

## **THE USE OF SIMULATION TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL**

**Aprillia<sup>1</sup>**

**Endang Sri Andayani<sup>2</sup>**

**Meiva Eka Sri Sulistyawati<sup>3</sup>**

Bina Sarana Informatika University<sup>123</sup>

uthegyps0615@gmail.com<sup>1</sup>

aprillia.prl@bsi.ac.id<sup>2</sup>

meiva.mes@bsi.ac.id<sup>3</sup>

### **Abstract**

The objective of this study is to enhance students' oral proficiency through the use of the simulation technique. The research was conducted using classroom action research based on the Kemmis and Taggart model. The research participants were 30 English majors. This research demonstrates that integrating simulation into language teaching can yield measurable improvements in students' speaking proficiency, providing educators with a practical tool for enhancing oral communication skills. The findings revealed a substantial enhancement in their speaking abilities. The mean pre-test score rose from 58.1 to 67.8 (a 16.7% increase) in the first cycle and further improved to 85.2 (a 25.7% increase) in the second cycle, resulting in a total improvement of 46.6%. These results suggest that implementing the simulation technique can effectively enhance students' speaking skills, as demonstrated by the significant gains in mean scores and overall performance across the research cycles.

*Keywords: Classroom Action Research, Speaking Skill, Simulation*

### **Introduction**

English is a globally recognized language. People use it to communicate with others from all around the world. It is the major language used to learn any subject. English is included in the curriculum of Indonesian elementary schools as part of the local content, as it is considered a foreign language. In addition, it has been integrated into the educational syllabus in high schools and universities. Students should study English because it helps them acquire a broader intellectual perspective, encourages the growth of their emotional intelligence, and enhances their quality of life by increasing their employment prospects (Tiana, Wibowo, et al., 2023). The purpose of English teaching is to

cultivate students' ability to effectively communicate, with a focus on developing abilities in listening, writing, reading, and speaking. Speaking is one of the most important skills to be developed and enhanced as a means of effective communication and it is regarded as one of the most difficult aspects of language learning (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). Thus, students must possess proficiency in the English language to effectively engage in communication with others.

Brown (2010) in Wulandari et al (2016) defines speaking as an interactive process involving the transmission, reception, and processing of information that constructs meaning. Proficiency in a language implies the ability to engage in a conversation with a reasonable level of competence. The success of speaking is demonstrated when the speaker is capable of delivering relevant, easily understandable, and acceptable content to the listener. Besides, according to McDonough (2013) in Daulay et al (2023) speaking is desire- and purpose-driven; in other words, we genuinely want to communicate something to achieve a particular end. This may involve expressing ideas and opinions; expressing a wish or a desire to do something; negotiating and solving a particular problem, or establishing and maintaining social relationships and friendships. Goh & Burns (2012) in Burns (2019) also argue that speaking is a "combinatorial language skill", which includes the linguistic and discursal features of speech, the core speaking skill that enables speakers to process and produce speech, and the communication strategies for managing and maintaining spoken interactions. To successfully deal with communication, students must possess a comprehensive understanding of language systems, discourse genres, speech production abilities, and communication techniques.

Teaching English as a foreign language is a challenging task in developing countries (Akbari, 2015). In Indonesia, the English teaching and learning process faces challenges in spoken language. Both teachers and students struggle to effectively use English as a communicative language. The students often encounter difficulties during their speaking class. The situation is

caused by several factors: student's lack of confidence in speaking, their perception of insufficient vocabulary, and their fear of making mistakes and being ridiculed by their classmates (Tiana & Apriani, 2021). Various contextual and social factors influence English proficiency, including classroom settings, teacher roles, linguistic factors like pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, affective factors like self-esteem, motivation, anxiety, and shyness (Tiana, Jimmi, et al., 2023). Alwasilah (2018) reveals that many recent college graduates lack fundamental English communication skills, causing a national crisis in Indonesia. In addition, Bygate (1987) in Maulidar et al (2019) point out that one of the basic problems in foreign language teaching is preparing learners to be able to use the language. Therefore, the teacher must employ an innovative approach to foster active student participation in their learning. While designing classroom activities that provide students with opportunities to practice and apply English, teachers must be resourceful and consider various factors and components that impact speaking efficacy. This includes the teaching method employed as well.

Several techniques are employed to teach English speaking proficiency, including role play, games, problem-solving activities, songs, discussions, and simulations. These techniques are applicable to any grade. The writers aim to enhance English speaking skill by introducing an innovative teaching technique using simulation to create an enjoyable and engaging classroom environment. According to Ken Hyland (2009) cited by Javid (2013), a simulation is a problem-driven that occurs in a clearly described realistic situation. Simulation equips students with the capacity to respond to exceptional and unforeseen circumstances, providing them with a realistic experience of real-life situations. Brown (2001) in Ahmad et al (2021) state that a simulation activity is usually planned so that intricate interaction and exchange of ideas between groups and individuals are based on the simulation of real-life experiences. Simulation is a more intricate and authentic kind of role-play, where students can bring necessary things to their sessions to enhance the reality of their particular roles.

Educational and training simulations can be categorized into live, virtual, or constructive scenarios. Live simulations involve real people using simulated equipment in the real world, virtual simulations involve real people using simulated equipment in a simulated environment, and constructive simulations involve simulated people using simulated equipment (Javid, 2013). Another definition given by Jones (2013) cited by Muñiz & Angelini (2023), a simulation refers to an activity in which participants are assigned duties and are given enough information about the problem to perform those duties without play-acting or inventing key facts. A simulation is constructed using a model that replicates a real-world process or system. Participants are required to portray an authentic role, evaluate themselves in authentic scenarios, provide factual information, and provide age and gender. They will not innovate but fulfill their roles within a regulated setting.

Angelini & Garcia-Carbonell (2019) have undertaken a comprehensive study of utilizing simulation to improve students' communication skills in the target language. It shows that simulation-based instruction contributes to significant progress in oral language production in English. The results indicate that students progressed significantly in four language-related areas: vocabulary, pronunciation, variety of expression, and grammar. Based on the results of a study conducted by Firiani et al (2013), the application of the simulation technique has the potential to enhance the students' proficiency in oral communication. It reveals that simulation is a highly effective way to teach to develop students' speaking abilities. Another research was conducted by Nurrahma & Nafi'yah (2023), the findings indicate that the implementation of simulation in teaching English leads to a high level of student motivation and a perception of receiving sufficient practical and theoretical knowledge. Students generally favor simulation as it enhances motivation. Simulation is enjoyable and it provides valuable self-study experiences and benefits. An effective simulation technique enhances language acquisition. Successful simulation techniques enhance communication, leading to a chain reaction of successful

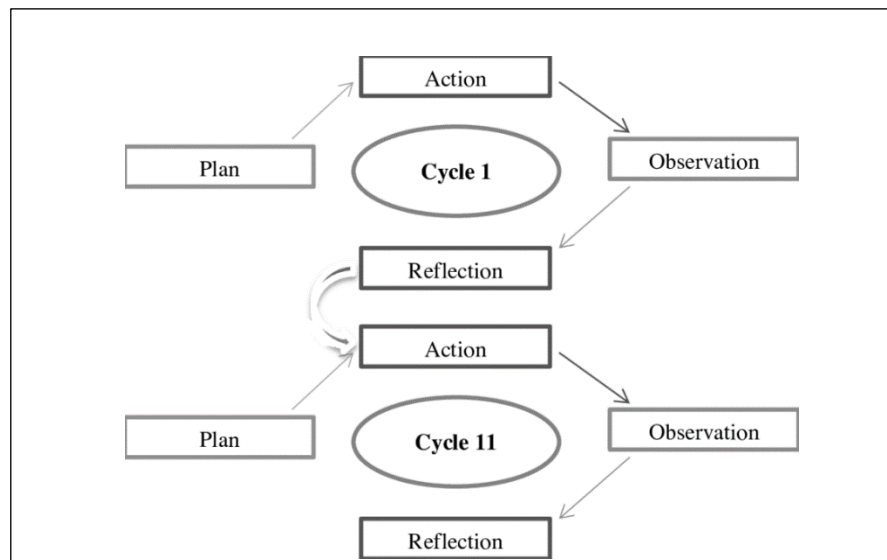
communication.

## **Method**

According to Goodnough (2012, as cited in Nuarsih, 2018), Classroom Action Research (CAR) is designed to systematically improve learning goals and the classroom environment. CAR a research approach carried out by teachers, who are the primary practitioners in the field of education, and help teachers address classroom learning challenges (Pardede, 2014). According to Kemmis and Mc Taggart in Burns (2009), to optimize the outcomes of students' speaking improvement, the researcher implements a classroom action research (CAR) methodology which consists of a few cycles including planning, action, observation, and reflection. The prior and following phases determined the conclusion. Kemmis & Taggart (2014) in Tiana, Wibowo, et al (2023) mentioned that planning is crucial for dealing with unexpected outcomes and preparing for them. Acting involves applying planning to teaching methods or completing models. Observation is essential for recording classroom actions' effects and conducting reflection to portray real situations. The final step is reflecting, which includes analysis, synthesis, interpretation, explanation, and conclusion. The research methodology used in this stage can potentially impact the future performance of the teacher.

This study included 30 students from the English Department in the second semester at a private university in Jakarta. They participated in the social conversation course for a duration of 12 out of the total 14 weeks of the semester. Students engaged in situational dialogue role-plays, where they performed routine activities based on assigned scenarios. They were divided into groups and given various scenarios like shopping in the mall, inviting friends to a birthday party, or conversing in a restaurant. They were given the freedom to choose from one of the provided situations. They were also required to bring real media to support their simulation-based experiences and each group was given approximately 5 – 7 minutes to perform the simulation.

Kemmis and Taggart's model suggests that action research begins with a preliminary study to identify the type of class-related issues students encounter. The collected data was organized, analyzed, and presented in tables for discussion. Nuarsih (2018) proposes that the students' speaking competence can be categorized based on their performance levels: *very good* (score  $\geq 85$ ), *good* (score between 70 and 84), *fair* (score between 55 and 69), *poor* (score between 40 and 54), and *very poor* (score  $< 39$ ). The observation result was analyzed, interpreted, and reported using descriptive method.



**Figure 1. Kemmis dan Mc Taggart Classroom Action Research Design**

### **Findings And Discussion**

The initial step in classroom action research is to conduct a preliminary study to assess the proficiency level of students. An observation was conducted to assess the speaking difficulties of students, revealing that the students exhibited a low proficiency in spoken English. They encountered challenges in articulating their thoughts and struggled with a lack of confidence in verbal communication. Furthermore, they experienced fear of making mistakes and being ridiculed by others, which subsequently reduced their motivation to communicate in English.

Most students did not have a positive attitude towards studying English, since they perceived it to be a challenging subject.

The preliminary study was carried out from meeting 1 to meeting 3, revealing that the main priorities for improvement are speaking skill and confidence. This may be achieved by increased practice, mastery of vocabulary, and enhancing fluency and accuracy. The following table displays the speaking scores of students in the preliminary study.

**Table 1: Students' Pre-test Speaking Performance**

No	Range of Score	Frequency	Percentage	Category	Mean Score	Max. Score	Min. Score
1	B $\geq 85$	0	0%	Very Good	58.1	84	35
a 2	70-84	6	20%	Good			
3	55-69	6	20%	Fair			
s 4	40-54	15	50%	Poor			
e 5	$\leq 39$	3	10%	Very Poor			
<b>Total</b>		30	100%				

Based on the data presented in Table 1, no student is in *very good* category and only 20 % of the students fall into *good* category. 20% of the students are classified as *fair*, while 50% are classified as *poor*, and the remaining 10% are classified as *very poor*. Consequently, a staggering 60% of the participants did not meet the expected level of proficiency in their speaking skill. The average score of the students is only 58.1. Additionally, the students often experienced boredom and lack of motivation in learning English, particularly speaking, due to unaltered teaching methods. Oral communication is a challenging skill, making it difficult for most students to reach their proficiency level. To address this, the researcher used a simulation technique over two cycles.

The first cycle was carried out from meeting 4 to meeting 6. The planning step involved the design of a lesson plan, teaching materials based on the syllabus: asking giving advice, expressing sympathy and sensitive topics, teaching media including props that students need to perform, scoring sheet, and observations. Implementing the intended actions was a crucial task throughout the action phase. From a technical standpoint, the researcher instructed the students using a carefully developed teaching approach that incorporated specific materials and media. Upon the conclusion of the lesson, the speaking assessment was conducted through a group simulation performed in front of the entire class. The results showed some students remained hesitant to express their thoughts. It is consistent with the findings indicating they were still nervous and afraid of making mistakes so they experienced a lack of confidence to speak (Tiana & Apriani, 2021). The students' lack of willingness to communicate is seen as a manifestation of a low learning attitude, which is a fundamental issue in foreign language instruction aimed at providing

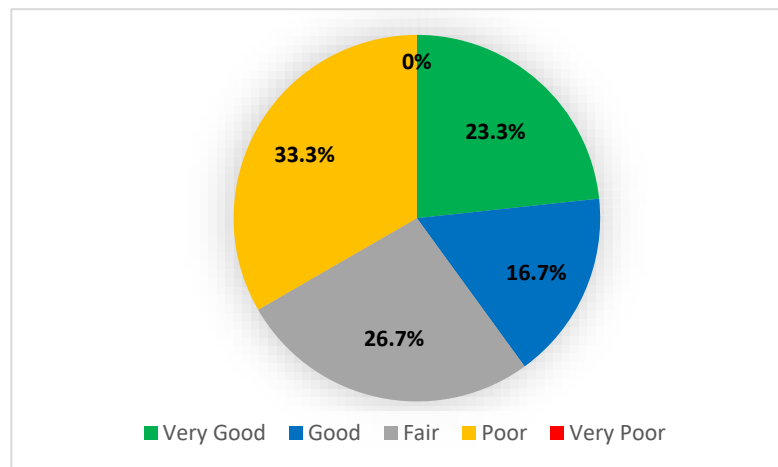


learners with language proficiency (Bygate: 1987 in Maulidar et al 2019). However, their enthusiasm to communicate increased during the simulation performance as they perceived it as a realistic activity and found it enjoyable. Observations were made on the classroom atmosphere, teacher's performance, and students' activities as a kind of reflection.

It was discovered that there were still some students who were classified as being in a poor category in terms of their speaking skills. Nevertheless, there was a notable enhancement in comparison to the score obtained in the preliminary study. The following table and chart illustrate the students' oral communication proficiency during the first cycle.

**Table. 2 Students' Post-test Speaking Performance in Cycle 1**

No	Range of Score	Frequency	Percentage	Category	Mean Score	Max. Score	Min. Score
1	≥ 85	7	23.3%	Very Good	67.8	92	50
2	70-84	5	16.7%	Good			
3	55-69	8	26.7%	Fair			
4	40-54	10	33.3%	Poor			
5	≤ 39	0	0%	Very Poor			
<b>Total</b>		30	100%				



**Figure 2. Students' Speaking Performance in Cycle 1**

Table 2 and Figure 2 show that 23.3% of the students fall into *very good* category, while 16.7% are classified as *good*. Additionally, 26.7% of the students are categorized as *fair*, 33.3% are still considered in *poor* category and no students are classified as *very poor*. It proves that there is a noticeable improvement in the students speaking skill. The mean score has increased: 67.8, or 9.7 (16.7%) higher compared to the previous test result. The researcher is advised to continue the research into the next cycle to enhance learning outcomes and improve students' speaking performance, as 33.3% of students remain in *poor* category.

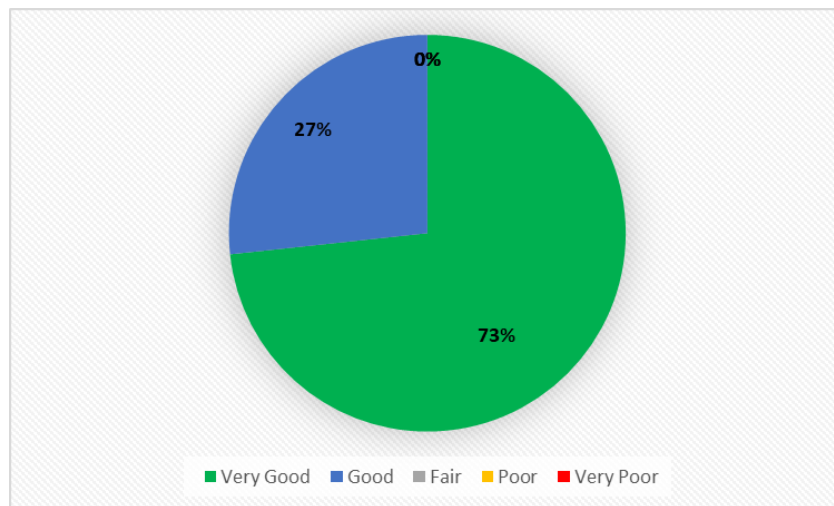
The language learner's insufficient vocabulary and lack of motivation significantly hinder their confidence in speaking. The factors contributing to the reluctance of EFL learners include motivation, anxiety, grammar, and vocabulary mastery. Previous studies indicate that English proficiency is influenced by contextual and social factors. The causes can be categorized into linguistic and affective factors. Motivation and anxiety are part of the affective factors, whereas grammar and vocabulary are the linguistic factors (Tiana, Jimmi, et al., 2023). To address the issue, we have utilized past research on the elements that contribute to resistance and included them into the enhanced lesson plan for cycle II.

Researchers chose a more engaging topic and collected learning materials from 9-11 meetings on daily life, restaurant reservations, and traveling. Cycle 2 planning was based on Cycle 1 findings, and preparation was conducted using the same method as Cycle 1. The acting segment was executed according to the preceding lesson plan. The students were split into groups and provided with flashcards to illustrate various scenarios. They had discussions to determine their respective roles and thereafter presented a performance in front of the class, utilizing props. Instrumental music was played during the performance, causing excitement among students which generated enthusiasm among them. The exercises were executed seamlessly, resulting in higher student engagement, enthusiasm, and increased confidence in oral communication for the majority of students.

The result of the second cycle was highly satisfactory. Most of students had high level of confidence in expressing their views, opinions, and thoughts. They made significant progress in their speaking skills. They derived great pleasure from engaging in speaking activities since it enabled them to greatly enhance their score. The following table and chart display students' speaking performance in the second cycle.

**Table 3. Students' Post-test Speaking Performance in Cycle 2**

No	Range of Score	Frequency	Percentage	Category	Mean Score	Max. Score	Min. Score
1	≥ 85	22	73.3%	Very Good	85.2	95	70
2	70-84	8	26.7%	Good			
3	55-69	0	0%	Fair			
4	40-54	0	0%	Poor			
5	≤ 39	0	0%	Very Poor			
<b>Total</b>		30	100%				



**Figure 3. Students' Speaking Performance in Cycle 2**

Table 3 and Figure 3 reveal a significant improvement in students' speaking performance, with 73.3% of participants completing the test well, 26.7% in good category, and no student score is below 55. The mean score is 85.2, or 17.4 (25.7%)

higher than the cycle 1 performance. The students' pre-test speaking performance score indicates an increase of 27.1. This indicates a 46.6% enhancement.

The improvement of students' oral proficiency is undeniable, as Angelini & Garcia-Carbonell (2019) reported that simulation-based instruction has been found to have a substantial impact on the improvement of oral language production in English. By offering realistic situations that maximize the chances of fostering genuine communication in EFL classrooms, simulations can provide effective and efficient learning in the classroom. The students can learn through direct experience in a naturalistic environment. They investigate the methods of acquiring English language skills specific to professions such as waiter, cashier, tour guide, etc., based on the topics covered in the learning materials. They conducted a natural study by doing thorough simulations.

In addition, the use of simulation in teaching English has been found to greatly engage students and promote interaction. This technique leads to a heightened degree of student motivation and a perception of acquiring ample practical and theoretical knowledge (Nurrahma & Nafi'yah, 2023). By effectively motivating the students, the teachers ensure that they can confidently articulate their thoughts in English. The students are allowed to participate in active learning. Fitriani et al (2013) has also highlighted the efficacy of simulation. The utilization of this technique has the capability to improve students' oral communication skills. Therefore, simulation proves to be an exceedingly efficient method for enhancing students' speaking skill.

## **Conclusion**

The Classroom Action Research (CAR) method is utilized in this study to discover the problem with students' speaking proficiency. The initial stage involves observing students who are considered to have low speaking skill. In conclusion, the simulation technique is an effective technique that English teachers can utilize to address the problem of students' speaking skill. The use of simulation technique in the teaching and learning process can enhance students' speaking skill. This is demonstrated by the improvement of students' speaking

performance in each cycle. Previous research and related theories have consistently proven the effectiveness of simulation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Furthermore, the findings from observations and interviews indicated that the students exhibited enhanced creativity and greater independence in expressing their ideas after engaging in simulation. As a result, their English fluency and confidence in speaking improved. To continue discovering the best method to teach speaking, teachers play a crucial role. Depending on the demands and circumstances of the students, different methods and techniques for enhancing speaking skills are recommended.

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