

Investigating the Challenges Faced by Students in Information Gap Activities and Strategies to Improve Speaking Ability

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ABSTRACT

Speaking refers to the capacity to communicate with others through the use of spoken language. Oral communication and speaking are synonymous. Therefore, information gap activity is one of several strategies for investigating the challenges and improve speaking skills. By employing information gap activities and observing the classroom setting when this approach is applied in speaking classes, the researcher aims to investigate the challenging that faced by the students using information gap activity. The other instruments also supported the observation, namely the interviews with the participant. Moreover, this study used the classroom action research design that covered plan, action, observation, and reflection in two cycles. Based on the findings This research commends the strategic introduction of information-gap activities, emphasizing their value in developing crucial speaking skills. The structured implementation of activities, clear instructions, and specific goals underscore the effectiveness of the teaching methodology.

INTRODUCTION

As a means of international communication, language is vitally essential. Language also plays a crucial role in enabling effective verbal and written communication, particularly in the context of academic tasks and the learning process. Additionally, individuals can express their thoughts, emotions, and philosophical perspectives through the use of language. Humans utilize language as a means of interaction and communication. Language proficiency, in particular, is not an innate human ability but rather a skill that necessitates systematic study and development. Speaking abilities include the act of communicating ideas, concepts, thoughts, and emotions to an interlocutor or listener for a particular purpose through the use of speech. A language pupil is required to develop critical speaking abilities. This seeks to enable students to communicate authentic ideas through language and has the potential to empower them to express their thoughts even in rudimentary discussions. Similar to academic settings, students are required to possess strong communication skills, particularly in the form of oral correspondence. Speaking is the capacity to articulate and convey ideas, emotions, and thoughts through the correct pronunciation of noises or words. Speaking is a system of symbols that are visible and audible, and it requires the use of numerous muscles and muscle tissue to convey concepts. A willingness to engage in both written and spoken practice is essential for language acquisition.

It is necessary to continually refine the ability to speak (Randha & Nababan, 2022). Without practice, quiet individuals will remain mute and will not dare to express their opinions. "Speaking is a language skill that develops throughout a child's life, which is only preceded by listening skills, and it is during this period that the ability to speak or talk is learned," noted Tarigan. "Speaking is a language skill that develops throughout a child's life." At the high school level, mastery of speaking skills is an examination that gauges whether students have mastered the fundamentals of speaking skills in order to progress to a higher level or possess exceptional speaking abilities.

As part of their language learning, students must be capable of verbally expressing their thoughts, ideas, and knowledge, as well as possess the ability to speak critically and creatively. The primary objective of speaking skill development is to equip students with the ability to articulate thoughts and viewpoints through oral communication, as well as to facilitate the expression of knowledge, life experiences, and diverse concepts. A person's speaking abilities require consideration of challenges or circumstances, as well as paralinguistics (nonverbal cues associated with elocution techniques or aural effects), which are of great assistance in managing communication. The language or auditory image utilized in an expression determines the degree of perfection in the correspondence cycle. Speakers ought to employ suitable and accessible language in order to impart their thoughts to students in order to facilitate effective communication.

Effective communication skills are essential for students to engage in the educational process. Oral communication of acquired knowledge is an essential component of the instruction and learning process. Additionally, they must

possess the gumption to appear and pose inquiries in order to conduct an inquiry and collect data. They must possess strong argumentative skills, particularly in seminars, discussions, and meetings, as well as the ability to elucidate challenges and propose solutions while eliciting audience sympathy.

Speaking refers to the capacity to communicate with others through the use of spoken language. Oral communication and speaking are synonymous (Lase et al., 2023). Multiple elements have the potential to impact spoken language usage. The following elements—additional posture (gestures), self-control, pronunciation, intonation, word selection, sentence and word organization, conversational systematics, conversational content, and appropriate beginning and ending points—are correlated with the ability to communicate clearly. Each of these crucial elements of communication.

Prior to commencing formal education, students have obtained and possessed the capacity to communicate orally their thoughts, emotions, and intentions. The speaking abilities of students vary considerably, spanning from adequate to faltering to proficient (Oktadela et al., 2023). Certain pupils possess the capacity to express their ideas with clarity, even at a rudimentary level. Certain pupils have experienced difficulties in expressing themselves effectively. A few distinct students were still hesitant to stand in front of their peers. In actuality, it is to be anticipated that a few exceptional students may emerge, albeit drenched in cold perspiration, exhibiting rigid postures, and forgetting everything when confronted with a multitude of other students. Consequently, appropriate guidance and support are necessary in order to rectify this matter.

Two elements contribute to the deficiency in speech abilities: internal and external factors. Communities, households, and families all exert influence on external factors. Speaking abilities are also influenced by internal factors, including the applications of models, media, approaches, and strategies by instructors, which have an impact on students' speaking abilities.

Students commonly face challenges when instructors assign projects that necessitate oral presentations of their ideas or narratives (Oktadela et al., 2023). They encounter difficulties in expressing thoughts, lack confidence in the instructor's knowledge or narratives, are ill-equipped to speak in public, instill dread in students, and are less inclined to express their opinions. They are unable to communicate their thoughts and ideas effectively as a result of these challenges, which hinders students' ability to discuss ways in which they can be more creative.

In light of the information presented above, questioning is a crucial component of education. Concerning questioning, these pupils have achieved mastery. Secondary school students should be capable of communicating and engaging in language as value-based, relational discourse and by seeking clarification on urgent issues, in accordance with the aforementioned objectives. Additionally essential for igniting students' interest in speaking abilities are teacher resources. In this instance, the instructor utilizes solely the materials referenced in a single textbook, neglecting to consider the suitability of said materials for the students. Students might experience a loss of engagement and encounter challenges in accurately pronouncing sentences if they commit errors

when choosing speaking material. Students must therefore locate authentic and engaging speaking material.

On the basis of the aforementioned assertions and peculiarities, scientists contend that the system must be altered in order to resolve issues concerning the speaking abilities of students. Students are more inclined to pose inquiries when the information gap activity strategy is implemented in the classroom, which piques the author's interest.

Information Gap activities involve at least two parties lacking the same data. Information Gap Activities: Due to the fact that not everyone has the same information at their disposal and that not everyone has the same knowledge, communication is required to complete the task. Groups consisting of two or more students are the norm (Adawiah & Siliwangi, 2018). A portion, if not all, of the information required for the activity is possessed by each student. By collaborating to compensate for informational "gaps," they develop communication abilities in a manner that is both genuine and significant.

Nevertheless, the implementation of information gap activities continues to face challenges, including reduced student activity and additional factors. Hence, the objective of this study is to examine the obstacles encountered by learners during the implementation of Information Gap Activities, in addition to proposing suitable approaches to enhance students' oral communication skills.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Teaching English requires the ability to speak effectively. An action is required in showing English, particularly for talking (Randha & Nababan, 2022). Therefore, a student activity must be provided so that they can practice speaking and comprehend the material. Students can practice their speaking skills in class using the Information Gap Activity, which is an appropriate teaching method. A "gap" in the information that two people process is called an "information gap," and conversation helps to close that gap so that both speakers have the same information. Activities with an information gap in which one group has half of the information needed to complete a task and another group (or two students) has the other half. In data hole exercises, an individual has specific data that should be imparted to others to tackle an issue, assemble data or go with a choice. This is referring to the fact that people typically communicate in real life to acquire information that they do not process. Students are supposed to work in pairs on information gap activities. The other partner will share the information because one student will have it. They fill many needs like taking care of issues or assembling data. Harmer concurs, stating that in information gap activities, each student must share distinct information regarding the same subject without considering what their partner is receiving in order to obtain complete information for a task. In addition, Richards stated that the term "information gap" refers to the fact that, in actual communication, individuals typically communicate in order to acquire information about which they are unaware.

Students are divided into pair activities or group work using a set of information that each student has in the Information Gap teaching and learning process (Lase et al., 2023). The Information Gaps activity is not about learning

new information; rather, it is about practicing English. Students should be allowed to speak without being corrected or interrupted. Take note of any grammatically incorrect questions that students ask, and after the activity is over, go over the questions again. The researcher came to the conclusion that information gap activities are activities that are done with pairs or groups of students and require each student to share a portion of the required information with the other using the target language.

METHODOLOGY

Research Method and Design

The researcher employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in the execution of this study, utilizing the Classroom Action Research (CAR) design. Observation and interviews provided the qualitative data, whereas the pre-test and post-test served as the quantitative data.

The primary objective of classroom action research is to enhance the instructional and learning process. Action research, according to (Zilola Mukumovna, 2021), entails both conducting research and undertaking action in response to that action. Action research has been implemented in schools, hospitals, health clinics, community organizations, and government agencies, among other settings. It has the potential to improve routine work procedures, address particular challenges, and foster the creation of specialized initiatives and programs.

The researcher utilized a Class Action Research (CAR) framework developed by Kemmis and McTaggart for this investigation. The teaching-learning process is structured into cycles, with each cycle comprising two sessions.

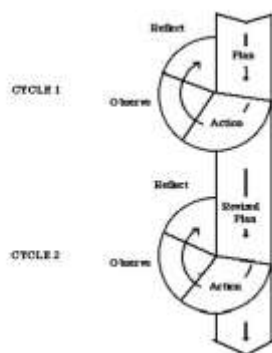


Figure 1. Action Research Cycle by Kemmis and McTaggart

This research was carried out at a senior high school in Sragen. A total of twenty-three first-grade students were utilized to implement this classroom action research. The research population consisted of tenth-grade students enrolled in one of the senior high schools located in Sragen. In addition, three instruments were utilized in this study: observation, examination, and interview.

Throughout the CAR, observations were made in order to assess the progress made from the initial to the final meeting. The examination then consists of a pre-test and a post-test.

The pre-test is administered prior to treatment, whereas the post-test is administered following the completion of the CAR. This examination measures the improvement in students' speaking following information gap activity-based instruction.

In conclusion, teacher and student interviews were undertaken to gain further insights into the benefits and repercussions of information gap activities on students' oral communication abilities. In collecting the data, the researcher used an instrument that referred to some tools. In this research, the researcher used the test, interview and observation checklist instruments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter is dedicated to describe the findings of the research and the discussion. It explains the challenges during the implementation of information gap-activity. Meanwhile in the discussion section, it elaborates the information gap activity more deeply relates to the learning process especially in the students' speaking practice.

The Challenges Faced By Students In Information Gap Activities

The common issues were needing more student motivation and confidence and insufficient grammar and vocabulary. To cope with the issues, the researchers attempted to design appropriate lesson plans, think of proper teaching methods, create learning media, and consider using exciting teaching techniques. In this cycle, the material focused on building students' vocabulary knowledge.

In order to implement the researchers' strategy, the PowerPoint Presentation's learning media was utilized to acquaint the students with the learning objectives and materials pertaining to soliciting and providing assistance. Students Considered were instructed in the common expressions of requesting and offering assistance and assigned tasks to help them practice the conversation. Students were acquainted with information gap activities, specifically those involving missing information, on this occasion. The functions and objectives of information gap activities were described in detail. The absent information was to be filled by students exchanging information in pairs and attempting to interpret or present their ideas in class. Nevertheless, the researchers were yet to identify the issues pertaining to the speaking performance and participation of the students throughout the classroom exercise. As directed by the instructor, students were unable to exchange the information; they lacked the necessary vocabulary and were hesitant to present their ideas.

Additionally, a number of students remained occupied with their studies. As evidenced by the subsequent session of the initial cycle, students had begun to respond actively to the instructor's introductory inquiries. The instructor elaborated on the details of the information activities and furnished illustrations for the pupils. Students were thus able to assess their deficiencies candidly throughout the learning process, which aided in the development of their confidence. Furthermore, students exhibited increased motivation towards learning and demonstrated a decreased inclination to consult a text when required to speak or present the tasks. By actively engaging in the information gap activities, students were motivated to enhance their pronunciation skills, ultimately leading

to improved fluency. Furthermore, by collaborating in pairs, students were able to provide valuable feedback. Students' varying levels of English proficiency, on the other hand, necessitated that the instructor partition the groups into pairs with care and provide pertinent feedback to each student. As a result, in instances where students encounter challenges with accurate word pronunciation, adequate vocabulary usage, or proper grammar application, the instructor would offer supplementary feedback in conjunction with the peer evaluations.

The responsibility of the educator to deliver effective pedagogical methods was challenging. The instructor was required to employ teaching methods that would put students at ease after the lesson. It may foster an environment conducive to learning in which natural interaction between students and between students and teachers occurs. In relation to this anticipation, the instructor had previously endeavoured to satisfy the students' requirements by incorporating technology into information gap activities. Additionally, students were provided with adequate vocabulary and expressions prior to encountering information gaps.

The Strategies to Improve Speaking Ability

The utilization of Information Gap Activities (IGA) has demonstrated usefulness in increasing students' speaking ability. Students must communicate with their peers in order to complete tasks or exchange information throughout these activities. Students can practice speaking and develop their language skills through this involvement. Students' speaking abilities are improved in several ways through information gap activities. First, they foster a communicative environment that inspires students to participate in insightful discussions. Students are inspired to think critically, express their thoughts, and convey information. Second, because students must cooperate to exchange knowledge and accomplish the assignment, information gap activities promote cooperation and teamwork. In addition to improving students' speaking abilities, the collaborative element of information gap activities enables them to build their communication and teamwork abilities. There are obstacles to using knowledge gap activities to improve students' speaking abilities. One issue is that it can be challenging to guarantee that every student contributes equally and participates at the same level due to differences in proficiency. If the students lack confidence in their language skills, they could be reluctant to speak up. In order to overcome this difficulty, teachers should foster a positive learning atmosphere in the classroom and offer scaffolding or other forms of encouragement to less proficient students so they may engage fully in the activity. Another difficulty is clearly outlining the activity's instructions for students to ensure they comprehend its goal and targets. One way to address this is to model the tasks by offering examples.

Observation results indicated positive outcomes in the classroom action research focused on this topic. Implementing information gap activities increased students' engagement and participation during speaking activities. Through information gap activities, students could communicate more freely and confidently about their ideas. The collaborative aspect of information gap activities increased students' willingness to communicate and exchange knowledge.

Furthermore, information gap activities allowed students to practice various speaking abilities, including expressing viewpoints, posing questions, and summarizing circumstances. Through consistent practice and feedback, students can improve their vocabulary, grammar, accuracy, fluency, and confidence. As a result, individuals can effectively and easily communicate their ideas orally. Overall, the observation results demonstrated how information gap activities can improve students' speaking skills and create a communicative learning atmosphere in the classroom.

Firstly, the introduction of information-gap activities is strategically outlined. The interviewee not only elucidates the concept but underscores its value in developing crucial speaking skills. By emphasizing collaborative work to fill in missing information, the interviewee promotes a meaningful and interactive approach to communication skill development. The specificity of activities and their structured implementation further highlights the thoroughness of the teaching methodology. The use of activities like "exchange information" and "Jigsaw Reading" is paired with clear instructions and goals, demonstrating a deliberate effort to guide students through effective information exchange. Strategic grouping or pairing of students enhances the overall efficacy of these activities.

The adaptability of materials and resources underscores a student-centered approach. Utilizing a diverse range of materials, including worksheets, pictures, articles, and online resources, reflects a commitment to catering to varying needs and language proficiency levels among students. Despite the evident success, challenges in ensuring equal participation and managing larger groups are candidly acknowledged. The interviewee's proactive approach to addressing these challenges is noteworthy, employing strategies such as role assignments, clear instructions, effective communication modeling, and opportunities for reflection and feedback. Assessment and monitoring strategies contribute to a robust evaluation process. The use of observation, listening to interactions, and immediate feedback, along with rubrics or checklists, ensures a comprehensive evaluation of specific speaking skills, including fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation.

Support strategies, such as encouraging peer collaboration and providing a supportive classroom environment, contribute to a positive learning atmosphere. The emphasis on scaffolding and examples demonstrates a commitment to helping students overcome difficulties in the learning process. The interviewee asserts that information-gap activities significantly contribute to English language learning by providing authentic communication opportunities. The improvement in speaking skills, encompassing fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, and confidence, underscores the transformative impact of these activities.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, this research highlights the challenges faced by students in implementing information gap activities, particularly in the context of speaking practice. Common issues include a lack of motivation, confidence, and insufficient grammar and vocabulary skills. The researchers employed various strategies, such

as designing lesson plans, using appropriate teaching methods, creating learning media, and incorporating exciting techniques to address these challenges.

This research emphasizes the positive impact of Information Gap Activities (IGA) on improving students' speaking abilities. Through collaborative efforts to exchange information and complete tasks, students engage in insightful discussions, enhance their critical thinking skills, and build teamwork and cooperation. Despite potential difficulties in ensuring equal participation and understanding instructions, the article suggests solutions such as fostering a positive learning atmosphere, offering support to less proficient students, and providing clear examples.

This research commends the strategic introduction of information-gap activities, emphasizing their value in developing crucial speaking skills. The structured implementation of activities, clear instructions, and specific goals underscore the effectiveness of the teaching methodology. Additionally, the adaptability of materials and resources reflects a student-centered approach, catering to diverse needs and language proficiency levels.

In order to mitigate the difficulties encountered by students during information gap activities and improve their speaking proficiency, it is advisable to undertake an exhaustive inquiry. Concentrate on comprehending particular obstacles, including motivation, self-assurance, and linguistic aptitude. Examine a range of inventive approaches utilized by educators, such as the incorporation of technology, individualized lesson plans, and a variety of teaching methodologies.

Furthermore, evaluate the influence of collaborative exercises such as Information Gap Activities (IGA) on the development of speaking abilities. This inquiry seeks to examine the ways in which these activities foster a collaborative atmosphere, stimulate critical thinking, and cultivate awareness. Propose remedies for potential challenges, such as inequitable participation, which may include cultivating a constructive learning environment and delivering specialized assistance to students with lower proficiency levels.

Observations of the classroom, evaluations of student responses, and assessments of learning outcomes ought to comprise the inquiry. The overarching objective is to discern efficacious methodologies that not only alleviate obstacles but also foster the holistic enhancement of students' oral communication skills within the context of language acquisition.

FURTHER STUDY

Furthermore, exploring the integration of technology—such as virtual simulations, digital role-play, or AI-based speaking platforms—may offer deeper insights into how innovative tools can enhance communicative interaction and reduce learner anxiety in EFL classrooms.

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