DOES STORYTELLING CAPTIVATE STUDENTS IN ICE-BREAKING SESSIONS?: ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES STUDENTS' PERCEPTION

Ni Kadek Herna Lastari[1], Made Yudyantara Risadi[2], I Putu Yoga Laksana[3]

[1,3] Politeknik Negeri Bali
[2] Universitas Hindu Negeri I Gusti Bagus Sugriwa
[1] hernalastari@pnb.ac.id, [2] yudyantara@uhnsugriwa.ac.id, [3] yoga.laksana@pnb.ac.id

Abstract

An attractive yet meaningful activity needs to be conducted as an ice-breaking activity in an ESP class to build a conducive learning environment that relaxes the students. This study aimed to figure out whether storytelling can engage vocational students in tertiary education in an ice-breaking session and the perception of the students. This study employed A qualitative research design involving 51 purposively chosen participants from the English for Specific Purposes class. Observation was carried out and followed by a Focus Group Discussion. The study revealed that the students were entertained by listening to fascinating and unusual stories from the storytellers because the students could capture positive enlightenment in their minds. The students became impatient to attend the ice-breaking session since, after the storytelling, their confidence in speaking was realized to be improved. Although storytelling could captivate the students' attention, lack of vocabulary range, audience engagement, and anxiety were unveiled as obstacles. The topic of destination visits, memorable experiences, and personal growth are the students' favorite. In the future, the students might have both free topics or specific topics regarded to the lesson for storytelling as the ice-breaking to keep the students entertained yet learn something advantageous.

Keywords: Ice-Breaking; Storytelling; Students' Perception; English for Specific Purposes

INTRODUCTION

The trend of mastering skills to work instead of learning just the theory for students grows in a positive development, where practice sessions are needed more than the theory that the students could experience the deeds directly and apply those skills in their work life. Following this phenomenon, vocational education is impacted in a good way for people to pay more attention to the students' prospects in the future. Thus, the school's decision-makers need commitment and integrity to continuously involve teachers to develop accurate and authentic materials and the instruction and delivery in the classroom according to what students need (Belcher, 2009). The learning goals are the main focus of the teachers where various gaps may appear and should be taken into account.

Designed after conducting the students' need analysis, it makes the English for Specific Purposes (ESP), equipping the students with competencies, skills, or abilities which has been the motor for transforming them into professionals who are adaptive in any circumstances with sufficient language mastery (Widodo, 2016). Even though the students know that the English language is crucial for their education and career path, which could be one of the motivations, self-awareness of the students from within is still needed to succeed. However, two parties are involved in the learning process: the teacher who can stimulate and the student who can be stimulated or respond. Thus, if the students are not aware yet, the teachers need to be skilled in encouraging the students to see how important the lesson is and to achieve the learning goals,

which could result in beneficial behavior changing (Heluri et al., 2021; Mudianingrum et al., 2019). Teaching ESP also means teaching not-so-kid-anymore students who could have set their purposes. Often, adult students come into the classroom with no motivation and are reluctant to contribute and participate in classroom activities, so the teachers need to engage them in some activities (Chlup & Collins, 2016).

The teachers can set the rules and stimulate enthusiasm early with ice-breaking when the students still need more ideas about what will happen in the class. The student's deadlock is the ice, so the classroom would be safe and comfortable if the ice could be broken. Ice breaking could bring back the energy and make the classroom less tense. The students might have an individual, pair, or group activity before the lesson starts. Even though ice breaking could energize the willingness to learn, the objectives of the lessons must be accomplished. That is why ice-breaking could be a means of getting to know the students more and emotionally understand each other for the students that lead to a conducive learning environment (Artati, 2021; Astuti et al., 2020; Chowdhury, 2022; Pranata et al., 2021)

To conduct an effective ice-breaking as a warm-up activity to start the class, it must be at the proper time, short enough that the students feel in a rush or too long to get bored. Besides, a relaxing situation must be engaging and fun and could be done with their abilities (Farwati et al., 2019). Therefore, icebreaking needs to consider reassurance, time management, peer learning, connections, creativity, group size, and appropriateness. Numerous ice-breaking activities have been developed; the unique and timeless one is storytelling.

Countless people believe storytelling could be executed with fairy tales, legends, myths, fables, or other fictions. However, the realm could be broader, like recounting one's experiences, explaining what one has known or read, talking about one's feelings, or even delivering actual news (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2018; Nicholas et al., 2011). Telling and sharing stories could attract the listener to focus on the content of what speakers talk about. Once nervous speakers start the first word, the stories flow naturally with natural facial expressions according to the emotion they are feeling, with excitement they are sensing after perceiving diverse responses from the listener. Storytelling could impact many things, such as motivation, self-confidence, and vocabulary memorization (Mokhtar et al., 2011; Satriani, 2019). In other words, storytelling could practice the students' daily life skills with no equipment or costume but has a significant impact.

Some previous research have been conducted and proved that storytelling has existed and been a fascinating topic to explore in the classroom as an ice-breaking activity. (Kavanagh et al., 2011) revealed that ice breaking in the classroom could connect the students to the learning circumstances, possibly easing the outcome of the students. Some students attend the class without prior knowledge of English, and others do. This gap requires a joyful yet meaningful warmer activity to diminish the difference. Embracing the students' need to communicate within a community, (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2018) also said that storytelling in the classroom to allow the talks to flow naturally as they relate the stories and their surroundings. A positive result is also found by (Lee et al., 2022) that storytelling could influence the students' speaking creativity. Storytelling needs an attractive engagement to make the listener pay attention. Thus, as storytellers, the students must differ their stories so that people's attention spans get shorter. From the justification of the advantages of storytelling and ice breaking in the classroom, it is excellent to cope with all differences of the students through ice-breaking; storytelling was chosen to be the way to get closer to the students and diminish the gap among their peers in the teaching-learning process. This study aims to figure out whether storytelling can captivate the students in ice-breaking sessions and the student's perception of using storytelling as ice-breaking. Besides, this study focuses entirely on English for specific purposes in a vocational school.

METHOD

This study occupies qualitative research method which is to figure out how the students view ice breaking through storytelling in English for Specific Purposes. Involving 51 students, the participants were selected purposively in English for Travel and Tourism and English for Food and Beverage classes in Tourism Department of tertiary vocational education. The researcher selected the classes where teaching and learning process used to be conducted to be highly involved to collect more detail information (Creswell, 2003). Storytelling became an ice-breaking in the beginning of ESP class where every meeting, a randomly selected student was telling a story spontaneously in a context of sharing personal experiences, telling facts, and reviewing recommended places or anything came across their mind. Furthermore, there was a question-and-answer sessions for the listener. The treatment was conducted in a semester or fourteen meetings in two classes. Thus, there were twenty-eight meeting with twenty-eight stories told. Active observation was carried out by noting some obvious behaviour changing happened. Afterwards, a recorded Focus Group Discussion was carried out in each class to identify the participants' perspective about storytelling for ice breaking during classes through eight questions in table 1 below. The data were analyzed by three flows: (1) data condensation, (2) data display, and (3) conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). Data condensation was done to select and simplify the data collected to focus on data needed, the voice of the students regarded on the perception, the challenge, and the preference. Data display was showed in a table to accommodate more detail answer that could be presented. Conclusion drawing was set according to comparison and contrast.

Table 1. The participants responses in Focus Group Discussion

No	Questions
1	Was storytelling an interesting ice-breaking?
2	Did you wait for the storytelling session as the ice breaking?
3	Did storytelling give you new insights?
4	Did storytelling make you less nervous before a class?
5	Did storytelling impact your speaking skills as a storyteller?
6	What are the challenges of telling stories?
7	What topic do you wish to listen to the most from the storyteller?
8	Do you want the teacher to limit the topic of the storytelling you can tell in the ice-breaking session?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of this research were gained from qualitative data in the form of the recording transcription of the FGD with participants. During the FGD, there were ten questions to reveal how the treatment of storytelling as an ice-breaking activity works within a semester or fourteen meetings in ESP classes. Due to the time limit, only twenty-eight students told stories in front of the classes. In comparison, thirty-two students listened to the speakers and continued by voluntarily giving questions related to the stories. The results revealed a wide range of responses to the open-ended questions. Before obtaining the students' voices, data from the closed questions are provided in the table below in pseudonyms to prevent the participants' identification from being revealed.

Table 2. The participants responses in Focus Group Discussion

No	Pseudonym	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q8	Role	Topic
1	WK	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	L	-
2	SP	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	L	-
3	AP	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	S and L	Covid 19
4	AS	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	L	-
5	MRA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	S and L	Daily Working
6	YA	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	S and L	Typical slow weekend
7	NA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	L	-
8	WA	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	S and L	Insecurities
9	EY	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	L	-
10	CDR	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	S and L	Lovina Beach and best friends
11	PS	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	S and L	The Legend of Kuta
12	NW	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	L	-
13	DA	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	L	-
14	MA	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	S and L	Balinese Dancer
15	DO	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	L	-
16	HA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	L	-
17	TT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	S and L	Visiting Penglipuran
18	YT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	S and L	Introducing Lazy river
19	KMM	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	L	-
20	AF	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	S and L	Train Company (KAI)
21	SD	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	S and L	Campus Newscasting Competition
22	KHM	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	L	-
23	SA	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	S and L	Holiday in Malang
24	DP	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	L	-
25	TD	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	S and L	My hometown, Buleleng
26	RP	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	S and L	My first mount hiking
27	AN	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	L	-
28	DSA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	S and L	My self now and then
29	APS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	S and L	Nusa Penida and Diving
30	RNS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	S and L	Salted egg is my favorite food
31	PCY	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	S and L	Fishing is my hobby
32	ALP	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	L	-
33	AHD	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	S and L	A day of my life
34	PKD	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	S and L	Beach and family guesthouse

35	SU	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	L	-
36	RW	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	L	-
37	EMP	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	L	-
38	LMS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	S and L	Guiding in a Sekumpul Waterfall
39	MF	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	S and L	Joining Competition
40	TM	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	L	-
41	LF	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	S and L	Past internship
42	OY	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	S and L	Study Tour in SHS
43	AKW	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	S and L	New foreigner friend
44	OP	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	L	-
45	ANY	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	L	-
46	RHM	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	L	-
47	VV	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	S and L	Gap Year experience
48	KMM	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	S and L	Working in a Day Care
49	APP	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	S and L	My favorite Football Player
50	TN	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	L	-
51	NC	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	L	-
Percentage	**Yes**	98%	78.4%	96.1%	68.6%	98%	35.3%		
	No	2%	21.6%	3.9%	31.4%	2%	64.7%		

a. S (Storyteller) and L (Listener)
b. Topic is for storyteller only

Discussion

Students Perception

According to the data obtained in Table 2, 98% of participants view storytelling as an interesting ice-breaking to start the class. Clarification was conducted and revealed that the students enjoy listening to funny and unique stories from the storytellers. From the observation, the students were relaxed, smiling, and laughing more if the storytellers' experiences personalized the story.

> *"The class atmosphere is happy because the story is sometimes funny and interesting." (SP-listener)*
> *"Everyone enjoys my story and listening to every word I am saying to them." (AP-storytellers)*
> *"I have many new stories from friends that are very interesting." (ANY-listener)*
> *"I like when my friends insert jokes or funny things in their story." (DSA-listener)*

Paying attention to purpose is not easy and requires full awareness to stay focused on the speakers if it is a listening activity. Thus, the way the speakers talk and the topics provided are some of the external factors that could be a hook. Funny or unique stories were thought-provoking things that made the listener desire to keep listening or even be emotionally motivated (Farwati et al., 2019). This story could make the students curious about what happened next and wait for more stories in other meetings.

The results of question 2 show that 78.4% of students chose 'yes'; the students waited for the storytelling session at the beginning of the class. After digging into the specific rationale, the

students revealed that the reasons are due to the atmosphere and the engagement constructed between the storytellers and the listeners in the classroom simultaneously.

"We get to know friends who are telling stories in front of the class better and gain new knowledge from the stories they tell." (AS-listener)

"Everyone active to ask and being interested with my story." (RA-storyteller)

"Get to know better about my friend's life." (PS-listener)

"What I like most about storytelling in ice-breaking sessions is how it fosters connections and creates a sense of community." (EMP-listener)

"When everyone listens to my story seriously, it makes me feel like I am being appreciated." (MF-storyteller)

The students who sit in the classroom need a personal approach to get closer or dive into their seatmates. The more they know their surroundings, the more likely they are to acquire knowledge comfortably. Circumstances are important for students to explore the subjects, expand their knowledge, enhance problem-solving, and do more networking (Heluri et al., 2021; Kavanagh et al., 2011). The teachers are suggested to make a pleasant learning community to accommodate the miscellaneous abilities of the students and make them eager to achieve the same learning objectives in the classroom.

The data from Table 2 unveils that storytelling evokes positive insights in mind, and 96.1% of students agreed with question 3. Further, the students said that the storytellers' insights were life lessons and others' skills gained through experiences. From the list of the topics delivered by the storytellers, the tendency appeared to be telling experiences.

"LF story (about a travel agent), and RNS story (about the salted egg)." (KMM-listener)

"I can share experiences I am proud of." (NA-storyteller)

"Get to know better about how my friends survive in life." (PS-listener)

Using storytelling, the students can learn about emotional, social, and practical lessons, which means the students are expected to reflect on the processes and problem-solving in the stories. Moreover, the foreseen output is that the students could successfully apply what they have known in the contextual situation(Balula & Vasconcelos, 2020; Rokhmawan et al., 2022). One student could benefit from other students' failure or success at no cost and deliver a personal story to them in mutualism.

As an ice-breaking, this storytelling session was conducted at the beginning of the class. Table 2 indicates that 68.6% of the students feel less nervous before a class because of the storytelling session as the ice-breaking. Nevertheless, almost a third of the students disagreed. In the end, it was exposed that most students felt safe communicating when the class started. The rest of the students still face some challenges.

"I think before telling a story you will feel very nervous, but after telling the story it will provide huge benefits, such as becoming more confident." (PS-storyteller)

"I think after telling a story, I become less nervous about my English skill." (PCY-storyteller)

"When I understand what my friend was saying and able to ask questions about the story delivered, there is a little satisfaction in myself (it turns out my English ability is not that bad)."(WA-listener)

A conversational individual might be a natural-born storyteller. However, for many people, being open to the public could be hard, particularly in overcoming nervousness (Sim & Kim, 2013). From the direct statement above, the students discover that nervousness is inevitable yet possible to control. One thing to be highlighted is that nervousness must be encountered and felt. The students found that after spending some time talking and making some mistakes, the

nervousness faded away while they were comfortable interacting and looking at priceless enthusiasm.

The fifth question result can be seen in Table 2, which shows that 98% of the students know the beneficial impacts of being storytellers in storytelling sessions as an ice-breaker. It was disclosed that confidence, vocabulary range, and listening skills had increased significantly.

> *"Sharpening spontaneity in thinking and speaking English because I usually prepare and tend to memorize. Ice-breaking sessions make my brain work harder to get a word out, but after thinking about it, it is good for me." (WA-storyteller)*
> *"I can increase my vocabulary, and I learned to be more confident in communicating in public and practicing my speaking skills." (KMM-storyteller)*
> *"I think it improved our speaking skills about sharing things and delivering a message clearly and properly in front of many people, as well as our listening skills because there is a Q&A section right after we tell a story. In other ways, it can also improve our focus before we start the class." (RHM-storyteller)*
> *"My confidence is increased, even if I do not have a chance to share my story, I can feel more confident when talking to my friend in English such as with LF or SD." (DP-listener)*

In this ice-breaking, the students work in classical groups. A storyteller delivered the story voluntarily, and the rest of the students were listeners. The listener asked questions about what they had listened to, which were powered by curiosity. Interacting with people they knew would be better than communicating with strangers, and the students were not required to adjust the speaking mode according to the status of the speaking partner. It helps both the storytellers and the listener feel more enjoyable in the question-and-answer part than constantly being confident. The more often the students get time to speak, the more vocabulary they use and master (Huang & Hu, 2015; Satriani, 2019).

Students Challenges

During the semester, the students went through different situations that made the ice-breaking look entertaining on some days and sometimes hard to follow. From the FGD, the students confessed the anxiety and challenges they faced. Vocabulary, engagement, and anxiety were admitted to be factors that are hard to deal with.

> *"I have to be confident and control my body also voice because, at the first time, my voice trembles. And think about what I should say (about the vocabulary)." (CDR-storyteller)*
> *"Of course, vocabulary and how to pronounce it. Many misunderstandings happen if we do not know some words when sharing our story. It is so challenging because I am still struggling with that too (make my friend understand the story)" VV-storyteller)*
> *"When everyone was staring at me while I was organizing the story to make the audience entertained by our story." (AKW-storyteller)*
> *"How to make the listeners interested in my story and how to compose sentences that are easy to be told." (MF-storyteller)*
> *"I am not confident yet and find it hard to understand difficult stories." (NC-listener)*

One of the reasons the students faced those challenges was due to a long break and the need for a better quality of interaction, specifically in English. They need time to reconstruct their ability, overcome nervousness, and build engagement. Additionally, vocabulary mastery is still the main factor in their deadlock. That is why 31.4% of students were still nervous after the ice-

breaking session. Shaping a belief that everything takes time to yield a result could give the students a better feeling. Challenges are not something negative in the process of learning. In contrast, challenges are the instrument to know our true potential and grow stronger after navigating to solve them.

The students have their preference for enjoying the storytelling. A student could be attracted to a topic, while another could want to listen to one that interests them. The tendency goes to stories about destination visits, memorable experiences, and the personal growth of the storytellers. Storytelling could gear up positive motivation towards life. Learning more about the industry through an internship or daily working experiences, stimulating tolerance by listening to someone's personal growth, and promoting tourism destinations are the students' ultimate advantages besides academic improvement.

Students Preference

For future improvement of storytelling sessions as an ice-breaking activity, Table 2 shows that 64.7% of the students do not want topic limitations because they are ready to deliver various life stories and still feel comfortable telling stories in daily life. However, 35.3% of the students long for more specific tourism topics related to the subjects. The best solution might be to have a balanced portion of free-to-choose topics and specific topics to maintain the students' interests and get more insights about contextual information from their peers.

CONCLUSION

English for specific purposes class occupies heterogeneity in skills and language ability. Storytelling was endeavored to be an ice-breaking to omit those gaps and exposed to be intriguing. The students agreed that storytelling was a successful activity to relax them before a lesson was started. Entertaining stories from thir peers range from destination visits, memorable experiences, and personal growth caught their attention and learn new perspectives. The students await the storytellers who voluntarily shared some narratives. The listener excitedly asked questions to satisfy their curiosity and the storytellers felt respected since their performance was listened. In contrast, behind the festive vibes created, the students still have barrier in joining the ice-breaking: lack of vocabulary range, audience engagement, and anxiety. In the upcoming class, some of the students expect to tell story in free topics, and the some other students desired a specific topics. Both free topics and specific topics are good to be executed to make the students remain entertaining. Due to the limitation of this study on the ESP class only, future researchers are expected to focus on other subjects and investigate on how to overcome the challenges faced by the students. Other research might be carried out upon other kinds of ice-breaking.

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