



EFFECT OF PAIR WORK TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL AT CLASS VIII MTsS MODERN ARAFAH SUNGAI PENUH

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Abstract

This study examined the problem of ineffective speaking instruction caused by monotonous teaching techniques and students' lack of confidence, which resulted in low speaking achievement among eighth-grade students at MTsS Modern Arafah Sungai Penuh . The objective of this research was to determine whether the Pairwork technique could significantly improve students' speaking skills, particularly in the aspects of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The study employed a pre-experimental design using one group that received a pre-test, four treatment sessions, and a post-test. Implementation of the Pairwork technique followed Harmer's teaching stages—pre-activity, whilst-activity, and post-activity—where students worked in pairs through guided instructions, interactive tasks, and feedback sessions. The results showed a marked improvement in students' speaking performance, with the mean score rising from 42.26 in the pre-test to 59.17 in the post-test, and statistical analysis using a paired sample t-test revealed a significant p-value of 0.000 (<0.05), confirming the effectiveness of the technique. The study concludes that the Pairwork technique has a substantial positive Effect on students' speaking ability and should be recommended as an effective instructional strategy for speaking classes.

Keywords:

Pair Work Technique, Speaking Skill, English Learning.

A. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the essential language skills required for successful communication, and its mastery plays a central role in supporting students' communicative competence. In the Indonesian educational context, English has long been recognized as a compulsory subject, yet many students continue to face difficulties in expressing ideas fluently and confidently. These challenges are often rooted in limited exposure, insufficient practice opportunities, and the use of monotonous teaching techniques that fail to encourage interaction and active participation in the classroom. Consequently, improving speaking proficiency requires the implementation of instructional approaches that promote collaboration, meaningful communication, and supported practice.

Previous studies have demonstrated that the Pairwork technique serves as an effective classroom strategy to enhance students' speaking performance. Mulya (2016) found that Pairwork increased students' participation and improved their fluency and accuracy. Similarly, Susanto (2013) reported notable gains in students' communicative competence when Pairwork activities were used to support speaking tasks. Additional research by Hidayati (2015) further emphasized that Pairwork fosters higher student engagement and creates a supportive environment for practicing spoken English. Although these studies confirm the value of Pairwork, research specifically conducted within the setting of MTsS Modern Arafah Sungai Penuh, which uniquely integrates intensive English programs, is still limited. This condition provides a gap and highlights the novelty of the present study.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the Effect of the Pairwork technique on improving the speaking skills of eighth-grade students at MTsS Modern Arafah Sungai Penuh. The expected outcome is that students taught through Pairwork will show significant improvement in key speaking components, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. This research also seeks to contribute practical insights for English teachers in designing more interactive and effective speaking instruction.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a pre-experimental research design using a one-group pre-test and post-test model to determine the Effect of the Pairwork technique on students' speaking skills. The participants were 36 eighth-grade students of Class VIII A at MTsS Modern Arafah Sungai Penuh, selected through cluster random sampling. This class was

chosen after a lottery selection from two available eighth-grade classes, ensuring that the sample represented the population adequately.

The population consisted of all eighth-grade students at MTsS Modern Arafah, totaling 66 learners divided into two classes. From this population, Class VIII A (36 students) was selected as the sample. These students were chosen because they demonstrated varied levels of speaking proficiency and reflected the overall learning characteristics of the school's English program. The researcher served as both observer and facilitator throughout the intervention.

The research was conducted in three main stages: pre-test, treatment, and post-test.

1. **Pre-test**

Before the treatment, students completed an oral speaking test using picture-based prompts. The test measured five dimensions of speaking ability: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. This assessment aimed to identify the students' baseline speaking performance.

2. **Treatment**

The Pairwork technique was implemented over four meetings. Each session followed Harmer's three teaching phases:

- 1) **Before-activity stage**, where the teacher introduced the topic, explained language forms, and presented media such as pictures or videos;
- 2) **Whilst-activity stage**, where students worked in pairs to practice conversational tasks while the teacher monitored, guided, and encouraged the use of English;
- 3) **Post-activity stage**, where students presented results of their pairwork and received constructive feedback. Activities included identifying expressions of asking and giving opinions, analyzing short conversations, and developing dialogues collaboratively.

3. **Post-test**

At the end of the treatment period, students completed the same form of oral test used in the pre-test. This test aimed to evaluate improvement in their speaking ability after being taught through Pairwork.

Data were collected through oral performance tests administered before and after the intervention. The test instrument consisted of 20 structured interview questions supported by visual prompts. The scoring rubric adapted from Hughes (2003) assessed

students across the five speaking components. Content validity was ensured through expert validation prior to use.

The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics through SPSS Version 20. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the mean and standard deviation of both pre-test and post-test scores. Prior to hypothesis testing, a **normality test** was conducted using the Shapiro–Wilk test, as the sample size was fewer than 50 students. After confirming the data were normally distributed, a **paired samples t-test** was employed to examine whether the difference between pre-test and post-test means was statistically significant. The significance threshold was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. A p-value below this threshold indicated that the Pairwork technique had a significant Impact on students' speaking performance.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate a significant improvement in students' speaking performance after being taught through the Pairwork technique. The pre-test mean score was **42.26**, while the post-test mean score increased to **59.17**, indicating a substantial overall improvement in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Statistical analysis using the paired samples t-test revealed a **p-value of 0.000 (<0.05)**, confirming that the increase was statistically significant.

These findings suggest that Pairwork successfully provided students with more opportunities to practice oral communication, resulting in enhanced speaking competence. Compared with previous studies, such as those conducted by Mulya (2016) and Susanto (2013), the present study supports their conclusion that Pairwork improves speaking participation and accuracy. However, while earlier studies primarily focused on general speaking performance, this research differs by emphasizing the speaking components relevant to asking and giving opinions within the context of MTsS Modern Arafah, a school with unique English-learning characteristics. This novelty adds contextual depth to the effectiveness of Pairwork in environments where students undergo periodic intensive English programs.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the Pairwork technique could significantly improve students' speaking skills. The findings provide strong evidence that Pairwork successfully addressed the core problem identified in the Introduction: students' limited opportunities for interaction, low confidence, and ineffective teaching techniques. By creating a supportive and collaborative environment, Pairwork allowed students to practice speaking more freely, helping them overcome anxiety and enabling

more natural communication. These findings directly align with the research objective and confirm that Pairwork enhances key aspects of speaking proficiency.

Scientifically, the improvement observed can be interpreted through the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT), which highlight interaction, negotiation of meaning, and cooperative learning as essential to language acquisition. Pairwork operationalizes these principles by encouraging students to use language meaningfully and repeatedly with peers. This aligns with theories stating that increased exposure and authentic speaking practice promote fluency and accuracy.

When compared with previous investigations, the results of this study are largely consistent. Similar studies by Mulya (2016), Susanto (2013), and Hidayati (2015) also reported that Pairwork increases student engagement and improves speaking performance. However, this study differs in two important ways. First, it was conducted in an Islamic boarding school that annually provides intensive English programs, meaning students have broader exposure to English learning contexts compared with participants in earlier research. Second, this study specifically focused on speaking within the context of asking and giving opinions, offering a more targeted application than previous studies that examined general speaking ability. These differences highlight the study's unique contribution to existing literature.

Overall, the findings of this study reinforce the argument that Pairwork is an effective pedagogical strategy for improving speaking skills. Its ability to build confidence, increase practice time, and promote communicative interaction positions it as a valuable method for enhancing students' oral proficiency across varied educational settings.

D. CONCLUSION

This study set out to determine whether the Pairwork technique could effectively improve the speaking skills of eighth-grade students at MTsS Modern Arafah Sungai Penuh. The findings clearly demonstrate that Pairwork contributes substantially to enhancing students' oral proficiency, thereby fulfilling the research objective. More importantly, the results advance the understanding of how interaction-based instructional strategies function within classroom contexts where students often struggle with confidence, limited practice, and passive learning patterns.

Scientifically, this research reinforces the theoretical foundation of communicative language teaching by providing empirical evidence that structured pair interaction strengthens essential components of speaking—pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, grammar, and comprehension. The effectiveness of Pairwork in this setting suggests

that meaningful peer-to-peer communication is a vital mechanism through which language learners internalize linguistic forms and improve performance. This contributes new insight to the field, particularly because the study was conducted in a unique environment where students also participate in periodic intensive English programs, showing that Pairwork remains effective even in contexts with varied exposure levels.

The practical implications of this study are significant. Teachers can apply the Pairwork technique to create more active, supportive, and interactive classrooms, helping students overcome anxiety and increasing their opportunities to speak English. The technique can also be adapted for various speaking functions, not only asking and giving opinions but also descriptive, narrative, or problem-solving tasks, thereby broadening its instructional value.

Future research may expand this work by comparing Pairwork with other communicative strategies, such as role-play, group discussions, or task-based learning, to determine which methods are most effective for specific learning targets. Studies with larger samples, multiple schools, or longer treatment durations would also provide deeper insight into the long-term impact of Pairwork. Additionally, qualitative investigations—such as interviews and observation-focused studies—could offer richer understanding of students' perceptions, motivation, and interactional dynamics during Pairwork activities.

In summary, this study not only confirms the effectiveness of Pairwork in improving speaking skills but also highlights its practical and theoretical contributions to language pedagogy, offering a foundation for broader applications and future empirical exploration.

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