Boosting Students' Speaking Skills Through the Chain Story Game

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ABSTRACT

Mastering speaking skills is essential for effective communication in English language learning. However, many students face challenges in developing these skills. Preliminary research at SMA N 1 Baradatu revealed that 60% of tenth-grade students scored below the minimum competency criterion (KKM) of 72. This study aimed to examine the impact of using the chain story game on the speaking ability of tenth-grade students at SMA N 1 Baradatu during the 2024/2025 academic year. A quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design was employed. The population comprised tenth-grade students at SMA N 1 Baradatu, with a sample of 68 students: 34 from class X IPA 2 and 34 from class X IPS 1. Data collection involved providing treatment to the experimental group, while the control group received no intervention. Oral pre-tests and post-tests were conducted for both groups, and the data were analyzed using SPSS Statistics 25. Since the data were neither normally distributed nor homogeneous, the Mann-Whitney U test was used. The analysis revealed a significance value (p-value) of 0.000, lower than $\alpha = 0.05$, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0) and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (Ha). The results demonstrate that the chain story game significantly improved students' speaking abilities. This study highlights the potential of interactive and innovative techniques, such as the chain story game, to address challenges in speaking skill development and enhance student engagement in English language learning.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental tool for communication, enabling individuals to express ideas and connect with others. Communication occurs through speech, which varies across regions as individuals adapt their language to their local environments. Speaking is a critical skill for expressing ideas in class and everyday activities. As Thornbury (2002) noted, speaking is an integral part of daily life, with individuals producing thousands of words per day, a number that may increase for those in roles such as auctioneers or politicians.

Speaking proficiency is essential for learning English, as it facilitates spontaneous communication and enhances fluency. However, based on an interview with an English teacher at SMA N 1 Baradatu, many tenth-grade students struggle with speaking skills, with 60% scoring below the standard competency level of 72. Several factors contribute to these challenges, including poor pronunciation, limited vocabulary, lack of speaking practice, boredom with

traditional learning methods, and low confidence, which often causes students to perceive English as difficult and impractical.

To address these challenges, innovative teaching techniques such as games can motivate students and enhance learning outcomes. One such technique is the "Chain Story Game," in which students collaboratively construct a story by contributing sequentially, thereby fostering creativity and active participation. This study builds on previous research by Muhammad et al. (2022), which investigated the Chain Story Game's impact on vocabulary mastery, and explores its influence on speaking ability. The research question is:

1. Does the Chain Story Game significantly improve the speaking ability of tenth-grade students at SMA N 1 Baradatu?

The study aims to determine the effectiveness of the Chain Story Game in enhancing speaking skills, addressing the identified barriers to communication, and fostering greater student engagement.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
Speaking

In studying English, students are required to master four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these, speaking is a crucial element of communication. Through speaking, individuals can relate to others and share their thoughts. According to Tarigan and Tarigan (2009), someone who masters a language is intuitively capable of speaking in that language. Nunan (2003) emphasized that, for most people, mastering the art of speaking is the most important aspect of learning a second or foreign language, with success measured by the ability to carry out a conversation in the target language. Based on these theories, speaking can be defined as a process of exchanging information between a speaker and a listener. It encompasses several key aspects, including comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. Brown (2004) highlighted these aspects as essential components of speaking that require evaluation.

Assessment of Speaking Ability

Speaking assessment is a critical process in evaluating an individual's ability to communicate effectively through oral language. It involves measuring how well a person can convey messages clearly and accurately, taking into account various aspects of spoken language. Speaking proficiency is an essential component of language learning, as it reflects a learner's ability to use language in practical, real-world situations (Istiara et al., 2023). This process often requires structured frameworks and tools to ensure comprehensive and objective evaluation. Such assessments are particularly important in educational contexts, where students need to demonstrate their ability to communicate ideas and engage in meaningful interactions in the target language. By focusing on specific criteria, speaking assessments provide valuable insights into areas of strength and those needing improvement, allowing educators to tailor their teaching strategies accordingly (Sari et al., 2023).

In this study, Brown's (2004) speaking assessment rubric serves as the primary tool for evaluating students' speaking abilities after treatment. The rubric is widely recognized for its comprehensive approach, as it evaluates five key aspects of speaking: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Each of these components is assessed based on specific criteria, ensuring that the evaluation captures the full spectrum of a learner's oral communication skills. Pronunciation assesses the clarity and accuracy of speech sounds, while grammar measures the use of correct sentence structures. Vocabulary evaluates the range and appropriateness of word choice, fluency considers the flow and pace of speech, and comprehension focuses on the ability to understand and respond appropriately. This rubric provides a robust framework for measuring speaking proficiency, making it a reliable tool for assessing the effectiveness of instructional interventions.

Chain Story Game

The chain story game is a dynamic and collaborative learning activity in which students sequentially contribute to building a story while maintaining its coherence and storyline. (Grüne-Yanoff & Schweinzer, 2008) described this technique as an engaging method for constructing a text collaboratively, where participants build upon sentences contributed by their peers. This activity not only encourages creativity but also fosters active participation and teamwork among students. By requiring learners to think on their feet and add meaningful content to the story, the chain story game promotes critical thinking and enhances speaking skills in a fun and interactive way. For this study, the procedure was adapted from Webb and Nation (2018) to align with classroom needs and ensure its applicability in the context of English language teaching.

The implementation of the chain story game followed a structured procedure to maximize its effectiveness (Muhammad et al., 2022). First, the teacher introduced narrative text material, such as legendary stories, and explained the rules of the game to the students. Next, students were divided into groups of 5–7, with one member designated as the group leader. Each group was given a story title and initial storyline, and group members were allocated 1–2 minutes to contribute a minimum of three sentences to the story. Before the activity began, students were encouraged to discuss and practice within their groups to ensure familiarity with the process. During the activity, groups performed sequentially in a circle, with members contributing to the story in a predetermined order. The group leader concluded the storytelling by saying "chaiiiin," signaling the end of their turn. Afterward, the researcher and students discussed the completed stories, comparing them to the original storyline to evaluate continuity and comprehension. This reflective step ensured students received constructive feedback, further supporting their language learning progress.

METHOD
Research Design

This study employed an experimental research design. According to Cresswell and Clark (2011), experimental research aims to determine whether a specific treatment influences an outcome. An experimental design allows researchers to control all variables affecting the outcome except the independent variable. When the independent variable affects the dependent variable, it can be stated that the independent variable "causes" or "probably causes" the dependent variable. A quasi-experimental design was utilized in this research to investigate whether the chain story game significantly affects students' speaking abilities.

Two classes were involved in the study: an experimental class and a control class. The experimental class used the chain story game as a learning method for English speaking, while the control class employed the lecture method. Both classes undertook identical pre-tests and post-tests to evaluate their speaking abilities.

Population and Sample

The population refers to the entire group being studied. In this research, the population comprised all tenth-grade students of SMA N 1 Baradatu during the 2024/2025 academic year, totaling four classes. Cluster random sampling was used as the sampling technique because the population was grouped and homogeneous. A lottery method was applied to select the experimental and control classes.

Data Collection

Data were collected using oral tests, including pre-tests and post-tests. The pre-test was administered to both the experimental and control classes before the treatment to determine their baseline speaking abilities. Students were asked to individually present a story based on a selected title. The experimental class received treatment through several sessions using the chain story

game to enhance their speaking skills. Following the treatment, a post-test was conducted in both classes, similar to the pre-test but with a different story topic, to assess the final speaking abilities.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study utilized parametric statistical methods, which assumed normal distribution, homogeneity, and hypothesis testing. To test for normality, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were applied. The null hypothesis (H_0) stated that the data were normally distributed, while the alternative hypothesis (H_a) proposed that the data were not normally distributed. H_0 was accepted if the significance (sig.) value exceeded $\alpha = 0.05$; otherwise, H_a was accepted. Homogeneity testing was conducted using Levene's test to assess whether the data variances were consistent. The null hypothesis (H_0) for this test asserted that the data variance was homogeneous, whereas the alternative hypothesis (H_a) suggested it was not. H_0 was accepted if the sig. value was greater than $\alpha = 0.05$; otherwise, H_a was accepted.
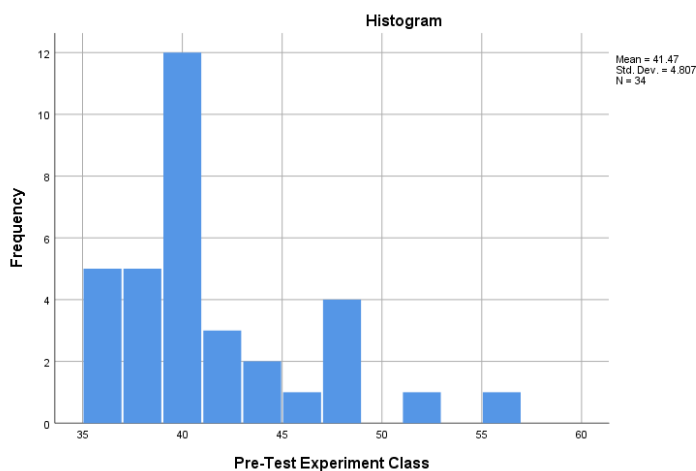
Once normality and homogeneity were assessed, the choice of statistical test was determined. If the data were both normal and homogeneous, an independent sample t-test was used to analyze the results. However, if the data were not normally distributed or homogeneous, the Mann-Whitney U Test was employed to determine the significance of the treatment effect. The study's hypotheses were as follows: H_0 indicated that the chain story game had no significant influence on the speaking ability of tenth-grade students at SMA N 1 Baradatu, while H_a suggested a significant influence. The decision criteria for hypothesis testing were to accept H_0 if Sig. $\geq \alpha = 0.05$ and to accept H_a if Sig. $< \alpha = 0.05$. This analytical approach ensured a rigorous examination of the treatment's impact.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**
FINDINGS

This research was conducted over five meetings. In the first meeting, the research began with a pre-test administered to students in both the experimental class (X IPA 2) and the control class (X IPS 1). The pre-test aimed to establish the baseline speaking abilities of the students. During the subsequent three meetings, the experimental class underwent treatment using the chain story game as a method for learning speaking, while the control class continued using the traditional teaching techniques typically employed by their teacher. The experimental class consisted of 34 students, as did the control class.

In each treatment session, the experimental class engaged in chain story game activities, where students collaboratively told legend stories in a sequential manner, ensuring active participation and practice in speaking. After the treatment sessions, both the experimental and control classes completed a post-test to evaluate any changes in speaking ability. The data from the pre-tests and post-tests were analyzed using SPSS version 25. The results of the pre-test for the experimental class are as follows: (continue with specific pre-test results).
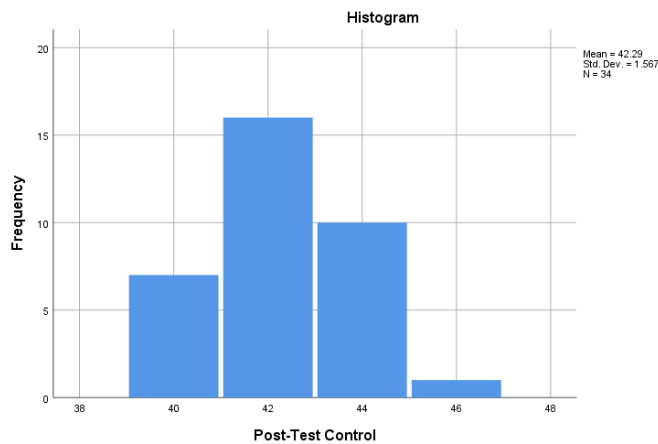

Histogram

Mean = 41.47
Std. Dev. = 4.807
N = 34

Based on the data presented above, the frequency distribution of the pre-test scores indicates the following: 10 students scored between 0–39, representing a failing level of speaking ability. Additionally, 24 students scored between 40–59, which reflects a low level of speaking proficiency. Notably, no students achieved scores between 60–70 (good speaking ability) or 71–100 (excellent speaking ability). The minimum pre-test score in the experimental class was 36, while the maximum score was 56, with a mean score of 41.47. These results indicate that the majority of students failed to meet the expected standard in their speaking test, demonstrating significant challenges in speaking ability. The results of the pre-test in the control class are as follows: (continue with control class data).
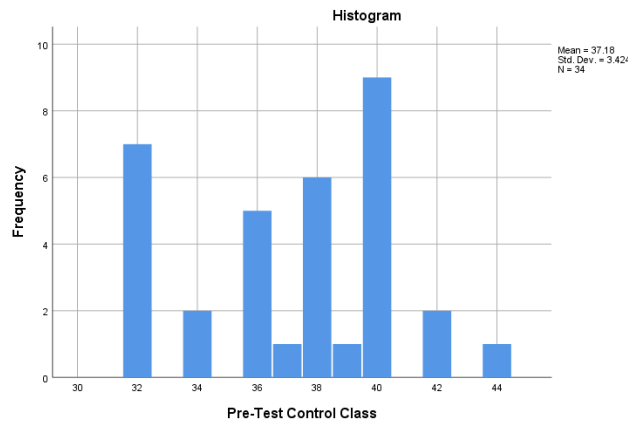
Figure 2. Graph of the Result Pre-test in Control Class

Based on the figure above, the frequency distribution of the pre-test scores in the control class revealed the following: 22 students scored between 0–39, indicating a failing level of speaking ability; 12 students scored between 40–59, reflecting a low level of speaking proficiency. Notably, no students achieved scores between 60–70 (good speaking ability) or 71–100 (excellent speaking ability). The minimum pre-test score in the control class was 32, the maximum score was 44, and the mean score was 37.18. These results demonstrate that the majority of students in the control class failed to meet the expected standard in their speaking test, highlighting considerable challenges in their speaking ability. Following the treatment, a post-test was conducted in both the experimental and control classes to assess the effects of the intervention. The post-test results for both classes are as follows: (continue with specific post-test data).

Figure 4. Graph of the Result Post-test in Control Class

Based on the data presented above, the frequency distribution of the post-test scores in the control class revealed the following: no students scored between 0–39, indicating a failing level in the speaking test. A total of 34 students scored between 40–59, reflecting a low level of speaking

ability. Notably, no students achieved scores between 60–70 (good speaking ability) or 71–100 (excellent speaking ability). The minimum post-test score in the control class was 40, the maximum score was 46, and the mean score was 42.29. These results indicate that most students in the control class still demonstrated low speaking proficiency, despite a slight improvement in scores compared to the pre-test.

In this study, the gain score was calculated by comparing the pre-test and post-test scores. A positive gain score indicated that the post-test value was higher than the pre-test value, while a negative gain score signified a decrease. The average gain score in the experimental class was 21.72, significantly higher than the control class's average gain score of 5.24. This highlights that the experimental class exhibited greater improvement in speaking ability compared to the control class.

A normality test was conducted to determine whether the data were normally distributed. Results using SPSS Version 25 indicated that the P-value (Sig.) for the pre-test in the experimental class was 0.00 for the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and 0.002 for the Shapiro-Wilk test. Similarly, in the control class, the P-value was 0.040 for the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and 0.010 for the Shapiro-Wilk test. As the P-values in both groups were smaller than $\alpha = 0.05$, it was concluded that the data were not normally distributed.

A homogeneity test was then conducted using SPSS Version 25 with the Levene Test. The results showed that the Sig. value based on the mean was 0.006, which is less than $\alpha = 0.05$, indicating that the data were not homogeneously distributed.

Subsequently, a hypothesis test was performed using the Mann-Whitney U test due to the lack of normality and homogeneity in the data. Analysis using SPSS Version 25 revealed a significance value of Sig. $0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$, leading to the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (Ha) and rejection of the null hypothesis (Ho). Based on the results of the Mann-Whitney U test, it can be concluded that the Chain Story Game had a significant effect on improving the speaking ability of tenth-grade students at SMA N 1 Baradatu.

DISCUSSION

The results of the pre-test indicated that students' speaking abilities were initially low. However, after implementing the Chain Story Game as a treatment in the experimental class, students' speaking skills improved significantly. The post-test results revealed a substantial difference between the experimental class and the control class. In the control class, the mean pre-test score was 37.18, and the post-test score increased slightly to 42.29. In contrast, the experimental class demonstrated a marked improvement, with the mean pre-test score of 41.47 rising to 64.12. These findings illustrate the effectiveness of the Chain Story Game in enhancing students' speaking abilities.

During the teaching and learning process in the experimental class, the Chain Story Game fostered an engaging and relaxed environment for learning English. This activity encouraged students to practice speaking by applying vocabulary and grammar within the context of a story, making the material more comprehensible and memorable (Grüne-Yanoff & Schweinzer, 2008). The collaborative nature of the game allowed students to practice speaking in groups, boosting their confidence in communicating in front of others. As a result, students felt more comfortable and self-assured in speaking English, which positively influenced their speaking skills.

The findings demonstrated that the Chain Story Game effectively enhanced students' speaking abilities, as evident during the treatment process. Students who were initially reluctant to speak gradually gained confidence and participated actively in class. Additionally, improvements were observed in key speaking aspects such as pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and grammar. The test results confirmed that the Chain Story Game positively impacted students' speaking abilities, addressing the research question, "Is there any influence of using the Chain Story Game on students' speaking ability at the tenth grade of SMA N 1 Baradatu?"

Hypothesis testing further supported these findings. The Mann-Whitney U test results showed a significance value of 0.00 (p < 0.05), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H₀) and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (Hₐ). This analysis confirmed that the Chain Story Game significantly influenced students' speaking abilities.

In conclusion, the Chain Story Game proved to be an effective method for improving students' speaking skills in English. This interactive activity positively impacted the speaking abilities of tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Baradatu, making it a valuable technique in English language teaching and learning.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research conducted in the tenth grade of SMA N 1 Baradatu, the following conclusions were drawn. Statistical analysis revealed a significant influence of the Chain Story Game on students' speaking abilities. The hypothesis test using the Mann-Whitney U Test produced a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000, which was smaller than $\alpha = 0.05$, leading to the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (Hₐ) and the rejection of the null hypothesis (H₀). This result indicated that the Chain Story Game effectively improved students' speaking skills. The game helped students enhance key aspects of speaking, including vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, comprehension, and grammar. Additionally, the interactive and engaging nature of the Chain Story Game created a fun and relaxed learning atmosphere, making the process of learning speaking skills more enjoyable and effective. Thus, the Chain Story Game proved to be a practical and interactive method for enhancing students' English language learning.

The findings of this research suggest that the Chain Story Game can be an effective teaching strategy for improving speaking skills, providing a framework for English teachers to create engaging and student-centered learning experiences. Teachers are encouraged to adopt this method to foster interactive and enjoyable speaking lessons, while students are advised to utilize the Chain Story Game to actively practice speaking, enhance their confidence, and improve their overall English proficiency. Despite its effectiveness, this study had some limitations, including its focus on a single skill (speaking) and its implementation within a specific population. Future research could expand on this study by applying the Chain Story Game to different language skills, such as writing or listening, or by testing its impact across various student demographics and educational settings. Moreover, researchers could explore alternative game-based methods to diversify teaching approaches and assess their comparative effectiveness in fostering language acquisition. These efforts could further support the development of innovative and effective teaching strategies for English language learners

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