

## **THE USE OF INFORMATION-GAP ACTIVITIES IN ENHANCING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL**

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### **Abstract**

Language is crucially important in human life. To be part of a community, language is most likely the easiest medium for humans to communicate with one another quickly and functionally. English is the medium of choice for 60% of the world's literacy. It is not an exaggeration to say that once a person has mastered English, he will have access to the entire world. When teaching students to communicate, the teacher should be able to entice them to practice speaking spontaneously. To encourage students to express themselves spontaneously, this study used Information Gap functions. The objectives of this research are to determine impact of using Information Gap activities in English teaching on the students' speaking ability in the first semester of tenth grade at High School X Lampung in 2022/2023. In this research, the experimental approach has been used, with 2 classifications chosen at random. One class served as the control group, while the other served as the experiment group. T-test was used to compare both classes when analyzing the data. The results of this research indicate that students who were taught using Information Gaps activities performed better in speaking than those who were taught using traditional techniques. It also implies that participating in Information Gap practices has a major impact on students' speaking ability at High School X Lampung in the first semester of the tenth class in 2022/2023.

**Keywords:** *experimental research, information gap, speaking exercise*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The demonstration of an ability to achieve pragmatic goals through interactive discourse with other language speakers is almost always the barometer of successful language acquisition (Brown & Lee, 2015). It is fair to say that Teachers cannot force students to speak in the first meeting of a beginner's class. The students will gradually absorb it. Especially for students who learn English as their second language. They require some time. Most second language learners form the sense of fragility, defensiveness and raising of inhibitions due to the lack of words or structures which left them speechless during a conversation (Brown & Lee, 2015).

Naturally, humans will start passively. In children, their success in acquiring language appear to be without thinking about the rules of the language (Brown & Lee, 2015). Learners need to pile up the collection of vocabularies in their mind as the first step. It can be done through listening. Humans will automatically learn the definition of the phrase, how to use the expressions, how to apply the basic structures, and how to arrange the words to form meaningful sentences by listening. Since there are differences between the written word and the pronounced word in English, listening can also be used to make students to get use to the pronunciation of the words. It is important to keep in mind that good oral communication depends on both the ability to

communicate and how well the learners listen (Harmer, 2007).

Other skill that can be used passively is reading skill. In reading, students can see how the words written and can try to understand the context of the text. They can figure out how the words formed through a reading text and learn unconsciously of how to create meaningful sentences. Learning a language is aided by reading. The more reading is done, the better learners become at it, provided they more-or-less comprehend what they read. Additionally, reading has a positive impact on students' writing, spelling, and vocabulary skills. Reading literature also provide useful examples for writing in English (Harmer, 2007).

After having enough vocabularies and having learned the structures too, students will be supported to use what they have learned in verbal way. Most students find it difficult to transfer what is in their mind to verbal language. One good thing for spoken sentences is that they can still be forgiven as long as both speakers understand each other. With the stock of enough vocabularies and some basic structures, teachers can have the expectation that the students will be able to produce sentences, even though their sentences are not correctly used. Speaking can be said as productive skill, aside from writing, which demands the learners to use what they have learned directly and orally. Many students find it difficult to express what is in their mind using English. They probably have enough vocabularies in mind, but when the time to speak comes, they tend to become reluctant. This problem probably occurs in every level of English classes.

Teachers face difficulties in speaking classes due to students' reluctance to speak English due to language barriers, namely vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency (Abrar et al., 2018). The English conversation in the classroom cannot run smoothly because students are not engaged in the activity due to their incompetence or belief that they are incompetent. Interesting learning activities and something to pique students' interest in attempting to speak in English from learning sources are required (Hamid et al., 2019)

Other issues investigated by Noprival (2016) on students' reluctance to practice spoken English include: (1) a lack of vocabulary development, (2) problems recognizing grammar, (3) fear of negative responses, (4) low self-esteem, and (5) nervousness in practicing spoken English. Vocabularies and grammar knowledge are still important to master, and English teachers should teach and monitor them. The teacher's job is to provide a variety of teaching methods, strategies, perspectives, techniques, and techniques as a solution to the problems. Furthermore, teachers should have strategies in place to motivate students in a variety of ways in order to get them to speak English (Nugroho & Nartiningrum, 2020).

Based on preliminary research, the author discovered that the majority of students at Highschool X Lampung were hesitant to use their English when it came to speaking skills. According to my observations, the majority of the students were unable to express themselves orally in English. The author also discovered that teachers attempted to deliver the materials by providing explanations, and then the students completed the tasks in the text book. The formula was also given to the students, who were then asked to create sentences based on it. Students were asked to write their own conversation for the conversation and then practice it in front of the class. The teacher requested that the students memorize their discussion.

This technique is widely used and many teachers apply this technique. This technique is not entirely wrong, but the teacher needs to apply other techniques to avoid boredom in studying English. Teachers should find innovative applications to invite students to speak up, especially when teaching speaking. There will be difficulties at first but the effort to invite the students to speak in English is worth their understanding in using English.

The main goal of educating English, which focuses on speaking skills, is for students to be able to speak up spontaneously. They must produce the sentence directly based on the situation and location of the conversation. To achieve this main goal, teachers must develop engaging practices that encourage students to produce English directly and without hesitation. Using information gap activities to teach speaking is one method suggested. Information-gap activities was proposed due to its element of producing more spontaneous words rather than only

memorizing sentences and conversation in a speaking activity in language learning.

Based on the context of the problems, information gap activities was engaged to train students to produce English spontaneously based on the information they had. It is hoped that the students would produce questions based on pictures to help activating the schemata and would respond well in answering a question spontaneously.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### ***Students' Speaking Skill***

Harmer (2007) identifies three reasons for order to encourage students to speak up in class. To begin with, speaking activities allow for rehearsal - opportunities to practice genuine speaking in the safety of the classroom. Second, speaking assignments in which students attempt to use some or all of the languages with which they are familiar provide feedback to both the teacher and the students. Finally, the more opportunities students have to use the various language components they have kept in their brains, the more automatic their use of these aspects has become.

It means that the process of transferring thought into spoken words in a foreign language is not something to take for granted. Practices are needed to make the students are use to use the language they are learning. To make students able to use their English, teachers have the role to develop a good atmosphere to support the students to practice their English. Students need rehearsals and practices again and again before they are able to produce their own speech.

Thornbury (2005) states a lifetime spent studying grammar is no guarantee that speaking will come naturally either. This statement shows that teaching English is not only a matter of grammar and vocabularies. Speaking itself is needed to be practiced. The mastery of grammar and vocabularies, does not automatically make someone a good English speaker. Furthermore, the concerns and challenges by the students' learning can be divided into two categories, namely; knowledge factors: the learner does not yet understand aspects of the language that allow production and competence factors: the learner's knowledge is not sufficiently automated to ensure fluency (Thornbury, 2005).

As a consequence, it is possible that: Affective factors that may impair fluency include a lack of confidence or conscience. Thornbury (2005) then continues that to activate the knowledge areas and make them available in fluent face-to-face conversation, the learning process must include at least three stages, namely; the target knowledge-base must be made clear to learners, adding the features, adding these features to their existing knowledge based, and to enhance the ability to deploy these features in real time and without assistance.

From this explanation, we can see that teaching speaking is necessary due to students' obstacles when they try to speak. To get the students to speak will probably need a lot of effort, considered by the teachers before the strategies are applied in the classroom. The main objective of the processes will be for learners to be able to create their own speech without even any assistance at the end.

The theory that understanding becomes completely automated through successive practice, according to Thornbury (2005), is crucially important to the perspective that communicating is a developmental process. Fluency, if not perfection, results from practice. This point of view has a corollary in that the process of automating can be tried to speed up by establishing practice circumstances that 'park the attentions.' That is, the best automatization based on the classification when the learner's focus is distracted from the temptation to refer to grammatical rules and begin generating each speech from schematic.

### ***Information Gap Activities***

From the statements, the exercise needed is an exercise where the learner does not only pay attention to only rules of grammar but how to make their speech meaningful, understandable, and communicative. With a meaningful task, learners are asked to release any burden from their shoulders and speak freely and meaningfully so that their interlocutor can understand their speech.

According to Thornbury (2005), in information-gap activities, the necessary information to accomplish the task is distributed among the communication partners. As an outcome, they have a knowledge gap that can only be filled by the application of language. Furthermore, an information gap is a useful method in which one person has relevant data that other does not (Bailey, 2004). Individuals must use the target language to communicate that information. Assume one student has the directions to a party and must give them to both a classmate.

According to Thornbury (2005), the information needed to perform the task is shared among the interactants in information gap activities. Thus, there is a knowledge gap between them that can only be filled by language. Additionally, Bailey (2004) added that filling in the information gap is a good action when one person possesses knowledge that the other does not. To communicate the knowledge, they must do so in the intended language. For instance, a classmate needs to be given the party's guidelines by the student who possesses them.

From these statements, the writer can conclude that information gap is performed by two people and each has different information which the other is lacking in some information. They need to exchange information in order to complete the task given. Once they are done, they can see that the information that each of them has completes the other.

## METHOD

The experimental method was used in this research. Two classes were used, one as the experiment group and the other as the controlled group. The whole first class was taught using Information Gaps, and the second category was taught using traditional techniques such as dialogue and memorizing. The emphasis was purely on the student's ability to .

Table 1. The Design of The Study

Classroom Activities	Students' Activities
The teacher describes the activities that students might do from morning to night.	Students demonstrate how to ask and how to answer together with different roles. Some as students act as reporters, some as actors.
Teacher demonstrates how to ask and how to answer Yes/No and Wh- questions.	
Teacher explains the pattern of the spoken language	

The topic of the material in the treatment was finding the differences in the picture using the Information Gap technique. The researcher described the Information Gap technique as well as the procedure for teaching public speaking. The researcher began the class by brainstorming about the material by discussing the students' activities in the morning, afternoon, and evening. The researcher began by describing a famous person's daily activities (a Hollywood actor). The lesson began with how to create yes/no questions and how to answer them. The activity was then continued by generating Wh-questions and determining how to respond to them.

To immerse the students in the situation, the teacher has them play the roles of a journalist and an actor. The teacher provided an example by pointing it out to their student in class. A few students practiced writing the sentences. Psychologically, the students were terrified of making a mistake. Students were able to use their prior knowledge or experiences during this brainstorming phase. Brainstorming is a schema theory application that attempts to explain how people integrate new information into their existing framework of knowledge.

Table 2. The List of Questions for The Students Acting as Reporter

Activities	Answers
Eat Breakfast	Yes/No
What time/	.....
Where/	.....

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What/	.....
With whom	.....
Exercise	Yes/No
What time/	.....
What exercise/	.....
Where/	.....

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Figure 1. The Guide of Answer for Students Acting as Actor

This research's population comprised of all students in the second semester of the eleventh class at High School X Lampung in 2022/2023. There are 234 students in total across seven classes. This study included twenty-two students from two different classes.

In this research, the cluster random sampling technique was used. Because the available seven classes are homogeneous, this sampling technique was used. The experimental class and the control class were chosen at random from among the seven classes. The students would be divided into pairs. Student A would be one student, and Student B would be the other. Each of them would get a different picture, but they are all related. Their mission was to complete the differences on each picture. They could only communicate verbally. The experimental class and the control class were chosen at random from among the seven classes. The students would be divided into pairs. Student A would be one student, and Student B would be the other. Each of them would get a different picture, but they are all related. Their mission was to complete the differences on each picture. They could only communicate verbally. They were not permitted to view their friend's photograph. It is hoped that by employing this technique, students will be forced to speak English without feeling compelled to do so and will strive to talk openly.

To obtain accurate data, the writer conducted an interview with a teacher from another institution who did not teach the students for the entire semester. The writer assigned the grade based on four criteria: accent, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. As continues to follow, the writer will implement Harris's oral-English rating sheet ((Harris, 1969).

Table 3. Harris's Oral-English rating sheet (1969)

Rated Qualities	Points	Behavioral Statements
Pronunciation	5	There are few trace amounts of a speech sound.
	4	Though there is a distinct accent, the speech is always understandable.
	3	Pronunciation issues necessitate focused listening and can occasionally result in misrepresentation.
	2	Pronunciation issues make it difficult to understand. Repeating must be requested frequently.
	1	Pronunciation issues so intense that speech is practically unintelligible.
Grammar	5	Assists in making few (if any) discernible grammatical or word-order errors.
	4	Makes occasional grammatical and/or word-order errors that do not occlude meaning.

	3	Constantly makes grammatical and word-order errors, which every once in a while obscure definition.
	2	Grammar and phrase errors impede comprehension. He must frequently rephrase sentences and/or limit himself to basic patterns.
	1	Grammar and word-order errors so severe that speech is nearly unintelligible.
Vocabulary	5	The use of diction and idioms is nearly identical to that of a native speaker.
	4	Because of lexical deficiencies, he sometimes uses inappropriate terms and/or must rephrase ideas.
	3	Constantly uses incorrect words; conversation is somewhat limited due to a lack of vocabulary.
	2	Comprehension is made difficult by word misuse and a limited vocabulary.
	1	Extreme vocabulary limitations make conversation nearly impossible.
Fluency	5	Extreme vocabulary limitations make conversation nearly impossible.
	4	Communication difficulties appear to have just a slight effect on speech frequency.
	3	Language issues have a significant impact on speed and fluency.
	2	Often hesitant, but required to keep completely quiet due to language constraints.
	1	Conversation is nearly impossible because speech is halting and fragmentary.
Comprehension	5	Everything appears to be understood without difficulty.
	4	Acknowledges almost everything at normal speed, though some consistency may be required.
	3	Recognizes the large percentage of what is said by replicating it at a slightly slower pace.
	2	Also seems to have difficulties comprehending what is being discussed. Only "social conversation" spoken gently and repeatedly can be comprehended.
	1	Even simple conversational English cannot be said to be understood.

By using Harris's rating sheet, it can be seen that the total value to be achieved was 25. To make it easier to score, the result was multiplied by 4 so the maximum score to be achieved was 100.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From the speaking test about present events, the distribution of the score was provided as follows.

Table 4. Score Distribution from Describing Present Events

Range Score	Frequency from Experiment Class Present Events Pretest	Frequency from Experiment Class Present Events Posttest	Frequency from Control Class Present Events Pretest	Frequency from Control Class Present Events Posttest
46-53	0	0	1	0
54-61	6	2	7	5
62-67	7	9	8	7
68-73	7	6	4	5
74-79	2	2	2	4
80-84	0	3	0	1
<i>Number of Students</i>	22	22	22	22
<i>Mean</i>	63,82	69,09	63,54	66,54

Table 4 shows that the distribution of the scoring has gone better in general which means the students learned something from the lesson. In general, the average for the class that used information gap activities was scored better after the activities was conducted.

Table 5. T-Test Comparison of Pretest to Posttest in Experimental Class and Control Class

Paired Samples Test		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Pair 1	ExpPre - ContPre	.27273	3.04227	.64861	-1.07614	1.62159	.420	21	.678
Pair 2	ExpPost - ContPost	2.54545	3.50139	.74650	.99302	4.09788	3.410	21	.003*

Thus, according research methodology, the results of this research reveal that students who were instructed using Information Gaps activities outperformed those who were taught using traditional methods in speaking. It also implies that using Information Gap activities has a significant impact on the students' speaking ability at Highschool X Lampung of the eleventh class in 2022/2023.

### Information-Gap Activities Is Effective to Develop Speaking Skill

According to the current research, information gaps can improve speaking skills. We can see from the comparison result in Table 3, that the result of the students' posttest was higher than the result of the pretest. Furthermore, as evidenced by the total mean score of students' utterances from this procedure, the students made some progress in some areas. When compared to the control class scores, it is clear that the experiment class has a higher average score than the control class.

To answer the initial question, based on the findings, it is reasonable to conclude that the information gap method can help students improve their speaking skills. It suggests that the students' achievement was hampered by an information gap. Furthermore, the improvement in the students' speaking ability could be attributed to the use of the information gap technique, in which the student could practice speaking. This increase was due to the use of Information Gap, which was able to motivate students' achievement of speaking skills. It is a process that involves both the speaker and the listener, as well as the productive and receptive skills of understanding. Furthermore, information gaps can provide opportunities for students to confidently transfer their ideas without fear or hesitancy. It is fair to say that it is believed that students should be given the opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

The general process of this research was examined during this discussion. The topic of the material in the treatment was finding the differences in the picture using the Information Gap technique. The researcher described the Information Gap technique as well as the procedure for teaching public speaking. The researcher began the class by brainstorming about the material by discussing the students' activities in the morning, afternoon, and evening. The researcher began by describing a famous person's daily activities (a Hollywood actor). The lesson began with how to create yes/no questions and how to answer them. The activity was then continued by generating Wh-questions and determining how to respond to them.

To make the students immersed to the situation, the researcher asks the students to play role as if they were journalist and the actor. The researcher gave the example by directly point out to their student in the class room. A few students practiced how to produce the sentences.

Psychologically, the students were afraid if they made mistake. Students were able to use their prior knowledge or experiences during this brainstorming phase. Brainstorming is a schema theory application that attempts to explain how companionship new information into their established framework of knowledge. The theory proposes that information is held in the brain in networks is called schemata (Alvermann & Swafford, 1989).

Activities to fill information gaps were introduced to the students beforehand and model of applying the activities were given to the students. It is hoped that by explaining the step of constructing the sentences, the students would master how to produce their sentences smoothly. Then, pictures were provided to the students, namely; student A and student B. The pictures were in line, but had differences as the gap. Therefore, the students had to gather information. The students tried to produce the sentences, pronounce and speak up clearly. This activity was done in half. The first chance was given to line 1 and line 2. After that, the students were asked to practice the gaps more slowly. While the students were practicing the information gap activities, the teacher moved among them and gave assistance and guidance as required. The researcher did so to make it easier to control when the students make mistakes or had difficulties. It is also useful to be done altogether considering it would reduce the language anxiety. Anxiety is usually become an obstacle in learning language (Krashen, 1982). After line 1 and 2 finished, the teacher did the same thing to the rest of the class.

### **How Information-Gap Activities Influence Speaking Skill**

To respond how information gap activities influence students' speaking ability, it appears fair to say that information gap activities fulfill some basic requirements of communicative activities, such as the transactional in meaning. Another feature of oral interaction is that participants must constantly negotiate meaning (Bygate, 2009). Furthermore, he claims that speaking tasks are frequently segmented into data and interaction practices. Information routines are usually interpreted by teachers as monologue. Giving description, giving explanation, and role playing as a news announcer are some examples of monologue. To give this task to students needs more consideration since it demands more independent students who actually have not only special talent in speaking but also students who have been able to speak the language. Monologue tasks often make students memorizing. Therefore, it contradicts with the purpose of making the students produce the sentences spontaneously. It is probably unwise to give this kind of task to students in beginner level.

Meanwhile, interaction routines have the possibility to share the burden in speaking because there is transactional in meaning. It is usually done at least by two people with the same shares. When one student A is asking, student B is listening and when student B is answering, student A is listening. When one of the students has difficulties, the other can help. In fact, information gap activities fulfill Bygate's suggestion of a speaking task.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the findings of this research's data analysis, it is possible to conclude that the typical score for each student's speaking skill when taught using information gap activities is higher than the control class when taught using traditional methods such as dialogue creation and memorization. The overall grade for the experiment group was 69.09, while the average score for the control class was 66.54.

Using the outcomes of both classes, the use of inquiry-based activities had a statistically significant effect on students' speaking ability. It indicates that information-gap activities are preferable to making dialogues and memorizing the dialogue in the classroom. Students' speaking skills are also improved through information gap activities.

*Information gap* activities were discovered to be interactive, which may reduce language anxiety, and each student was involved in the activities. As a result, it required each student's active participation and avoided classroom boredom. It also asked the student to participate. For



the language learning itself, it is probably necessary to see students' psychological condition in performing the information-gap activities during classes.

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