

Bridging the Gap in Speaking: Local Folktales as a Strategy for Active Participation in EFL Education

Marlini Novianty^{1*}

Amriani Hambali²

¹Polytechnic LP3I of Makassar, Makassar 90145, Indonesia

², Pangkep State Polytechnic of Agriculture, Pangkep, Indonesia

Abstract

This study investigates the use of local folktales as a culturally responsive strategy to enhance students' active participation and confidence in English speaking classes. The research was conducted as a one-shot descriptive case study involving 15 students from a junior high school in the Selayar Islands, Indonesia. Over five sessions, students participated in a series of folktale-based speaking activities, including discussion, retelling, word shopping, and role play. Data were collected through classroom observations, video recordings, and a perception questionnaire. The findings revealed that folktales effectively encouraged students to speak more actively, ask questions, and express opinions, particularly during discussion and role-play activities. Students reported high levels of enjoyment and motivation, attributing their increased confidence to the familiarity and moral values of the stories. Although participation was lower in retelling tasks, the overall results highlight the potential of culturally grounded materials to foster communicative engagement and reduce speaking anxiety. Despite its limited scope and duration, this study provides pedagogical insights into integrating local narratives in EFL classrooms to make learning more meaningful and culturally relevant.

Keywords: English Foreign Language, Folktales, Speaking Participation, Student Motivation

1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a fundamental skill in second and foreign language learning, as it enables learners to construct meaning, express ideas, and

²*Corresponding author, email: amrianihambali@polipangkep.ac.id

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engage in social interaction through verbal and non-verbal communication (Chaney as cited in Kayi, 2006). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts such as Indonesia, developing oral proficiency remains a persistent challenge. Students often demonstrate limited participation in classroom speaking activities, constrained by anxiety, low self-confidence, insufficient vocabulary, and fear of making mistakes (Brown, 2000; Harmer, 2007). These challenges frequently lead to teacher-dominated classrooms, where communication is unidirectional and opportunities for authentic interaction are scarce.

Recent pedagogical paradigms emphasize that successful speaking instruction should move beyond rote repetition or controlled drills toward communicative and culturally responsive learning environments (Nunan, 1995; Burns, 1999). Within this framework, integrating local narratives such as folktales offers a culturally grounded yet communicatively rich approach. Folktales contain repetitive structures, contextualized moral themes, and familiar cultural settings, making them powerful tools for language development (Taylor, 2000). They not only provide meaningful linguistic input but also promote interaction, creativity, and cultural reflection—key components of active participation in the classroom (Wu, 2008).

However, while narrative-based learning has been widely explored for its impact on reading comprehension and writing (Masuhara, Timmis, & Maley, 2011), empirical studies on how folktales can enhance *oral participation* in EFL speaking classes remain limited—particularly in Indonesian secondary education. Most existing research focuses on communicative language teaching or task-based learning without integrating local cultural materials (Bailey, 2003; Harmer, 2008). This gap suggests a need to examine locally relevant, culturally engaging materials that not only improve language outcomes but also foster students' willingness to communicate and confidence in speaking English.

Therefore, this study aims to bridge the gap in speaking participation by employing *local folktales* as a strategic medium for teaching English speaking. By situating folktales within a communicative and culturally sustaining pedagogy, this study contributes to the growing body of research advocating localized and participatory approaches in EFL education. This study aims to investigate the potential of using local folktales as a culturally responsive strategy to enhance students' oral

engagement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. The research focuses on exploring how the integration of local folktales can increase students' active participation in speaking activities, motivate them to communicate more confidently, and foster positive attitudes toward English learning. By examining students' classroom behaviors and perceptions, the study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of how culturally familiar narratives can serve as an effective medium for developing speaking competence and sustaining learner motivation in the Indonesian EFL context.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Developing students' speaking competence and active participation remains a persistent challenge in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, particularly in contexts where English exposure is limited to classroom interaction. To address this issue, researchers and educators have explored innovative and culturally responsive strategies to make language learning more engaging and meaningful. Among these strategies, the use of folktales has gained renewed attention for its potential to integrate linguistic practice with cultural relevance and learner motivation. This literature review examines three key areas that underpin the present study: (1) the nature of speaking in EFL contexts, (2) the importance of student active participation in language learning, and (3) the pedagogical value of folktales as a strategy for enhancing oral communication. The review also identifies existing gaps in the literature, particularly the limited empirical focus on how local folktales can be employed to foster students' active engagement and communicative competence in Indonesian EFL classrooms.

2.1. *Speaking in EFL Contexts*

Speaking is widely recognized as one of the most complex and anxiety-inducing skills for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, requiring simultaneous control of linguistic, cognitive, and affective processes (Huang, 2022; Zarrinabadi et al., 2021). In EFL settings, particularly in Asian contexts, students often struggle with limited vocabulary, pronunciation issues, and a fear of negative evaluation, which collectively restrict their oral participation (Abrar et al., 2022; Li, 2023). These affective barriers highlight the importance of supportive,

interactive classroom environments that encourage learners to communicate freely without fear of mistakes.

In Indonesia, similar issues persist due to teacher-centered instruction and limited exposure to authentic English communication. Research by Mustamir et al. (2024) shows that traditional pedagogical practices tend to emphasize grammatical accuracy over communicative competence, resulting in passive student engagement. Likewise, Azzahra and Widiati (2023) found that many Indonesian secondary students remain hesitant to speak because they associate speaking with public performance rather than interpersonal communication. To overcome these challenges, communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based learning approaches have been increasingly promoted to provide meaningful, interaction-rich learning environments that enhance speaking proficiency and confidence (Derakhshan et al., 2023; Ningsih & Nurpahmi, 2022).

2.2. Student Active Participation in Language Learning

Active participation in EFL classrooms involves behavioral engagement (e.g., asking and answering questions), cognitive engagement (e.g., processing and applying input), and emotional engagement (e.g., enthusiasm, confidence, and motivation) (Fredricks et al., 2016; Han & Hyland, 2022). Research consistently emphasizes that the degree of student participation significantly influences speaking fluency, accuracy, and communicative competence (Alshammari, 2021; Rosdiana & Taufiqulloh, 2024).

In the post-pandemic era, the shift toward hybrid and digital learning has redefined classroom participation. Khaerani et al. (2024) found that learners exhibit greater engagement when speaking activities are interactive, culturally relevant, and connected to real-life contexts. Similarly, Mahmoudi and Buğra (2023) demonstrated that task design and supportive teacher feedback increase students' willingness to speak and reduce anxiety in EFL classrooms. Importantly, self-confidence and intrinsic motivation are essential drivers of participation (Li & Ma, 2022). These factors suggest that beyond technical instruction, affective and contextual support—such as culturally meaningful materials—can help learners take more active roles in communication.

2.3 *Folktales as a Pedagogical Strategy in EFL Classrooms*

Folktales and storytelling have re-emerged as valuable pedagogical tools in recent EFL literature, recognized for their dual role in promoting language learning and cultural understanding. Folktales, as narrative resources, provide authentic, repetitive, and context-rich input that supports language acquisition while fostering imagination and moral reflection (Jannah et al., 2022; Pratiwi, 2025). They align closely with socio-constructivist principles that position learning as socially and culturally mediated (Vygotsky, 1978; Nguyen & Tran, 2021).

Globally, storytelling and folktale-based instruction have been shown to enhance speaking performance and reduce communication anxiety. For example, Fitriani and Yusuf (2023) found that storytelling activities improved Indonesian EFL learners' fluency and pronunciation while increasing their willingness to communicate. Internationally, González and Blanco (2022) reported that using cultural stories in Spanish EFL classrooms improved students' engagement and intercultural communicative competence. Similarly, Khoshima et al. (2022) demonstrated that Iranian EFL learners exposed to storytelling tasks showed significant gains in oral fluency, vocabulary retention, and self-efficacy.

In the Indonesian context, local folktales have particular pedagogical value because they integrate familiar cultural content with linguistic learning. Jannah et al. (2022) showed that using Indonesian folktales helped junior high school students connect moral themes with English vocabulary, reducing affective barriers to speaking. However, as noted by Pratiwi (2025) and Rahmawati and Sari (2024), most studies have focused on literacy or cultural awareness rather than students' *active participation* and oral interaction. There is a notable scarcity of empirical studies examining how local folktales can systematically enhance classroom speaking engagement and participation among secondary-level EFL learners.

Recent research underscores the benefits of storytelling and narrative-based pedagogy for EFL learning, particularly in developing linguistic competence and motivation. However, empirical studies remain limited in three respects; few have examined the impact of local folktales—rooted in learners' cultural contexts—on active oral participation in speaking activities. Besides, the majority focus on tertiary

education or literacy development, rather than junior secondary classrooms, where affective and motivational factors are especially critical. Finally, there is a lack of studies exploring students' perceptions of folktales as tools for enhancing confidence, engagement, and interaction in EFL speaking classes.

Thus, this study seeks to bridge these gaps by investigating how local folktales can function as culturally responsive instructional media to promote active student participation in speaking and to foster a more communicative and engaging classroom environment.

3. METHODS

This study employed a one-shot descriptive case study design to investigate the role of local folktales in enhancing students' active participation in English speaking activities. A case study design was chosen because it allows for in-depth exploration of a single bounded system—in this case, one class of junior high school students—within its real-life educational context (Yin, 2018). The “one-shot” nature of the study refers to its focus on observing and describing the teaching and learning process as it occurred during a limited series of classroom sessions, without experimental control or repeated interventions. The objective was to obtain a rich, holistic description of how folktale-based instruction influences students' verbal engagement and attitudes toward speaking English.

The study was conducted at SMP Negeri 3 Bontomanai, located in the Selayar Islands District, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The setting was selected because it represents a typical rural EFL learning environment, where students have limited exposure to English outside the classroom and speaking activities are often dominated by the teacher. The participants were 15 students from Class VIII-B (ages 13–14). The class was selected through cluster sampling, considering accessibility and the teacher's recommendation. Students' English proficiency was generally at a lower-intermediate level. Before the study began, informed consent was obtained from the school administration and students, ensuring ethical participation. The class was selected using a cluster sampling technique based on accessibility and the recommendation of the English teacher, who also collaborated with the researcher during classroom instruction. Prior to data collection, consent was obtained from the school principal

and participants were informed of the research objectives. Students' anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study.

The teaching intervention was implemented over the course of five meetings, each lasting approximately ninety minutes. During this period, students engaged in a sequence of speaking activities designed around both local and international folktales, including *Timun Mas*, *The Three Little Pigs*, and *The Ant and the Dove*. Each session emphasized communicative interaction and oral expression rather than grammatical accuracy. The activities were structured to progressively develop students' participation and confidence in speaking English. The first two meetings focused on discussion activities, where students shared opinions about characters and moral lessons from the stories. The third meeting involved a retelling activity, in which students reconstructed and narrated the story orally in their own words. The fourth session implemented a word shopping activity, where students moved around the classroom identifying and matching vocabulary items from the folktales. The final meeting culminated in a role play activity, allowing students to perform dramatized scenes from the stories. Throughout these sessions, the teacher acted as a facilitator, encouraging students to speak, guiding discussions, and offering language support when needed.

Data were collected through three primary instruments: an observation checklist, audio-visual recordings, and a questionnaire. The observation checklist was used to systematically record students' active participation during each class. Participation indicators included asking or answering questions, giving opinions, responding to peers, and volunteering to speak during group activities. Each indicator was scored based on the frequency and quality of student participation, using Rahman's (2007) three-level categorization: *less active*, *moderately active*, and *very active*. To ensure reliability and accuracy, the classroom sessions were also video recorded. The recordings allowed the researcher to review student behavior, language use, and interactional patterns that might have been missed during live observation. Finally, a questionnaire was distributed at the end of the final meeting to capture students' perceptions of learning speaking through folktales. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) and included items measuring students' enjoyment, motivation, and perceived improvement in speaking confidence.

The data collection procedure was carried out systematically during the five sessions. Each classroom activity was observed and recorded, and the researcher also kept reflective field notes to document classroom atmosphere and spontaneous student reactions. After the final session, the questionnaire was administered to all fifteen students to gather quantitative and qualitative feedback. Students completed the survey anonymously to encourage honest responses.

Data analysis combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data from the observation checklist and questionnaire were analyzed descriptively to determine the proportion of students categorized as very active, moderately active, or less active in each type of activity. Mean scores and percentages were calculated to represent overall trends in participation and perception. Meanwhile, qualitative data from video recordings and field notes were transcribed and coded thematically. Thematic analysis focused on identifying recurring patterns such as students' willingness to speak, expressions of confidence, peer collaboration, and cultural engagement. Triangulating the results from multiple data sources enhanced the validity and credibility of the findings. Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the research process. Participants and school authorities were informed of the study's objectives and assured that participation was voluntary. All data collected, including video recordings, were kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes. Students' names were replaced with pseudonyms in all documentation and reporting.

In summary, this one-shot case study was designed to capture a detailed picture of how folktale-based instruction influenced students' participation and engagement in English speaking activities within a single classroom setting. By integrating classroom observation, recorded evidence, and students' self-reported perceptions, the study sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of the pedagogical value of using culturally familiar narratives to make EFL speaking classes more interactive, meaningful, and motivating.

4. RESULT

This section presents the findings of the study, which aimed to examine how the integration of local folktales can enhance students' active participation in English speaking activities and explore their

perceptions toward this culturally grounded instructional approach. The results are drawn from classroom observations, video recordings, and student questionnaires conducted over five meetings in one junior high school English class. Both quantitative and qualitative data are presented to capture not only the level of students' verbal engagement but also their attitudes, motivation, and learning experiences during the folktale-based speaking sessions. To provide a comprehensive understanding of the outcomes, the results are organized according to the sequence of classroom activities—discussion, retelling, word shopping, and role play—followed by an analysis of students' overall participation patterns and perceptions. The interpretation of these findings highlights how the use of culturally familiar stories served as a meaningful pedagogical medium for encouraging learners to speak more confidently and actively in English.

4.1. Students' Active Participation in Folktale-Based Speaking Activities

Observation data indicated that students' overall participation in speaking activities improved progressively throughout the sessions. Students became increasingly engaged and confident as they participated in tasks that connected familiar cultural stories with communicative English use. Although grammatical accuracy remained limited, the level of verbal contribution, peer interaction, and willingness to speak English increased notably.

4.1.1 Discussion Activities

During the first two sessions, students participated in group discussions centered on the stories *The Three Little Pigs* and *Timun Mas*. Initially, many students responded using short phrases or Indonesian, and some were reluctant to contribute voluntarily. However, as the sessions continued, students began to express opinions about the characters and moral lessons in English. Based on the observation checklist, 93% (14 students) of students were categorized as moderately active, while 7% (1 student) were very active in the discussions.

The improvement appeared to result from the familiarity of the folktales and the relatable moral values embedded in them. Students were able to draw parallels between story situations and real-life experiences, which helped them construct opinions in English. This finding supports Taylor's (2000) argument that folktales serve as meaningful linguistic and cultural materials that allow learners to use language authentically. The

use of moral-centered questions (e.g., "What can we learn from *Timun Mas*?) stimulated deeper cognitive and affective engagement, making participation more purposeful.

However, the observation and classroom recordings revealed that the discussion activity generated the highest level of student interaction among all folktale-based speaking sessions. As shown in the data, most students utilized the teacher-student interaction sessions to ask questions related to the folktales, particularly about moral issues, character traits, and vocabulary meaning. The observation tally indicated that students asked a total of 38 questions, demonstrating an eagerness to clarify story details and English equivalents of Indonesian words. In addition, students contributed 21 expressions of opinion and 15 suggestions, reflecting growing engagement in expressing personal viewpoints and interpretations of the stories. However, only a few instances of comments (two occurrences) and answers (one occurrence) were recorded, suggesting that while students were confident in initiating questions, they were still developing skills in sustaining interactive discourse.

Table 1: Students' Participation during the Discussion Activity

Type of Participation	Description of Interaction	Frequency (f)
Asking Questions	Students asked about vocabulary meanings, story morals, or character traits.	38
Giving Opinions	Students shared personal viewpoints or interpretations of the folktale.	21
Giving Suggestions	Students provided ideas or moral suggestions related to the story.	15
Giving Comments	Students made brief comments on peers' or teacher's remarks.	2
Giving Answers	Students responded directly to teacher's or peers' questions using English expressions.	1
Total		77

The following from classroom interactions illustrate typical examples of students' questions during the discussion session:

"Bu, apa bahasa Inggrisnya kejam?" /"Mam, what is the English word for kejam?" (student A)

“Bu, apa bahasa Inggrisnya jahat?” /“Mam, what is the English for jahat?”/ (student B)

“Bahasa Inggrisnya jahat adalah wicked.” /“The English of jahat is wicked.”/ (student C)

“Bu, apa bahasa Inggrisnya raja?” /“Mam, what is the English for raja?”/ (student D)

These excerpts demonstrate that the discussion activity created opportunities for spontaneous vocabulary learning and meaning negotiation between the teacher and students. The interaction frequently revolved around translating adjectives used to describe characters in the stories, showing that students were actively engaged in understanding key descriptive terms relevant to moral and behavioral traits. This reflects Nunan's (1995) view that communicative tasks should promote authentic meaning exchange, even in linguistically simple forms.

Moreover, the students' frequent code-switching between Indonesian and English highlighted their transitional stage of communicative development. Rather than a sign of deficiency, this behavior indicates students' willingness to participate and seek linguistic clarification within their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). The teacher's responsive scaffolding—providing immediate lexical feedback—helped students connect familiar concepts with new vocabulary, gradually supporting their confidence to speak in English.

Overall, the findings from this discussion activity suggest that folktale-based dialogue encouraged a more interactive and culturally grounded learning environment. By connecting moral lessons and character traits from the stories to linguistic exploration, students became more motivated to speak, ask questions, and seek understanding in English. This interaction pattern signifies the early development of communicative competence, particularly in the areas of vocabulary building and functional language use.

4.1.2 Retelling Story Activities

In the third meeting, students were assigned to retell *The Ant and the Dove* orally. The goal of this task was to build narrative fluency and sequencing ability. The observation data showed that 80% of students were less active, 13% moderately active, and 7% very active. Many students hesitated to speak due to vocabulary limitations and anxiety about making grammatical mistakes. However, qualitative notes and

recordings revealed gradual improvement in fluency and pronunciation. Several students began to use connectors such as *first*, *then*, and *after that* to sequence events correctly.

Although participation levels were lower than in the discussion sessions, the task successfully encouraged individual speaking attempts. This aligns with Harmer's (2007) view that storytelling promotes fluency practice and helps learners internalize narrative structures. The retelling activity provided a scaffold for students to recall and reconstruct the story while practicing cohesive speech. Despite their limited vocabulary, students' growing confidence in delivering complete sentences was a positive indicator of progress in oral performance.

Table 2: Students' Active Participation during the Retelling Story Activity

No.	Type of Participation	Frequency (f)	Description of Interaction
1	Comment	9	Students made short remarks or confirmations while retelling the story.
2	Question	0	No student-initiated questions were observed.
3	Answer	22	Students responded to teacher prompts about story sequence or vocabulary.
4	Reason/Opinion	0	No opinions or personal reasoning were expressed.
5	Suggestion	0	No suggestions or creative input occurred during the activity.
Total		31	

Note. Data were derived from the classroom observation checklist and supported by video recordings of the retelling session.

The results indicate that the retelling activity encouraged individual participation primarily in the form of teacher-led questioning rather than peer-initiated communication. This pattern aligns with Harmer's (2007) observation that learners in early stages of speaking development often depend on teacher scaffolding to sustain oral production. Although student-initiated discourse was limited, the task still facilitated practice in recalling vocabulary and constructing narrative sequences—key components of speaking fluency.

4.1.3 Word Shopping Activity

The fourth session introduced the *word shopping* activity, in which students moved around the classroom to identify and match vocabulary items related to *The Three Little Pigs*. This interactive and game-like approach generated a high level of enthusiasm and physical engagement. other group got. At the beginning, teacher told a story titled *The Three Little Pigs*". Teacher run the class based on the procedures on the lesson plan. In order to stimulate students" active participation, students were given few questions such as;

- a. What is the most interesting part in the story "The three Little Pigs"?
- b. Who is your favorite character in the story? How do you want the story goes (Plot)?
- c. Which part of the story do you want to change?
- d. Where do the three pigs live?
- e. Who is the enemy of the three little pigs?

Quantitative results showed that 73% of students were less active in sustained English speech, but qualitative observations indicated heightened excitement and cooperation. Students frequently asked peers and the teacher for word meanings in English, showing curiosity and a desire to learn new expressions.

This finding supports Brown's (2000) claim that active learning activities stimulate participation by reducing affective barriers. The word shopping activity provided a non-threatening environment where students could use English in playful and meaningful ways. Even though linguistic output was limited, the willingness to interact and inquire in English marked a significant shift from passive listening to active exploration.

4.1.4 Role Play Activity

In the final session, students prepared short dramatizations of previously learned folktales. The role play required students to work collaboratively, assign characters, and perform scenes in English. Observation results showed 67% of students were less active, 27% moderately active, and 6% very active. While not all students spoke extensively, most participated enthusiastically in group preparation, rehearsals, and performances. The use of gestures, memorized phrases,

and peer encouragement contributed to a lively and supportive atmosphere.

This finding resonates with Bailey's (2003) assertion that role play encourages communicative spontaneity and cooperative learning. Although linguistic accuracy remained inconsistent, the activity demonstrated that folktales can serve as a framework for authentic communication and creative expression. The students' laughter, applause, and peer support during the performances reflected an affectively positive learning environment—one that is essential for sustained oral participation in EFL contexts.

4.2 Student' Motivation towards English Learning through Folktales

To gain deeper insight into students' attitudes, a questionnaire was distributed after the completion of the folktale-based speaking sessions. The questionnaire consisted of twelve statements measuring students' interest, motivation, and attitudes toward learning English speaking through folktales, using a five-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*.

As summarized in Table 3, the overall responses showed a strongly positive perception of the folktale-based instruction. The majority of students expressed high enthusiasm, enjoyment, and motivation to participate in English speaking activities using folktales as learning material.

Table 3: Frequency Distribution of Students' Interest and Attitudes toward Learning English through Folktales

No.	Questionnaire Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I am especially pleased to learn English speaking/conversation using folktales.	14 (93.3%)	1 (6.7%)	0	0	0
2	I was motivated to learn English because it is an international communication tool.	12 (80%)	3 (20%)	0	0	0
3	I am very pleased to learn English through discussion methods.	9 (60%)	6 (40%)	0	0	0
4	Language teaching techniques should be made more communicative to increase student interest in speaking.	9 (60%)	3 (20%)	0	2 (13.3%)	1 (6.7%)

No.	Questionnaire Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	I enjoyed the discussion method because I could share ideas in English with my teacher and classmates.	14 (93.3%)	1 (6.7%)	0	0	0
6	Discussion and retelling story techniques motivated me to learn English.	13 (86.7%)	2 (13.3%)	0	0	0
7	Mastering discussion and retelling story techniques helped me speak English more easily.	10 (66.7%)	5 (33.3%)	0	0	0
8	I was reluctant and afraid to speak in English because I have not mastered how to talk and retell.	1 (6.7%)	4 (26.7%)	3 (20%)	2 (13.3%)	5 (33.3%)
9	I like to compete with my classmates in English language activities.	7 (46.7%)	3 (20%)	1 (6.7%)	4 (26.7%)	0
10	To improve English skills, it is necessary to have extra activities such as English clubs or contests.	13 (86.7%)	0	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	0
11	Students need bilingual guidebooks (Indonesian-English) for discussion and retelling activities.	6 (40%)	9 (60%)	0	0	0
12	I am motivated to learn English because it will help me find a good job easily.	11 (73.3%)	2 (13.3%)	0	2 (13.3%)	0

The results in Table 3 clearly indicate that students displayed a high level of interest and positive attitude toward learning English speaking through folktales. Almost all students (93.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that folktales made English speaking lessons more enjoyable and motivating. Likewise, a strong majority (86.7%) stated that using folktales through discussion and retelling techniques motivated them to participate more actively in speaking activities.

The data also show that students appreciated the communicative and interactive nature of the learning approach. Many (93.3%) enjoyed the discussion method because it allowed them to exchange ideas with peers

and the teacher. This finding aligns with Nunan's (1995) argument that communicative tasks promote authentic interaction, enabling learners to use language for real purposes.

Interestingly, item 8 revealed that only a small number of students (6.7%) still felt anxious or reluctant to speak English, indicating that the folktale-based approach helped reduce speaking anxiety for most learners. This supports Krashen's (1985) *Affective Filter Hypothesis*, suggesting that lowering learners' anxiety enhances their language acquisition and willingness to communicate.

Furthermore, 73.3% of students reported being motivated to learn English for instrumental reasons—believing it could help them secure better job opportunities. This aligns with Harmer's (2007) view that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations drive sustained language learning.

Overall, these findings reinforce that integrating local folktales into speaking instruction not only increases students' participation but also fosters positive emotional engagement. The combination of cultural familiarity, meaningful storytelling, and interactive activities created an environment where learners felt comfortable expressing themselves in English, fulfilling both the motivational and communicative aims of this study.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this one-shot case study demonstrate that integrating local folktales into English speaking instruction significantly enhanced students' active participation, motivation, and confidence in an Indonesian EFL context. The results directly address the three objectives of the study: (1) to examine whether the use of local folktales can increase students' participation in speaking activities, (2) to determine the extent to which this approach motivates and builds learners' confidence, and (3) to explore students' perceptions and attitudes toward folktales as a learning medium.

The observation data revealed that folktale-based discussions generated the highest level of verbal engagement, with students frequently asking questions, sharing opinions, and seeking vocabulary clarification. This indicates that folktales provided a familiar, meaningful context for communication. The repetitive, moral-based, and culturally relevant nature of the stories encouraged students to relate personally to

the topics while using English authentically. These findings are consistent with Taylor (2000) and supported by recent studies such as Jannah, Darmawan, Lebagi, and Wahyudin (2025), who found that folktales promote motivation, enhance classroom interaction, and reduce students' affective barriers to speaking in Indonesian EFL classes. Likewise, Pratiwi (2025) demonstrated that folktale-based storytelling helped learners develop oral fluency while fostering self-directed learning strategies.

However, the *retelling activity* showed relatively lower participation levels, suggesting that students were still developing autonomy and linguistic confidence in extended speech. This aligns with Harmer's (2007) observation that learners often rely on teacher scaffolding when attempting longer oral tasks. Nevertheless, retelling encouraged recall, sequencing, and fluency-building – essential components of spoken narrative competence. Zainuddin and Fitriani (2021) also noted that retelling using local stories enhances students' vocabulary retention and narrative coherence when supported by teacher guidance and peer collaboration.

In contrast, *word shopping* and *role play* activities fostered enthusiasm, creativity, and cooperative learning. Students engaged actively in non-threatening, game-like contexts, which reduced anxiety and encouraged spontaneous English use. These results reflect Brown's (2000) communicative principle that language learning should emphasize meaningful interaction over mechanical accuracy. Recent empirical studies echo this finding. For instance, Sari and Mulyani (2023) revealed that local cultural materials, including folktales, significantly improved students' willingness to communicate by providing authentic topics grounded in students' lived experiences. Similarly, Lestari (2022) found that role play based on Indonesian folklore boosted students' self-expression and interpersonal communication in speaking classes.

The questionnaire data further reinforced these patterns. Nearly all students reported that folktale-based speaking activities were enjoyable, motivating, and helpful for their language development. Most participants appreciated the communicative techniques of discussion and retelling and agreed that these methods made learning English more engaging. This reflects both intrinsic motivation (enjoyment and personal satisfaction) and extrinsic motivation (the perception that English is a tool for success and employability).

Interestingly, only a small number of students reported persistent anxiety or reluctance to speak English, suggesting that folktales helped lower the *affective filter*—a concept originally introduced by Krashen (1985) and reaffirmed by recent studies in Asia (e.g., Chen & Tsai, 2022; Nugraha & Yuliana, 2023), which emphasize the role of culturally familiar materials in reducing speaking anxiety. In this study, the teacher's scaffolding and the use of shared cultural narratives provided both cognitive and emotional support, promoting a safe environment for language production.

Overall, the findings confirm that local folktales serve as an effective pedagogical bridge between language learning and cultural identity. They create opportunities for students to engage actively, communicate meaningfully, and develop confidence in expressing themselves in English. These results align with the growing body of literature advocating for culturally responsive and narrative-based approaches in English language teaching (e.g., Gay, 2018; Widodo, 2019; Jannah et al., 2025). By embedding English speaking tasks within familiar cultural frameworks, teachers can make learning more relevant, reduce affective barriers, and cultivate a sense of ownership and pride in using English to express local stories.

In summary, this study supports the argument that folktale-based instruction can bridge the participation gap in EFL speaking classrooms. It promotes linguistic, affective, and cultural engagement, thus contributing to both communicative competence and learner motivation. Nevertheless, for optimal impact, future classroom practices should combine such narrative-based tasks with systematic scaffolding and reflection to ensure balanced opportunities for fluency, accuracy, and interaction.

6. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the use of local folktales as a culturally responsive strategy to enhance students' active participation and confidence in English speaking classes. The findings revealed that folktale-based activities, particularly discussions and role plays, successfully encouraged students to engage more actively in classroom communication, reduced their anxiety about speaking, and increased their overall motivation to use English. The cultural familiarity of the

stories enabled students to connect meaningfully with lesson content and express ideas more confidently, showing that folktales can serve as effective pedagogical tools for bridging linguistic and cultural gaps in EFL learning. Despite its positive outcomes, this study was limited by its one-shot case study design, small sample size, and short duration. As such, the findings cannot be generalized to all EFL contexts. The study also focused primarily on students' participation and perceptions without measuring long-term improvement in language proficiency. Nevertheless, the results offer valuable insight into how locally grounded materials can foster meaningful engagement in speaking classrooms.

Future research could extend this work by employing longitudinal or experimental designs to examine the sustained impact of folktale-based instruction on students' fluency, pronunciation, and communicative competence. Additionally, integrating digital storytelling or multimedia-based folktales may provide further opportunities to enhance students' creativity, intercultural understanding, and autonomy in learning. Overall, this study underscores the pedagogical value of incorporating cultural narratives into language teaching as a way to motivate learners, enrich classroom interaction, and strengthen the connection between language and identity.

7. REFERENCES

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