

# IMPROVING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH IMAGINARY CONVERSATION

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to prove that the use of imaginary conversation techniques can improve the ability of students speaking skill of class VIII MTs Alkhairaat Tondo. This study used a quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent control group. The population is chosen randomly to determine the sample of the experimental group and the control group. Data collection instruments use tests to measure students' skills in using imaginary conversations. Data collection uses t-test statistics. Data obtained through tests are analyzed. It was found that the average value of the ability of the experimental group students was 85 greater than the control group, 73.83. The results of comparison through t-test illustrate the value of  $t\text{-count} = 4.56 > t\text{-table value} = 1.671$ . Thus,  $H_a$  is accepted and  $H_0$  is rejected. It can be concluded that the use of imaginary conversation techniques is effective on students' speaking skills.

**Keywords:** *Imaginary conversation; Improving Speaking Skill*

*Tujuan penelitian ini ialah untuk membuktikan bahwa penggunaan teknik percakapan imajiner dapat meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara siswa kelas VIII MTs Alkhairaat Tondo. Penelitian ini menggunakan quasi eksperimental dengan rancangan non-equivalen kelompok kontrol. Populasi di pilih secara acak untuk menentukan sampel kelompok eksperimen dan kelompok kontrol. Instrumen pengumpulan data menggunakan tes untuk mengukur keterampilan siswa dalam menggunakan percakapan imajiner. Pengumpulan data menggunakan statistik uji-t. Data yang diperoleh melalui tes di analisa. Ditemukan bahwa nilai rata-rata dari kemampuan siswa kelompok eksperimen adalah 85 lebih besar dari kelompok kontrol, 73.83. Hasil perbandingan melalui uji-t menggambarkan nilai  $t\text{-hitung} = 4.56 > \text{nilai } t\text{-table} = 1.671$ . Sehingga,  $H_a$  di terima dan  $H_0$  di tolak. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa penggunaan teknik percakapan imajiner efektif pada keterampilan berbicara siswa*

**Kata kunci:** *Teknik percakapan imajiner, Meningkatkan Keterampilan Berbicara.*

## INTRODUCTION

The role of English in this century is incredibly powerful in all spheres of life. It is the best way to get access to new information and a practical medium for global communication. The development of new technology has rapidly expanded the worldwide use of English and it seems that the future of English as an international language is undoubtedly evident and this is an irresistible trend. As a result of rapid globalization, mastering English creates a huge demand for teaching English or those people who can orally communicate in English. In Indonesia, English is neither a native nor a second language. It is a foreign language. Considering to its importance as a language of international communication, English becomes one of the subjects taught at school and university level.

Since English is learnt as a foreign language, the students are expected to be competent in oral or written communication. In mastering or using the language communicatively, they need to learn the language skills like listening, speaking, reading, and writing and there is no skill which is better than others. It is seen as the whole ability and learning the language. In order not to be illiterate in any language skills, they also need to learn English components they are grammar, pronunciation,

and vocabulary. These components can support learners' competence both in learning and using the language.

Speaking is one of the four basic skills in learning foreign language besides listening, reading, and writing. Speaking seems intuitively the most important skills to be mastered because by mastering speaking skills, people can carry out conversation with others, give the ideas and exchange the information with others. "The mastery of speaking skills in English is a priority for many second-language or foreign-language learners" (Richards, 2008). By speaking with others, we are able to know what kinds of situation are in the world.

In developing speaking skills, each student must begin speaking by knowing its components such as fluency, accuracy, and appropriacy. Those components relate to one another and need learning in order to have pleasant speaking. The absence of one of those components will produce a poor result of speaking. Since English is not Indonesian mother language, many people have some obstacles in speaking English. Some of those obstacles are the difficulty in pronouncing English words, learning English only as a subject in school-not for the habit, teachers rarely ask the students to speak full English in classroom.

The researcher observed during teaching learning process of the eighth grade students of MTs Alkhairaat Tondo. She noticed that the students got obstacles on responding the teacher's speaking. The students felt hesitant to speak English because some friends laughed at them when they made some mistakes. They were not confident to speak English in front of their friends. While the students tried to speak, the mention words separately. The students also lacked vocabulary that causes many long pauses when they spoke.

In increasing students' interest in learning English especially speaking, the teacher should be able to make interesting topic and apply suitable technique. This can motivate them to speak more because speaking skill emphasizes students' ability to speak as much as possible. Interesting topic can relate to their environment and life. In addition teacher has to instruct them but teacher does not give correction to their speaking directly. It fosters them to be confident to explore their idea so that students are not afraid of making mistake in speaking classroom.

Some techniques such as presentation, debate, dialogue, storytelling, and role play will help the students overcome their problems in speaking. Somehow, the teaching of speaking still needs another alternative to encourage the students to be better in speaking. To overcome the problems above the researcher proposed the imaginary conversation as the appropriate technique to develop students' speaking skills. Based on the problem stated at the background, the researcher formulated the research question as follows: *Can the use of Imaginary Conversation Improve the Speaking Skills of the the eighth grade students of MTs Alkhairaat Tondo?* Related to the problem statement, this research is aimed at proving that the use of Imaginary Conversation Improve the Speaking Skills of the the eighth grade students of MTs Alkhairaat Tondo.

## RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, the researcher used Quasi-experimental design. Two classes were used in this research, there were experimental group and the control one. The experimental group was given pre-test, treatment, and post-test. Meanwhile, the control one was given pre-test and post-test without treatment. The design of this research is proposed by Cohen (2005) as can be seen bellow:

Experimental	01	X	02
Control	03		04

In the design of non-equivalent control group, 01 and 03 symbolize pretests, X represents the treatment implemented. 02 and 04 assert posttests. This quasi experimental research was designed to measure how is the application of imaginary conversation can improve students' speaking skills.

This research needed population as an object for the research. According to Creswell (2005: 381), "A population is any group of individuals who have same characteristic."

The population in this research was the eighth grade students of MTs Alkhairaat Tondo. They consist of two parallel classes. Sample is defined as a smaller of accessible population, Latief (2013:

181). The ways of determining the sample are taken randomly by using lottery. First, the researcher wrote the name of all classes of the the eighth grade students of MTs Alkhairaat Tondo on pieces of paper. After that, she put all pieces of paper in a small box and then shook it. The paper that was falling down at first chance was the experimental group and the next was the control one. There were two types of variables in this research namely independent and dependent variables. The independent variable of this research was the use of imaginary conversation, while the dependent one was the students' speaking skill.

The data of pretest and posttest were analyzed statistically to measure the students' individual score. The scale of scoring system that covers fluency and comprehensibility adapted from Heaton (1988:100) is used to score the students' skills in speaking through the imaginary conversation technique. The scoring system can be seen in the following table:

**Table 1** The Scale of Scoring System

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Fluency</b>	<b>Comprehensibility</b>
4	Although he has to make an effort and search for words, they are not too many unnatural pauses. Fairly smooth delivery mostly. Occasionally fragmentary but succeeds in conveying the general meaning. Fair range of expression.	Most of what the interviewee says is easy to follow. His intention is always clear but several interruptions are necessary to help him to convey the message or to seek clarification.
3	Has to make an effort for much of the time. Often as to search for desired meaning. Rather meaning delivery and fragmentary range of expression often limited.	The interviewer can understand a lot of what is said, but he must constantly seek clarification. Cannot understand many of the interviewee more complex or longer sentences.
2	Long pauses while he searches for the desired meaning. Frequently fragmentary and halting delivery. Almost gives up making the effort at times. Limited range of expression.	Only small bits (usually short sentences or phrases) can be understood-and then considerable effort by someone who is used to listen to the interviewee.
1	Full of long and unnatural pauses. Very halting and fragmentary delivery. At times gives making the effort. Very limited range of expression.	Hardly anything of what is said can be understood. Even when the interviewer makes a great effort of interrupts, the interviewee is unable to clarify anything he seems to have said.

*adapted from Heaton (1988: 100)*

**Table 2** The Band Scores

<b>Mark</b>	<b>Score Range</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Qualification</b>
4	75-100	Good	Successful
3	65-74	Fair	Successful
2	55-64	Low	Unsuccessful
1	0-54	Very low	Unsuccessful

*adapted from Heaton (1988: 100)*

According to the scale of scoring system from the table above, the high score is 4 for the fluency and 4 for the comprehensibility of speaking. There are 2 number of tests only. So, the maximum score is 8. After doing all the treatment the results of test were evaluated. The result of students' score in pre-test and post-test were analyzed statistically. The researcher calculated the students' score by applying formula which is proposed by using the formula by Arikunto (2006) as follows:

$$\Sigma = \frac{x}{N} \times 100$$

Where:

$\sum$  = standard score

X = raw score

N = maximum score

To know the use of imaginary conversation technique accepted or rejected, the researcher tested the hypothesis with the criteria are If the  $t_{\text{counted}}$  value is higher than  $t_{\text{table}}$  value, it means that the hypothesis of the research is accepted, while if the  $t_{\text{counted}}$  value is lower than  $t_{\text{table}}$  value, it means that the hypothesis of the research is rejected.

## FINDINGS

In collecting the data, The researcher used test as her research instrument. There were two kinds of the test: pre-test and post-test. Pretest was given to experimental and control classes in order to know the students' speaking skill concerned with their fluency. In conducting the test, there were given some topics to be asked and answered. In this activity, the students were expected to be active in speaking activities. After conducting the pretest to the two sample classes, the researcher provided them with treatment. The treatment was only given to the experimental class with different topic each meeting, but both of experimental and control classes received the same material. The researcher applied Imaginary Conversation for experimental class. The treatment was conducted for eight meetings, the first meeting was given pretest and the eight meeting was given posttest. Each meeting spent 80 minutes. After doing all the treatments, the posttest was given. The result of pretest and post test of experimental group is presented on table 3 bellow:

**Table 3** score of pretest and posttest Experimental Class

No.	Initials	Students' Score		Deviation (d)
		Pre-test	Post-test	
1	AD	37.5	87.5	50.0
2	ALM	62.5	87.5	25.0
3	APT	25.0	75.0	50.0
4	ADP	25.0	75.0	50.0
5	ARS	25.0	75.0	50.0
6	AT	37.5	87.5	50.0
7	AA	50.0	87.5	37.5
8	AL	50.0	87.5	37.5
9	BV	75.0	87.5	12.5
10	EPN	37.5	87.5	50.0
11	EF	50.0	87.5	37.5
12	EM	37.5	87.5	50.0
13	EJMY	62.5	87.5	25.0
14	FR	37.5	87.5	50.0
15	FM	87.5	100	12.5
16	IKD	50.0	75.0	25.0
17	IMS	25.0	62.5	37.5
18	MW	75.0	100	25.0
19	MAF	25.0	87.5	62.5
20	MAA	25.0	75.0	50.0
21	MRD	62.5	100	37.5
22	MLD	62.5	87.5	25.0
23	NR	75.0	87.5	12.5
24	NMS	50.0	87.5	37.5
25	NDS	75.0	87.5	12.5
26	RT	62.5	87.5	25.0
27	RHH	50.0	75.0	25.0
28	SP	37.5	87.5	50.0
29	SOA	25.0	75.0	50.0
30	YAM	25.0	87.5	62.5
<b>Total</b>		<b>1425</b>	<b>2550</b>	<b>1125</b>

After counting the pretest score of the experimental class, the researcher found that the highest score of the pre-test is 87.5 and the lowest score is 25. After calculating the individual score, the researcher found that the students' mean score in the pretest is 47.5. In the posttest, the highest score gained by the students is 100 and the lowest is 62.5. Furthermore, the mean score of the students in posttest is 85. It simply means that there is an improvement of the students' score in the experimental group.

After knowing the result of the experimental class than the researcher calculating the result of pretest and posttest of control class. The result is presented on table 4 below:

**Table 4** score of pretest and posttest control Class

No	Initials	Students' Score		Deviation (d)
		Pre-test	Post-test	
1	AN	75.0	87.5	12.5
2	AH	25.0	75.0	50.0
3	AM	37.5	62.5	25.0
4	BAW	62.5	75.0	12.5
5	DD	37.5	62.5	25.0
6	FR	75.0	100	25.0
7	GR	50.0	62.5	12.5
8	HI	87.5	100	12.5
9	IWA	50.0	87.5	37.5
10	MLA	37.5	87.5	50.0
11	MF	62.5	87.5	25.0
12	MA	62.5	75.0	12.5
13	MN	25.0	75.0	50.0
14	MT	37.5	62.5	25.0
15	ML	37.5	62.5	25.0
16	NN	75.0	87.5	12.5
17	NR	50.0	62.5	12.5
18	NMK	50.0	62.5	12.5
19	RH	62.5	75.0	12.5
20	RD	75.0	87.5	12.5
21	RS	37.5	62.5	25.0
22	RT	75.0	100	25.0
23	SR	50.0	62.5	12.5
24	SW	87.5	100	12.5
25	ST	37.5	75.0	37.5
26	TAS	75.0	75.0	0
27	VCN	25.0	62.5	37.5
28	YA	25.0	25.0	0
29	ZR	75.0	87.5	12.5
30	AN	37.5	62.5	25.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>1687.5</b>	<b>2362.5</b>	<b>675</b>

In calculating the students' individual score of the control class, the researcher employed and applied the same formula as in control experimental class. The result showed that the highest score that students got in pretest is 87.5 and the lowest score is 25. The research found that the mean score of the pretest is 52.7.

## DISCUSSION

After analyzing the result of the test, the problem statement of this hypothesis is answered. It showed that applying of Imaginary Conversation Technique had influence on students' skills. It could be proved from their achievement in pretest and posttest. Before applying this technique, the mean score both of groups in pretest were 47.5 for experimental group and 52.7 for the control one. It indicated that before doing the treatment, the students' skills in speaking of both groups were same. After doing the treatment, both the posttest mean score of experimental and control class are different.

They are 85 for the experimental class and 73.83 for the control class. It can be said that the use of imaginary conversation can improve the students' speaking skills.

In the scope of the research, the researcher focused on analyzing students' fluency and comprehensibility in speaking. In other words, the researcher limited the research due to the problems encountered by the students. Moreover, those problems could be solved by the technique that the researcher suggested. Therefore, the researcher would like to discuss the result of this research.

In conducting this research, the researcher measured students' speaking skills by giving oral test consisting two numbers. The first test was pre-test. The purpose was to find out students' prior ability in speaking (Fluency and comprehensibility). The result of the pre-test showed that the students lacked in fluency and comprehensibility of speaking. Based on the minimum standard of learning mastery which is 76, there were 29 students who failed the pre-test in experimental class. On the other side, there were 30 students who did not pass the pre-test in control class. It indicates that the level of speaking skills of both experimental and control classes in pre-test was nearly equal because most of the students did not reach the passing grade.

The researcher provided the result of error rate of pre-test from both classes. In the result of pre-test in experimental class, the researcher found that there were 29 students (96%) who made error in fluency and 30 students (100%) who made error in comprehensibility. Moreover, the result of the pre-test in the control class showed that there were 30 students (93.75%) who made error in fluency and 32 students (100%) who made error in comprehensibility. Based on the error rate of pre-test, it can be concluded that students lacked more in comprehensibility than in fluency. Nevertheless, the difference of error rate between both classes is nearly close. It can be concluded that the ability of experimental class was lower than the control class. Therefore, the students in experimental class should get special treatment from the researcher.

After giving the pre-test to the experimental and control classes, the researcher gave the treatment to the experimental class in six meetings. Experimental and control classes were taught the same teaching materials. However, the researcher applied Imaginary Conversation Technique as the special treatment to experimental class. On the other side, the researcher did not use that technique in teaching speaking to control class. Thus, the researcher only taught the control class by using conventional teaching strategy. It is in order to find out whether the use of Imaginary Conversation Technique can improve students' speaking skills or not.

During the treatment, the researcher opened the class as what teachers usually do. However, before the researcher taught the teaching materials to the students, the researcher asked them about Imaginary Conversation Technique only in the first meeting. Then, the students only gave short response like translating the meaning of Imaginary Conversation Technique. Actually, they got confused about Imaginary Conversation Technique because they were not familiar with it. Therefore, the researcher introduced it to the students. Then, the researcher taught the teaching material. The topics were asking and giving permission, asking, giving, and refusing opinion, offering, accepting, and refusing something, starting, extending, and ending conversation on the phone, asking, giving, and denying information, and inviting, accepting, and refusing invitation. Those topics were given during the treatment. In the first meeting, before the researcher explained the topic, she explained the technique first about imaginary conversation then for five meetings rest, she directly explained and gave the examples of the topics. In the first and second meeting, the students were still shy and afraid to practice it and perform it in front of the class because they just started and tried to use the language orally by using imaginary conversation. In the third and fourth meeting, the students started using the language better because they did it always. In the last two meetings, in the fifth and the sixth meeting, the students were active enough to practice the language through imaginary conversation. It happened because during the treatment, they had more chance to practice and to use the language orally. Therefore, the imaginary conversation technique really helped them to improve their speaking step by step.

In conducting the research, researcher used Imaginary conversation technique. This research has correlation with several studies that have been done previously. One of them was written by Nurbaity (2005). The design used in her research was Classroom Action Research. She used this research in speaking and writing classes. The finding of the research showed that Imaginary Conversation could be significantly effective in teaching speaking and writing. Another research was

conducted by Mizqiyah (2012), she applied Imaginary Conversation to improve students' speaking skills. The design that she used was true experimental design. The result of her research showed that students' speaking skills at eleventh year can be improved by using Imaginary Conversation. Testing hypothesis was proved. It likely motivated and convinced the students to speak. It means Imaginary Conversation could improve students' speaking skills.

First research, Nurbaity (2005) used Imaginary Conversation in teaching English to motivate them in uttering and responding the ideas. Meanwhile, Mizqiyah (2012) applied Imaginary Conversation to make enjoyable learning in using English language. In the present research, the researcher also used Imaginary Conversation technique in improving students' speaking skills because from some previous studies, there was significant improvement on students' speaking skills but the design of the research was quasi experimental design. She motivated the students to practice English and made them confidence in mastering the language. She conducted the research to the the eighth grade students of MTs Alkhairaat Tondo. In implementing the technique, the research focused on fluency and comprehensibility.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of data analysis, it can be concluded that the use of imaginary conversation technique can improved students' speaking skills of the the eighth grade students of MTs Alkhairaat Tondo. It can be proved from their achievement from pretest to posttest. After applying imaginary conversation technique, the students are able to make the short imaginary conversation, they are able to act as what characters in the conversation, they are able to utter the sentences smoothly and confidently in front of the class, and they are able to speak fluently enough. However, if it is compared to the class that is not taught by using imaginary conversation, the students are still unconfident to use English orally. It can be seen from their achievement from pretest to posttest, there is only a bit improvement from their score. It can be said that the group that is taught using imaginary conversation technique has greater improvement than another one. From all the results indicate that the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) is accepted, while the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected. In other word, applying imaginary conversation technique has significant influence on speaking skills of the eight grade students of MTs Alkhairaat Tondo.

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