

## Improving the EFL Learners' Speaking Ability through Interactive Storytelling

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### Abstract

This present research was aimed to improve the EFL learners' speaking ability and their classroom activities through the implementation of Interactive Storytelling Strategy. Therefore, this study was directed to explore the beneficial of Interactive Storytelling that closely related to the EFL learners' everyday activities at their home and school. The subject consisted of 22 of Junior High of Indonesian EFL learners. A Classroom Action Research in two cycles had been conducted within 6 meetings for every cycle. The meetings were focused on the interactivity and communicative ability among learners. The research result showed that the learners' speaking ability improved from 17 or 72,27% passed in Cycle 1 to 22 or 100% passed the criteria of success in Cycle 2. It also showed that their classroom activities improved from 8 or 36,36% who were very active (VA) and 14 or 63,64% who were active (A) to 18 or 81,82% were very active (VA) and 4 or 18,18% were active (A). In conclusion, the implementation of Interactive Storytelling Strategy increased the EFL learners' speaking ability and their classroom activities.

**Keywords:** Interactive Storytelling, classroom activities, speaking performance.

## A. Introduction

In recent years, applied researchers have become increasingly interested in improving learners' communicative competence in English language teaching and learning. Therefore, many researchers take learners' speaking involvements as their research as well as to find a strategy how to improve the learners' speaking ability, such as that of Shahini & Riazi (2011) and Farida & Sofwan (2012). Consequently, this view has been receiving a considerable support widely. For example, Koşar & Bedir (2014) explains that learners' speaking ability is an important skill to be improved to make the learners conduct communication directly. In the same vein, Razmjoo & Ardekani (2011) reveals that the teacher's effort in proposing learners to articulate their ideas and opinions are highly expected. Therefore, communicative ability becomes an important goal in the teaching and learning process (Boonkit, 2010).

Learners, in the same way, want to be proficient in speaking skill. Many of them try to focus on their speaking rather than other skills. Numerous numbers of language learners have been emphasizing their attention in mastering speaking competence (Richard & Renandya, 2002). This is in line with Graham (2007) who explains that most learners believe that the important goal in learning English is how to be able to sustain the flow of conversation orally. By mastering this skill, learners can actively get involved in the run of conversation as well as reciprocating the information with others (Rohmah, 2012).

The necessity of developing proficiency in speaking as proposed by Richard & Renandya (2002) and Graham (2007) above must bring many advantages to the English learning process, especially in speaking skill. However, some classroom instructions suffer from limitation of the learners' communicative interaction. Some research projects in Indonesian EFL learners, such as that of conducted by Efrizal (2012) and Akhyak & Indramawan (2013) found different circumstances. Those research projects display some conditions that the EFL learners' speaking skill is still unsatisfactory. Many learners, in learning process, were unmotivated in bearing their speaking in classroom activities. The learners seemed reluctant to reveal their thought when they had something to speak (Faulin & Soefendi, 2013). Another problem that made them difficult to convey their ideas was that they did not feel confident. Some of them might try to speak but then got stuck when they found that it was difficult to keep on conveying their ideas in English (Juhana, 2012), they then switched to their native language to continue expressing their ideas.

Looking at the challenges above, an appropriate strategy need to be applied to involve the learners in the speaking activity, as well as having them build up conversation based on the topic given to them. Moreover, it seems necessary to provide an interesting material, which is well known by the learners so that they can easily get in touch with that material (Katsara, 2015). The obvious condition regarding the EFL learners in the schools, a remote area school in Bombana, Indonesia, was that the learners had low speaking ability. They hardly proposed their ideas or reasons in their speaking activities. Therefore, it was advantageous to apply an interactive speaking strategy to improve their speaking.

The learners in that school, fortunately, interested in listening to their teacher telling stories, especially stories that were originated from folktale. In addition, the learners also liked to tell folktale to their friends. They, in many turns, unintentionally

formed a group to tell folktales to each other. Therefore, it is believed that the use of folktale in the Interactive Storytelling Strategy for speaking activity would be beneficial to improve the EFL learners' speaking ability and of their classroom activities. As the material, the teacher chooses a story to be proposed in the teaching and learning process by some consideration that story should be suitable in teaching, the story makes important contribution to the lesson, and story should be easy to understand and interesting.

Theoretically, telling story becomes one of the ways in classroom to learn a new language. It is an important activity to prepare the learners involve in speaking activities (Somdee & Suppasetserree, 2012). It is also an excellent verbal activity to help learners imagine and creates plots as well as improving their speaking performance (Reinders, 2011). Akhyak & Indramawan (2013) also support this point by explaining that storytelling has big impact on improving the learners' motivation to speak.

Furthermore, the use of storytelling strategy can integrate some language skills (Kartiah, Rahman, & Jabu, 2014). For storytellers, it trains them to be creatively using their vocabularies to involve the listeners' imagination, meanwhile for listeners, they will imaginatively connect the story with their experiences. Mall-Amiri & Ghanbari (2014) say that children in the school age are fond of listening and enjoy a story. This means that both of listening and retelling story are two interesting activities for EFL learners. Fortunately, the activities in listening and reading stories can be followed up with speaking activities by retelling the story with the learners' own words. Therefore, through storytelling, the EFL learners can demonstrate their ability to tell the story as well as they can selectively using colorful vocabularies to involve the listeners' imagination. In the same vein to Mall-Amiri & Ghanbari (2014) & Nia, Ghaemi, & Afraz (2013) add that storytelling is a non-threatening way to activate the EFL learners with various language competence.

The storytelling strategy, indeed, has been applied by some researchers, such as that of Atta-Alla (2012), Agustina (2015), and Ono (2014). Those research projects tried to integrate the storytelling as the strategy to improve the EFL learners' language competences. Some research projects, however, consider the ability in retelling story as the main purpose. This present Interactive Storytelling Strategy, fortunately, used the storytelling as the way to improve the EFL learners' speaking competence. The learners would interactively build up communication with teachers and friends, asking and giving help, asking question, and answering questions. This means that the learners will build up communication talking about their ideas, feeling, and experiences related to the story. This strategy will also trigger the learners' motivation to speak since it expects the learners to explore their imagination related to the story then propose it in their speaking. Therefore, this research becomes increasingly important to be applied among the Indonesian EFL learners to improve their speaking ability and that of their classroom activities.

## **B. Literature Review**

This section presents some theoretical backgrounds concerning the learners speaking activities and the importance of the storytelling to improve the learners' speaking ability.

### **1. Storytelling in Speaking Activities**

Telling story becomes one of the ways in classroom to learn a new language. This activity refers to the introducing vocabularies of the new language through constructing them to form story. In line to this point, Dujmovic (2006) explains that storytelling is considered as an important activity that demonstrates the power of words. Here, words are used to make listener imagine what is being told. Moreover, it uses words to enhance verbal expression, increases comprehension, and creates mental image.

The activity concerning storytelling, fortunately, trains the learners to connect their imagination about the events in the story and try to build up relations with their factual environments. Therefore, it is a worth way to involve the learners in the activity of telling stories. Wang & Lee (2007) assert that storytelling is an excellent verbal activity to help learners imagine and creates plots. It also encourages them in building up details, plot prediction, and drawing conclusion. Al-Mansour & Al-Shorman (2011) also support this point by explaining that story has big impact on improving the learners' motivation to speak. Through story, the learners can understand their real situation as well as able to connect their real environment with the imaginable events in the story. Fortunately, the learners have adequate capacity to combine the real situation with their imagination to form new stories. Moreover, the learners can also easily share the story to people around them.

### **2. The Advantages of Storytelling**

The act of storytelling generally brings advantages to the learners. The teacher may use storytelling to create comfortable condition when he/she knows that the learners are moody to study. The teacher can also use storytelling to gain the learners' attention when their focus spread out. In short, the storytelling strategy is beneficial for learners in their learning activities. Pedagogically, storytelling strategy brings advantageous result to improve the learners speaking ability. Mixon & Temu (2006) state that storytelling is an important way that can be applied to provoke the result of learners' learning. From the two points of view above, it can be understood that through storytelling, both of teacher and learners can obtain benefit (Miller & Pennycuff, 2008).

The teacher benefits of trying to organize their way in uttering sentences logically. This means that the teacher effortfully to sequentially tell the story to be understood by learners. In the same way, the learners also get many benefits of telling stories. Jalongo (1992) explains that the teacher effort in sharing stories to the children is essential part of their growth in literacy because stories (1) increase children knowledge and understanding of others races and beliefs, (2) introduce children to a wider range of story sharing experiences, (3) stimulates children imagination, (4) expand vocabularies and provide children with good models of usage, enunciation, and pronunciation, (5) encourage children to listen, concentrate, and follow event-structured material, (6) challenge assumption and introduce new ideas in a nonthreatening way, (7) develop children' thinking skill, (9) increase the children appropriation of literature and reinforce cultural values.

### 3. Ways in Building up Storytelling Ability

There have been efforts to support the learners' ability in constructing stories, especially through school-based process. These efforts are expected to bind the learners' experiences with the story that they are going to tell. Rohmah (2012) gives beneficial solution to improve the learners' ability in storytelling that is asking learners to read the stories and make brief notes for the important events in the story. This step leads the learners to tell the stories using their own words. Besides, she also suggests 3 main activities that can train learners to be creatively constructing their stories, they are single-word story, sentence-story, and writing story in big circle.

#### a. Single-word Story

The single-word story is applied by asking learners to contribute word by word to construct the story. This means that a learner is expected to say a single word that is appropriate to keep the story continues. Technically, this activity can easily be done by asking learners to stand in line and sequentially every learner says a word to continue the story. If every learners has contributed a word in the story while the story still in progress, the activity will still continue by turning to the first learner to continue the story then followed by the next learner until the story complete.

#### b. Sentence Story

This kind of activity proposes learners to contribute their ideas in the form of sentences. So, a learner will say a sentence to continue the story until the story complete. Technically, the process is as same as in the single-word story, the only main different is that this activity requires every learner to contribute a sentence to improve the flow of the story. If the story has not completed yet, the turn continues to the first learner then followed by the next learner until the story complete.

#### c. Writing Story in Big Circle

The process of writing story in this activity is done in a circle. Therefore, the first activity is that requiring learners to form circles. In the process of constructing story, the learners will contribute their idea in the form of sentences. The process is as same as in the sentence story, the only different is that the process is done by writing their sentences to continue the story. Technically, a learner will write his/her sentence in the paper then gives that paper to the next learner to contribute their sentences. If the story have not completed yet, the turn can continue to the first learner then followed to the next learners until the story complete. From the 3 ways above, we can conclude that the storytelling technique requires learners to be actively contributing their ideas for the improvement of story.

In this present research, the researcher applied a new storytelling strategy namely Interactive Storytelling Strategy. The point was that the EFL learners were given a story to read. In their activities, the learners were expected to make display questions and referential questions concerning the story to ask their friends. The learners then share their question to their friends to answer. They could also ask for help to their friends when they found difficulties in the process of retelling the story, asking questions, and answering questions to make the flow learning activities runs interactively. In the last, the teacher gives them solution how they can solve their

problems. These processes are expected to improve the learners' speaking ability and their classroom activities.

### C. Research Methodology

This study was carried out in a remote area school at Bombana, Indonesia. As the purpose of this strategy was to improve the EFL learners' speaking ability and their classroom activities, the design of this study is Action Research by using the Interactive Storytelling Procedures. There were three main indicators as the main concern related to the learners' speaking ability, namely fluency, understandability, and accuracy. Those three indicators were measured using scoring rubrics (the scoring rubric is in Appendix 1). Here, the learners performed their speaking through retelling a story, while the teacher might immediately asked questions concerning the learners' opinion, ideas, feeling, or experiences related to the story. Meanwhile, the aspect of the learners' classroom activities, there were 8 activities that were considered in their learning process. Those 8 activities were (1) asking referential questions, (2) explaining their reasons and or ideas, (3) retelling the story, (4) asking display question, (5) answering their friends' question, (6) helping and or asking for help from each other, (7) responding to the instruction, and (8) answering the teacher's question. These activities were observed using observation checklist (the observation checklist is in Appendix 2). From those indicators, the categorization of learners' classroom activities were 1) very active (VA) addressed for learners who meet 7-8 of the indicators, 2) active (A), for those who meet 5-6 of the indicators, 3) active enough (AE), for learners who meet 3-4 of the indicators, and 4) less active (LA), for those who meet 1-2 of the indicators.

There were eight teaching actions applied as the procedures in Interactive Storytelling Strategy. They were (1) showed the picture and asked some questions to the learners, (2) gave model of retelling the story, (3) asked the learners to form groups, gave photocopies of story to the groups, and asked them to read, (4) asked the learners to construct questions then share those questions to their friends, (5) asked the learners to retell the folktale, ask questions, and answer questions, (6) required the learners to ask the teacher, (7) explained and give solution to learners' problems, (8) reminded the learners' difficulties and the solutions how they could solve their problems. Those 8 actions were implemented in four meetings.

In the first meeting, the learners observed a picture related to the story and answer the questions provided by teacher. They then paid attention to a story told by teacher as a model. The next activities were that the learners were arranged into groups and were given story to read. The learners were also given solutions if they found difficulties in understanding the story. Finally, the learners wrote display and referential question related to the story to be used in questions session. In the process of constructing questions, the learners were required to ask for help to their friends when they found difficulties in seeking appropriate vocabularies to complete their questions.

In the second meeting, the learners shared their questions and they interactively discussed the points of their questions. The learners also required confirmation from their friends when they found difficulties in understanding their friends' questions. The activities of asking and giving help among learners also took place here. In this process, the learners were guided and were given solutions when they faced asperities in their

activities. In the last, the learners shared their obstacles during their activities to be explained and given solutions.

In the third meeting, the learners were reminded their last meeting difficulties as well as the ways to solve those problems. They then listened to a story told by teacher as their model then answered the questions provided by teacher. After that, the learners retold the story, asked questions, and answered their friends' questions in their groups interactively and simultaneously. In this process, the learners helped each other when they found obstacles in retelling, asking questions, and answering questions. The learners were also guided during their activities.

In the fourth meeting, the learners were required to answer the teachers' questions. After that, the learners interactively and simultaneously retold the story, asked questions, and answered their friends' questions in the groups. The activity of asking for help and giving help among learners also took place in this process. Moreover, the learners were also guided and were given feedback during their activities.

The criteria of success in this research were that in the aspect of the learners' classroom activities, the learners should increase their activities at least 50% very active while the rest are active. Meanwhile for their speaking performance, the learners who failed in the semester test should increase 15 point, and for those who passed the semester test should increase 8 point to be considered gain the criteria of success.

#### D. Findings

The research findings showed the two aspects of the EFL learners' improvement, they were the learners' classroom activities and their speaking performance.

The data resulted from the learners' classroom activities in the second cycle were 4 learners (18.18%) Active and 18 learners (81.82%) Very Active. Since the result of the first cycle were there were 14 learners (63.64%) Active and 8 learners (36.36%) Very Active, it showed that in the second cycle the number of Active learner decrease 10, and consequently, the number of Very Active learners increased 10. This means that the learners' classroom activities improved from 36.36% became 81.82%.

Table 1. The Distribution of the Learners' Classroom Activities in the First and the Second Cycle

Indicators	The first cycle		The second cycle	
	Frequenc	%	Frequenc	%
Asking referential questions	5	22.73	13	59.09
Explaining their reasons and or ideas	10	45.45	15	68.18
Telling the folktale	22	100	22	100
Asking display question	22	100	22	100
Answering their friends' questions	22	100	22	100
Helping and or asking for help from	10	45.45	22	100
Responding to the teacher's instruction	22	100	22	100
Answering the teacher's questions	22	100	22	100
Very Active	8	36.36	18	81.82

Active	14	63.64	4	18.18
Active Enough	-	-	-	-
Less Active	-	-	-	-

It can be seen in the Table 1. that the learners' activities improved in 3 indicators, namely asking referential questions, explaining reasons or ideas, and helping and asking for help from each other. The other indicators had gained 100% since in the first cycle so that the focuses of activities to be improved were those 3 indicators. To focus to those three aspects did not mean to neglect other aspects, but it was meant to keep the flow of other aspects and in the same time to improve those three aspects to make the learning process more lively.

Therefore, in the second cycle, during the learning activities, the EFL learners who wanted to ask referential questions and those who wanted to explain their ideas but then got stuck because of the lack of vocabularies, were required to ask for help to their friends. Moreover, their friends were expected to provide the intended words to be used by the speakers. This activity did not only help the speaker in producing referential questions and explaining ideas, but also increased their vocabulary mastery, improved their ability in retelling the story, and also increased their ability to choose appropriate words in their speaking activities. So, by this single way, the learners improved their classroom activities in 3 indicators in the same time namely asking referential questions, explaining their reasons, and helping and asking for help from their friends. This process made the learners' classroom activities improved significantly.

The data concerning the learners' speaking performance shows that there were 5 learners (22.73%) failed while the 17 others (77.27%) passed in the first cycle. Fortunately, in the second cycle, all the learners (100%) passed their speaking performance. The list of the learners' score before and after the implementation of strategy is shown in Appendix 3.

Table 2. The Result of the Learners' Speaking Performance

	Score in the first cycle		Score in the second cycle	
	Passed	Failed	Passed	Failed
Frequency	17	5	22	-
Percentage	77.27	22.73	100	-

Table 2. explains that all the learners succeed improve their score equal or beyond the criteria that had been settled earlier in the second cycle. This means that the learners' scores in fluency, understandability, and accuracy successfully passed the criteria of success.

The way in improving the EFL learners' fluency, understandability, and accuracy was done under a single complete way. First of all, the learners were required to understand the overall content of the folktale, then they were asked to write questions to be used in their activities. The questions consisted of display questions and referential questions. Moreover, the teacher instigated the learners' imagination by picturing unreal condition such as how if the occasions in the folktale change to other



occasions and what the learners would do if the folktale really happened in their environment. Next, the learners shared their questions to their friends to be answered. Finally, they were assigned to study the folktale as well as to be able to ask as many questions as they had and answer all the questions would be asked by their friends. These steps prepared the learners to do their activities in retelling the folktale, asking display and referential questions, answering questions, and explaining their reasons and ideas. By these preparations, the learners significantly improved their fluency in speaking, understandability of their intention, and the accuracy of their sentences in their speaking performances.

## **E. Discussion**

In regard to the findings, it shows that this research resulted at improving the learners' classroom activities and of the quality of their speaking performance. This result was in line with many other research projects conducted by researchers, such as that of Mokhtar, Halim & Kamarulzaman (2010) and Mall-Amiri & Ghanbari (2014). Those two research projects and many other studies agree that storytelling has many advantages in classroom learning.

Mokhtar et al. (2010) explain that storytelling is not only advantageous for classroom activities, but also beneficial for the curriculum enhancement. These present findings also support Mall-Amiri & Ghanbari (2014) study in their point about improving the learners' comprehension as well as their ability to use colorful vocabularies through storytelling. Fortunately, the finding of this present research adds some points regarding the improvement the learners' fluency in speaking, understandability of their intention, and accuracy in their speaking performance.

The successfulness of the Interactive Storytelling strategy applied in this research was determined by the appropriateness of steps implemented by the teacher in the teaching procedures. Those steps can be seen through the improved aspect they dealt with.

### **a. Discussion on the Learners' Classroom Activities**

The findings of this research significantly improved the EFL learners' classroom activities in the aspects of (1) asking referential questions, (2) explaining their reasons and or ideas, (3) retelling the folktale, (4) asking display questions, (5) answering their friends' questions, (6) helping or asking for help from each other, (7) responding to the teacher's instructions, and (8) answering the teacher's questions.

The steps in this strategy were very beneficial to involve the learners in their classroom learning activities. Moreover, one single step in this strategy resulted in some learners' activities improve. Here are the improved learners' activities based on the steps applied in this strategy.

#### *1. Asking referential questions, asking display questions, and helping each others*

The learners were able to improve their activity in asking referential questions because they were required to construct their questions before the activity of asking questions conducted. The learners were given chance to construct their questions—display and referential questions—that would be used for asking their friends after retelling the folktale. In line with this activity, Hopkins (2008) explains that learners

need chance to articulate their questions to produce not only literal questions, but also inference or deduction questions. This process led the learners to be able to ask either display questions or referential questions (Hadijah, 2014).

The interactive process of asking for help and giving help were generated in the process of constructing questions. The learners were required not to hesitate to ask for help from their friends either in their group or to other groups if they found difficulties in constructing their questions. To avoid the learners' hesitation, the teacher briefly taught the learners how to ask for help to their friends. Besides, the teachers also required the learners to be cooperatively to each other. Therefore, they were also required to help their friends if their friends got difficulties in arranging their questions. To improve the interactivity, the process of helping and asking for help were also applied in the process of retelling the folktale, asking questions, and answering questions among the learners.

In their activities, the listeners were required to provide vocabularies that their friends might need when they found their friends got stuck and had obstacles in the process of retelling, asking, or answering questions. In the same way, the learners who got difficulties in doing their activities were expected not to hesitate to ask for help from their friends. In line with the activities above, Richard & Renandya (2002) explain that group is the place to gain mutual helpfulness and to increase active participation from all the group members. In addition, Naylor & Martinez (2011) add that groupwork encourages the learners' interaction and willingness to help each other. So, by helping their friends in retelling, asking, and answering questions, the learners got mutual advantages for sustaining their activities (Nguyen, Rezik, & Gillet, 2005). The mutual advantages here are enriching their vocabulary mastery, improving their ability in retelling, asking, and answering questions, and also increasing their ability to use or to choose appropriate words in their speaking activities (Witkowski & Baker, 2012).

## *2. Ability in explaining ideas and reasons*

The advantages of mutual helpfulness above led to another advantage namely the learners were able to improve their ability to give explanations or reasons for their answers (Dooly, 2008). The fact was that when one's vocabularies enriched and his/her ability to use or to choose words increased, giving explanations or reasons would be easier (Meyer, Haywood, Sachdev, & Faraday, 2008). Plaister (2008) explains that vocabulary enrichment has strong relationship with reasoning ability, which means that the rich vocabulary one has, the better reasoning that one will be. This is also supported by Russel & Wariua-Nyalwal (2015) by explaining that to give better and understandable explanation, the vocabulary becomes a crucial aspect, especially in learning foreign language.

Another supporting technique in improving the EFL learners' ability in explaining ideas and reasons was that the use of "imagine how if". The learners were expected to imagine: (a) how if the occasions in the story were changed to other occasions and (b) how if the story really happened in their environments. This technique broadened the learners' imaginations and stimulated their critical thinking to construct reasons to answer questions (Coughlan, 2007; Samli, 2011). Wood & Endres (2011) and Wood & Endres (2011) agree that building up learners' imagination brings

better result in understanding a narrative text as well as to be creatively connecting events in the text to other circumstances.

In the same way, the "imagine how if" technique also triggered the learners' ability to answer questions and formulated their reasons or explanation for their answers (Lohman & Lakin, 2009). In line with this fact, Kagan & Kagan (2009) explain that letting the learners to take ownership and contribute their own ideas to a work can trigger their motivation in doing the work. Here, this can be seen that the technique of "imagine how if" served the learners chance to take ownership (Nunan, 2003) of the folktale and gave them free conditions to contribute their opinion and ideas in the folktale.

### *3. Ability in answering their friends' questions and asking questions*

Some steps that were applied to improve the learners speaking performance also contributed to the improvement of learners' classroom activities. One of those steps was the learners were expected to ask questions to the teacher. In the process of asking questions, the teacher gave model of answering the learners' questions. So, the learners modeled the way to answer questions. In addition, the teacher made an effective way to guide the learners in questioning. For learners whose questions were grammatically incorrect and affected the intention of the questions, the teacher guided those learners so that they could decide the focus of their questions, then the teacher answered the questions. Meanwhile for those whose questions were grammatically incorrect but did not affect the intention of the questions, the teacher only gave appropriate correction to those questions then answered the questions.

Giving acceptable feedback and appropriate correction were able to keep the learners' enthusiasms in asking questions (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Talley (2014) explains that offering suggestion or giving appropriate correction can help the EFL/ESL learners to improve in their learning. This means that directing the focus of the learners' questions can help them to produce other better questions. Furthermore, Billah (2015) adds that feedback and correction lead the learners to grow and improve. This explains that it is a beneficial contribution for EFL learners when they are directed through feedback and correction (Agbatogun, 2011). This process can improve their self-confidence and way of thinking in providing questions (HatziaPOSTOLOU & Paraskakis, 2010). So, through this activity, the learners were guided to be effortfully providing clear and right questions to be used in their classroom activities (Suryati, 2015).

Another important activity in this strategy was that the learners shared their questions to their friends. The learners then tried to understand all their friends' questions. The interactive process took place here when a learner did not understand his/her friends' questions, that one might ask the questions maker to explain what the questions mean. The learners also helped their friends in understanding the questions by explaining their friend's questions. Both of these activities improved the speaking opportunity among the learners (Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Tsou, 2005). So, by these activities, the learners trained themselves to sustain the speaking activities among them. Dhanda (2015) explains that asking clarifying questions can keep the flow of conversation among the EFL learner. This indicates that when a learner clarifies

his/her friend's questions, he/she unintentionally keeps the sustainability of conversation in their activity (Thalheimer, 2003).

#### 4. *Ability to answer questions and retelling the folktale*

Related to the process of sharing and explaining the point of questions, Brown (2007) quoted Long's term (1985, 1996) that is *Interaction Hypothesis*. Brown (2007) explains that when learners build up interaction, either through spoken or written mode, it results in the improvement of communicative ability. Moreover, sharing and explaining the points of their questions improved the learners' preparation to answer their friends' questions and in the same way made the learners to be creatively constructing their questions. This step also led to the improvement of the learners' fluency in speaking, understandability of their points, and the accuracy of their sentences in their speaking performances (Chen & Mykletun, 2014).

In line with the step above, Pitoy (2012) states that the frequently language presentment brings gradual process of experiencing the better result of learning. Fergusson (2014) adds that it is neurologically a repeated and frequent model improve the learners' disposition. This proves that the more the learners practice retelling the folktale, asking questions, and answering question, the better their ability in speaking will be, and this strategy proved both of the two views above (Hernandes & Li, 2007; NEALS, 2010).

#### 5. *Ability to answer and to respond the teacher questions and instructions*

Furthermore, by this strategy, the teacher's questions and instructions were replied satisfactorily by the learners. The learners, through the process of asking for help from their friends, and sometimes from the teacher, gained available vocabularies that made them able to interact to their friends and to the teacher as well (Mehring, 2005). So, the process of answering the teacher's questions and responding to the teacher's instructions could easily be replied. This was because the words production is gained from the previous reception (Saville-Troike, 2006; Tulung, 2013). This means that, in normal condition, the more the learners receipt vocabularies in their previous interaction, the better their speaking will be (Muñoz, 2010; Muñoz & Singleton, 2011).

Moreover, in this research, the teacher provided such a kind of adjusting instructions and questions to the learners. This means that when the learners were given instructions or were asked about something, but they did not respond or answer, the teacher tried to simplify the instructions or the questions to make the learners understand what was meant. Krashen (2013) by his *Input Hypothesis* infers that one of the ways to make the language last in mind is that it must be understood. This argues that it needs the teacher's effort to simplify the language use to make the learners understand. In a different point of view, this way is called *Accommodation Theory* by Myers-Scotton (2006). She explains that the *Accommodation Theory* takes place when the speaker adjusts his/her speaking toward the listener. By the adjustment of the teacher toward the learners' ability, the learner followed the flow of instructions and questions from the teacher as well as involved in the process of learning (Meksophawannagul & Hiranburana, 2014). In the same time, the learners learned the vocabularies introduced by the teacher. So, the process of answering and responding the teacher' questions and instructions flowed understandably.

#### 6. *Ability to retell the folktale, ask, and answer questions*

This research also supported the process of retelling, asking, and answering questions regarding the folktale. When the process of retelling, asking, and answering question was in progress, the teacher went around the groups and gave solutions if the learners found difficulties in their activities. This process was very helpful to improve the learners' classroom activities. Orey (2010) supports this step by introducing the sense of *collaboration*. He reveals that the teacher's effort in supporting and helping the learners rather than evaluating them results in the good accomplishment of their work. Simply, this process was an effective way to help the learners improved their activities (Malin, 2004).

Furthermore, another beneficial activity in this strategy was that the process of asking and answering questions ran simultaneously. This means that a learner who was asked questions could also provide questions in the same time if he/she felt it was needed for the sake of clarification. This process brings a better learning interaction among the EFL learners (Iqbal, Kousar, & Rahman, 2011). So, by improving the interactivity among learners, the learning result will also improve (Alibakhshi & Padiz, 2011).

The teacher also asked the learners' obstacles they found in their activities then gave solution to those problems. This process was very beneficial to improve the learners' ability in retelling, asking questions, and answering the questions (Hadijah, 2014). By this process, the learners realized their difficulties then tried to improve them by solving their problems. Orey (2010) explains that the teacher's role as a model gives advantageous result for learners' learning activities. So, explaining the learners' difficulties with the ways to solve the problems was very advantageous for the learners to continue to the next activities (Karsono, 2014). Moreover, the activity in asking difficulties contributed to improve the learners' interaction with the teacher that resulted in maximizing speaking opportunities in the classroom (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Therefore, it improved their ability to sustain their speaking activities either in the groups or in the individual speaking performance (Fauzan, 2014; Fauzan, 2016).

#### **b. Discussion on Learners' Speaking Performance**

In regard to the result of speaking performance, the strategy applied in this research brought 100% of learners gained the criteria of success that had been settled earlier. This indicates that this research resulted at improving the learners' speaking performance in term of fluency, understandability, and accuracy.

The improvement of learners' speaking performance was derived from the advantage of their activity in formulating questions that it was to improve the their self-confidence. The questions the learners made were used by themselves to ask the teacher, and fortunately, asking the teacher naturally improved their self-confidence. Psychologically, it started from the learners' feeling that they were put in account when they were able to provide questions to the teacher (Robingatin, 2012). Therefore, when a learner successfully accomplishes a hard work, this will support his/her belief about his/her ability (Kagan & Kagan, 2009). The leaners also felt that they could do many other activities since they believe their ability (Marwan, 2008). So, by this understanding, having ability to provide questions to the teacher triggered their self-

confidence to be fluency in retelling the folktale, to be understandable for their points in their speaking, and improve the accurateness of their sentences.

Another point is that the learners felt more anxious if they asked teacher than if they were asked by the teacher. Learners feel more anxious when they believe they are toward something beyond their ability. In line with this believe, Lyness (2013) reveals that some learners feel anxious to build up communication with some older people. So through asking questions to the teacher, the learners were trained to be confidently asking question and later they were expected to be confidently retell the folktale and answer questions (Mahmoodzadeh, 2012). Fortunately, when the learners were able to ask question to the teacher, that means they were able to introduce their questions to the whole class. This process improved their self-efficacy to do other activities in their learning process. Orey (2010) names this as *mastery experiences*. He infers that when a learner is able to do something satisfactory, it leads to the improvement of self-efficacy to do other activities. So, the two psychological backgrounds above naturally increased the learners' self-confidence in their speaking activities.

The activities explained above are all included in the learning process. This seems that all of these activities are not merely slight steps to improve the EFL learners' speaking ability, but it is supported by previous research and experts' opinions why every single activity is advantageous. As the result, through all the ways above, the learners' classroom activities and their speaking performance increased satisfactorily.

## **F. Conclusions and Suggestions**

Here are presented the conclusions and suggestions concerning the findings of this research.

### **1. Conclusions**

This Action Research was completely implemented in two cycles, where each cycle consisted of four meetings. In every cycle, the teacher applied 8 actions that constituted the procedures of the Interactive Storytelling strategy. There are some points obtained as the result of the implementation of the strategy in this research. Those points related to the following: (1) The learners' classroom activities in the first cycle did not meet the criteria of success. Realizing this condition, the teacher revised the strategy by focusing to the simultaneous interaction among learners. Besides, the learners also were required to construct their questions then shared them to their friends to be answered. Through those steps, the learners freely proposed their speaking activity in asking and answering their friends' questions. Fortunately, this activity also improved the learners' activities in asking referential questions, explaining their ideas and reasons, and helping and asking for help from their friends. (2) In the aspect of the learners' classroom activities, it was found that the more the learners effortfully helped their friends, the better their speaking ability. The fact that the learners who always helped their friends by providing vocabularies for their friends to continue their speaking were trained themselves to know and remember many vocabularies. Certainly, through remembering many vocabularies, their ability in speaking increased. (3) The learners' speaking performance in the second cycle increased satisfactory when the learners improved their activities in asking and giving help to their friends. The fact that the learners improved their vocabularies mastery

through the help of their friends and that of made them easily to remember the vocabularies that would be used in their speaking when they always help their friends. (4) It was also found that the more attentive the learners paid attention to their friends retold the story, the better they retold back the story. The fact that the learners, who attentively listened to their friends when retelling the story, repeatedly heard and understood the flow of plots of the story. This made them easily remembered the vocabularies and the plots in the story. Therefore, those learners were able to retell the complete story faster than those who did not.

## 2. Suggestions

A number of suggestions can be addressed based on the result of the research. First, as this present research utilized a single folktale for one cycle. This led all the learners presented a same story in their activities. Therefore, future research projects need to consider using more than one folktale in a cycle. This is by the aim at varying the story to be retold among the learners. By applying such kind of step, the learners will obtain various vocabularies that are beneficial for their vocabulary mastery. Moreover, next studies can adjust the material use (for example using fable for beginner and of using a bit complex story for advance learners). This step can also consider the learners' background knowledge whether or not they fond of listening and retelling folktale, legend, fable, etc.

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