The Effectiveness Of The Three-Step Interview Technique In Improving Students' Speaking Ability At SMK Negeri 3 Padangsidimpuan

Abdul Azis Sikumbang[1*]

[1]Bachelor of English Language Education, Universitas Graha Nusantara, Indonesia

Siti Meutia Sari [2]

[2] English Language Education Study Program, Universitas Graha Nusantara, Indonesia

Lisa Fitri Meidipa[3]

[3] English Language Education Study Program, Universitas Graha Nusantara, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of the Three-Step Interview Technique in improving the speaking ability and classroom participation of eleventh-grade students at SMK Negeri 3 Padangsidimpuan. Employing a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, the study was conducted in two cycles involving 72 students selected by cluster random sampling. Data were collected through pre-tests, post-tests, and student observation sheets. The results showed that the students' speaking ability significantly improved, with mean scores increasing from 57.08 in the pre-test to 81.46 in the post-test Cycle II, representing a 42.70% improvement. Additionally, student participation scores remained consistently high, indicating strong engagement throughout the intervention. The findings suggest that the Three-Step Interview Technique is an effective cooperative learning strategy to enhance students' speaking competence and classroom interaction. The study recommends the wider application of this technique in EFL classrooms to foster communicative competence in a supportive learning environment.

Corresponding Author:

Abdul Azis Sikumbang

English Language Education Study Program, Universitas Graha Nusantara, Indonesia
Email: abdulazissikumbang05@gmail.com

A. INTRODUCTION

English has become a global lingua franca, extensively used in communication, science, business, and education (Crystal, 2003)). The mastery of English, especially speaking skills, has emerged as a priority for learners worldwide, as it serves as a primary medium for interpersonal and professional communication (Richards, 2009). In Indonesia, English has been integrated as a compulsory subject in the national curriculum from senior high school through higher education, reflecting its significance for global competitiveness and employability.

Speaking, among the four essential language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), is often considered the most challenging and critical for learners due to its direct relation to communicative competence (Brown & Yule in Sharifovna, 2022). According to Kayi (in Murillo, 2022), developing speaking skills requires both linguistic proficiency and the confidence to engage in meaningful interaction. However, various factors hinder students' speaking ability, including limited vocabulary, lack of self-confidence, insufficient practice, and teacher-centered instructional methods (Harmer, 2009).

Preliminary observations at SMK Negeri 3 Padangsidimpuan revealed that eleventh-grade students experienced low motivation and inadequate opportunities to practice English speaking in class. Many students exhibited reluctance to speak due to fear of making mistakes and lack of encouragement. Moreover, traditional lecture-based methods employed by teachers often failed to engage students in active speaking tasks. These observations align with findings by Vanna and Sonthara (in Shah & Shah, 2021), who emphasize the importance of cooperative learning to stimulate student participation and responsibility.

To address these challenges, this study implemented the Three-Step Interview Technique, one of Kagan's cooperative learning strategies (Chophel, 2021). This technique promotes interaction among peers by structuring the learning process into interviewer, interviewee, and reporter roles, thus increasing speaking opportunities and fostering social and linguistic development. The method has been shown to enhance students' communication and critical thinking skills (Devo et al., 2024), and provides a supportive environment for practicing speaking through peer collaboration.

The study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the Three-Step Interview Technique in improving students' speaking ability among the eleventh-grade students of SMK Negeri 3 Padangsidimpuan. Specifically, the research addresses the following questions: (1) To what extent does the Three-Step Interview Technique improve

students' speaking abilities? (2) How does the technique affect classroom interaction and student engagement?

The findings are expected to contribute to pedagogical practices by providing evidence for the use of cooperative learning models to enhance speaking skills in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts, thus supporting previous research highlighting the success of interactive methods in language learning (Cameron, 2001)

B. LITERATUR REVIEW

1. Speaking Skill in English Language Learning

   Speaking is a vital component of language learning, reflecting the ability to communicate ideas, opinions, and information effectively (Yule, 2005). (Nunan, 2003) defines speaking as "the productive aural/oral skill that involves producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning." The nature of speaking requires learners to master various linguistic elements such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency (Richards, 2009).

   In the Indonesian EFL context, speaking is often cited as the most difficult skill for students to master due to limited practice opportunities and anxiety over making mistakes (Harmer, 2015). Students frequently encounter barriers such as limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and low self-confidence (Kayi in Murillo, 2022). Research indicates that teacher-centered methods exacerbate these difficulties by restricting students' chances to engage in meaningful speaking tasks (Vanna & Sonthara in Shah & Shah, 2021).

2. Types and Purposes of Speaking

   (Brown, 2004) categorizes speaking activities into monologues and dialogues. Monologues include speeches and presentations, whereas dialogues involve two-way communication and can be transactional (to convey information) or interactional (to build relationships). (Richmond et al., 2000) suggests that the main purposes of speaking are to inform, persuade, and entertain. Classroom activities should be designed to support these purposes and offer students structured opportunities to develop their speaking skills.

3. Cooperative Learning and Speaking Skill Development

   Cooperative learning is a student-centered instructional approach that encourages learners to work together in small groups to maximize their own and each other's learning (Slavin, 2012). According to (Johnson et al., 2007), cooperative learning promotes active engagement, higher retention of material, and increased motivation.

In the EFL classroom, cooperative learning strategies help reduce learners' anxiety and create a supportive environment for practicing speaking.

4. The Three-Step Interview Technique

    The Three-Step Interview Technique, developed by Kagan (in Chophel, 2021)., is a structured cooperative learning activity where students take turns being the interviewer, interviewee, and recorder. This method fosters student interaction, active listening, and accountability within teams. (Devo et al., 2024) demonstrated that using the Three-Step Interview in EFL settings led to improvements in students' speaking, listening, and summarizing skills. The technique not only enhances linguistic proficiency but also cultivates personal and social skills such as responsibility and respect for peers (Shaddad & Jember, 2024).

    Previous studies, such as (Quynh & Van, 2021), report that incorporating cooperative learning strategies, including the Three-Step Interview, increases students' motivation and participation in speaking activities. It provides structured opportunities for learners to practice oral communication in a less intimidating setting than traditional classroom speaking tasks.

    This study builds on these findings by investigating the application of the Three-Step Interview Technique to improve the speaking ability of Indonesian senior high school students, where previous studies have shown a gap in the use of cooperative learning models for speaking skill enhancement.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, which is characterized by a cyclic process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Pelech, 2021). CAR was chosen because it allows educators to investigate and improve their own classroom practices (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The researcher applied the Three-Step Interview Technique to improve the students' speaking ability at SMK Negeri 3 Padangsidimpuan during the 2024–2025 academic year. The research was conducted in two cycles, with each cycle comprising the following stages: (1) planning the lesson and materials; (2) implementing the intervention; (3) observing student performance and participation; (4) reflecting on the results to plan further improvements.

The population of this study consisted of 180 eleventh-grade students from SMK Negeri 3 Padangsidimpuan. Using cluster random sampling (Simkus & Simkus, 2022), two classes were selected as the sample, resulting in a total of 72 participants from classes XI-1 TKJ and XI-3 TKJ. The sample was considered homogeneous as all

students were at the same educational level and followed a similar curriculum (Arikunto, 2014).

The data were collected through both qualitative and quantitative instruments. The primary instrument was a speaking test, administered as a pre-test and post-test in each cycle to measure the students' speaking ability before and after the application of the Three-Step Interview Technique. Observation sheets were also used to record students' participation and classroom interaction. The speaking test was based on the assessment criteria of fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension (Brown, 2007). A scoring rubric was used to ensure consistency and objectivity.

In Cycle I, the teacher introduced the Three-Step Interview Technique and applied it during the speaking activities. Students were divided into groups of three, where they alternately acted as interviewer, interviewee, and recorder. After each interview session, group members shared and summarized the information collected.

Upon reflection of Cycle I results, adjustments were made for Cycle II, which focused on increasing students' speaking time and improving the quality of questions and responses during the interviews.

The students' scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The mean (M) was calculated using the formula:

$$M = \frac{\Sigma X}{N}$$

where ΣX = sum of individual scores and N = number of students (Sudijono, 2016).

The percentage of students meeting the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) was also calculated. Improvement was measured by comparing pre-test and post-test scores:

$$P = \frac{(Y2 - Y)}{y} \times 100\%$$

where Y = pre-test score and Y2 = post-test score (Cycle II). According to the success criteria, the intervention was considered effective if at least 30% improvement was achieved (Creswell, 2020).

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the Three-Step Interview Technique at SMK Negeri 3 Padangsidimpuan involved two research cycles, each followed by a speaking test. The pre-test results showed that students' speaking ability was relatively low, with a mean score of 57.08. Only 8.33% of students achieved the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 75.

After Cycle I, the students' speaking ability increased, with a mean score of 72.50 and 37.50% of students meeting the KKM. However, this result did not meet the success criterion of a 30% improvement from the pre-test (achieved was only 27.01%). Therefore, a second cycle was conducted.

In Cycle II, the mean score increased significantly to 81.46, with 81.94% of students meeting the KKM. The percentage improvement from the pre-test to the post-test in Cycle II was 42.70%, exceeding the success criterion. The progression of the students' mean scores is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Students' Mean Scores Across Tests

Test Type	Mean Score	% Students Meeting KKM
Pre-Test	57.08	8.33%
Post-Test Cycle I	72.50	37.50%
Post-Test Cycle II	81.46	81.94%

In addition to speaking achievement, this study observed student participation levels across four classroom meetings. The activity assessment was based on student engagement indicators such as participation, willingness to interact, and collaboration. Scores ranged from 0 to an ideal maximum of 16. Figure 3 presents the student activity score development across the sessions.
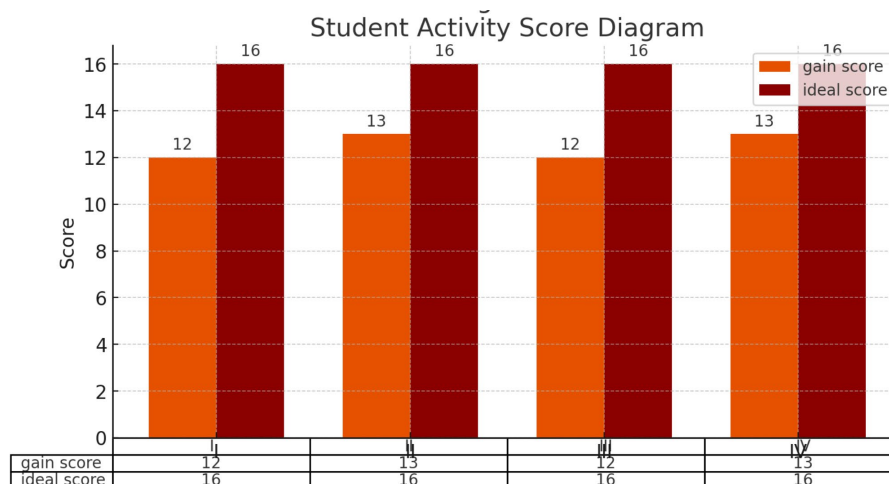

Figure 1

Student Activity Score Diagram

Figure 1 shows that student activity scores were relatively high throughout the study, with scores of 12, 13, 12, and 13 across the four meetings. Although slight fluctuations occurred, the overall trend indicates positive student engagement, reflecting the

effectiveness of the cooperative learning model in enhancing classroom participation (Johnson et al., 2007).

This finding corroborates Vanna and Sonthara's (2009) observation that structured cooperative strategies significantly improve student motivation and reduce anxiety. The Three-Step Interview Technique effectively facilitated communication and collaboration, contributing to the overall improvement in students' speaking skills and classroom dynamics.

The results of this study clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of the Three-Step Interview Technique in improving both the speaking ability and classroom participation of eleventh-grade students at SMK Negeri 3 Padangsidimpuan. The improvement from a pre-test mean score of 57.08 to a post-test Cycle II mean score of 81.46 reflects a significant enhancement in students' speaking performance, with an overall improvement percentage of 42.70%. These results exceed the success criteria of 30% improvement set for this study.

This finding aligns with the theory proposed by (Tamimy et al., 2023), which states that cooperative learning structures provide a supportive environment for language learners to practice and refine their skills. The structured roles within the Three-Step Interview (interviewer, interviewee, and reporter) not only ensured active student participation but also reduced student anxiety about speaking, a major obstacle highlighted by (Harmer, 2015) in the context of EFL learning.

In addition to speaking achievement, the student activity scores, presented in Figure 3, show a consistent level of engagement throughout the intervention. Although slight fluctuations were observed between meetings, the overall participation remained high, with scores ranging between 12 and 13 out of a possible 16. These results support the findings of (Johnson et al., 2007), who emphasized that cooperative learning increases motivation, retention of information, and willingness to participate.

The success of the Three-Step Interview Technique can also be explained through (Tamimy et al., 2023) research, which concluded that cooperative strategies significantly reduce student apprehension and enhance classroom interaction. In this study, students became progressively more confident and motivated as they grew accustomed to the cooperative structure, which required them to take an active role in asking and answering questions and summarizing responses.

Moreover, this study contributes to the growing body of literature advocating for the shift from traditional teacher-centered methods to student-centered learning

approaches in Indonesian EFL classrooms (Hadiyanto, 2024; Indrapurnama et al., 2022). The use of structured cooperative techniques, such as the Three-Step Interview, provides learners with frequent and meaningful opportunities to practice speaking in authentic, interactive contexts.

In conclusion, the findings of this study reinforce the effectiveness of cooperative learning strategies for enhancing speaking skills and classroom participation in EFL settings. They suggest that the Three-Step Interview Technique is not only feasible but highly beneficial in helping Indonesian students overcome communication anxiety and develop their speaking competence in a supportive environment.

E. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of the Three-Step Interview Technique in improving the speaking ability and classroom participation of eleventh-grade students at SMK Negeri 3 Padangsidimpuan. The findings confirmed that the technique significantly enhanced students' speaking skills, with the mean score improving from 57.08 in the pre-test to 81.46 in the post-test Cycle II, reflecting a 42.70% increase and exceeding the established success threshold of 30%.

Additionally, the application of the Three-Step Interview Technique fostered consistent student engagement, as indicated by stable student activity scores across four classroom sessions. The structured nature of the technique, which involves roles as interviewer, interviewee, and reporter, successfully encouraged student collaboration, reduced anxiety, and promoted active participation in speaking tasks.

The results support the theoretical claims of cooperative learning as a powerful instructional approach to overcome traditional teacher-centered barriers and enhance communicative competence in EFL settings. Consequently, this study suggests that the Three-Step Interview Technique can serve as an effective alternative strategy for teachers seeking to improve students' speaking performance and participation in language classrooms.

Future studies are encouraged to apply the technique in different educational contexts and with varying student proficiency levels to further validate its effectiveness and generalizability.

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