

**THAI NGUYEN UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

**BUI NGOC MAI**

**APPLYING STORYTELLING TO IMPROVE SPEAKING SKILL FOR  
THE FIRST YEAR STUDENTS AT THAI NGUYEN COLLEGE OF  
ECONOMICS AND FINANCE**

**(Ứng dụng hình thức kể chuyện để cải thiện kỹ năng nói cho sinh viên  
năm thứ nhất tại trường Cao đẳng Kinh tế Tài chính Thái Nguyên)**

**M.A. THESIS**

**Field: English Linguistics**

**Code: 8220201**

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(APPLICATION ORIENTATION)**

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**Supervisor: Dr. Nguyen Thi Viet Nga**

**THAI NGUYEN – 2018**

## DECLARATION

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I certify that the minor thesis entitled **“Apply storytelling to improve speaking skill for the first year students at Thai Nguyen College of Economics and Finance”** is my own study in the fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts at Foreign Language Faculty, Thai Nguyen University.

Signature:

Bùi Ngọc Mai

Thai Nguyen, 2018.

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This research has enabled me to investigate a new aspect of storytelling when introduced as a curricular innovation and gain more insights into my teaching practice. I am grateful to many people who have supported and encouraged me to complete this minor thesis.

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*Bùi Ngọc Mai*

## **ABSTRACT**

Previous research has been conducted related to the effectiveness of storytelling towards different aspects of language learning, especially speaking skill. It has been established by many researchers that storytelling can positively improve learners' speaking skill and be used as a useful method to engage students in the classroom. While research to date has been launched outside Vietnam at different levels of education, it has not been adequately done to investigate the relationship between storytelling and speaking skill within the Vietnamese context. That is the main reason for the researcher to carry out a form of action research as a trial to check the effectiveness of storytelling in teaching students English speaking skill.

This minor thesis reflects on a qualitative research project to explore the effectiveness of storytelling on 50 first year students' speaking skill during five weeks of learning and interaction.

Three research instruments including observation, evaluation sheet, and semi-structured interview were designed to investigate the improvement of the students' speaking skill via telling stories and their engagement in the classroom activities over the given period of introducing storytelling as a curricular innovation.

The results showed that the students' speaking skill, especially pronunciation, intonation, body language and eye contact, were improved. It also showed that students were engaged by listening attentively to their classmates' stories in the classroom.

## LIST OF CHARTS

<i>Chart 1: Elements of speaking skills improved by storytelling - Individual presentations .....</i>	<b>25</b>
<i>Chart 2: Elements of speaking skills improved by storytelling - Group presentations .....</i>	<b>27</b>
<i>Chart 3: Determinants of a logical story - Individual presentation .....</i>	<b>29</b>
<i>Chart 4: Determinants of a logical story – Group presentation .....</i>	<b>30</b>

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION .....	i
LIST OF CHARTS .....	iv
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1. Rationale for the study .....	1
1.2. Aims of the study .....	3
1.3. Research questions .....	3
1.4. Significance of the study .....	3
1.5. Scope of the study .....	3
1.6. Design of the study.....	4
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	5
2.1. Storytelling.....	5
2.2. Speaking skill and speaking competence.....	7
2.3. Storytelling and digital storytelling as a useful pedagogical tool to improve speaking skill.....	7
2.4. Storytelling as a method of engaging students.....	10
2.5. The objectives and the steps of applying storytelling in speaking class .....	11
2.6. Review of Related Studies .....	13
2.7. Theoretical Framework .....	14
2.8. Summary .....	15
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY .....	16
3.1. Research approach .....	16
3.2. Participants, Course Syllabus and Materials.....	16
3.2.1. Participants.....	16
3.2.2. Course Syllabus.....	16
3.2.3. Materials.....	16
3.3. Research Methods .....	17
3.3.1. Observation .....	17
3.3.2. Evaluation Sheet.....	19
3.3.3. Interview .....	20
3.4. Data collection and data analysis .....	22

3.5. Triangulation .....	23
CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS .....	24
4.1. Elements of English grammar and speaking skills improved by storytelling...24	
4.2. The ways storytelling helps students engage into the classroom activities. ....31	
4.2.1. The shift from being passive to active .....	31
4.2.2. Factors that help engage students.....	32
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS .....	35
5.1. Recapitulation .....	35
5.2. Limitations of the study .....	36
5.3. Suggestions for further study .....	36



## **CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Rationale for the study**

Nowadays, English has become an officially international language in the world. Due to its popularity, in Vietnam, the teaching of English is taken into consideration and paid more attention in terms of the attitudes in society, the policies of government and the efforts from teachers. It is an undeniable fact that English is also a very important subject at college today. However, the results of the English learning are not very good due to a number of reasons. One of which is that the teaching of English has been strongly influenced by the teaching traditional methods in which teacher played the role of the knowledge provider and the students were the passive knowledge recipients. Teachers as well as students focus on grammatical structures whereas four English skills especially speaking skill is not considered. As a result, they have encountered a number of problems when dealing with spoken English in real life. Vietnamese students have lots of difficulties practising speaking skill because they are often shy or even express fear toward public speaking. However, many students show their desire to learn speaking skill; some of them even urge teachers to include speaking activities in the lessons. It is the fact that speaking English well depends on the number of factors. They are personal characteristics of the learners, chances to communicate with native speakers, or motivation of learners, methods of teachers....For college students, these factors can only work well with the help of the teachers using different methods in language teaching.

We cannot deny that traditional teaching methods are slowly moving towards more innovative practices in Vietnam particularly in the Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) which is an educational priority in Vietnam (London 2014, p.4). The Ministry of Education and Training, (MOET) has legislated far-reaching changes that insist on all students in Vietnam learning English as a second language (MOET 2020 Policy). This project is the result of a modest classroom innovation where students were asked to construct brief stories and convey them orally to each other. This process is called storytelling. The stories were based on familiar Vietnamese proverbs and folk tales which the students then translated into

English and presented to the group. Processes such as storytelling allow for a more student-centred approach to learning, and have received very positive anecdotal responses to date. Student-centred approaches have a long history in Western-based learning, but are still rather new and under-researched in the Vietnamese context. An Indian well known proverb says ‘tell me a fact and I’ll learn. Tell me the truth and I’ll believe. But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever’. In the Vietnamese educational context, historical figures did use storytelling in their teaching, and storytelling has, in the past, been a widely ‘accepted practice’ used by them (London, 2011, p.6-7)

Recent researchers beyond Vietnam share the view that storytelling is instrumental in the learning and teaching language. According to Ohler (2007), as cited in Somdee and Suppasetsee (2011), and Yuksel, Robin, and McNeil (2011), storytelling has increasingly been applied as a useful teaching technique. They point out that storytelling is more actively engaged in many countries both inside and outside the classroom for educational purposes. Indeed, storytelling has long been used in the practice of teaching and has been suggested by many researchers to be both a powerful tool to develop oral skill and a useful method of getting students engaged in the lessons. Previous research has been launched outside Vietnam at different levels of education. However, the particular elements of speaking skills and the degree to which students are engaged in speaking while telling and listening to stories are areas which are under-researched. In addition, research to date has not been adequately done to investigate the relationship between storytelling and speaking skill within the Vietnamese context

Being a teacher of English at Thai Nguyen College of Economics and Finance, the researcher is well aware of the importance of applying storytelling in English classes to improve speaking skill for students. This led me to the choice of the study: “*Applying Storytelling to Improve Speaking Skill for the first year students at Thai Nguyen College of Economics and Finance*” as a trial to investigate the effectiveness of storytelling in teaching students speaking skill and detect an effective way to improve speaking skill for the first year students at Thai Nguyen College of Economics and Finance. It is also hoped that this study may