

Enhancing EFL Students' Speaking Ability through a HOTS based Show and Tell Technique

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A B S T R A C T

This study investigated the effectiveness of a HOTS-Based Show and Tell technique in enhancing EFL students' speaking ability. The study employed a quantitative approach using a pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design. The participants were 36 eleventh-grade students of SMAN 2 Parepare. Data were collected through speaking tests and analyzed using descriptive statistics and a paired-samples t-test. In the implementation of the technique, students were encouraged not only to describe objects or topics but also to analyze, evaluate, and express personal opinions, thereby incorporating Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) into speaking activities. These tasks required students to explain reasons, compare ideas, solve simple problems, and support their arguments during presentations and discussions. The findings revealed that students' speaking ability improved significantly after the implementation of the technique. The mean score increased from 36.44 in the pre-test to 55.67 in the post-test, with a significance value of $p < .001$. The results indicate that integrating HOTS into Show and Tell activities can promote more meaningful speaking practice, increase student participation, and create a more interactive learning environment in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: *EFL Speaking Ability, HOTS-Based Instruction, Show And Tell Technique*

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking ability is a central component of communicative competence and a primary objective in second and foreign language learning. In today's globalized context, English speaking proficiency plays a crucial role in academic, professional, and intercultural communication, making it a key priority in modern EFL curricula (Motallebzadeh et al., 2018). Based on the theory of communicative competence, speaking as a productive skill requires learners not only to master linguistic features such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, but also to negotiate meaning, manage interaction, and perform language functions appropriately in real communicative situations (Canale & Swain, 1980). In line with this perspective, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emphasizes meaningful communication and learner-centered interaction, making it a relevant approach for developing students' speaking ability (Richards, 2006).

Despite its importance, many Indonesian EFL learners continue to demonstrate limited speaking proficiency due to linguistic, psychological, and pedagogical factors. Linguistically, restricted vocabulary, pronunciation problems, and lack of fluency constrain students' ability to produce extended spoken discourse (Idrus et al., 2025). Psychologically, speaking anxiety and low self-confidence reduce students' willingness to participate in oral communication (Khafidhoh et al., 2023). Pedagogically, teacher-centered instruction and limited communicative practice restrict learners' exposure to meaningful speaking tasks and authentic interaction (Al-shehri & Alaudan, 2024). As a result, many learners fail to achieve the expected

levels of fluency, accuracy, and pragmatic competence, highlighting the need for more effective instructional interventions.

Although various instructional strategies have been introduced to improve speaking ability, many EFL classrooms still fail to promote meaningful spoken communication, limiting students' ability to use language communicatively (Ud Din, 2023). Consequently, unengaging classroom speaking activities may lead students to lose interest and become bored during speaking practice (Areski et al., 2019). Learners are often given limited opportunities to engage in authentic interaction and express ideas spontaneously (Huda & Lubis, 2019), particularly when linguistic and affective constraints reduce their participation (Idris et al., 2020; Khafidhoh et al., 2023). In addition, speaking tasks tend to remain cognitively undemanding, with minimal emphasis on analysis, evaluation, or idea generation, resulting in superficial language production (Purnama & Nurdianingsih, 2019). These conditions highlight the need for more innovative and learner-centered techniques that promote both meaningful interaction and cognitive engagement (Al-shehri & Alaudan, 2024)

In response to these challenges, communicative and learner-centered techniques have gained attention for promoting active participation and meaningful interaction. One such technique is Show and Tell, which encourages students to present objects or topics and explain them orally, creating opportunities for authentic communication (Apriyanto & Syakur, 2022). This activity enables learners to express ideas, interact with peers, and build confidence in a supportive environment, and has been shown to improve speaking ability and increase engagement (Alvionita et al., 2022; Sela et al., 2025)

However, in practice, it is often limited to descriptive activities and may not sufficiently support the development of communicative and higher-order language skills required for future English use. In its conventional form, Show and Tell typically involves lower-order thinking skills (LOTS), where students focus on describing objects or experiences based on recalling and understanding information. In contrast, a HOTS-based Show and Tell requires learners to go beyond description by analyzing information, evaluating ideas, and generating original responses, such as explaining reasons, comparing perspectives, or proposing solutions to real-life situations. This shift enables speaking activities to become more cognitively engaging and meaningful.

This limitation indicates that many speaking activities are still dominated by lower-order thinking skills, with limited opportunities for students to engage in higher-order processes such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating (Safira et al., 2025). As a result, students may not develop critical and reflective thinking during speaking tasks, which reduces the depth of language processing and interaction (Suryaningrum, 2024). To address this issue, the integration of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) has been increasingly emphasized in language learning due to its role in promoting meaningful and cognitively engaging learning (Harahap & Natsir, 2021; Hasan & Pardjono, 2019).

Based on Bloom's revised taxonomy, HOTS involves higher-level cognitive processes such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating (Baguma et al., 2019). In EFL contexts, HOTS not only supports cognitive development but also enhances language use by encouraging learners to express ideas more critically and meaningfully, particularly in speaking activities (Alek, 2021; Purnama & Nurdianingsih, 2019)

Although previous studies have examined the effectiveness of Show and Tell and the role of HOTS in language learning, limited research has explored the integration of HOTS into Show and Tell in EFL speaking instruction, particularly in Indonesian secondary school contexts. Most studies focus on participation or on HOTS in receptive skills (Nourdad et al., 2018), leaving its application in structured speaking activities underexplored.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the effectiveness of a HOTS-based Show and Tell technique in improving students' speaking ability and to explore how cognitively demanding speaking tasks can support more meaningful oral communication in EFL classrooms. This study contributes to teaching practice by redesigning Show and Tell from a simple descriptive activity into a more cognitively challenging speaking task, which can guide teachers in developing HOTS-oriented speaking instruction.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach using a pre-experimental design with a one-group pre-test and post-test model. This design was selected to examine the effect of a HOTS-based Show and Tell technique on students' speaking ability by comparing students' speaking performance before and after the instructional treatment. A pre-test was administered to identify students' initial speaking ability prior to the implementation of the HOTS-based Show and Tell technique.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of all eleventh-grade students of SMAN 2 Parepare in the academic year 2025/2026, comprising 390 students distributed across 11 classes. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique, in which one intact class, namely class XI A.3, was chosen as the research sample. The class was selected based on research considerations, including accessibility, classroom feasibility, and its representation of the general academic characteristics of the eleventh-grade students.

Instruments

Data were collected through speaking tests administered as a pre-test and a post-test. In the tests, students performed individual oral presentations using the Show and Tell technique based on given topics. Students' speaking performance was assessed using an analytic speaking rubric adapted from H. Douglas Brown. The rubric evaluated grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, pronunciation. The same rubric and scoring criteria were applied in both the pre-test and post-test to ensure scoring consistency.

Procedures

The research was conducted in eight meetings. The first meeting was devoted to administering the pre-test to measure students' initial speaking ability. The second to the seventh meetings were allocated for the instructional treatment through the implementation of the HOTS-based Show and Tell technique, in which students participated in communicative speaking activities that encouraged them to describe topics, express opinions, analyze information, generate ideas, and create written responses based on the given topics through individual presentations, pair discussions, and classroom interaction. The final meeting was used to administer the post-test to examine students' speaking ability after the treatment using the same speaking assessment criteria as in the pre-test.

Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed quantitatively. Students' speaking scores from the pre-test and post-test were calculated and compared to determine the extent of improvement after the implementation of the instructional treatment. A paired-samples t-test was employed to examine whether there was a statistically significant difference between students' pre-test and post-test speaking scores.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Descriptive statistics were analyzed first to provide an overview of students' speaking performance before and after the implementation of the HOTS-Based Show and Tell technique.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Pretest Speaking	36	36.44	10.81	20.00	60.00
Posttest Speaking	36	55.67	7.85	44.00	72.00

Based on Table 1, the mean score of the pretest was 36.44 with a standard deviation of 10.81, while the mean score of the posttest increased to 55.67 with a standard deviation of 7.85. This result indicates an increase of approximately 19.22 points after the implementation of the HOTS-based Show and Tell technique. Furthermore, the smaller standard deviation in the posttest suggests that the students' scores became more homogeneous after the treatment. In other words, the instructional intervention not only improved students' speaking performance but also produced a relatively consistent effect across participants.

Before conducting inferential analysis a normality test was carried out to determine whether the data were normally distributed. A significance > 0.05 indicates that the data are normally distributed, whereas a significance value < 0.05 indicates that the data are not normally distributed. Since the sample in this study consisted of 36 participants, the interpretation mainly referred to the Shapiro-Wilk test.

Table 2. Result of Normality Test

Variabel	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pretest	0.953	36	0.126
Posttest	0.948	36	0.092

As shown in Table 2, all significance values exceeded the 0.05 significance level. The Shapiro-Wilk significance values were 0.126 for the pretest and 0.092 for the posttest. Since all values were greater than 0.05, the data were considered normally distributed. Therefore, the assumptions required for parametric statistical analysis were fulfilled, and the paired-samples t-test could be conducted.

Table 3. Paired Samples Test

Variable	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest - posttest	-19.2222	10.8525	-10.627	35	< .001

Based on Table 3, the mean difference between the pretest and posttest scores was -19.22. The negative value indicates that the posttest scores were higher than the pretest scores. The obtained t-value was -10.627 with 35 degrees of freedom, while the significance value was lower than 0.05 ($p < .001$). These findings indicate that there was a statistically significant improvement in students' speaking ability after the implementation of the HOTS-Based Show and Tell technique. Thus, the instructional treatment contributed positively to the enhancement of students' speaking performance.

Discussion

The findings showed that students' speaking ability improved after the implementation of the HOTS-Based Show and Tell technique. This improvement can be seen from the increase in the mean score from 36.44 in the pretest to 55.67 in the posttest, with an improvement of approximately 19.22 points. In addition, the standard deviation decreased from 10.81 in the pretest to 7.85 in the posttest, indicating that students' speaking performance became more consistent after the treatment. These findings suggest that the technique helped students participate more actively and confidently during speaking activities.

The paired-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between students' pretest and posttest speaking scores. The mean difference between the two tests was -19.22, with a t-value of -10.627 and a significance value of $p < .001$. These findings indicate that the improvement in students' speaking ability did not occur by chance, but was influenced by the implementation of the HOTS-Based Show and Tell technique.

The improvement may be related to the HOTS-based instructions integrated into the speaking activities. In this study, HOTS was not statistically measured as a separate variable, but functioned as the instructional approach used to support speaking practice. Students were encouraged to analyze topics, develop ideas, and provide responses before presenting them orally. This process likely helped students become more engaged during classroom interaction and produce more meaningful spoken responses. This finding supports (Purnama & Nurdianingsih, 2019), who found that HOTS-oriented instruction positively influenced

students' speaking skills by encouraging more active and meaningful language use. The findings are also in line with (Alvionita et al., 2022), who reported that Show and Tell activities improved students' speaking ability and increased classroom engagement.

Furthermore, the findings reinforce the view of (Richards, 2006) that speaking instruction should emphasize meaningful communication and learner-centered interaction. Through the HOTS-Based Show and Tell technique, students were not only practicing language forms, but were also encouraged to communicate ideas actively during speaking activities. This indicates that integrating communicative speaking activities with HOTS-oriented instruction may create a more interactive and cognitively engaging learning environment for EFL learners.

The findings of this study imply that English teachers should provide more speaking activities that involve critical thinking and active student participation. Integrating HOTS into speaking instruction may help students become more confident speakers and create a more student-centered classroom atmosphere. In addition, Show and Tell activities can be used as an alternative strategy to increase students' classroom interaction and speaking practice in EFL contexts.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that the HOTS-Based Show and Tell technique effectively improved students' speaking ability. The significant increase in students' post-test scores demonstrates that integrating Higher Order Thinking Skills into speaking activities can support more meaningful and communicative language use. The technique encouraged students to express ideas actively, participate confidently, and engage in more cognitively demanding speaking tasks. Therefore, the HOTS-Based Show and Tell technique can be considered an effective alternative strategy for improving speaking instruction in EFL classrooms.

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