

THE EFFECT OF SCAFFOLDING IN STORY REENACTMENT ON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL EFL STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS

Betsi Daputri Rahayu¹, Agus Sholeh², Rizky Lutviana³

Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, FBS, Universitas PGRI Kanjuruhan Malang^{1,2,3}

e-mail: betsidap@gmail.com¹, sholeh_agus@unikama.id², lutviana.rizky@unikama.id³

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ABSTRAK

Siswa SMP dalam konteks belajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL) kerap menghadapi kesulitan dalam berbicara (*speaking*). Hal ini terjadi bukan karena kurangnya penguasaan bahasa yang mereka miliki, melainkan karena minimnya kesempatan berlatih secara komunikatif di dalam kelas. Kesulitan tersebut juga terjadi karena tingginya kecemasan saat berbicara serta aktifitas pembelajaran. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh *scaffolding* dalam kegiatan *story reenactment* terhadap kemampuan berbicara siswa SMP dalam konteks EFL. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kuasi-eksperimen dengan metode pretest-posttest yang melibatkan dua kelas VIII di SMPN 23 Malang. Sampel berjumlah 54 siswa yang dibagi ke dalam kelompok eksperimen ($n=26$) dan kelompok kontrol ($n=28$). Data penelitian diperoleh melalui tes kemampuan berbicara menggunakan rubrik analitik yang mencakup *fluency*, *grammatical accuracy*, *vocabulary*, *pronunciation*, dan *content*. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa kelompok eksperimen mengalami peningkatan kemampuan berbicara yang lebih tinggi dibandingkan dengan kelompok kontrol pada seluruh komponen berbicara, terutama *grammatical accuracy* dan *fluency*. Hasil uji Mann-Whitney U menunjukkan adanya perbedaan signifikan antara kedua kelompok ($p = .002$) dengan *effect size* sebesar .42. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan *scaffolding* dalam *story reenactment* membantu siswa mengurangi beban linguistik dan kognitif selama proses produksi lisan sehingga mendukung performa berbicara yang lebih baik dalam pembelajaran EFL tingkat SMP.

Kata Kunci: Kemampuan Berbicara, EFL, Siswa SMP, Scaffolding, Story Reenactment

ABSTRACT

Junior high school students in EFL contexts frequently encounter challenges in speaking. These challenges are not primarily caused by insufficient language knowledge, but rather by limited opportunities to use English during communicative classroom activities. Another factor that contributes to students speaking difficulties is high speaking anxiety. This study aimed to examine the effect of scaffolding in story reenactment activities on junior high school students' speaking skills in EFL contexts. The study employed a quasi-experimental method with a pretest-posttest control group design involving two eighth grade classes at SMPN 23 Malang. The sample consisted of 54 students who were assigned into an experimental group ($n=26$) and a control group ($n = 28$). The data collection process used speaking tests using an analytic scoring rubric covering fluency, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, and content. The findings showed that the experimental group achieved greater improvement than the control group across all speaking components, particularly grammatical accuracy and fluency. The result of The Mann-Whitney U test showed that the two groups were significantly different ($p = .002$) with an effect size of .42. The findings indicate that the implementation of scaffolding in story reenactment helped students manage linguistic and cognitive demands during oral

production, thereby supporting better speaking performance in junior high school EFL classrooms.

Keywords: *scaffolding, story reenactment, speaking skills, EFL, junior high school*

INTRODUCTION

One of the most crucial yet demanding components of language learning is speaking proficiency, as students are required to be able to produce language in real communicative situations (Elmahdi et al., 2025; Ghafar & Raheem, 2023). Speaking problems experienced by Indonesian junior high school students are affected by limited opportunities to implement real language in the school environment and high speaking anxiety such as fear of making mistakes and being laughed by their classmates (Indahyanti et al., 2023; Melansari et al., 2025; Mustamir, 2024; Palomargareta & Astutik, 2024). As a result, many students face problems in improving fluency, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary in one speaking activity.

Recently, the use of scaffolding as an instructional technique has been introduced in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) speaking classrooms. In the sociocultural theory, scaffolding is the provision of temporary instructional assistance that enables learners to execute tasks that are higher than their own ability level (Vygotsky, 2018). Scaffolding in speaking instruction can be implemented by preparing the students' vocabulary, pronunciation modeling, guided rehearsal, and corrective feedback provided to students when they produce oral sentences (Abdelshaheed, 2019; Panhwar et al., 2025). Such support reduces the cognitive demands experienced by learners during communicative speaking activities.

Several studies have demonstrated the positive effects of scaffolding on EFL speaking development across different learning contexts. Through structured roles such as instructor, contingent supporter, consultant, model, motivator, and evaluator, scaffolding has been shown to support speaking improvement in online EFL settings (Ardiningtyas et al., 2023). In addition to teacher facilitated support, peer scaffolding has also been found to be effective in improving students' speaking competence, especially in the context of vocational activities where speaking is used as the main language medium for communication (Azir, 2019). Furthermore, when scaffolding is integrated into real communicative contexts, linguistic support is focused on a specific need, directly supporting learners' speaking ability (Pishadast, 2022). These findings indicate that scaffolding contributes positively to EFL speaking development across different learning contexts.

One communicative activity that can be integrated with scaffolding is story reenactment. Through this activity, students read or listen to a story and later perform it through dramatization and dialogue performance. Story reenactment provides contextualized language input and allows students to practice speaking through meaningful interaction (Raberti & Handayani, 2020). Previous studies have shown that story based speaking activities contribute positively to speaking development. Reader's theater, a form of story reenactment, enhances speaking fluency, comprehension, and confidence by allowing students to read script expressively (Awawd, 2024). Furthermore, storytelling improves oral language complexity by providing rich linguistic contexts and enhances vocabulary acquisition (Macalister & Thao, 2025; Pratiwi et al., 2025).

Although scaffolding and story reenactment have individually shown positive effects on speaking instruction, studies rarely examine how scaffolding functions within story reenactment activities in junior high school EFL classrooms. Existing studies tend to discuss story-based activities and scaffolding separately, leaving limited evidence regarding how scaffolded reenactment supports students' speaking performance. Therefore, this study

investigates the effect of scaffolding in story reenactment on junior high school students' speaking skills, which in this study are operationalized through five components: fluency, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, and content. The novelty of this research lies in the integration of vocabulary preparation, pronunciation modeling, and guided rehearsal within story reenactment activities to support EFL speaking performance among junior high school learners.

METHODS

This study employed a quasi-experimental method with a pretest-posttest control group design (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2019). Two intact eighth-grade classes in one public junior high school in Malang were designated as the experimental group ($n=26$) and the control group ($n=28$) through purposive sampling based on comparable English achievement scores from the previous semester. Prior to data collection, institutional permission was obtained from the school administration, and students participated voluntarily with full awareness of the study's purposes. The instruments consisted of scripted dialogue texts adapted from fable stories in the students' eighth-grade English textbook, "An Elephant and His Friends" and "The Ugly Duckling", which were used for both groups to ensure equivalent level of difficulty, and a five-component analytical speaking rubric adapted from Pratiwi et al., (2025), Riswandi, (2016), and Wang et al., 2024, covering fluency, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, and content, each scored on a five-point scale. Both groups were taught by the same teacher. The speaking assessment instrument was assessed for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha in IBM SPSS Statistics. The result showed a coefficient of .956, indicating excellent reliability. In addition, the inter-reliability analysis between the two raters yielded a coefficient of .851, indicating good score consistency.

The research was conducted over five 70-minute meetings, including a pretest in Session 1, three intervention sessions (Sessions 2–4), and a posttest session (Meeting 5). During pretest and posttest, students were presented with story reenactment activities in which they used silent reading to read a scripted dialogue for 10 minutes and then performed it in groups. The groups ranged from 4 to 5 students and all performances were video recorded. Their performances were independently rated by two raters based on a speaking scoring rubric that included fluency, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation and vocabulary (1 = poor, 5 = excellent). During the treatment sessions, the experimental group was scaffolded with three techniques: pre teaching vocabulary, pronunciation modeling, and rehearsal time with corrective feedback, while the control group did the same activity without scaffolding. Data were analyzed with descriptive statistics, independent t-test was used to examine baseline equivalence between groups based on pretest scores, and the Mann-Whitney U test was used as the major inferential test as the gain scores of the control group were not normally distributed ($p < .05$).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results are presented in five sections: baseline equivalence, descriptive statistics of total speaking scores, mean scores of speaking components by group and measurement, the Shapiro–Wilk normality test, and the Mann–Whitney U test. Table 1 presents the baseline equivalence between the experimental and control groups based on the pretest scores.

Table 1. Baseline Equivalence of Pretest Scores

Group	N	Mean	SD	T	df	p
Experimental Group	26	12.38	2.85			
Control Group	28	12.25	3.41	0.157	52	.876

Note. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was met (Levene's $F = 0.777$, $p = .382$).

Table 1 presents the baseline equivalence between the experimental and control groups based on the pretest speaking scores. An independent samples t -test showed no statistically significant difference between the experimental group ($M = 12.38$, $SD = 2.85$) and the control group ($M = 12.25$, $SD = 3.41$), $t(52) = 0.157$, $p = .876$. These findings indicate that both groups had comparable speaking proficiency before the intervention. After establishing baseline equivalence between the experimental and control groups, the descriptive statistics were examined to provide an overview of students' speaking performance before and after the intervention. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the pretest, posttest, and gain scores for both groups.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Total Speaking Scores

Group		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experimental	Pretest	26	7.00	19.00	12.3846	2.85064
	Posttest	26	7.00	20.50	15.2692	2.93677
	Gain score	26	.00	5.50	2.8846	1.29852
Control	Pretest	28	7.00	20.00	12.2500	3.41429
	Posttest	28	8.00	20.50	13.9464	3.01336
	Gain score	28	.00	4.50	1.6964	1.35632

As shown in Table 2, the descriptive results revealed that both groups showed gains at the end of the treatment period. The experimental group, however, had a higher gain than the control group in their overall speaking performance than the control group. The pattern suggests that scaffolded story reenactment facilitated students' oral performance during speaking activities. The difference between groups became more visible in thsse gain scores, where the experimental group showed more consistent progress across students. In order to gain a more detailed picture of the effect of the treatment on each component of speaking, Table 3 presents the mean scores per rubric component for both groups at pretest and posttest, along with the gains per component between the pretest and posttest.

Table 3. Mean Scores of Speaking Component by Group and Measurement

Component	Experimental group			Control group		
	Pre-test	Post-test	Gain	Pre-test	Post-test	Gain
Fluency	2.38	3.04	+0.66	2.32	2.70	+0.38
Grammatical Accuracy	2.33	3.04	+0.71	2.39	2.79	+0.40
Vocabulary	2.56	3.12	+0.56	2.46	2.75	+0.29
Pronunciation	2.54	3.00	+0.46	2.54	2.84	+0.30
Content	2.54	3.15	+0.61	2.54	2.88	+0.34

Note. Scores are means of averaged Rater 1 and Rater 2 scores per component, on a 1–5 scale. Bold values indicate gain scores for the experimental group.

As shown in Table 3, the experimental group experienced greater gains across all speaking dimensions. The most significant improvements were in grammatical accuracy and fluency, whereas the smallest improvements were in pronunciation. In contrast, the control group demonstrated more limited progress across components, particularly in vocabulary and fluency. These results suggest that scaffolded activities facilitated general speaking ability, but also influenced how students managed different aspects of oral production during reenactment tasks. To determine the appropriate inferential test, the Shapiro-Wilk normality test was conducted on gain scores for both groups. The Shapiro-Wilk test was selected over the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test due its greater ability to detect distributional differences in small samples (Mishra et al., 2019). The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Shapiro -Wilk Normality Test on Gain Score

	Group	W	Df	Sig.	Distribution
Gain score	Experimental	.979	26	.860	Normal
	Control	.921	28	.038	Non-Normal

As shown in Table 4, the gain scores of the experimental group met the normality assumption, whereas those of the control group did not. Because normality could not be simultaneously established for both groups, the Mann-Whitney U test was employed as the appropriate non-parametric alternative for hypothesis testing. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Mann—Whitney U Test Results

	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	Z	p	r
Gain Score	Experimental Group	26	34.31	892.00	187.000	-3.081	.002	.42
	Control Group	28	21.18	593.00				

Note. r = effect size (rank-biserial correlation)

The significant difference between groups indicates that scaffolded story reenactment facilitated higher speaking performance than reenactment activities conducted without scaffolding support. The effect size ($r = .42$) indicates a large effect according to Penedo & Flückiger (2026) guidelines, suggesting that the scaffolding intervention had a practically meaningful impact on students' speaking performance.

Discussion

Based on the findings of this study, the students who were in the experimental group showed more improvement than those in the control group in all components of speaking. In addition, the Mann-Whitney U test revealed a statistically significant difference between two groups, with large effect size ($r = .42$). This finding suggests that the scaffolding intervention was not only statistically effective but also had a practically meaningful impact on improving students' speaking performance. The results indicate that the embedding of scaffolding in story reenactment resulted in a structured instructional support for students to manage the cognitive and linguistic requirements of oral performance better. This aligns with Vygotsky (2018) Zone of Proximal Development theory which states that with temporary but targeted assistance from

the teacher, the learner can achieve a level of performance that is beyond their independent ability. The study indicate that the three scaffolding approaches helped reduce the gap between students' existing speaking competence and the speaking demands of the reenactment task.

Among all speaking components, the largest gain in the experimental group was for grammatical accuracy. This finding is significant because junior high school students in EFL contexts often experience difficulties in maintaining grammatical accuracy during oral production. One mechanism contributing to this improvement was the use of scripted dialogue as a learning media. Because the script contained fixed grammatical structures, students encountered the same forms repeatedly across reading, rehearsal, and performance stages within each session. As Modirkhamene et al. (2018) pointed out, structured production conditions force learners to pay attention to gaps in their grammatical knowledge and to attempt to produce more accurate forms. This process occurred systematically as the students rehearsed their language output during the treatment session without the full processing demands of spontaneous speech.

Cognitive load further explains this finding. The theory identifies speaking in a foreign language as a cognitively demanding task because learners must manage vocabulary retrieval, grammatical encoding, content planning, and pronunciation simultaneously within l(Ramadhani & Widiastuty, 2024) (Ramadhani & Widiastuty, 2024). When learners need to focus on all these processes simultaneously, grammatical accuracy is often affected first. The scaffolding techniques used in this study distributed these demands across several stages of learning. As a result, students did not need to manage all linguistic demands simultaneously during performance. Vocabulary preparation reduced retrieval demands during speaking, whereas pronunciation modeling provided students with a phonological reference prior to rehearsal. As a result, students could allocate more cognitive attention to grammatical monitoring during performance. This finding aligns with Panhwar et al. (2025), who concluded that scaffolding using the Vygotskian approach is effective at supporting students to manage complex speaking skills because it minimizes the cognitive load in the process of spoken language.

The experimental group also demonstrated greater improvement in fluency, which was strongly associated with the vocabulary preparation before speaking activities. A previous study found that having prior knowledge of the necessary vocabulary for speaking activities facilitates more automatic word retrieval, thereby minimizing hesitation and facilitating fluent speech production (Chou, 2021). Pre-teaching vocabulary before each reenactment session in this study facilitated the ability of students to reduce pausing in their performance and avoid reading the script word by word. This result is in line with the study conducted by Macalister & Thao (2025) which showed that EFL learners' fluent performance in speaking was improved after being prepared with structured vocabulary before oral activities. Vocabulary preparation in this study was also seen to help grammatical accuracy, where students who did not struggle to recall vocabulary were able to focus more on producing grammatically accurate utterances.

Content and vocabulary scores also improved more in the experimental group. This result reflects the pedagogical value of story reenactment as a communicative and meaning focused speaking activity. Unlike isolated speaking exercises, story reenactment requires students to perform a coherent narrative involving characters, events, and dialogue, which gives language production a clear communicative objective. Recent research indicates that using contextualized speaking activities is more effective in helping learners remember words and improve their content than highly controlled speaking activities (Pratiwi et al., 2025; Raberti & Handayani, 2020). In this research, the scaffolding strategies supported this process by helping

the students to understand the content of the story and the vocabulary used before performing it, so that they could pay more attention to conveying meaning while performing the reenactment activity.

Pronunciation showed the smallest gain among all components in the experimental group, though improvement was still greater than in the control group. This finding aligns with previous studies suggesting that pronunciation development generally requires extended and individualized practice that a short-term classroom intervention cannot fully provide (Awawd, 2024). This study used a group level instructional approach to pronunciation modeling, providing students with common models for target sounds and sentence stress. While this activity likely has enhanced students' phonological awareness during rehearsal, the limited amount of individualized corrective feedback limited the extent to which students that helped students make more precise pronunciation adjustments within three treatment sessions. Nevertheless, the improvement observed in this study indicates that group pronunciation modelling contributed positively to students' pronunciation awareness, although its effect was smaller than those found in other speaking components.

The overall results suggest that the effectiveness of scaffolded story reenactment was influenced by how the three scaffolding strategies functioned as an integrated instructional system, not as isolated techniques. Vocabulary preparation minimized word retrieval problems during speaking, pronunciation modeling offered phonological support before performance, and rehearsal sessions allowed for grammatical monitoring and language control. When these strategies were combined within story reenactment activities, students experienced lower cognitive demands during oral production and were able to produce more fluent and accurate language. These findings support the view that structured assistance before and during speaking activities helps students manage oral tasks more effectively. This support is particularly important in classroom contexts where exposure to authentic English communication remains limited (Ardiningtyas et al., 2023; Pishadast, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The present study examined the effect of scaffolding in story reenactment on junior high school students' speaking skills in EFL classrooms. The findings revealed that students who received scaffolding support through vocabulary preparation, pronunciation modeling, and guided rehearsal achieved significantly better speaking performance than students who participated in story reenactment without scaffolding support. Greater improvement was found across all speaking components in the experimental group, particularly in grammatical accuracy and fluency. These findings indicate that the integration of scaffolding within story reenactment provided structured instructional support that assisted students in managing the linguistic and cognitive demands of oral production. In addition, the use of story reenactment as a communicative activity created contextualized speaking practice that supported students' speaking development in a more contextualized learning environment.

The present findings contribute to EFL speaking instruction by providing empirical evidence that scaffolded story reenactment can function as an effective pedagogical approach for junior high school learners. The findings support the view that structured assistance before and during speaking activities helps students perform oral tasks more effectively, especially in classroom contexts where exposure to authentic English communication remains limited. The study also highlights the importance of combining communicative activities with instructional support to reduce students' difficulties during oral production. However, this study was limited by the short duration of the treatment, which may not have been sufficient to produce more

substantial improvement in certain speaking components, particularly pronunciation. Therefore, future research is recommended to implement scaffolded story reenactment over a longer period in order to examine its effect on the development of different aspects of speaking skills more comprehensively.

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