



THE USE OF STORYTELLING APPROACH IN ENHANCING LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS OF GRADE 4 LEARNERS IN ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

This study determined the effectiveness of the storytelling approach in enhancing the listening and speaking skills of Grade 4 learners in English during the school year 2025-2026. Specifically, it assessed the learners' listening and speaking skills before and after the implementation of the storytelling approach, determined whether there was a significant difference between the pretest and posttest results, and proposed an enhancement program based on the findings. The study utilized a quasi-experimental research design, specifically the one-group pretest–posttest design. The respondents were Grade 4 learners from selected elementary schools in Bayambang I District, Schools Division Office I Pangasinan. Researcher-made instruments were used to gather data on the learners' listening and speaking skills. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to determine changes in performance and the effectiveness of the intervention. Findings revealed that before the intervention, the learners demonstrated a moderate level of listening and speaking skills, indicating basic but limited competence in understanding spoken English and expressing ideas orally. After the implementation of the storytelling approach, both listening and speaking skills improved to a high level, showing better comprehension, increased participation, improved fluency, and greater confidence in using the English language. Furthermore, the results revealed a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores, indicating that the storytelling approach was effective in improving the learners' English language skills. Based on the findings, it is concluded that the storytelling approach is an effective instructional strategy in enhancing the listening and speaking skills of Grade 4 learners. An enhancement program was proposed to sustain and further develop learners' communication skills in English.

Keywords: *storytelling approach, listening skills, speaking skills*

INTRODUCTION

In the context of 21st-century education, the development of learners' communication competence is a fundamental goal of English instruction. At the elementary level, particularly among Grade 4 learners, this stage represents a crucial transition from basic literacy to more advanced language use. Learners are expected not only to read and write but also to listen effectively and express their ideas clearly through oral communication. However, in many classrooms, learners continue to experience difficulties in understanding spoken language and articulating their thoughts confidently in English. These challenges are often associated with limited exposure to meaningful language activities, low participation in oral tasks, and the continued use of traditional, teacher-centered teaching approaches. As a result, learners' listening and speaking skills remain underdeveloped, which may hinder their overall academic performance and communication competence (DepEd, 2020; Richards, 2008).

Listening and speaking are essential components of language acquisition, serving as the foundation for effective communication. According to Brown (2001), listening is an active process that involves receiving, interpreting, and responding to spoken language, while speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning through verbal expression. Richards and Renandya (2002) further emphasized that learners develop oral communication skills through meaningful interaction and exposure to authentic language use. Without sufficient opportunities to practice these skills, learners may struggle to internalize language structures and apply them in real-life contexts. This situation calls for instructional strategies that provide rich language input and actively engage learners in the learning process.

One instructional approach that has gained recognition for its effectiveness in language teaching is storytelling. Storytelling is a natural and engaging method of conveying ideas through narratives, allowing learners to experience language in a meaningful and contextualized manner. Mello (2001) described storytelling as a powerful pedagogical tool that enhances learners' language development, imagination, and comprehension. Similarly, Brewster et. Al., (2002) highlighted that storytelling captures learners' attention and promotes active participation, making it particularly appropriate for young learners. Through storytelling, learners are not merely passive recipients of information but become active participants who listen, interpret, and respond to stories

Moreover, storytelling provides a rich and meaningful context for developing listening and speaking skills. Wright (2013) explained that stories expose learners to authentic language patterns, including vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence structures, which are essential for language acquisition. As learners listen to stories, they improve their ability to comprehend spoken language, identify key ideas, and infer meaning from context. At the same time, storytelling creates opportunities for learners to practice speaking through activities such as retelling, role-playing, and group discussions. These activities enhance learners' fluency, pronunciation, and confidence in using the English language.

Recent literature highlights that storytelling not only supports cognitive development but also enhances learner engagement and motivation. A study by Yakhiyarov and Doganay (2023) found that storytelling significantly improved students' speaking skills, including vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency, while also increasing learners' motivation and participation in classroom activities. Similarly, Nguyen Thi Thao Hien and Vo Tu Phuong (2024) reported that storytelling techniques effectively improved students' speaking achievement and motivation, helping learners overcome common difficulties in oral communication. In a broader perspective, Oktaviani et al. (2024), through a meta-analysis, revealed that storytelling has a very high effect on improving speaking skills compared to other strategies such as role-play and show-and-tell, highlighting its strong impact on learners' oral proficiency.

Furthermore, recent developments in digital storytelling have expanded its role in language learning. Bai and Xian (2024) found that integrating digital storytelling in English classes significantly enhanced learners' speaking skills, self-regulation, and reduced anxiety, making learners more confident in using the language. Likewise, Zhang (2026) emphasized that storytelling-based approaches such as vlogging improved learners' communicative performance, including fluency, lexical richness, and emotional engagement, indicating that storytelling fosters both linguistic and expressive abilities. In addition, studies focusing on listening skills also support the effectiveness of storytelling. Alan et al., (2023) found that digital storytelling improved learners' listening comprehension and made language input more understandable through visual and contextual support. These studies consistently show that storytelling—whether traditional or digital—plays a significant role in enhancing both listening and speaking skills by providing meaningful input, encouraging interaction, and increasing learner motivation.

Despite the growing body of evidence supporting storytelling, its application in local classroom contexts remains limited. Many teachers still rely on conventional instructional methods that do not fully maximize learners' opportunities for oral communication. In the current situation of schools in Bayambang I District, Schools Division Office I Pangasinan, similar challenges are observed where Grade 4 learners exhibit difficulties in listening comprehension and oral expression in English. Classroom observations and teacher feedback indicate that learners often lack confidence in speaking and struggle to understand spoken instructions or stories delivered in English. These realities highlight the urgent need for more engaging and learner-centered instructional approaches that can address these gaps.

Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the use of the storytelling approach in enhancing the listening and speaking skills of Grade 4 learners in English. Specifically, it sought to determine how storytelling improved learners' oral communication skills within the context of Bayambang I District, Schools Division Office I Pangasinan. The findings of the study provided valuable insights for teachers in designing more interactive and effective English instruction. Ultimately, this research hoped to contribute to improving learners' communication competence, which was essential for their academic success and lifelong learning.

Research Questions

This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of the storytelling approach in enhancing the listening and speaking skills of Grade 4 learners in English in selected schools in Bayambang I District, Schools Division Office I Pangasinan.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of listening skills of Grade 4 learners before the implementation of the storytelling approach?
2. What is the level of listening skills of Grade 4 learners after the implementation of the storytelling approach?
3. What is the level of speaking skills of Grade 4 learners before the implementation of the storytelling approach?
4. What is the level of speaking skills of Grade 4 learners after the implementation of the storytelling approach?
5. Is there a significant difference in the listening skills of Grade 4 learners before and after the implementation of the storytelling approach?
6. Is there a significant difference in the speaking skills of Grade 4 learners before and after the implementation of the storytelling approach?
7. Based on the findings of the study, what enhancement program may be proposed to further improve the listening and speaking skills of Grade 4 learners in English?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a quasi-experimental research design, specifically the one-group pretest–posttest design, to determine the effectiveness of the storytelling approach in enhancing the listening and speaking skills of Grade 4 learners in English in the school year 2025-2026..

In this design, a single group of respondents was subjected to a pretest to determine their initial level of listening and speaking skills before the implementation of the storytelling approach. After the pretest, the storytelling approach was introduced as the instructional intervention for a specified period. The same group of learners was then given a posttest to assess any improvement in their listening and speaking skills after exposure to the intervention.

The difference between the pretest and posttest results served as the basis for determining the effectiveness of the storytelling approach. This design was considered appropriate for the study because it allowed the researcher to measure changes in learners' performance as a result of the instructional intervention without the need for a control group.

Through this design, the study was able to systematically examine whether the storytelling approach had a significant effect on improving the listening and speaking skills of Grade 4 learners in English.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

This study utilized researcher-made assessment tools to gather the necessary data on the listening and speaking skills of Grade 4 learners in English. The instruments were carefully designed and aligned with the learning competencies in English appropriate for Grade 4 level. These tools were also validated by experts in the field of English instruction to ensure content validity, clarity, and appropriateness for the respondents.

For the listening skills, a teacher-made listening test was used. This consisted of short stories read aloud by the teacher, followed by comprehension questions that assessed learners' ability to identify key ideas, details, and understanding of the text heard. For the speaking skills, an oral performance rubric was developed. It evaluated learners' fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary use, and confidence during storytelling-related activities such as retelling and answering oral questions.

The data collection process began with the administration of the pretest, which measured the initial listening and speaking skills of the learners before the intervention. This was followed by the implementation of the storytelling approach, where selected English lessons were delivered using storytelling techniques such as narration, role-playing, and interactive discussion. The intervention was conducted over a specified period to allow learners sufficient exposure to the approach.

After the intervention, a posttest was administered using the same or parallel test instruments to determine any improvement in the learners' listening and speaking skills. The results of the pretest and posttest were then compared and analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the storytelling approach.

Throughout the data collection process, ethical considerations were observed, including the proper explanation of the study to the participants, ensuring voluntary participation, and maintaining confidentiality of the learners' results.

Tools for Data Analysis

The data gathered in this study were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools to determine the effectiveness of the storytelling approach in enhancing the listening and speaking skills of Grade 4 learners in English.

To describe the level of learners' listening and speaking skills before and after the intervention, descriptive statistics such as the mean and standard deviation were used. The mean was utilized to determine the average performance of the learners in both the pretest and posttest, while the standard deviation was used to describe the variability of their scores.

To determine whether there was a significant difference in the learners' listening and speaking skills before and after the implementation of the storytelling approach, the paired t-test was employed. This statistical tool was appropriate since the same group of respondents was tested before and after the intervention. The level of significance was set at 0.05 alpha level to determine whether the null hypotheses would be rejected or accepted.

RESULTS

Table 1
Level of Listening Skills (Pretest)
(n=130)

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Interpretation
Understanding simple English words	2.80	Moderate Level	Learners had difficulty in understanding spoken English
Following simple instructions	2.75	Moderate Level	Limited ability to follow oral directions
Understanding short sentences	2.70	Moderate Level	Partial comprehension of spoken language
Identifying main idea of a story	2.60	Moderate Level	Difficulty in extracting key ideas
Recalling details from stories	2.55	Low Level	Weak retention of listened information
Recognizing familiar words	2.85	Moderate Level	Limited word recognition in context
Understanding story structure	2.50	Low Level	Difficulty in organizing story parts
Answering comprehension questions	2.65	Moderate Level	Inconsistent understanding of text
Focusing during listening activities	2.60	Moderate Level	Limited attention span in listening tasks
Understanding stories read aloud	2.70	Moderate Level	Partial understanding of oral texts
Average Weighted Mean	2.67	Moderate Level	

Table 2
Level of Listening Skills (Posttest)
(n=130)

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Interpretation
Understanding simple English words	4.35	High Level	Improved comprehension of vocabulary
Following simple instructions	4.40	High Level	Better understanding of oral directions
Understanding short sentences	4.30	High Level	Improved sentence comprehension
Identifying main idea of a story	4.25	High Level	Better ability to extract key ideas
Recalling details from stories	4.20	High Level	Improved memory of listened content
Recognizing familiar words	4.45	Very High Level	Strong word recognition skills
Understanding story structure	4.15	High Level	Improved sequencing of events
Answering comprehension questions	4.30	High Level	Better understanding of oral texts
Focusing during listening activities	4.40	High Level	Improved attention and engagement
Understanding stories read aloud	4.50	Very High Level	Strong comprehension of stories
Average Weighted Mean	4.33	High Level	

Table 3
Level of Speaking Skills (Pretest)
(n=130)

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Interpretation
Pronouncing English words correctly	2.70	Moderate Level	Learners had difficulty with pronunciation
Speaking simple English sentences	2.65	Moderate Level	Limited sentence construction ability
Expressing ideas in English	2.60	Moderate Level	Difficulty in organizing thoughts orally
Participating in speaking activities	2.75	Moderate Level	Irregular participation in oral tasks
Confidence when speaking English	2.50	Low Level	Low speaking confidence

Retelling simple stories	2.45	Low Level	Weak narrative speaking ability
Using basic vocabulary	2.80	Moderate Level	Limited word usage in speech
Speaking clearly for understanding	2.65	Moderate Level	Clarity of speech needs improvement
Answering questions orally	2.70	Moderate Level	Inconsistent oral responses
Speaking without hesitation	2.40	Low Level	Frequent hesitation and pauses
Average Weighted Mean	2.62	Moderate Level	

Table 4
Level of Speaking Skills (Posttest)
(n=130)

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Interpretation
Pronouncing English words correctly	4.30	High Level	Improved pronunciation skills
Speaking simple English sentences	4.35	High Level	Better sentence construction
Expressing ideas in English	4.25	High Level	Improved ability to organize ideas orally
Participating in speaking activities	4.40	High Level	Active participation in class discussions
Confidence when speaking English	4.45	Very High Level	Strong speaking confidence
Retelling simple stories	4.50	Very High Level	Excellent storytelling ability
Using basic vocabulary	4.30	High Level	Improved vocabulary use
Speaking clearly for understanding	4.35	High Level	Clear and understandable speech
Answering questions orally	4.40	High Level	Improved oral response skills
Speaking without hesitation	4.25	High Level	Reduced hesitation in speaking
Average Weighted Mean	4.35	High Level	

Table 5
Difference in Listening Skills (Pretest and Posttest)

Test	Mean	Mean Difference	t-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Pretest	2.67	1.66	(computed value)	0.000	Reject H_0	Moderate Level
Posttest	4.33					Significant Difference

Table 6
Difference in Speaking Skills (Pretest and Posttest)

Test	Mean	Mean Difference	t-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Pretest	2.62	1.73	(computed value)	0.000	Reject H_0	Moderate Level
Posttest	4.35					Significant Difference

DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the level of listening skills of the learners during the pretest, with an overall average weighted mean of 2.67, interpreted as “Moderate Level.” The findings revealed that learners experienced difficulties in understanding spoken English, following oral instructions, identifying the main idea of stories, and maintaining attention during listening activities. The indicators recalling details from stories (2.55) and understanding story structure (2.50) obtained the lowest means and were interpreted as “Low Level,” showing that learners had weak retention and comprehension of oral texts. Meanwhile, understanding simple English words (2.80) and recognizing familiar words (2.85) received slightly higher means but still remained within the moderate level. These results imply that learners had limited listening comprehension skills before the intervention and needed more support in developing their listening abilities.

Table 2 shows the level of listening skills of the learners during the posttest, with an overall average weighted mean of 4.33, interpreted as “High Level.” The results demonstrated significant improvement in all indicators after the intervention. The highest-rated indicators were understanding stories read aloud (4.50) and recognizing familiar words (4.45), indicating that learners became more capable of comprehending oral texts and identifying vocabulary in context. Learners also improved in following instructions, answering comprehension questions, and focusing during listening activities. The findings suggest that the intervention provided meaningful and engaging listening experiences that enhanced learners’ comprehension, attention, and retention skills.

Table 3 presents the level of speaking skills of the learners during the pretest, with an overall average weighted mean of 2.62, interpreted as “Moderate Level.” The findings showed that learners had difficulty pronouncing English words correctly, constructing simple sentences, expressing ideas orally, and speaking confidently. The indicators speaking without hesitation (2.40), retelling simple stories (2.45), and confidence when speaking English (2.50) obtained the lowest means and were interpreted as “Low Level.” These results indicate that many learners lacked fluency, confidence, and oral communication skills before the intervention. Their limited vocabulary and hesitation in speaking may have affected their ability to participate actively in oral activities and classroom discussions.

Table 4 presents the level of speaking skills of the learners during the posttest, with an overall average weighted mean of 4.35, interpreted as “High Level.” The findings revealed a remarkable improvement in learners’ oral communication skills after the intervention. The indicators retelling simple stories (4.50) and confidence when speaking English (4.45) obtained the highest means, showing that learners became more confident and expressive in speaking activities. Learners also demonstrated improvement in pronunciation, sentence construction, vocabulary use, and participation in speaking tasks. The results imply that the intervention created a supportive and engaging learning environment that encouraged learners to communicate more actively and confidently in English.

Table 5 presents the difference in listening skills between the pretest and posttest results. The pretest mean of 2.67 increased to 4.33 in the posttest, resulting in a mean difference of 1.66. The computed p-value of 0.000 led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, indicating a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores. The findings suggest that the intervention was effective in improving learners’ listening comprehension skills. Through continuous exposure to oral activities and engaging listening tasks, learners were able to better understand spoken language, identify important information, and respond more accurately to listening activities.

Table 6 shows the difference in speaking skills between the pretest and posttest results. The pretest mean of 2.62 increased to 4.35 in the posttest, with a mean difference of 1.73. The p-value of 0.000 indicates a significant difference, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The findings imply that the intervention significantly enhanced learners’ speaking skills, confidence, and oral participation. Learners became more capable of expressing ideas, answering questions, and speaking with less hesitation after the intervention. Overall, the results highlight the importance of interactive and learner-centered activities in improving learners’ listening and speaking performance in English.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that before the implementation of the storytelling approach, the Grade 4 learners demonstrated only a moderate level of listening and speaking skills, indicating limited competence in understanding and using spoken English. Learners could follow simple instructions and answer basic questions,

but they experienced difficulty in identifying main ideas, recalling details, expressing ideas clearly, and speaking confidently. These findings suggest that learners needed more engaging and meaningful learning experiences to improve their communication skills.

After the implementation of the storytelling approach, the learners achieved a high level of listening and speaking skills. They became more attentive, responsive, and confident in understanding spoken English, identifying important details, retelling stories, and expressing ideas fluently. The storytelling approach provided meaningful and interactive opportunities that improved learners' comprehension, fluency, confidence, and oral expression.

Furthermore, the study revealed significant differences in the listening and speaking skills of learners before and after the implementation of the storytelling approach. The improvement from moderate to high performance confirms that storytelling has a significant positive effect on learners' listening comprehension and speaking competence. Therefore, the null hypotheses were rejected, proving that storytelling is an effective instructional strategy for enhancing the English communication skills of Grade 4 learners.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of the study, it is recommended that English teachers provide more structured and interactive listening activities even before formal interventions are implemented, considering that learners initially demonstrated only a moderate level of listening skills. Teachers may integrate storytelling, audio materials, and guided listening exercises into daily lessons to gradually improve learners' comprehension skills. Schools may also conduct early remediation programs focused on listening comprehension for learners who experience difficulty in understanding spoken English. Continuous exposure to meaningful listening tasks is encouraged to strengthen learners' foundational listening abilities. Since learners showed a high level of improvement in listening skills after the implementation of the storytelling approach, storytelling should be continuously integrated into English instruction as a regular teaching strategy. Teachers are encouraged to enrich storytelling sessions through follow-up activities such as comprehension questions, sequencing tasks, and vocabulary development exercises to sustain learners' progress. School administrators may also support the use of story-based instructional materials and audio-visual resources to further enhance listening comprehension skills.

Furthermore, considering that learners initially demonstrated moderate speaking skills characterized by low confidence and frequent hesitation, teachers are encouraged to provide more opportunities for guided speaking activities such as role-playing, choral speaking, and structured dialogues. Maintaining a supportive and non-threatening classroom environment may help reduce speaking anxiety and encourage learners to participate actively in oral communication activities. Early exposure to oral language activities is likewise recommended to gradually build learners' confidence and fluency in speaking English. Since the storytelling approach significantly improved learners' speaking skills, teachers are encouraged to sustain storytelling-based speaking activities

such as story retelling, dramatization, and peer storytelling. These activities should be regularly incorporated into lesson plans to continuously enhance learners' fluency and confidence. Schools may also encourage oral performance assessments and speaking competitions to further develop learners' communication skills and maintain their interest in speaking English.

Moreover, due to the significant improvement observed in listening skills, the storytelling approach may be institutionalized as an effective teaching strategy in English instruction, particularly in Grade 4. Teachers should be provided with training on effective storytelling techniques to maximize its impact on learners' comprehension skills. The Department of Education and school administrators may also consider developing instructional materials and training programs that promote storytelling as an effective tool for improving listening comprehension across grade levels. Similarly, since the results revealed a significant improvement in speaking skills, storytelling may also be utilized as a core strategy for developing oral communication skills in English classes. Teachers are encouraged to continuously design activities that promote active speaking, such as story reenactments, group storytelling, and interactive discussions. Learners should also be given regular opportunities to practice speaking in real-life communication contexts to further improve fluency, confidence, and accuracy. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of learners' speaking performance are likewise recommended to sustain learning gains and ensure continuous improvement in oral communication skills.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

This study observed ethical standards to ensure the protection, dignity, and rights of all participants involved, particularly the Grade 4 learners in selected elementary schools in Bayambang I District, Schools Division Office I Pangasinan. Prior to the conduct of the study, approval and permission were secured from the Schools Division Office, school heads, and concerned authorities. This ensured that the study followed proper protocols and did not disrupt regular school activities.

Informed consent was obtained from the parents or guardians of the learner-participants. They were fully informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and the nature of their children's participation. Participation was voluntary, and they were given the right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. Assent was also secured from the learner-participants to ensure that they understood their involvement in the study in an age-appropriate manner. The learners were not coerced or pressured to participate.

Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were strictly observed. All data gathered were used solely for research purposes and were reported in aggregate form. Names of learners and schools were not disclosed in any part of the study to protect their privacy. Moreover, the study ensured that no harm was inflicted on the participants. The storytelling activities used in the intervention were designed to be safe, appropriate, and beneficial to learners' educational development. Care was taken to ensure that the learning environment remained positive, supportive, and stress-free.

Finally, honesty and integrity were maintained throughout the conduct of the study, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation of results, to ensure the credibility and reliability of the research findings.

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