

**Developing Students' Speaking Competence  
Through Information Gap Technique  
(An Action Research Conducted at Class XI of Tourism Study Program  
of SMK Negeri 1 Gorontalo)**

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**Abstrak**

Berdasarkan observasi di kelas XI Program Keahlian Usaha Perjalanan Wisata SMK Negeri I Gorontalo, nampak bahwa para siswa memiliki masalah dalam menyelesaikan tugas *speaking* yang diberikan oleh guru. Para siswa biasanya takut dan malu dalam melakukan tugas tersebut. Berdasarkan pengalaman dan realitas dalam pembelajaran di kelas, menunjukkan bahwa hanya terdapat 33,3% dari 36 siswa yang mampu melakukan tugas *speaking* yang diberikan guru dengan baik. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa kompetensi siswa dalam *speaking*, harus segera ditingkatkan. Aspek-aspek yang dinilai dalam *speaking* adalah; *pronunciation grammar, word choice, fluency* dan *communicative ability*. Strategi yang biasa digunakan dalam pengajaran *speaking* masih konvensional dan kadang-kadang tidak relevan dengan materi. Para siswa hanya menghafal dialog yang ada dalam buku paket dan mendemonstrasikannya di depan kelas. Solusi dari persoalan ini, peneliti menggunakan *Information Gap Technique* dalam pembelajaran *speaking*, untuk membantu meningkatkan kompetensi siswa kelas XI Program Keahlian Usaha Perjalanan Wisata dalam *speaking*. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pada siklus pertama, terdapat 25 siswa (69,44%) belum berhasil dalam pembelajaran dan 11 siswa lainnya (30,56%) berhasil. Pada siklus kedua, terdapat 36 siswa (97,22%) yang berhasil. Berdasarkan temuan di atas dapat disimpulkan bahwa *Information Gap Technique* dapat meningkatkan kompetensi *speaking* siswa kelas XI Program Keahlian Usaha Perjalanan Wisata SMK Negeri I Gorontalo.

**Key Words :** *Gap Information Technique, Speaking Competence.*

**Basic Consideration**

Speaking is one of the four language skills. It is a productive skill to express ideas, thoughts, messages and feelings. As Bailey (2005: 124) states that speaking is the productive oral or aural skill. This skill comprises producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. When a speaker wants to speak, he or she expresses not only to show how to use language, but also to respond in a communicative way to other speakers. Therefore, in speaking class, English teachers should not only teach speaking just as a repetition or drills or memorization of dialogues, they have to improve students' communicative skills. It means that teachers should manage speaking class in various contexts, so students are able to communicate in English clearly and efficiently. However, when I conducted a direct observation 1 April 2009 at class XI of Tourism Study Program of SMK Negeri 1 Gorontalo, it seems that the students of this class had the adequate ability in writing a good text. However, when the students were asked to present the text orally, they seemed difficult to do that. Secondly, the students were frightened and embarrassed to do speaking tasks given by the teacher. They seemed having lack of English vocabulary, lack of English grammar mastery, so that they did not have ideas in their mind when doing speaking activities.

Similarly, the teacher's role in class was dominant in the teaching-learning process, so the students became inactive in class. The teacher was lack of giving a chance for the students in performing speaking skill in a real world. Another matter relates to the teacher's way in presenting the speaking class is she concentrated too much on the dialogues printed in textbook, not enough on practicing speaking in real situation. The teachers' efforts were lack to enhance the students to speak. Teaching of speaking class seemed was only oriented to teacher's centre and concentrated on a technique. Finally, this class has the great amount students, i.e. 35 to 40 students, so that most of the students did not have a chance to perform their competent.

There were three impacts which I identified as the results of the teacher's experience and reality in the classroom. Firstly, the result of speaking assessment showed that only twelve (33,3%) out of thirty-six students were successful and twenty-four (66,7%) were unsuccessful. It means that the students' speaking competence must be developed immediately. Secondly, strategy of teaching speaking was still conventional and sometimes it was irrelevant to material. The students only memorized several texts printed on packet books to be presented in front of the class. They did not perform the speaking ability spontaneously and communicatively. Lastly, the teacher was lack giving drill of speaking in communication contexts both in class and out of class.

To overcome the problems, I have to be creative in using various techniques, so that the students can master vocabulary easily. One of techniques is information gap. Azies and Alwasilah (1996: 102) argue that information gap emphasizes in a part that can be separated in communication of our life. In information gap, a speaker or a writer says or writes something that does not know by a listener and a reader. So, the listener or the reader has to attend actively. In this technique, the listener cannot guest what will be said by the speaker. This technique can give stimuli to students to say something.

Sasson (2008: 1) gives definition of information gap activities are those in which students exchange information in order to complete a required lesson plan activity. He adds that most information gap activities are done in pairs, with each student having a part of the information. They are especially effective when used as vocabulary activities during the pre-reading part of a reading lesson, but they can also be applied to reading comprehension and math activities as well

Based on the opinions, I would like to use information gap technique in teaching of speaking at class XI of Tourism Study Program of SMK Negeri 1 Gorontalo. I used conducted the method is to help the students develop their students' speaking competence and also facilitate the teachers of English to improve the quality of teaching speaking at SMK Negeri 1 Gorontalo, especially at Tourism Study Program. The problem statement of this research can be formulated as follows. "*Does information gap technique develop the speaking competence at class XI students of Tourism Study Program of SMK*

*Negeri 1 Gorontalo?*”. The objective of this research is to develop the eleventh students of Tourism Study Program of SMK Negeri 1 Gorontalo in speaking skill.

## **Methodology of Research**

This research was conducted at SMK Negeri 1 Gorontalo. It was done at class XI UJP 2008/2009 of Tourism Study Program. This research involved thirty-six students which consist of seven boys and twenty-nine girls. The students of this class have different competency, especially in speaking. Method used in this action research was the classroom action research. Thus, the aim of the conduct this research was to do an action of teaching ways to repair quality of teaching so that it can affect to the students’ competence in speaking skill. In this research, there was a participant or collaborator as a research member. The collaborator is an English teacher who teaches English at SMK Negeri 1 Gorontalo.

This action research was designed by using Lewis’ design. Lewin in McNiff (1992: 22 – 23) proposes the process of action research as a spiral of steps. They are planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The procedure of this action research consisted of four steps. They were (1) planning, (2) action, (3) observation, and (4) reflection. This research would be conducted in two cycles or more.

The data were gathered from the observation and the test, then were analyzed through the following ways: (1) the observation data were analyzed by using simple calculation. I counted the check list for each criterion. Each criterion was scored 1. Thus, the highest score of the observation aspects was 20 and the lowest score was 0. (2) the data of the students’ speaking competence were analyzed through the speaking rubric which focused five aspects of speaking skill: pronunciation, grammar, word choice, fluency, and communicative ability.

The success of this research is determined by an indicator is that the use of information gap technique can be accurately implemented in the teaching of speaking. The success is indicated by (a) 85% of the observation aspects can achieved good and very good category; (b) 80% of all students (the subject of research) can achieve value 65 or more.

## **Research Findings and Discussion**

### **1. Research Findings**

#### ***The First Cycle***

As stated in the previous chapter that this action research has four stages. They are planning, action, observation, and reflection. The explanations of these stages are as follows.

#### **a. Planning**

Based on the steps of the planning stated in Chapter III, the main points for the planning are to analyze materials on curriculum, to prepare materials of lesson: expressing a procedure text orally, to

design lesson plan or scenario of teaching, prepare media of teaching such worksheet, cartoon, photographs, poster, jumbled pictures, to design an observation sheet, to make a speaking test, to a rubric of speaking, and to establish time of the action.

**b. Action**

The action of the first cycle was conducted for two times of meetings with the allocation of time (2 x 90 minutes). It was conducted 14 and 15 April 2009.

In the first meeting, I used information gap technique through cartoon sequence activity. In the teaching and learning process, I showed a range of expressions of asking for opinions and giving opinions on the whiteboard. Then I practiced the students to pronounce the expressions. After this activity, I asked the students to do dialogues by using the expressions based on situations. Next, the students were given vocabulary lists. I asked the students to look for the similar meanings of the vocabulary.

After giving the materials, I made the class into six groups consisting of six students. Each group was distributed a picture story with the jumbled number on the pictures. The students were asked to do speaking activity based on the picture story using expressions of asking for opinions and giving opinions.

In the second meeting, teaching speaking was conducted through information gap with the activity of who's who. Presenting material was begun with showing ten pictures and ten words relate to professions to the students. I asked the students to match the pictures and the words and then to give a simplest description of the pictures. The next activity, I reviewed the material about simple present tense. And then, giving exercises after the students understood the material. The next step of teaching and learning process was to divide students into 4 groups consisting of there students. Each group was given a worksheet. Then the group was asked to discuss the characteristics of people on it.

**c. Observation and Evaluation**

(1) The result of observation

The results of the observation in the first cycle show that it was still not optimal yet. It is proved by the data presented in table below.

Table 1  
The Result of the Observation in the First Cycle

No.	The Aspects of Observation	Category			
		Very Good	Good	Enough	Lack
I.	Sets of lesson aspect	2	2	-	-
II.	The instructional aspect	-	4	10	1
Sum		2	6	10	1
Percentage (%)		10,5	31,6	52,6	5,3

The data of the observation in the first cycle as shows in table 1 can be explain as follows. The set of lesson consists of four aspects. The collaborator responded that two (50%) out of four aspects sign in very good category and two (50%) aspects sign in good category.

The instructional aspect comprises fifteen aspects. The results of the observation were four (26,7%) aspects for good criteria, ten (66,7%) aspects for enough criteria, one (6,7%) aspect for enough criteria. The target would be achieved as the indicator of success in this action research is 85% of the observations aspects reach good and very good criteria. However, the result of the observation as shown that only 8 (42,1%) aspects are included in good and very good criteria. While, 11 (57,9%) aspects are included in enough and lack criteria (see appendix 4). The finding reveals that the implementation of this action must be continued to next cycle.

(2) The result of evaluation

Based on the evaluation to the students' speaking competence in the first cycle, I found the data as shown in table 2.

Table 2  
Data of the Students' Speaking Competence in the First Cycle  
Viewed from Components of Speaking

No.	Components of Speaking	Data of the First Cycle	
		The Students' Scores	Percentage
1.	Pronunciation	60	41.7
2.	Grammar	76	52,8
3.	Word choice	90	63
4.	Fluency	64	44.4
5.	Communicative ability	94	65.3

Table above shows the data of the students' speaking competence in the first cycle. The score of communicative ability is the highest of all components. The component is scored 94 (65.3%) points, followed by word choice with score of ninety (63%) points, grammar is score of 76 (52.8%) points, fluency is score of 64 (44.4%) points, and pronunciation is score of 60 (41.7%) points. These scores can be seen in appendix 5.

By paying attention to the table, it seems that there are still three aspects of speaking must be improved. They are pronunciation, fluency, and grammar. These aspects obtained the unsatisfied scores and their percentages are still less than 60%. Two aspects of speaking achieved good scores, especially in free activity. When the students' speaking scores are classified into the classifications of score, so it can be seen the data as shown in table 3.

Table 3  
Data of the Students' Speaking Competence of in the First Cycle  
Viewed from the Criteria of Score

No.	Classification	Intensity of Score	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Very Good	19 – 20	0	0
2.	Good	16 – 18	3	8,3
3.	Average	12 – 15	22	61,1
4.	Poor	6 – 11	11	30,6
5.	Very Poor	0 – 5	0	0
Sum			36	100

As we can be seen from table 3, there are five classifications of the score. No one student has score 19 to 20 or included in very good classification. Three or 8,3% out of thirty-six students has score between 16 and 18 and they are classified into good classifications. Twenty-two (61,1%) students have score between 12 and 15 and they are classified into average classifications. Eleven (30,6%) students have score between 6 and 11 and they are classified into 'poor' classifications. The findings reveal that the action research is still gone on with further cycle because from thirty-six students only, 11 (30,6%) students are classification in poor. It means that the students are not success in learning.

#### d. Reflection

The result of the reflection among the collaborator and I based on the implementation of the first cycle can be explained as follows.

In the first cycle, it seems that most of the students were lack of self-confidence in speaking English. As a result, they imitated the other students' expressions. The condition happened because the students were unfamiliar to the information gap technique. This technique is the first time applied in teaching of speaking at class XI of Tourism Study Program of SMK Negeri 1 Gorontalo. Other possibility is lack of practicing language expressions and vocabulary taught to the students so that the students to be embarrassed. The problem of the students' self confidence will be the serious attention in doing the next cycle.

In the speaking activity, the students should share and give information through asking and answering question in English. However, most of the students used Indonesia words on certain vocabulary. To overcome this problem, I gave practices of using four expressions written on the chart. There were four expressions practiced to the students. They were: (1) expressions used in describing process, such as: *first, ... next, ... then ... finally*; (2) expressions used in asking for and giving suggestions and advice, for example: *What do you recommend for making ...*; (3) expressions used in asking necessity and obligation, for example: *You must add a glass of water before ...*; (4) expressions used in persuading and convincing, for example: *Why don't you try our special drink to warm up your*

*body*. These expressions were taught through charts and then the model how to pronounce and to express them in the second cycle.

I gave motivation so that the students were not to doubt and embarrassed in speaking activity. I designed the information gap technique by involving overall students in class. However, I regrouped the students. In supporting the students in speaking, I reviewed the materials about degree of comparison and imperative and gave in examples of sentences, beside I used small coloured-pictures in sized 12 x 12 cm about professions when the students conducted the information gap activities. I should gave the direction about the activities of information gap technique in the next meetings by choosing procedural text as the material.

### ***The Second Cycle***

#### **a. Planning**

Based on the result of the implemented action in the first cycle and the reflection had been discussed with by the collaborator, so the plan of the second cycle is to prepare materials, charts and pictures in facilitating the students to speak, to design lesson plans for the meeting, and to determine the time of second cycle.

#### **b. Action**

The implementation of the second cycle was conducted in two meetings 21 and 22 April 2009. Each meeting was gone through in two activities of information gap. They are the activity of describe and draw, and the second one is the activity of jumbled pictures. The steps of the teaching were as follows.

(1) The First meeting (information gap in activity of describe and draw).

- (a) Giving closed-text and asking students to complete text with suitable words.
- (b) Practicing pronunciation
- (c) Giving explanations about the activity of describe and draw.
- (d) Dividing students into pairs. They will be student A and student B.
- (e) Distributing a paper to student B.
- (f) Putting on a picture on white board and asking student A paying attention on it.
- (g) Student A describes the picture based on what he or she sees on it by using oral spoken language.
- (h) Student B draws an object based on student A's descriptions.

(2) The Second meeting (information gap in activity of jumbled pictures).

- (a) Practicing students' pronunciation based on words provided.
- (b) Explaining activity of *jumbled pictures*.
- (c) Dividing students into groups and giving two pieces of papers for each group. Each paper has four pictures

- (d) Arranging pictures into a picture story.
- (e) Asking a student in turn to tell a story based on his picture.
- (f) A student draw a picture based on his friend's illustrations

**c. Observation and Evaluation**

**1. The result of observation in the second Cycle**

The result of the observation in the second cycle can be seen in appendix 7. Those data can also be seen in table 4.

Table 4  
The Result of the Observation in the Second Cycle

No.	The Aspects of Observation	Category			
		Very Good	Good	Enough	Lack
I.	Sets of lesson aspect	3	1	-	-
II.	The instructional aspect	5	8	2	-
Sum		8	9	2	-
Percentage (%)		42,11	47,37	10,53	5,3

The shown data in table 5 can be described as follows.

There are three (75%) out of four aspects responded by very good category and one (25%) aspects sign in good category. In the instructional aspect, there five (33,3%) aspects for good criteria, eight (53,3%) aspects for enough criteria, two (10,5%) aspect for enough criteria.

The target would be achieved as the indicator of success in this action research is 85% of the observations aspects reach good and very good criteria. From the result of the observation in the second cycle, it reveals that 17 (89,5%) aspects are included in good and very good criteria. Only 2 (10,5%) aspects are still in enough criteria. The result of the observation activity in the second cycle showed that the target of the achievement indicators has been reached. Therefore, the action research must be stopped.

**2. The result of evaluation in the second Cycle**

To evaluate the students' speaking ability in the second cycle, it was done through the performance test. Based on the analysis of the students' speaking activity as attached in appendix 8, the result can be seen in table below.

Table 5  
Data of the Students' Speaking Competence in the Second Cycle  
Viewed from Components of Speaking

No.	Components of Speaking	Data of the Second Cycle	
		The Students' Scores	Percentage
1.	Pronunciation	88	61,1
2.	Grammar	95	66
3.	Word choice	124	86,1
4.	Fluency	101	70,1
5.	Communicative ability	134	93,1



Table 6 shows data of the students' competence in the second if it is viewed from the components of speaking. The data can be interpreted that the students' score of pronunciation component is score of 88 (61,1%). The score of grammar is 95 (66%). The scores of word choice are 124 (86.1%). The scores of the students' fluency are 101 (70.1%). The total of the score for the aspect of communicative ability is scored 134 (93,1%). Data of the students' speaking competence are viewed from the criteria of the value can be seen in table 6.

Table 6  
Data of the Students' Speaking Competence of in the Second Cycle  
Viewed from the Criteria of Score

No.	Classification	Intensity of Score	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Very Good	19 – 20	3	8,3
2.	Good	16 – 18	10	27,8
3.	Average	12 – 15	22	61,1
4.	Poor	6 – 11	1	2,8
5.	Very Poor	0 – 5	0	0
Sum			36	100

By paying attention to data in table 6, I interpret the data are as follows. There are 8.3% students are categorized into 'very good' classification. Most of the students are in 'average' and 'good' classification. In average classification is 22 students or 61,1 and in good classification is 10 students or 27,8. Only one student or 2.8% still gains score less than 12 so this student is still classified into 'poor' classification.

#### **d. Reflection**

The reflection of the second is also still given by the collaborator as the observer. The collaborator stated that the implementation of the second cycle is better than the first cycle. In this cycle, the collaborator commented that the implementing of teaching and learning process has been optimally presented. But, there is one student who is unsuccessful in learning. Based on the finding, it can be concluded that this action research should be stopped because the indicators of success had been achieved. Relating to the unsuccessful students, I gave remedial to do exercises out of class individually under the teacher's control.

#### **Discussion**

The conditions occurred in happened at SMK Negeri 1 Gorontalo impacted to the students' learning achievement in speaking skill. From thirty students at class XI of

Tourism Study Program of SMK Negeri 1 Gorontalo, there were only 33,3% out of thirty-six students were successful. Therefore, I used informative gap technique to teach speaking skill in this action research. Sasson (2008: 1) gives definition of information gap activities are those in which students exchange information in order to complete a required lesson plan activity. He adds that most information gap activities are done in pairs, with each student having a part of the information.

The finding of the first cycle revealed that the students' speaking competence were not optimal. It was proved from twenty-five students (69,4%) of thirty-six students were unsuccessful in learning. They got the value less than 65. The average of the students' value is 63,6. Because of the result of the first cycle was not optimal, so I practiced expression relating to the material through charts, giving motivation to the students, regrouping the students' pairs and preparing coloured-pictures.

After doing the teaching-learning process at the second cycle, students seem to be brave to their opinion. The result of the action research can be described as follows: In observation activity shows show 17 (89,48%) aspects in good and very good category. Only two aspects (10,53%) were in enough. In addition, the students' achievement in the second cycle was 35 (92,22%) out of thirty-six students were obtained the value more than 65 or successful in learning. While, one student (2,8%) were in poor classification. The average of the students' value in the second is 73,5.

Based on the research findings of the research, I conclude that information gap technique can develop the speaking competence at class XI students of Tourism Study Program of SMK Negeri 1 Gorontalo. It is proved that through, the students' speaking competence can be improved for 13.47% from the first cycle to the second cycle.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the result of the research, it can be concluded that Information Gap Technique can increase students' competence in speaking. It can be seen from the improvement of the amount of students who got performance indicator, such as; enough, good and very good category.

As the implementation of information gap technique could give significant improvement on the students' learning achievement as well as on students' speaking ability, it was recommended to be understand the step of each activity of information gap, so that it can be applied well in teaching and learning process.

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