

## **IMPROVING STUDENTS' ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITY THROUGH THE FREE STORY METHOD WITH PICTURE CARD MEDIA**

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**Abstract:** *This study focuses on student problems related to limited ability to communicate in English in class VII-A Pamekasan Middle School. The Free Story method is used in this study, along with picture card media. This study used a classroom action research design which was carried out in two cycles. The results showed that in cycle I, 18 students (66.67%) had the same or higher speaking ability score than the KKM, while nine students (33.33%) had lower scores than the KKM. Because these results did not meet the success criteria, namely at least 85% of students had scores equal to or above the KKM, the research would continue in the next cycle by first revising some of the results.*

**Keywords:** *Talking, free stories, picture cards.*

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini berfokus pada permasalahan siswa terkait keterbatasan kemampuan berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggris di kelas VII-A SMP Pamekasan. Metode Free Story digunakan dalam penelitian ini, beserta media kartu bergambar. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian tindakan kelas yang dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pada siklus I, 18 siswa (66,67%) memiliki nilai kemampuan berbicara yang sama atau lebih tinggi dari KKM, sedangkan sembilan siswa (33,33%) memiliki nilai lebih rendah dari KKM. Karena hasil tersebut belum memenuhi kriteria keberhasilan yaitu minimal 85% siswa memiliki nilai sama dengan atau di atas KKM maka penelitian akan dilanjutkan pada siklus berikutnya dengan merevisi terlebih dahulu beberapa hasil.

**Kata kunci:** Berbicara, cerita bebas, kartu bergambar.

### **Introduction**

The spread of the Corona Virus or also known as Covid-19 is part of the natural dynamics of the times, and is related to the need for life that is oriented towards a clean and healthy culture. No, the very easy transmission process requires everyone to maintain very strict hygiene, especially when in contact with other people (Rudiyanto & Kasanova, 2021). The spread of the virus has changed various policies, mindsets, behaviors and habits in society, starting from villages, districts, countries, even at the global level (Siringoringo & Umar, 2018). This applies except for changes in decisions and plans for school activities as part of the public sphere. Schools require more stringent adaptation activities to follow health protocols planned by the government through the Ministry of Health. This is due to concerns that the school will become a new cluster for placement. Covid 19 (irfan fajrul falah, 2022).

Schools as a central component of activities, education and learning have not been spared from the effects of the pandemic. Covid19. Learning activities are disrupted, eroded, even delayed for a short time. Of course this has an impact on the learning process that was previously scheduled and running well. Carefully planned learning activities must be adjusted and comply with health protocols so that students can continue to participate in learning activities. Changes in the schedule of learning activities in schools not only affect school governance, but also and more importantly, the process of interpreting the results of learning

activities. It gets pretty minimal. Learning activities are efforts to provide understanding to students so they can observe changes in attitudes as a result of this understanding. As a result, when learning activity decreases, the process of increasing knowledge becomes very slow.

Teachers, to overcome this problem, must exert effort so that students' understanding and learning activities can increase. Supposedly, this kind of effort should not only be made when learning activities decrease, such as when a virus or other inhibiting factors are spreading, but it is also expected that teachers under normal conditions try to improve the results of learning activities through the application of a particular method or strategy. Various attempts have been made to improve the language skills of students learning English at school, particularly at the secondary level. Efforts are usually associated with following steps in learning that have previously proven successful. It could also be a new method or strategy that has not been proven successful.

Speaking ability is one of the skills that must be prioritized in research to improve its quality. One of the reasons why speaking ability is interesting to be the focus of research is because the improvement in speaking ability can be easily observed. This means that the description of learning outcomes can be easily known when or after learning activities occur. This is one activity that is directly related to a student's communication skills. As a result, a very simple measurement as evidence of improving students' speaking skills is simply by ordering them to speak (Junia, 2020). When the learning process is ongoing, especially in efforts to improve speaking skills, the reality that we sometimes encounter in the field shows that many students are not motivated and do not have the confidence to express their ideas orally. As a result, they are less active in composing sentences to be spoken. As a result, they tend to close themselves during learning activities. A number of students sometimes only talk about things that can be explored more broadly because they are considered to be within the reach of students' knowledge (Trisnadewi & Purnama Lestari, 2018).

Pamekasan Middle School students, in learning English activities, especially focusing on speaking skills, are also not free from ongoing problems. Not many ideas from students. In learning activities, they tend to be passive and withdrawn. Spirit students feel they don't have enough opportunities to express and explore their ideas or opinions. Next, they look for activities that will help them learn. The above can be seen in the learning outcomes obtained before the spread of Covid-19. From one of the wrong classes, it was found that the number of students was less than half, namely only 11 students or 40.74% completed (determined by comparing student scores with KKM), while the remaining 16 students or 59.26% were considered incomplete. Students lack the ability to speak, even though they have a vocabulary that is considered sufficient for the purpose. Students are impressed that they are not ready or creative enough to express themselves in English. As a result, they are more likely to forget English vocabulary, which they already know and will later express in sentences.

This is very different when they are given questions in the form of memorizing vocabulary. When students were asked vocabulary questions, they answered them fluently and with little difficulty. Likewise, when the question vocabulary is given through a written test, students can easily answer the questions in a short time. The author believes that classes experiencing problems as a result of this should shift their focus from studying to memorizing vocabulary. This is because, according to the author, students already have sufficient vocabulary to communicate. Not to mention learning to compose sentences (Sukatmi, 2009). Consider this because constructing sentences will focus more on tenses, making students more rigid with time rules.

The emphasis of learning that needs to be emphasized is how students can confidently and creatively express sentences using the English vocabulary they already know. Learning that does not focus on tenses does not rule out the rules of constructing sentences, but places more emphasis on expressing ideas from students quickly by using the vocabulary they already know (Hasibuan, 2016). To achieve the above objectives, learning methods and media are able to encourage students to express the ideas they think about confidently and creatively. Furthermore, it is hoped that the methods and media used can increase the level of students' thinking skills (Sukatmi, 2009). By him, the author tries to apply methods and media that according to him are very appropriate to solve student problems. The term "method" refers to the free story method.

The Free Story method is a method in which students are given the freedom to tell their own stories based on their imagination. Expression of imagination, of course, by using vocabulary that has been mastered by students. This method expects students to express sentences consisting of previously learned vocabulary. Or, at least, vocabulary they don't know they can find on their own when they need to express an idea. A number of picture cards are provided as learning media for students with direct imagination. Students are expected to arrange cards freely according to their needs. The next step is for students to make stories to reveal the process and meaning of the pictures that have been compiled (Muhfizaturrahmah & Hermaniar, 2018).

Freehand arrangement of images is possible so that no student is limited to one idea. Students are given the freedom and creativity to put various ideas into stories that might occur from the arrangement of cards they have arranged using the vocabulary they know. This method is also expected to improve higher-order thinking processes. This is important because students can freely explore various possible events that occurred in the past series of picture stories arranged according to their imagination. As a result, the authors believe that by using this method, students' speaking skills will improve (Bahrani & Sim, 2012). Related to the media used in this study, there are several reasons behind the choice of images as media. The first reason is that students are still interested in pictures that reveal certain stories. Although the use of

gadgets is quite wide, the pictures are always interesting for students. This is shown when students visit the library. They prefer story picture books to other types of books. As a result, picture cards are still used as media in learning activities (Siringoringo & Umar, 2018).

The second reason for using picture cards as media is that there is no access to electricity in Pulau Masaloka Raya District, Bombana Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, which can be used for the needs of learning activities, especially in the afternoon. This means that there is no electricity at SMPN Pamekasan. This is not possible if using IT-related media, where electricity is the most basic need. The third reason for using media images is that they must comply with health protocols. The Ministry of Health requires Activities to maintain a safe distance between students is necessary so that each student works independently. And use image media that meets these requirements. This is because each student will work on compiling pictures based on their imagination, which can result in differences of opinion if students work in groups. As a result, using picture card media is considered to be the best choice for areas that do not yet have access to electricity and during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The formulation is based on the explanation on (1) How does the application of the Free Story method with picture card media improve the speaking skills of class VII A SMPN Pamekasan? , (2) How does the application of the free story method with picture card media in class VII A SMPN Pamekasan improve students' speaking skills? The aims of this study were to: (1) describe the steps for implementing the free story method with picture card media which can improve the speaking skills of class VII A students of SMPN Pamekasan, and (2) describe the improvement of students' speaking skills through the application method. Free stories with pictures of media cards for class VII A SMPN Pamekasan students.

## **Method**

Action research by applying the free story method with picture card media in learning activities is a learning design. This research is intended to help students who have difficulty speaking. This means that the problem must be solved using the methods and media that have been planned. The design of the research model used in this study was adapted from Kemmis & Mc. Taggart (Islamiati, 2020) which consists of 4 steps, namely: (1) planning, (2) implementation, (3) observation, and (4) reflection. The determination of the number of cycles in this study was based on the results of the previous cycles. If the results of the application of the free story method with picture card media in one cycle have not been able to solve the problem, then the next cycle is carried out by revising the first step, namely planning which contains learning steps. That is, the next cycle is developed based on the findings in the previous cycle. Rubric Evaluation and Field Notes (Fujianti, 2019) are two important instruments used in this research. When learning activities occur, rubric scoring is used to assess students' speaking

abilities. Understanding of the message to be conveyed, accuracy of pronunciation, and fluency in speaking are three important factors that will be evaluated.

While notes are used to describe students' ability to improve speaking skills while using this method. Notes This purpose is to record things that are considered important but are not included in the Evaluation Rubric. Determines that the free story method with picture card media is considered successful in improving students' speaking skills if 85% of the total class VII A students can increase their grades equal to or higher than the KKM score for English. The KKM value in question is 69. The determination of 85% of the total students is because novice students are considered to be minimal in speaking English.

## **Results and Discussion**

Cycle I free story method with picture card media in learning is completed according to plan in the lesson plan. Preliminary activities such as greetings, prayers, and attendance checks are always held. Researchers who are also English subject teachers continue to communicate Basic Competencies and Goals to be achieved following learning activities. Figure 2 shows a student telling a story based on the cards that have been arranged. After the preliminary activities, orderly do step-by-step learning using the free story method using picture scratch cards as media. Previously, the teacher would show a card to students and then ask about an incident or story that could be assembled from the card. The use of Indonesian is still permitted/allowed during this process. This is done because the students' English speaking ability is still very limited. In this case the teacher will occasionally direct students to help their friends if their friends express words in Indonesian. The assistance provided can be in the form of: telling the English equivalent of the words spoken by their friends in Indonesia.

After completing one card, the teacher will take the next card and ask students what they did on the first card. This activity will continue until the card is finished. Each time the cards are shown, the teacher instructs students to remember and then reveals the vocabulary they already know. If students are still not sure how to express the words correctly, the teacher tries to remind students to return the word. Throughout the process, the teacher encourages students to record important vocabulary that they can use when telling a story. The more knowledge and readiness students have about how to interpret the cards as preparation for telling stories, the better. After showing each card to students one by one, the teacher will ask students to share stories that might occur as a result of the arrangement of the cards. The teacher can also deliberately change the arrangement cards and then ask students to assemble a story with the existing arrangements. Disclosure of stories in a combination of Indonesian and English is still allowed in this process. However, the teacher continues to direct students to use English. A common problem is that students often forget their English vocabulary. To overcome this, the

teacher asks students to help each other by reminding English vocabulary, which their friends can say if they want.

The next step is the teacher shows the picture of the card to the students. Each student is given five cards that are unique to them. The teacher had previously explained that students had to assemble a story based on the available cards. Students are given the freedom to arrange the cards in any way they want. During this process, if students experience difficulties, especially those related to the vocabulary they use when constructing stories, they can seek help from friends. However, teachers still remind students to maintain a safe distance and follow health protocols. If students continue to struggle, they can consult a dictionary or ask the teacher directly. For the purposes of asking questions, the teacher determines that students ask questions in English with the sentence "What is the English of...?" or "How do you say... in English?" In this process, the teacher also asks students to arrange cards not only in one arrangement, but to try different possible arrangements and then tell a story that can be assembled from each arrangement of cards.

The next step is to form groups to speed up the ability to tell stories at one time. Facilitate storytelling skills because students tell stories that are contained in the arrangement cards that have been prepared for their group mates. And improve speaking skills because students are expected to be able to explain questions that might be asked by friends in their groups. During learning activities, students can rearrange the existing cards and tell stories based on their arrangement. And the activity here is the core of the story. This means that students can start with free-arrangement cards and then tell a story based on the arrangement of the cards, then move on to Suite cards and retell the story based on the arrangement of the cards. Even though they are in groups, the sitting position between students is maintained with sufficient distance to ensure that health protocols are complied with at all times. Masks and hand sanitizers must be used by students during and after learning activities.

The final activity of implementing free stories using the media card picture method is that the teacher asks students one by one to tell a story based on the cards they arrange. After listening to the students' story, the teacher deliberately changed the arrangement of the cards and then instructed the students to tell a story based on the arrangement of the cards. That's when the communication process between teacher and student begins. That is, besides the story from the arrangement cards, the teacher expands the questions to test how to improve students' speaking skills after applying the method and using existing media. Teacher questions can include: public school, neighborhood, students, classmates, and other questions designed to assess students' communication skills. Storytelling based on existing cards and conversation results. The result shows data on students' speaking abilities obtained from both the teacher and students, that 18 students (66.67%) experienced an increase in their speaking ability and telling the target. This means that these students have fulfilled the criteria for successful application of

the methods and media that have been held. Consider this because their score is equal to or higher than the KKM score. However, there were 9 students or 33.33% whose speaking ability had not increased significantly. Students, their scores are still below the KKM. As a result, researchers tried to revise several learning steps that were felt to be less supportive of student achievement in improving speaking skills. What is outlined in the learning activities of cycle II is completed in stages.

Cycle II used the free story method with the media of revised experience picture cards, adapted to the needs and seeing students' reactions to the method of implementing the previous cycle. Preliminary activities, which are usually permanent, are carried out by the researcher. After the preliminary activities, step by step learning using the free story method as a result of revision with picture card media began to be carried out in an orderly and planned manner. The card media used in this cycle is different from that used in Cycle I. The activity begins with the teacher showing the cards to students and then asking stories that can be assembled from these cards. This process lasts until the card is finished. When asked, the teacher tried to use English without combining it with Indonesian. For this purpose, the teacher uses English vocabulary that students can understand as well as possible. Teachers often use appropriate gestures to explain what is said so that students understand more. Furthermore, the teacher often repeats vocabulary or sentences that are considered to be important points from the stories contained in the cards. Not only when asked, but also when explaining, the teacher always uses the same method.

If the teacher finds a student using Indonesian, the teacher directs the student to remember the equivalent word in English. Other students are also involved in remembering the equivalent words. That is, the teacher deliberately involves other students to think and remember the vocabulary used to express their thoughts. Thus, the active involvement of all students becomes more focused. The result becomes more uniform. In this process, the teacher still directs students to help their friends if their friends have difficulty remembering vocabulary in English. The teacher also instructs students to record vocabulary that is considered quite important and to wear a mask that permanently covers the nose and mouth. After completing one Suite card, the teacher instructs students to arrange the cards in a unique arrangement and then write a story based on this arrangement. In Cycle II, data on students' speaking abilities were obtained from stories based on existing cards and the results of conversations between teachers and students. What they can use when telling stories is for students to easily recall the words that need to be said. After listening to students' opinions on the cards shown one by one, the teacher then shows all the cards at once and asks students to share any stories that emerge as a result of the cards. During this process, the teacher directs students to express their thoughts/stories in English. Students who still have difficulty using English can open notes related to the vocabulary used when telling a story. You can also ask friends. Other students

who observe their friends' difficulties in using English can help them by expressing which of their friends will use English. This action appears to guess a friend's thoughts about the vocabulary he will express in English. As a result of these actions, students can remember more vocabulary in English. In addition, students' willingness to express their opinions in English is higher. This is because they often hear and also pronounce vocabulary in English.

Students must be given five picture cards. Each student is given a unique card. The cards that are distributed are different cards from those used in Cycle I. Previously the teacher assigned students to compose stories based on the cards available. As in the previous cycle, students are free to arrange cards according to their imagination. To create a class, students must engage in the discussion process, express their thoughts, and ask questions. It becomes hoarse. This consideration is due to the distance between students. In cycle II, group formation is led by free. This means that students are free to form their own groups. This is because they tend to prefer groups of friends with whom they previously discussed, asked, and answered questions. Students become accustomed to telling stories themselves, asking friends for help, and answering questions in groups. The teacher even instructed students to develop their questions during group discussions. If students have difficulty, they can consult a dictionary or ask their teacher directly.

The final activity of the free story method with the application of picture card media is the same as the previous cycle. The teacher asks each student, one by one, to tell a story based on the cards they have collected. After listening to the students' stories, the teacher deliberately changed the arrangement of the cards and then instructed the students to tell stories based on the arrangement of the cards. The process of communication between teachers and students is quite enlightening. This is because, in addition to story cards, the teacher expands the questions to test how much the students' speaking skills improve after applying the method and using existing media. These questions can be in the form of students' hobbies, parents' work, students' professions at home, and other questions that aim to enable students to demonstrate their ability to speak. The result shows that 26 students or 96.30% have scores equivalent to or higher than the KKM, while only 1 student or 3.70% has scores lower than the KKM. Because more than 85% of students have scores equivalent to or higher than the KKM, improving students' speaking skills in Cycle II is considered to have a Fulfill target success method. Figure 2 shows an increase in the number of students who met the success criteria before implementing the strategy, Cycle I, and Cycle II. Figure 2 shows that after using the Free Story method with picture card media in Cycle I, the percentage of students passing in terms of English speaking ability increased by 25.93%, from 40.74% to 66.67%. However, this increase has not met the predetermined success criteria. After Cycle II, the percentage of student passing increased from 66.67% to 96.30%.



The results of the study met the criteria for application methods and use of existing media so that the next cycle was not continued. Thus it can be said that the learning steps implemented in Cycle II are very appropriate in solving problems related to low ability students. The results of the study met the criteria for application methods and use of existing media so that the next cycle was not continued. Thus it can be said that the learning steps implemented in Cycle II are very appropriate in solving problems related to low ability students. If examined more deeply, found several learning activities that really support the achievement of learning objectives. One of them is the disclosure of students' initial ideas, which is done when the teacher shows the picture cards one by one. This activity aims to help students develop ideas gradually. In addition, the purpose of this process is to expand students' vocabulary. Another advantage is that it makes it easier for students to recall previously learned vocabulary. Allison (2014) demonstrated the success of this step by revealing that one way for students to be able to express their opinions confidently is to develop their ideas gradually and constructively. The teacher will then proceed to show the picture cards in their entirety while asking what stories can be assembled from the cards. This method is intended to help students organize their ideas and create well-organized stories (Nashrudin & Ningtyas, 2020).

In the process, the teacher continuously explains to students using simple vocabulary, including frequently repeating vocabulary or sentences that are considered to be the core of the story. As a result, in addition to increasing the quantity of vocabulary, students can also take examples of how to express ideas from the available cards (Aini, Khoyima, & Santoso, 2020). Another step that drives the success of this method is due to the involvement of all students in memorizing vocabulary and helping each other express thoughts. This means that teachers must encourage students to contribute to their learning activities (Fitriah & Muna, 2019). This step proved to be not only effective in expanding students' vocabulary, but also increasing students' confidence in speaking. This is due to the act of helping friends who need knowledge and confidence to provide the help needed (Rahmah & Adnan, 2017). Furthermore, the process of communication in groups makes a significant contribution to improving students' speaking skills. This is because in groups, students are given the freedom to tell stories, discuss, ask questions, and explain their ideas to others. These activities help students become more accustomed to communicating in English while also reducing feelings of embarrassment and doubt about their own abilities (Lecture & Marzuki, 2020). As the final result of this study, it was concluded that the ability to tell stories is directly proportional to the ability to speak. This means that the better a student tells a story freely in English, the better the student's ability to speak. This happens because the vocabulary used to tell stories is a vocabulary that is very supportive and ready to be used for speaking. So that by increasing students' ability to tell stories freely, their ability to speak will also increase.

## Conclusion

The free story application method with picture card media is scientifically proven to improve the speaking skills of class VII A students of SMPN Pamekasan. This is indicated by the achievement of targets or the determination of success criteria. These criteria anticipate that at least 85% of students will improve their speaking skills in a way equal to or greater than the KKM score. After the implementation of Cycle II, there were 26 students or 96.30% whose scores were equivalent to or higher than the KKM. Thus, it can be stated that the use of the free story method with picture card media can improve students' speaking skills. As a result, it can be concluded that the free story method with picture card media is effective in solving students' problems related to the lack of ability to communicate in English.

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