

**Improving Students' Speaking Skills  
through Information Gap Activities In XI Mia 3  
of SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Yogyakarta  
in Academic Year of 2015/2016**

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**Abstract:** This research is aimed to improve the students' speaking skills of the class XI MIA 3 students of SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Yogyakarta in the academic year of 2015/2016. The researcher tried to improve the speaking skills by implementing information gap activities. This study is an action research. The participants of the research were the students of class XI MIA 3 students of SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Yogyakarta in the academic year of 2015/2016 while the research members were the researcher, an English teacher, and a collaborator. The research steps consist of reconnaissance, planning, action and observation, and evaluation and reflection. The researcher collaborated with the English teacher in implementing the actions. The data were collected through observations in teaching and learning process and through interviews with the research members. The instruments for collecting the data were observation guidelines, interview guidelines and tests such as pre-test and post-test. The data, in the form of field notes and interview transcripts are analyzed qualitatively. Meanwhile, the scores which are obtained from the tests are analyzed quantitatively. The findings of this research show that the information gap activities were successfully implemented and the objective of the research had been achieved. The students' mean scores in the post-test is higher than the students' mean scores in the pre-test. The gain score is 0.47. It indicates that there is an improvement on the students' speaking skills after the implementation of information gap activities.

**Key words: speaking skills, information gap activities**

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**Introduction**

Language is social and we are constantly involved in process of social interaction which makes it possible (Nicholas, 1982: 76). There are many kinds of languages in the world. The different languages make the problem for communication among people from different nations. Based on the condition, people need a lingua franca. It means that people need a language which is used for communication between groups of them who speak different languages. The lingua franca is also called as the international language. It is stated by Budiharso (2004: 4) that English is the major language which is used by people in some sectors. Furthermore, Jenkins (2003: 04) defines that English is being the worlds' current lingua franca. It brings a serious consequence to the people across nation: those who want to survive in international life should be able to communicate in English. Soares (2011) in Phisuttangkoon (2012: 1) claims that 400 million people speak English as their

first language and over 900 million people speak English as their second language.

The mastery of speaking is a priority for many foreign language students. Therefore, the students sometimes reflect their success in language learning based on how much they have improved in their speaking (Richards, 2008: 19). Teachers in some preschools in the cities even teach this subject. This fact implies that Indonesian learners have been introduced to English since early ages.

SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Yogyakarta is a private school in Yogyakarta that is located in Jalan Kapas No 7 Semaki, Umbulharjo, Yogyakarta. As a private school, it also prepares its graduates to be ready either to go work or to continue their study. The curriculum used here is the Kurikulum 2013. The importance of speaking is not always supported by the students' speaking ability in the real life. This condition happened in SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Yogyakarta. Based on the classroom observation and interviews with the English teacher and some students that the researcher had conducted, she found some problems related to students, the English teacher and the learning media. Many students could not express their ideas and opinions in English. They had to memorize their texts or just read them in the speaking class. They were hesitant, worried, and anxious if they had to speak and perform using English. Those conditions could happen because they did not have sufficient vocabulary, they could not pronounce the words well and also lacked of confidence. Therefore, they were still not fluent enough to speak in English. Besides, during the observation many students were not paid attention to the teacher, they seemed unenthusiastic. Many of them were busy talking to their friends or doing another business instead of listening to their teacher. Based on the observation, the researcher believed that using information-gap activities is useful because they are very meaningful; all students are involved in the process equally and they are all moving towards a specific purpose. One of the speaking activities that promote the communicative situation is information gap activities. Information gap activities are useful activities in which one person has information that the others lacks. They must use the target language to share that information (Bailey, as cited in Nunan, 2003: 56).

Knowing the gaps gives them a direction for improvement. As it is cited in Hamzah (2009: 4), Harmer stresses that group work is an attractive idea to increase the amount of students' talking time. Clear explanation about the rule of not using other languages except English aims to train the students to use their English. Besides, it also helps them to reduce their anxiety in speaking English. In addition, the researcher chooses information gap activities to improve the students' speaking skills because information gap activities give opportunities for students to practice their speaking. The students must speak in order to be able to finish the task. Information gap activities also can make the teaching learning situation more interesting. The students are not just sitting and listening to the teacher's explanation, but they can interact with their friends and practice their speaking skills. Lastly, information gap activities may boost students' confidence and also motivation in speaking. Considering the problems above and also the benefits of information gap activities in improving students' speaking skills, it is necessary to conduct a research in SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Yogyakarta.

Numerous experts in language teaching suggest information-gap activities to teach speaking as they bring advantages as follows. First, they serve many purposes such as solving problem or collecting information. Besides, they also promote real communication and facilitate language acquisition, especially in mastering vocabulary and grammatical structures taught in the class (Kayi, 2005; Liao, 2001 and Raptou, 2002 in Defrioka, 2009: 40). Moreover, communicative activities, in this case information-gap activities, can improve students' English speaking ability at the secondary level, vocational certificate student level, and tertiary level (Promshoit, 2010; Phunphanpet, 2004; Kethongkum, 2005; Domesrifa, 2008; Ponglangka, 2007; Klanrit, 2010 and Noon-Ura, 2008 in Phisutthangkoon, 2012: 5). Using information-gap activities is another technique of teaching speaking (Raptou, 2002 in Sari, 2008: 13). Nation and Newton (2009: 101) distinguish information-gap activities into a split information arrangement (in which each student has different essential information) and a superior-inferior arrangement (in which one student has all the information that the others need)

### **Research Method**

This study was focused on improving the students' speaking skills through information gap activities. The actions were carried out in September 2015 to October 2015 using class XI MIA 3 students of SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Yogyakarta as the subjects of the research. The school is located in Jalan Kapas No. 7, Umbulharjo, Yogyakarta. The observations were done on October 2015. The research study was conducted in the first semester of the academic year of 2015/2016. The actions were applied based on the schedule of the English class, on Thursday.

Using the action research's model of Kemmis and McTaggart, this study consisted of two cycles; each consisted of reconnaissance, planning, acting and observing, and reflecting.

The observation and interview guidelines were used in the reconnaissance and the observation during the implementation of the actions. In the reconnaissance step, the observation guideline was used to find out the existing problems. In the action step, the observation guidelines were used to see the implementation of the actions. It covered the instruments of the lesson, the learning and teaching process, and the class situation. These three main parts covered some sections. The instruments of the lesson included the lesson plans and the syllabus. The pre-teaching, whilst-teaching, and the post teaching were the parts of the learning and teaching process. The class situation was needed to observe since it was also one of the things to improve in this research. The class situation was related to the students' enthusiasm, involvement, understanding, and the students' responses towards the techniques and activities used by the researcher and so forth. The result of the observation during the research was also in the form of field notes.

## Research Findings

The research was aimed to improve the students' speaking skills by using information gap activities. The actions were conducted in two cycles starting on October 8<sup>th</sup> 2015 and ended on October 29<sup>th</sup> 2015. Based on the result of the actions in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2, the researcher and the collaborator decided to end the research. The information gap activities were successfully implemented and the objective of the research had been achieved. The researcher presented the following table to show the changes as a result of Cycle 1 and Cycle 2.

### The comparison of Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 after the implementation of Information Gap Activities

Before the actions were conducted	After the actions were conducted	
	Cycle I	Cycle II
The students were lack of motivation to speak	Some students had high motivation in learning speaking	Most students high motivation in learning and learned more actively
The students were lack of confidence to speak	They got more opportunities to speak and interact with their friends by using information gap activities. There were also some problems related to the class and time management that could not be controlled by the researcher.	They were confident and not shy anymore to express their ideas and to deliver the story. Thus, the researcher was able to manage the time and also minimize the noise so that the class situation was getting better and conducive for the learning process
The students had limited vocabulary	The students were good enough in understanding the material of vocabulary and pronunciation. They found it helpful to get more vocabulary and be familiar with the right pronunciation of the words. The students got new words with the right pronunciation of the	The students were able to increase their vocabulary. They understood the words and the meaning well. Thus, the students used the words they had known to speak up.

	vocabulary.	
The teacher dominated the class	The teacher used new teaching technique in teaching speaking class	The teacher used new teaching technique in teaching speaking class and most students were high motivated in teaching and learning processes

In addition, to know the improvement of the students' speaking skills, the researcher also scored the students' speaking performance in the pre-test and the post-test. The scoring process was done by the researcher and the collaborator. The result of the pre-test, the progress test, and the post-test is presented below.

#### The comparison of students' mean scores in the test aspect

Aspect	Mean Score	
	Pre Test	Post Test
Pronunciation	2.33	3.33
Vocabulary	2.66	3
Grammar	2.33	3
Fluency	2.66	3.33

#### The scores comparison (mean scores)

Mean Score	
Pre Test	Post Test
2.64	3.11

From the table above, the students' mean scores in the speaking aspects increased after the implementation of the information gap activities. The students' mean scores in pronunciation aspect increased 1.00 from 2.33 in the pretest to 3.33 in the post-test. The vocabulary aspect increased from 2.66 in the pre-test to 3.00 in the post-test. The grammar aspect increased from 2.33 in the pre-test to 3.00 in the post-test. The students' mean scores in fluency aspect also increased 0.66 from 2.66 in the pre-test to 3.33 in the post-test.

#### Conclusions

Information gap activities were conducted in pairs or in groups. Hence, the activity gave the students more opportunities to practice their speaking by communicating certain information to the other friends. Next, information gap activities also increased the students' motivation and confidence to speak in

English. The activities require students to use the target language to fill in the gap. Hence, by using the target language continuously, the students felt motivated and confident to speak in English.

The improvement also reflected from the teaching learning process. The students were more active in the speaking class. They discussed well by actively asking and answering the questions. Besides, the students also understood the classroom English very well. They were able to comprehend the target language spoken by the teacher. Third, the students were able to increase their vocabulary. The students got exposure that made them able to get a lot of new vocabulary related to the materials they learnt. The use of information gap activities in the speaking class also facilitated the students to interact with the others by asking and giving the information in the target language

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