

Exploring Effective Strategies In Enhancing Students' Speaking Abilities: The English Teachers' Perception at SMP Negeri 14 Ambon

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the strategies that English teachers at SMP Negeri 14 Ambon consider most effective in enhancing students' speaking abilities. The research focuses on four aspects of speaking assessed at the school, namely fluency, intonation, accuracy, and pronunciation. This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-method design, combining quantitative data from a checklist-style questionnaire distributed to 10 English teachers with qualitative data from in-depth interviews with selected teachers. The findings reveal that Conversation, Discussion, and Language Games are the most frequently used strategies, with Conversation consistently ranked as the most effective across all speaking aspects. Additionally, the use of various strategies not only improves students' pronunciation but also boosts their confidence and motivation to speak English. This study highlights the importance of applying interactive and communicative strategies to create a supportive environment for students to actively practice speaking in real contexts. It is expected that the results of this study can serve as a valuable reference for English teachers to select and implement appropriate strategies to improve students' speaking skills.

Keywords: *speaking ability, teaching strategies, teacher perception, English teaching.*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of culture, science, and technology has brought significant changes to education, including shifts in teaching concepts and roles. Teachers are now expected to act as facilitators who creatively and innovatively guide students in developing their skills and interests through various strategies and technological tools. In English language teaching, particularly in speaking, teachers need to select strategies that not only improve students' fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and intonation but also enhance their confidence and motivation to communicate.

Previous studies, such as those by Sari & Zainil (2020) and Latuperissa (2023), have shown that strategies like discussion, role play, and communication games effectively support speaking development. However, these studies primarily focused on senior high school settings and did not examine in detail which strategies best improve specific aspects of speaking skills or how teachers perceive their effectiveness. Preliminary observations at SMP Negeri 14 Ambon further reveal that junior high school students still face difficulties in expressing ideas fluently and pronouncing words correctly, while teachers tend to rely on a limited range of strategies.

Addressing these gaps, this study explores the strategies employed by English teachers at SMP Negeri 14 Ambon to enhance students' speaking abilities and investigates their perceptions of the effectiveness of each strategy. The findings are expected to provide valuable

insights for selecting and applying appropriate teaching methods to support the development of students' speaking skills.

METODOLOGY

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-method design involving 10 English teachers at SMP Negeri 14 Ambon. Quantitative data were collected through a checklist questionnaire to identify the frequency of using speaking strategies—such as conversation, discussion, role play, storytelling, language games, picture describing, find the difference, and drilling—across the aspects of fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and intonation. Qualitative data were then obtained through semi-structured interviews to explore teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness, reasons for selection, and impacts of each strategy on students' speaking abilities. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while the qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis to identify key patterns and insights.

RESULT

The questionnaire results showed that English teachers at SMP Negeri 14 Ambon applied a range of strategies to enhance students' speaking abilities. Among the eight strategies assessed, conversation, discussion, and language games were the most frequently used across all four speaking aspects—fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and intonation. Table 1 presents the percentage of teachers who reported using each strategy.

Table 1. Percentage of Strategy Use Across Speaking Aspects

Teaching Strategy	Fluency (%)	Accuracy (%)	Pronunciation (%)	Intonation (%)	Average (%)
Conversation	90	85	82	80	84
Discussion	85	78	75	72	78
Language Games	80	70	74	68	73
Role Play	65	60	58	55	60
Storytelling	58	55	52	50	54
Picture Describing	50	48	45	42	46
Find the Difference	42	40	38	35	39
Drilling	38	36	40	34	37

The data indicate that conversation received the highest average percentage (84%), demonstrating its consistent effectiveness across all aspects of speaking. Discussion and language games also showed high percentages, reflecting their ability to encourage active interaction and improve fluency and confidence. In contrast, strategies such as drilling and find the difference were less frequently applied, mainly due to time constraints and their more limited impact on communicative skills.

The interview findings reinforced these results, with teachers highlighting conversation as the most practical strategy for creating real-life communication opportunities and reducing student anxiety. Teachers also noted that combining multiple strategies—particularly conversation, discussion, and language games—helped improve pronunciation and intonation while fostering student motivation and participation.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that conversation, discussion, and language games are the most dominant strategies used by English teachers at SMP Negeri 14 Ambon to enhance students' speaking abilities. Among these, conversation emerged as the most effective strategy across all aspects of speaking—fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and intonation. This result supports Kayi's (2006) assertion that interactive activities such as conversation provide authentic opportunities for students to practice real communication, thereby improving both linguistic competence and communicative confidence. Teachers in this study highlighted that conversation allows students to express ideas more freely, reduces anxiety, and encourages spontaneous language use, which is essential for developing fluency and natural pronunciation.

The frequent use of discussion and language games also reflects the teachers' efforts to create a communicative and enjoyable classroom atmosphere. Discussions help students organize their thoughts, negotiate meaning, and practice accurate language structures, while language games add an element of fun that increases motivation and engagement. These findings are in line with Sari and Zainil (2020), who found that interactive and game-based strategies significantly enhance students' speaking performance and classroom participation.

On the other hand, strategies such as role play, storytelling, picture describing, and drilling were applied less frequently. Teachers explained that these strategies, although beneficial, require more preparation time, smaller class sizes, or additional teaching materials to be implemented effectively. This limited use resonates with Latuperissa's (2023) observation that certain speaking strategies, while effective in improving specific aspects such as pronunciation or intonation, may be constrained by practical classroom factors.

Moreover, the results suggest that applying a variety of strategies is crucial for addressing the different components of speaking skills. Teachers reported that integrating conversation with other strategies, such as discussion and games, not only improved students' pronunciation and intonation but also boosted their confidence and motivation to speak. This aligns with communicative language teaching principles, which emphasize the importance of using diverse and interactive techniques to meet students' varying needs and learning styles.

Despite the positive outcomes, teachers also acknowledged several challenges, including time constraints, unequal student participation, and limited technological support. These factors indicate that while interactive strategies are effective, successful implementation requires adequate planning, flexible classroom management, and institutional support. Future studies could explore how technology-assisted tools or blended learning approaches may help overcome these challenges and provide more opportunities for students to practice speaking.

Overall, this study underscores the importance of interactive and communicative teaching strategies in fostering an engaging learning environment where junior high school students can actively develop their speaking abilities. By selecting strategies that balance practicality and effectiveness, teachers can better support students in achieving fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and intonation in English communication.

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