



Improving Speaking Skills by Using Rotating Story at Eight Grade of Mts Bani Salim

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to improve the speaking skills of eighth-grade students at MTs Bani Salim through the implementation of the Rotating Story technique. The research was conducted using a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design consisting of two cycles, each involving planning, action, observation, and reflection stages. The participants were eighth-grade students in the 2024/2025 academic year. Data were collected through speaking tests, classroom observations, field notes, and documentation. The students' speaking performance was assessed based on four aspects: fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. The results showed a significant improvement in students' speaking ability after the implementation of the Rotating Story technique. The overall average score increased from 2.45 in Cycle 1 to 3.57 in Cycle 2. Improvements were observed across all speaking aspects, with pronunciation and vocabulary showing the most notable gains. In addition to quantitative improvement, qualitative findings indicated that students became more active, confident, and engaged in speaking activities. They were able to produce more spontaneous speech, develop ideas more coherently, and interact more effectively with their peers. The findings suggest that the Rotating Story technique provides meaningful opportunities for students to practice speaking in a collaborative and low-anxiety environment. This technique encourages active participation, supports vocabulary development, and enhances students' confidence in oral communication. Therefore, it can be considered an effective and practical alternative strategy for teaching speaking in EFL classrooms, particularly at the junior high school level.

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a central productive skill in learning English because it enables learners to express ideas, negotiate meaning, and participate in real communication. In EFL settings, however, speaking is often one of the most demanding skills because learners must produce language spontaneously while managing vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency at the same time (Hwang et al., 2024). Recent research shows that speaking performance is closely connected to learners' affective conditions, especially confidence, enjoyment, and anxiety, which may either support or hinder oral production (Özdemir & Seçkin, 2025; Sun et al., 2025). Foreign language anxiety, in particular, remains a major barrier because it can reduce learners' willingness to speak, limit participation, and weaken performance in productive tasks (Bashori et al., 2021).

Preliminary observations at MTs Bani Salim showed that students' participation in speaking activities was still low. The classroom atmosphere was dominated by the teacher, so students tended to take passive roles during learning. As a result, students had limited opportunities to practice oral English in meaningful interaction. This condition is important because speaking development requires repeated participation, not only passive exposure to language input. In the context of this study, the preliminary findings also indicated that students were hesitant, nervous, and not yet confident when asked to speak in English.

Further interviews with the English teacher revealed that the students' speaking difficulties were mainly caused by limited vocabulary mastery, fear of making mistakes, and lack of spontaneous speaking experience. These findings are consistent with current research showing that speaking anxiety is influenced by learners' limited linguistic resources and their fear of negative evaluation (Sun et al., 2025). Studies on foreign language anxiety also show that anxiety is dynamic and can fluctuate depending on classroom interaction, task design, and teacher support. Therefore, speaking instruction should not only develop linguistic competence, but also create a safe and supportive learning environment that reduces pressure and encourages students to participate actively (Özdemir & Seçkin, 2025).

One promising way to support speaking development is through Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes meaningful interaction, learner-centered activity, and opportunities for authentic communication. Research in EFL contexts shows that CLT can improve students' communicative competence and confidence because learners are given more chances to use English actively in classroom interaction (Cloudia Ho, 2020). This is especially relevant for junior high school learners who need structured but engaging speaking opportunities. In addition, recent studies on speaking development indicate that interactive tasks can strengthen not only overall speaking performance, but also specific subskills such as fluency, lexicon, grammatical accuracy, and pronunciation (Hwang et al., 2024). Therefore, speaking instruction should be designed to maximize interaction and

reduce the dominance of teacher-centered explanation.

Within this pedagogical orientation, the Rotating Story technique is a relevant alternative because it transforms speaking practice into a collaborative storytelling task. In this activity, students continue a story in turns, respond to their peers' contributions, and build ideas sequentially (Yao et al., 2025). This kind of oral narrative activity is supported by evidence that storytelling can improve vocabulary use, communicative ability, and oral language development. A systematic review and meta-analysis found that narrative interventions, including traditional storytelling and digital storytelling, significantly improve second language learning outcomes, and that both formats can be equally effective (Wu & Chen, 2020). Earlier experimental work also showed that storytelling helps learners develop vocabulary and use words and phrases more appropriately in communication (Mokhtar et al., 2011). These findings suggest that storytelling-based tasks can provide meaningful speaking practice while keeping learners engaged.

Rotating Story also aligns with classroom conditions where students need more structured interaction. Because each student must contribute to the continuation of the story, the technique encourages active listening, spontaneous speech, and peer dependence in a positive way. It may also help reduce anxiety because learners speak in a shared task rather than in isolation. Recent research on speaking-related anxiety suggests that supportive classroom practices such as pair work, group work, positive feedback, and repeated practice can help learners manage anxiety and improve performance (Özdemir & Seçkin, 2025). Likewise, a recent study on technology-supported speaking tasks found that interactive practice can improve speaking skills while also enhancing affective variables such as enjoyment and grit (Bashori et al., 2021; Hwang et al., 2024). For this reason, Rotating Story is expected to be suitable for students who need a low-pressure but communicative environment to practice English orally.

Although storytelling has been widely discussed in language teaching research, studies that specifically examine the application of Rotating Story in Islamic junior high school contexts remain limited, especially at MTs Bani Salim. This gap is important because each school context has its own classroom dynamics, learner characteristics, and instructional challenges. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the implementation of the Rotating Story technique to improve the speaking skills of eighth-grade students at MTs Bani Salim through Classroom Action Research. The study focuses on fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar, while also observing changes in students' participation and confidence during speaking activities. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of more interactive, student-centered, and communicative approaches to speaking instruction in EFL classrooms.

METHOD

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) because the design is suitable for improving classroom practice through repeated cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection. Recent EFL studies show that action research is commonly used when teachers aim to solve local classroom problems and refine instruction step by step, including in speaking lessons (Aljohani, 2022; Manurung, 2015; Zhang & Wang, 2024). The present research was conducted in two cycles. In each cycle, the researcher prepared the lesson plan and learning materials, implemented the Rotating Story technique, observed students' participation and speaking performance, and then reflected on the results to determine the revisions needed for the next cycle.

The participants were eighth-grade students of MTs Bani Salim in the 2024/2025 academic year. Data were collected through classroom observation, speaking tests, field notes, and documentation. Observation and field notes were used to capture students' engagement, interaction, and difficulties during the learning process, while the speaking tests administered at the end of each cycle were used to measure progress in oral performance. The speaking assessment focused on four criteria: fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar (Brown, 2004). This choice is consistent with recent speaking research showing that oral proficiency is commonly evaluated through fluency, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation, and that vocabulary knowledge is an important predictor of speaking performance and fluency (Aljohani, 2022; Istiara et al., 2023; Manurung, 2015; Zhang & Wang, 2024).

Each speaking component was scored on a 1–5 scale. Fluency was judged by the smoothness of speech and the degree of hesitation or pausing; vocabulary was assessed by the range, accuracy, and appropriateness of word use; pronunciation was evaluated by clarity and intelligibility; and grammar was measured by the accuracy and appropriateness of sentence structure. The final speaking score was obtained by averaging the four component scores, and the result was then converted into a percentage of achievement.

The data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Quantitative data from the speaking tests were processed by calculating the mean score of each cycle and the percentage of improvement from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2, while qualitative data from observation sheets and field notes were analyzed descriptively to identify patterns in student participation, classroom interaction, learning difficulties, and the overall implementation of the Rotating Story technique.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The students' speaking performance was measured in two cycles using four indicators: fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Each indicator was scored on a scale of 1 to 5. The results show a consistent improvement from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2 after the implementation of the Rotating Story technique.

In Cycle 1, the students' speaking performance was still in the low category. The average scores indicate that pronunciation obtained the lowest score, while grammar achieved the highest score among the four aspects. Overall, the students were able to produce simple sentences, but their speaking was still characterized by hesitation, limited vocabulary, and weak pronunciation accuracy.

Table 1. The Average Scores of Each Speaking Aspect Test in Cycle 1

No	Assessment Aspect	Average Score	Level of Achievement	Category
1.	Fluency	2.65	53	Poor
2.	Vocabulary	2.30	46	Poor
3.	Pronunciation	2.10	42	Poor
4.	Grammar	2.75	55	Fair
	Overall Average	2.45	49	Poor

The results in Table 2 show that students had not yet performed well in spontaneous speaking. Although grammar was relatively better than the other aspects, the overall speaking achievement in Cycle 1 remained low. After revisions were made in Cycle 2 by providing clearer examples, additional vocabulary support, and more intensive practice through the Rotating Story technique, the students showed better performance in all speaking aspects. The scores improved across fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar, indicating that the students became more confident and more capable of continuing the story with greater ease.

Table 2. The Average Scores of Each Speaking Aspect Test in Cycle 2

No	Assessment Aspect	Average Score	Level of Achievement	Category
1.	Fluency	3.70	74	Good
2.	Vocabulary	3.47	70	Good
3.	Pronunciation	3.45	69	Fair – Good
4.	Grammar	3.65	73	Good
	Overall Average	3.57	70	Good

Table 3 shows that all speaking indicators improved in Cycle 2. Fluency and grammar recorded the highest gains, while pronunciation also increased to a better level. The overall average score rose from 2.45 in Cycle 1 to 3.57 in Cycle 2, showing a clear improvement in students' speaking performance after the implementation of the Rotating Story technique.

Table 3. Comparison of the Average Scores of Each Speaking Aspect in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

No	Assessment Aspect	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Improvement
1.	Fluency	2.65	3.70	+1.05
2.	Vocabulary	2.30	3.47	+1.17
3.	Pronunciation	2.10	3.45	+1.35
4.	Grammar	2.75	3.65	+0.90
	Overall Average	2.45	3.57	+1.12

The comparison in Table 3 confirms that the students experienced improvement in all assessed aspects. The largest gain was found in pronunciation, followed by vocabulary, fluency, and grammar. Overall, the findings indicate that the Rotating Story technique contributed positively to the development of students' speaking ability across the two cycles.

Discussion

The improvement in students' speaking performance from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2 indicates that the Rotating Story technique was effective in promoting oral production in a classroom setting. In this study, the overall mean score increased from 2.45 to 3.57, with the largest gain found in pronunciation, followed by vocabulary, fluency, and grammar. This pattern is consistent with research on oral narrative interventions, which shows that telling and retelling stories can significantly improve language outcomes across contexts. A recent systematic review and meta-analysis found that oral narrative interventions, including traditional storytelling, are beneficial for second-language learning, with the strongest effects often appearing when learners repeatedly engage in meaningful narrative tasks rather than isolated drills (Yao et al., 2025). From this perspective, Rotating Story appears to work because it gives students repeated chances to speak for a communicative purpose while staying anchored in a shared narrative structure (Kim & Tracy-Ventura, 2013).

The gains in fluency and vocabulary are especially important. Vocabulary knowledge is not only a supporting skill but also a direct predictor of speaking ability. Enayat and Derakhshan found that vocabulary size and productive vocabulary knowledge significantly contribute to overall speaking proficiency, as well as to fluency and lexical resource (Janebi Enayat & Derakhshan, 2021). This helps explain why the students in Cycle 2 performed better after receiving vocabulary support before the storytelling activity. When learners have access to more lexical items, they can retrieve words faster, reduce pauses, and sustain longer stretches of speech (Bashori et al., 2021). The present findings therefore suggest that the Rotating Story technique does not improve speaking through practice alone; it also creates repeated lexical retrieval opportunities in a meaningful context, which is likely to strengthen students' word use and verbal flow. That interpretation is also supported by the fact that vocabulary deficits are widely associated with weaker language performance and higher speaking anxiety.

The improvement in pronunciation and grammar may be understood as a gradual effect of repeated oral production and peer-supported interaction. In Cycle 1, students were hesitant and needed more time to continue the story, whereas in Cycle 2 they spoke more confidently and with fewer interruptions. Task-repetition research shows that repeating oral tasks can improve overall L2 performance, with particular benefits for fluency and structural development. Kim and Tracy-Ventura reported that repeated or procedurally repeated collaborative tasks support development in complexity, accuracy, and fluency, even when speech rate does not rise dramatically (Kim & Tracy-Ventura,

2013). Likewise, a later study on repeated oral narratives found that task repetition can assist learners in improving lexical diversity and other CAF dimensions across performances (Muhammadpour et al., 2023). In the current study, the better pronunciation and grammar scores in Cycle 2 may therefore be interpreted as an early form of accuracy development produced by repeated rehearsal, greater familiarity with the task format, and increased attention to form during peer interaction.

Another key explanation lies in the affective dimension of speaking. Speaking success depends not only on linguistic knowledge but also on willingness to communicate, confidence, and anxiety levels. Lee and Hsieh show that self-confidence and low anxiety are strongly associated with willingness to communicate in in-class and out-of-class settings (Lee & Chen Hsieh, 2019). Bashori et al. similarly found that vocabulary-focused intervention could reduce speaking anxiety and increase language enjoyment among Indonesian secondary school learners (Bashori et al., 2021). These findings are relevant to the present study because the Rotating Story technique creates a collaborative, low-pressure speaking environment in which students contribute short segments rather than performing individually in isolation. Such a format likely lowers affective barriers, increases turn-taking confidence, and helps students participate more actively (Bashori et al., 2021; Lee & Chen Hsieh, 2019). Overall, the results suggest that Rotating Story is pedagogically useful because it combines narrative repetition, peer interaction, and reduced anxiety, all of which support speaking development in junior high school EFL classrooms

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Rotating Story technique was effective in improving the speaking skills of eighth-grade students at MTs Bani Salim. The improvement was evident from the increase in students' overall speaking scores from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2, as well as from the development of all assessed aspects, including fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Among these aspects, pronunciation and vocabulary showed the most noticeable progress, indicating that students became more accustomed to producing spoken language and using more appropriate lexical items in context. In addition, qualitative observations revealed that students became more active, confident, and engaged during speaking activities, suggesting that the technique successfully created a more interactive and supportive learning environment.

Furthermore, the findings highlight that the Rotating Story technique not only improves linguistic performance but also enhances students' participation and reduces hesitation in speaking. The collaborative nature of the activity allows students to share ideas, respond to peers, and practice speaking in a less stressful context, which contributes to increased confidence and willingness to communicate.

Therefore, this technique can be considered an effective alternative strategy for teaching speaking in EFL classrooms, particularly at the junior high school level. Future research is recommended to explore the application of this technique in different educational contexts, with larger samples or longer implementation periods, to further examine its effectiveness and potential integration with other communicative teaching approaches.

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