. Muhamad Argi Afriandi assisted in proofreading the final manuscript.
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