

**COMMUNITY SERVICE THROUGH STORYTELLING RUBRIC
DEVELOPMENT TO STRENGTHEN ENGLISH PROFICIENCY IN STATE
JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN SITUBONDO**

E-ISSN : 3089-4980
P-ISSN : 3089-2228
Submitted : June 11, 2025
Accepted : July 29, 2025
Published : July 31, 2025
Page : 46-57
DOI : <https://doi.org/10.31294/jabdimas.v7i1.6638>
Citation (in APA) : Asri, A. K., & Sarimbit, D. G. (2025).
Community Service Through English
Storytelling Competition to Strengthen
Students' English Proficiency of State Junior
High Schools in Situbondo. *International
Journal of Community Service in Language,
Literature, Culture, and Their Teaching*, 2(1),
46-57.
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Abstract

Storytelling is an engaging activity that benefits both the audience and the storyteller. Through storytelling, students practice pronunciation, intonation, expression, gestures, and grammatical accuracy, while audiences develop their listening comprehension and gain new knowledge. To facilitate storytelling activities and strengthen students' English proficiency, MGMP Bahasa Inggris and MKKS SMP Negeri Kabupaten Situbondo organized an English Storytelling Contest as part of the Englishphoria event. The contest featured participants from public junior high schools across the region. A key component of this program was the enhancement of the storytelling assessment rubric. The rubric was collaboratively developed and adapted from international standards (CEFR and Cambridge English), aiming to ensure a more objective, fair, and comprehensive evaluation of students' performances. The event ran smoothly and demonstrated the importance of clear assessment criteria in educational competitions. It is expected that similar events and rubric-based assessments will continue to support English language learning and encourage daily English use among students in Situbondo.

Keywords: competition, English speaking skill, scoring rubric, storytelling

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, English is taught to help students to be able to communicate with people across the world (Putri, Mutia; Santoso, 2024). Learning English can be beneficial for students in the future because it can enhance their cognitive and critical thinking skills, as well as provide opportunities for higher education and careers (Mauliska & D'Angelo, 2024). Being able to read and listen in English can help students in Indonesia to gain more knowledge from various sources. Additionally, being able to communicate in both oral and written forms increases their chances of securing a better education and career, not only in Indonesia but also abroad.

In Situbondo, the use of English as a daily communication language is uncommon. People rarely speak English in daily life, unlike other big cities like Jakarta or Surabaya. Most schools also do not provide programs or facilities to encourage students to speak English daily, either at private or public schools. This is why students at Situbondo have limited opportunities to speak in English, and they are not accustomed to using it. To encounter this problem, MGMP Bahasa Inggris SMP Negeri Kabupaten Situbondo, together with MKKS SMP Negeri Kab. Situbondo, initiated to hold a competition entitled The 2nd Englishphoria 2025 for students in state junior high schools. The competition facilitated the participants to join a speech or storytelling contest.

Storytelling is one of the fun ways to enhance students' mastery of English, specifically in speaking skills (Purwasari & Nugraha, 2023) Andrian & Faudi, 2020). Storytelling is the use of stories or narratives as a communication tool to value, share, and capitalize on the knowledge of individuals (Serrat, 2017). The stories are told to communicate with audiences by integrating facial expression, intonation, stress, speaking fluency and accuracy, eye contact, and also gestures. To acquire the storytelling ability, one must practice speaking comprehensively, as they are required to remember the script and present it appropriately.

The activity of telling a story can be engaging for the audience and beneficial for the storyteller. The storyteller learns how to read using correct pronunciation, tone, stress, expression, gestures, and the use of grammar. The audience, on the other hand, can practice their listening skills and upgrade their knowledge through the stories being told. In a teaching learning context, storytelling is believed to help expand students' vocabulary, stimulate their imaginations, improve their literacy skills, and increase their enthusiasm for and knowledge of reading (Satriani, 2019).

Several studies showed the benefit of storytelling across various educational levels, student age groups, and institutions. In non-formal education, the English Storytelling Technique helps boost students' willingness to learn speaking skills (Farid Noor Romadlon & Azmi, 2024). ESP students have also benefited from this activity. Digital storytelling is an effective teaching strategy for ESP students to enhance both non-linguistic and productive linguistic abilities (Lestari & Nirmala, 2020). In a study to examine the impact of storytelling strategies on A2-level students, it was discovered that most participants significantly increased their speaking fluency by using narrative approaches. Additionally, students' confidence and willingness to speak up were enhanced when the narrative technique was combined with personal motivation, according to the results (Hien & Phuong, 2023).

Not only in producing oral language, EFL learners also benefit from storytelling activities in other aspects, such as vocabulary and pronunciation. Based on the study, storytelling: (a) is a suitable method for teaching students vocabulary, pronunciation, and speaking fluency; (b) enhances their comprehension of the text;

(c) stimulates their cognitive abilities to learn and practice speaking English; and
(d) helps reduce speaking anxiety and boost speaking confidence (Purwasari & Nugraha, 2023).

However, in the implementation of the storytelling activities, some problems arise due to the assessment and the decision to choose the winners. Some parties feel that the assessment is detrimental to them. Some even disagree with the judges' assessment results. Therefore, an assessment rubric is needed that can provide an objective assessment and cover all aspects that need to be assessed in a storytelling competition. A rubric is a helpful way for teachers to grade students' work that makes it more fair, consistent, and reliable. Teachers can make numerous types of rubrics and use them in their classrooms for different things, but rubrics aren't good for every kind of work (Chowdhury, 2018). A rubric is a tool that can assess students' performance objectively. To facilitate the juries to assess objectively, rubrics are very much needed, especially rubrics that assess storytelling performance. Therefore, to address the issue with scoring rubrics, the author facilitated this event as part of our community engagement activities.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

To facilitate storytelling activities at school, Musyawarah Kerja Kepala Sekolah (MKKS) SMP Negeri Kabupaten Situbondo and Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran (MGMP) for English subject at state junior high schools in Situbondo held a competition entitled The 2nd Englishphoria 2025 for students in state junior high schools. One of the events held was the 'English Storytelling Contest' under the MKKS Cup 2025. This event was held on 26 May 2025 at SMPN 1 Situbondo. The storytelling competition itself is not the only competition held by MKKS Situbondo. In the English subject, storytelling and speech contests were held at the same time. 29 participants from all the state junior high schools in Situbondo joined storytelling competitions. The participants were students at public junior high schools in Situbondo. Each school was allowed to delegate one student for each competition.

As part of the community service team actively involved in this program, we observed that 29 participants from various public junior high schools in Situbondo joined the storytelling competition. To facilitate the juries to assess objectively, a standardized assessment rubric was urgently required, especially one that could fairly evaluate storytelling and speech performances. The involvement of judges and committees in determining objective assessment criteria can minimize subjectivity during the assessment process. Therefore, as the executing team, we took the initiative to coordinate the design of the assessment rubric. The rubric was compiled by the storytelling competition committee and juries, adapting several sources such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the speaking assessment criteria from Cambridge Assessment.

METHOD

The storytelling competition was held on Wednesday, 26 May 2025, from 7.30 A.M. to 2 P.M. The competition was held in one round with 29 students from the state junior high school in Situbondo, East Java, Indonesia. To avoid subjectivity, each contestant should cover their identity, including their school badge and their name tag.

As part of the executive committee, we designed the competition flow to ensure fairness and minimize distractions. The storytelling was held in a classroom where the doors were closed during the competition. This was meant to avoid distraction from other contestants or audiences. The room was only seated by three judges, two committees that arranged the turn, one committee as a time keeper, one operator, and 4 contestants with their coach. Each student was accompanied by one coach. Participant numbers were assigned based on the order of arrival at the competition site, and the competition was started from number 1 to number 29.

Three judges were assigned to the storytelling competition. To ensure consistency and clarity of assessment criteria, we held a Zoom coordination meeting before the event to brief all judges on the use of the scoring rubric. Judges provided scores based on the rubric developed and distributed by the organizing committee. Each judge was assigned to evaluate specific aspects according to their expertise and preference. The judges came from different institutions. In detail, two are from private universities in Situbondo and one from a state senior high school in Bondowoso. Each judge was responsible for evaluating three to four out of five scoring aspects, which included:

1. Fluency: Students who earned high scores in this category spoke fluently and effortlessly with no noticeable hesitation.
2. Coherence: High scores were awarded to students who presented clear, well-structured speech with good use of organizational patterns, connectors, and cohesive devices.
3. Accuracy: This aspect measured the grammatical correctness and lexical appropriateness of the speech. High scores were given to those using a wide range of well-chosen vocabulary and minimal grammatical errors.
4. Pronunciation, Stress, and Intonation: Judges assessed intelligibility, natural stress patterns, and expressive intonation.
5. Performance: This included facial expressions, body language, and effective time management during the performance.

All assessment components were designed and implemented collaboratively by the committee and the judging team as part of our contribution to ensuring a fair, professional, and pedagogically valuable competition.

The scores of the storytelling competition were collected using a rubric. The rubric was created collaboratively by the Storytelling Competition Committee,

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including the author as one of the implementing team members, and it was consulted with all six appointed juries. It was adapted from the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) and the Cambridge English Speaking Criteria. The rubric consisted of five key assessment aspects, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Scoring Rubric Used

No	Aspect	Excellent (16-20)	Good (11-15)	Satisfactory (6-10)	Developing (1-5)
1	Fluency	Speaking fluently and effortlessly, with no hesitation to speak	Speaking comprehensively with a fairly even tempo, although he/ she can be a little hesitant to speak	Speaking in short utterances with pauses and some hesitation to speak	- Speaking with many pauses - False starts and reformulation are very evident
2	Coherence	Being able to produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured speech, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices	Being able to use cohesive devices to link his/ her utterances into clear, coherent discourse, though there may be some “jumpiness” in a long contribution	Being able to link a series of shorter, discrete, simple elements into a connected, linear sequence of points	Being able to link groups of words with simple connectors like “and, but, because”
3	Accuracy	- Speaking with no/ minor grammatical errors - Using a wide range of well-chosen vocabulary	- Speaking with some grammatical errors - Using a good range of well-chosen vocabulary	- Speaking with frequent grammatical errors that do not obscure meaning - Using a limited range of vocabulary	- Speaking with frequent grammatical errors that obscure meaning - Using a very limited and some inappropriate vocabulary
4	Pronunciation, Sentence/ Word Stress, and Intonation	- Pronunciation is highly intelligible - Stress and intonation are used effectively to express meaning	- Pronunciation is intelligible - Stress and intonation are used to express meaning well	- Pronunciation is generally understood - Stress and intonation are used to express meaning adequately	- Pronunciation can generally be understood, but L1 features may cause strain - Attempts to use stress, intonation to express meaning are not always successful
5	Performance: Facial Expression	Facial expression and body language add	Facial expression and body language	Facial expression and body language	Facial expression and body

, Body Language, and Time Manageme nt	greatly to the message ● The storytelling lasts 5-7 minutes	compliment message ● The storytelling lasts 4-5 or 7-8 minutes	lack variety and spontaneity ● The storytelling lasts 3 minutes or 8-9 minutes	language are lacking and inappropriate ● The storytelling lasts under 3 or more than 9 minutes
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To reduce cognitive load and maintain fairness, each judge was given the freedom to choose three to four aspects they felt most confident in assessing, based on their expertise and preference. This strategy was proposed by the committee as part of the planning process, in which the author was actively involved. Each of the three storytelling judges assessed different combinations of aspects, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: The Distribution of Assessment Aspects

Jury	Aspects Assessed
1	Fluency, Coherence, Performance
2	Fluency, Accuracy, Pronunciation & Stress
3	Accuracy, Coherence, Pronunciation & Stress, Performance

Each contestant was required to submit three copies of their story text for distribution to the judges. During or immediately after each performance, the judges recorded their assessments according to the rubric. After all participants had performed, the committee collected and entered the score data.

As part of the organizing team, we ensured that the score processing was conducted transparently. The final ranking was determined by compiling and averaging the scores from each judge. This process led to the selection of winners based on overall performance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The storytelling competition under the MKKS Cup 2025 ran smoothly. The participants followed the rundown and came on time. There was a short delay, yet it did not affect the event.



Figure 1: Opening Ceremony



Figure 2: Some Remarks

Before the competition began, all involved parties, including the committee, contestants, judges, and representatives from related educational institutions, gathered in the school hall. During this session, opening remarks were delivered by the Head of the Situbondo Education Office and the Principal of SMPN 1 Situbondo. As part of the organizing committee, the author helped coordinate the welcoming session and ensure that all participants were briefed on the competition procedures. The committee also provided a short technical briefing to the contestants and coaches to explain the rules and expectations for the storytelling contest.

Storytelling Competition

The storytelling competition was held in a 9D classroom. The room was prepared with a banner displaying the name of the event, a digital timer display, chairs, and tables for contestants, juries, and committee members.

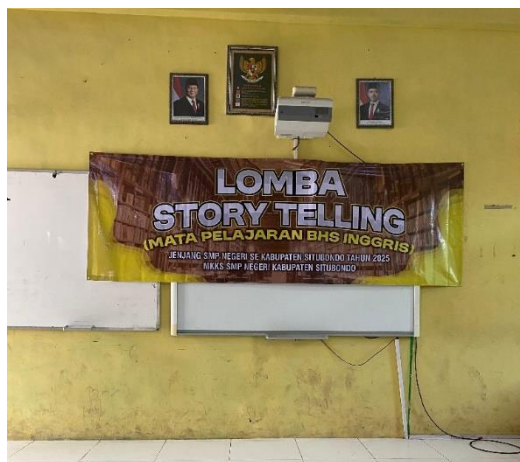


Figure 3: Storytelling Competition Banner

The three appointed judges entered the room and positioned themselves at the center. Each judge reviewed the scoring rubric and confirmed the assessment aspects they would evaluate, by their area of expertise.



Figure 4: Juries Were Ready to Assess

A committee member assigned as the timekeeper activated the digital timer, which was displayed on the screen. Each contestant was allocated 5 to 7 minutes to deliver their story performance.

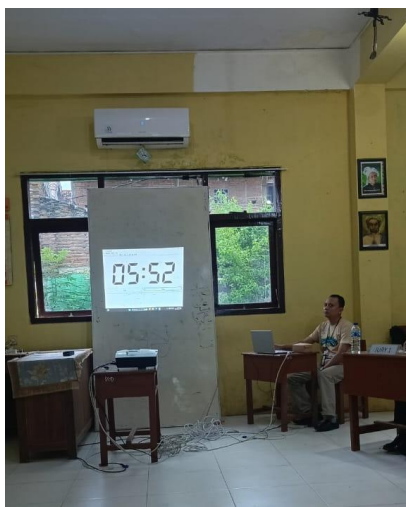


Figure 5: The Time Keeper and the Display

Once all preparations were complete, the competition officially began. Contestants entered the room sequentially, accompanied by their coaches. To maintain order and minimize distractions, only a limited number of participants were allowed in the room at one time, based on their performance order. The atmosphere during the performances was focused, and each student made their best effort to demonstrate their storytelling skills.



Figure 6. Some Participants

Closing Section

The competition was conducted from 9:00 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. All 29 registered participants successfully performed their stories within the allotted time. After all contestants had performed, the judges submitted their scoring sheets to the committee. As one of the competition committee members, the author was involved in the collection, verification, and tabulation of the scores. The final results were compiled, and the top-ranking contestants were determined based on the total average scores.

At the end of the event, the committee and judges held a brief discussion session to validate the scoring outcomes and ensure that all evaluation procedures had been carried out fairly and transparently. The winners were then announced during the closing ceremony.



Figure 7. The Juries and the Committees

Discussion and Suggestion

After all scores were collected from the three judges, the competition committee calculated and averaged them based on the assessment rubric provided. The winner was determined by evaluating which contestant most successfully fulfilled all five aspects outlined in the rubric. As part of the organizing team, the author was involved in tabulating and verifying the results, ensuring transparency and fairness throughout the assessment process.

First, during the opening ceremony in the school hall, it would be more convenient if not only the coaches, committee members, judges, and invited guests but also the contestants were provided with chairs. Since the opening ceremony took a relatively long time, standing for an extended period was uncomfortable for the participants, especially as they were about to perform. Second, regarding venue logistics, the competition area would benefit from the installation of clear direction signs and the assignment of liaison officers to guide both judges and participants. This would help streamline the flow of movement and reduce confusion, especially for those unfamiliar with the venue.

Third, the use of rubrics should be refined. While the current rubric already covers five essential aspects, further improvement is needed. For example, facial expression and body language, currently grouped under one criterion, should be assessed separately. Storytelling is a performance art that not only requires verbal fluency but also the ability to engage the audience through appropriate gestures and facial expressions. Separating these components would ensure more accurate scoring and better recognition of diverse student strengths.

Overall, the competition was well-organized and successfully implemented. Nevertheless, some areas could still be improved for future iterations of the speech

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and storytelling contests. To enhance inclusivity and diversity, it is recommended that not only public (state) junior high schools but also private junior high schools in Situbondo be invited to participate in upcoming events. This will help broaden the reach and impact of the competition and provide a more comprehensive platform for young English learners in the region.

CONCLUSIONS

The MKKS CUP 2025 served as a valuable platform to support students in improving their English-speaking abilities, particularly through storytelling and speech competitions. Students who participated in these events were given the opportunity to enhance their public speaking skills, boost their confidence, and demonstrate their English proficiency in an engaging and motivating environment. In addition, the competitions enabled judges and coaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding of each student's strengths and potential in oral communication. As a member of the organizing team, the author observed that the competition also encouraged peer learning, where both participants and audiences benefited from exposure to varied performance styles and language use. The event likewise helped improve the audience's listening skills through their engagement with live storytelling performances.

To ensure the sustainability and wider impact of such events, similar competitions should be conducted regularly to continuously stimulate students' and teachers' motivation to develop their speaking skills. It is also suggested that future events expand their scope to include other speaking-focused activities, such as debates or impromptu speech contests. These programs should ideally involve participants from both public and private schools. Furthermore, based on the experience of the MKKS Cup 2025, it is recommended that such competitions be extended to other educational levels, including elementary and senior high schools, to foster early interest in English learning and strengthen the English-speaking culture in Situbondo.

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