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Boosting Students' Speaking Skill Through Information Gap Activities (IGA)

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A B S T R A C T

Speaking proficiency is essential for academic and social development of EFL students. However, numerous students often struggle with limited vocabulary, grammatical deficiencies, and a lack of confidence which contribute to their speaking performance. Therefore, this study exposes the effectiveness of Information Gap Activities (IGA) to elevate students' speaking skills – specifically in fluency and comprehensibility – of eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Sigi. A quasi-experimental design was employed, involving two groups: an experimental class received IGA treatment and a control class taught by using conventional methods, with a total of 60 student participants. Both groups were given pre-tests and post-tests to measure their speaking ability before and after the treatment. Pre-test and post-test data were analyzed using SPSS. The results revealed a statistically significant improvement in the experimental group, with the mean score increasing from 41.67 to 67.50, compared to the control group's increase from 41.67 to 50.56. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test (p = 0.000) and Mann-Whitney U Test (p = 0.000) confirmed this difference to be statistically significant. These findings suggest that Information Gap Activities can effectively enhance students' speaking abilities, offering a communicative and interactive alternative to traditional instructional approaches.

Keywords: Information Gap Activities, Speaking Skills, Fluency, Comprehensibility, EFL Learner

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking is widely recognized as the most challenging productive skill for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It requires learners to express thoughts, ideas, and information clearly through spoken language. This skill emphasizes oral proficiency and communicative competence, which are essential indicators of social interaction. Speaking is considered one of the main skills in English language learning for achieving effective communication (Parasulu et al., 2024).

Furthermore, in practical contexts, EFL learners are often evaluated based on their speaking ability. This is because speaking reflects their overall effectiveness in using English for communication. Mastery of speaking skills, therefore, is a fundamental requirement for English language learners to achieve in order to succeed in both academic and real-life communication settings.

In line with this perspective, the Indonesian government introduced the Merdeka Curriculum, which places speaking skills as a core competency to be developed at the secondary education level. The curriculum is designed to strengthen practical communication skills and encourages students to engage in realistic speaking activities that improve fluency and build self-confidence.

However, in actual classroom practice, many high school students still face serious difficulties in speaking English. These problems are often caused by limited vocabulary mastery, weak grammatical knowledge, and psychological barriers such as language anxiety

and lack of confidence. As a result, students' speaking performance frequently falls short of the expectations set by the curriculum.

Similar challenges are also experienced by students at SMA Negeri 1 Sigi. There exists a clear gap between curriculum expectations and the students' actual performance in speaking English. This condition highlights the urgent need for more engaging, interactive, and effective teaching strategies that can bridge this gap and help students overcome their difficulties.

To address this challenge, teachers are required to adopt or adapt teaching strategies that encourage active student participation in communication. One promising approach is the use of Information Gap Activities (IGA). In these activities, students work in pairs or groups to exchange missing information in order to complete specific tasks. This approach creates a real need for communication, which motivates students to use English more naturally.

The structure of Information Gap Activities supports authentic communication and aligns well with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching. By requiring students to talk, listen, and respond in order to achieve a task outcome, IGA fosters fluency, accuracy, and confidence. This makes it a particularly suitable strategy for enhancing speaking skills in EFL classrooms.

Previous studies have confirmed the effectiveness of IGA in improving students' speaking performance. Argawati and Suryani (2019) highlight that IGA motivates students, builds cooperation, and improves their speaking ability. Similarly, Fuqaha and Ghofur (2015) recommend IGA as an engaging strategy for developing speaking skills. Building upon this foundation, the present study seeks to assess whether the implementation of IGA can significantly enhance students' speaking skills—particularly in terms of fluency and comprehensibility—at SMA Negeri 1 Sigi.

METHOD

This study implemented a quasi-experimental design, involving two classes: an experimental group (XI E) and a control group (XI C). Each group consisted of 30 students. The experimental group was taught using Information Gap Activities during six treatment sessions, while the control group received conventional methods. The measurement tools used in this study included pre-test and post-test speaking assessments, evaluated using a standard rubric that focused on fluency and comprehensibility. Student performance was evaluated through individual monologue tasks and interactive pair-based speaking tasks. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), including descriptive statistics, normality tests (Shapiro Wilk), and non-parametric tests (Wilcoxon Signed-Rank and Mann-Whitney U) due to the non-normal distribution of the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

To begin the analysis, descriptive statistics were used to observe the score differences before and after the treatment in both experimental and control groups. The results are shown in the following table:

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-Test Eksperimental	30	25.00	66.67	41.6663	12.76054
Post-Test Eksperimental	30	58.33	75.00	67.5000	7.04175
Pre-Test Control	30	25.00	58.33	41.6660	11.98610
Post-Test Control	30	33.33	66.67	50.5563	11.14472
Valid N (listwise)	30				

The table above presents that both the experimental group and the control group experienced an increase in speaking scores from the initial test to the final test. The average score of the experimental group increases from 41.67 (SD = 12.76) in the initial test to 67.50 (SD = 7.04) in the final test. Similarly, the control group shows an increase from 41.67 (SD = 11.99) to 50.56 (SD = 11.140). These initial results indicate improvement in both groups. However,

the increase in the experimental group is significantly higher, indicating a more substantial impact of the information gap activity on students' speaking skills, particularly in terms of fluency and comprehensibility.

After identifying the general score improvements, a normality test was carried out using the Shapiro-Wilk method, to determine whether the data were normally distributed.

Tests of Normality

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Kelas	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Hasil Belajar Siswa	Pre-Test Eksperimental	.143	30	.119	.911	30	.016
	Post-Test Eksperimental	.257	30	.000	.783	30	.000
	Pre-Test Control	.157	30	.058	.891	30	.005
	Post-Test Control	.221	30	.001	.887	30	.004

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The results of the Shapiro-Wilk normality test indicate that all the significance (p) values are below 0.05. Specifically, the post-test scores of both the experimental and control groups had p-values of .000 and .004, respectively, while the pre-test score also shows non-normal distributions (p = .016 for experimental and p = .005 for control). These results suggest that the data are not normally distributed, and therefore, non-parametric statistical tests are selected for further analysis, including the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test and the Mann-Whitney U test.

Ranks

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
PostTest - Pre-Test	Negative Ranks	0[a]	.00	.00
	Positive Ranks	30[b]	15.50	465.00
	Ties	0[c]		
	Total	30		

PostTest < Pre-Test

PostTest > Pre-Test

PostTest = Pre-Test

Test Statistics[b]

	PostTest - Pre-Test
Z	-4.829[a]
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

Based on negative ranks.

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores within the experimental group. The results show that all 30 students experience an increase in their scores, as indicated by the 30 positive ranks, and zero negative ranks or ties. Furthermore, the Z-value is -4.829 and the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value is 0.000, which is below the significance level of 0.05. This interprets a statistically significant improvement in the speaking performance of the experimental group after being taught using Information Gap Activities. These findings suggest that the treatment had a strong positive effect on the students' speaking skills. The use of interactive and communicative tasks likely encouraged more active participation, leading improvements in both fluency and comprehensibility.

Next, to compare the posttest scores between the experimental and control groups, a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted. The following tables present the results:

Ranks

	Kelas	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Hasil Belajar	Pre-Test	30	16.70	501.00
	Post-Test	30	44.30	1329.00
	Total	60		

Test Statistics[a]

	Hasil Belajar
Mann-Whitney U	36.000
Wilcoxon W	501.000
Z	-6.212
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

Grouping Variable: Kelas

The results showed that the U value is 36.000 with a Z value of -6.212, and the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) is .000. Since the p-value is lower than 0.05, it can be interpreted that there is a statistically significant difference in the post-test performance between the two groups. The experimental group, which was taught using Information Gap Activities, achieves higher speaking scores compared to the control group. This result indicates that Information Gap Activities are more effective than traditional teaching methods in improving students' speaking skills.

Discussion

The results of this study reveal that Information Gap Activities (IGA) have a strong positive impact on students' speaking skills. One possible reason for this improvement is the interactive nature of IGA in which students are demanded to persistently exchange information to complete tasks orally and must express it in English or target language. As a result, students constantly express ideas, ask questions, and provide responses, which helps them speak more fluently and with fewer pauses. Information Gap Activities facilitate genuine communication among students because they have numerous opportunities to convey missing information (Triana & Anita, 2022). Implementing Information Gap Activities can increase students' speaking time, maximize opportunities for students to speak, and this has an impact on their fluency in speaking (Defrioka, 2017). The activity of filling in the information gaps provides real motivation for students to communicate, as they have the opportunity to practice in real-life situations (Duyen, 2021). This strategy fits well with the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method, which highlights the importance of real interaction in learning a language.

In addition to speaking fluently, students also improve their ability to speak clearly. By applying an interaction-based approach in this strategy, students can organize their ideas and adjust their speech based on the reactions of others. This is evident during the learning process, where students learn how to respond, explain, and use context to make their speech easier to understand. Since students often express and respond to ideas in their own way, the use of Information Gap Activities can enhance students' understanding and expand their vocabulary (Almziad, 2020).

Furthermore, compared to the control group who was getting conventional strategy, students in the experimental group are more engaged and confident. Interactive activities such as IGA have been shown to foster active student participation, enhance motivation, and lead to more meaningful learning experiences (Argawati & Suryani, 2019). Through IGA, students not only practice speaking, but also build their confidence and ability to communicate meaningfully. Not speaking performance, Information Gap Activities can also boost students' confidence (Pinilih & Sukarno, 2024). Using the target language continuously in speaking activities will have a positive impact on students' motivation and confidence (Ismaili & Bajrami, 2016). Thus, this study supports the previous finding that Information Gap Activities is one recommended strategy to bridge students' speaking skill and it can be implemented in all levels of EFL learners.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that Information Gap Activities (IGA) significantly boost the speaking skills of 11th grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Sigi, particularly in terms of fluency and comprehensibility. Students taught using IGA showed greater improvement compared to those who received conventional methods, becoming more fluent and easier to understand. These results support the importance of interactive and meaningful speaking tasks, as emphasized in the Merdeka Curriculum. Future researchers are encouraged to explore different teaching models or speaking topics to see if similar improvements can be achieved through other approaches or in diverse communicative situations.

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