

Challenges in Implementing the Information Gap Technique to Enhance the Indonesian EFL Students' Speaking Skills

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Abstract:

Even though the Independent Curriculum suggests teachers conduct speaking activities in class, the real situation is quite the opposite. Students rarely speak English in class; hence, students still lack the ability to speak English. This study aims to describe the challenges in implementing the Information Gap Technique to enhance students' speaking skills in a vocational high school located in Sleman. Employing Classroom Action Research, the research unfolds across four iterative stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. This study used interviews, observations, and documentation as primary instruments. This is qualitative analysis with interactive model analysis and thematic analysis as data analysis. The findings illuminate several hurdles faced by both teachers and students. Teachers confront difficulties in classroom management, struggling to monitor and assess students simultaneously. Meanwhile, students encounter challenges in peer assessment and formulating questions, along with linguistic obstacles in pronunciation and grammar. The study concludes that an effective strategy to mitigate these challenges involves teachers actively circulating the classroom and engaging in peer assessment. This approach enables teachers to identify and address individual student difficulties promptly. The research suggests that while IGT proves effective in enhancing speaking skills and boosting confidence, teachers should judiciously incorporate it, considering both its advantages and drawbacks. The recommendation encourages periodic utilisation of the technique, with teachers being mindful of the need for a balanced approach that addresses the identified challenges, thereby maximising the benefits of IGT in enhancing students' speaking abilities.

Keywords: *classroom action research; EFL; information gap technique; speaking skills*

1. INTRODUCTION

The significance of speaking in communication cannot be overstated, as it serves as a crucial avenue for meaningful interaction. Language, as highlighted by Namaziandost et al. (2019), is fundamentally designed to enable humans to convey their meanings and intentions to one another. This statement also has the same argument as Dalimunthe & Haryadi (2022), that speaking is essential because humans cannot be separated from each other. In this context, speech emerges as the paramount skill within the realm of language arts, functioning as the primary tool for expressing information, emotions, ideas, and beliefs. The importance of spoken English in the process of language acquisition is emphasised by Malavika & Muthukrishnan (2021), who underscore its pivotal role in facilitating effective communication and eventual career success. Sudarmo (2021) contributes a sociolinguistic perspective, accentuating the necessity for both skilful and thoughtful competence in conversing in a foreign language. Collectively, these scholarly contributions emphasise the indispensable role of oral communication in language learning and the subsequent attainment of effective communication skills.

Many scholars have also discussed the recency of teaching speaking. The teaching of speaking in English language classrooms is a complex and often overlooked aspect of language education (Burns, 2019). Despite its importance, many teachers feel ill-equipped to teach speaking, often focusing on accuracy rather than fluency (Gandeel, 2016). However, there are practical strategies for integrating speaking skills across the curriculum, such as building, performing, and evaluating speeches (Correa & Villa, 2019). In the classroom, the teacher's role is crucial, with their talk serving as a key element in encouraging student participation (Wicaksono, 2016) and circulating the discourse in the teaching of speaking (Saadillah & Fauzan, 2024).

Although the independent curriculum, has emphasized the importance of speaking and listening in English, the practice in class is quite the opposite. This is prompting numerous studies to investigate effective strategies for their improvement. Shinta (2022) identified confidence, mastery of grammar and vocabulary, and engagement in specific speaking activities as pivotal factors contributing to enhanced English speaking competence. Afriana et al (2022) emphasized the broader implications of English proficiency for both students and teachers, particularly in professional and legal communication contexts. Mahmud et al. (2022) delved into the positive impact of extracurricular activities, such as English public speaking, on students' English communication skills. Additionally, Nasution et al. (2020) explored the use of parliamentary debate as a tool to address challenges like limited vocabulary and self-confidence, aiming to bolster students' English speaking proficiency. Collectively, these studies underscore the significance of speaking and listening skills in English, offering diverse strategies to elevate these essential language competencies.

In a vocational high school in Sleman, our observation highlighted a gap in the English teacher's emphasis on improving students' speaking skills. Therefore, before the implementation of CAR, an observation was undertaken to directly assess the teaching and learning process. According to the observation notes, the teacher predominantly delivered and explained the material without encouraging students to actively participate in discussions. Students only spoke when they had a specific speaking skills test, and even then, it was limited to certain times during each class. Moreover, students were not encouraged to express themselves or have more interactive conversations in their own way.

Employing such a teaching strategy poses an ongoing challenge for students in the process of learning and comprehending the use of oral English. This approach, where students speak only during designated assessments and are not encouraged to express themselves or engage in communicative conversations, is particularly problematic. This limitation becomes more pronounced for students with a restricted vocabulary, hindering their ability to communicate effectively. Consequently, this teaching method contributes to a silent classroom environment and underscores the necessity for students to develop their speaking skills, especially in using expressions conducive to real communication.

Prior to the action or pre-cycle, the researchers discovered that the students still lacked confidence and did not feel fluent in English. Students are also embarrassed because they seldom speak English in class. When the researchers asked the teacher for speaking scores, the teacher said it had been a while because the last time they had a speaking performance was in the first semester. This means that the students are only taught reading and structure.

The teacher's lack of diversity and absence of pre-speaking exercises resulted in an uninspiring atmosphere and hindered students' language proficiency goals. A detailed analysis exposed additional challenges, including students struggling with English self-introductions, unclear learning objectives, and a lack of meaningful feedback. This contributed to a pervasive lack of student confidence, impeding active participation. In response, a consensus emerged for transformative changes. Proposed strategies involve introducing diverse activities to stimulate confidence, interest, and excitement in English communication. Agreements were made to diversify media and materials, aligning them with the curriculum and students' needs. This collaborative approach aims to create a positive learning atmosphere, fostering active, attentive, and confident participation in English-speaking activities, ultimately addressing nuanced challenges for an enriched learning environment.

One of the effective techniques for improving speaking skills is the Information Gap Technique (IGT). IGT represents an innovative language teaching method that immerses learners in interactive scenarios, compelling them to exchange information to achieve specific tasks. Rooted in communicative language teaching, IGT places a strong emphasis on fostering real-life communication and language development (Serrano-Bersosa & Guamán-Luna, 2022). This review explores the foundational principles of IGT, its theoretical underpinnings, and its pivotal role in promoting communication and language proficiency. At its essence, IGT involves creating situations where learners encounter a knowledge gap, actively seeking, processing, and exchanging information with peers to fill this gap (Alshurraian, 2023; Masluha, 2023), fostering purposeful communication and mirroring authentic language use.

IGT proves most beneficial in enhancing students' communicative abilities within the classroom. Students are divided into groups, engaging in collaborative tasks, such as describing images or completing texts in a second language (L2), primarily English. Teachers play a supportive role, providing necessary vocabulary assistance. Penny (1996 in Ismaili & Bajrami, 2016) emphasizes that information gap activities actively involve learners, fueling enthusiasm for acquiring more information.

The theory behind information gap activities, as outlined by Dandu et al. (2021), assists L2 learners in improving communication, focusing on filling gaps in missing knowledge related to expressing thoughts, offering instructions, and conveying messages. It fosters effective communication, encouraging learners to express views and engage in sessions with enthusiasm. Moreover, Dandu

et al. (2021) highlight the advantages of IGT, such as enhancing the ability to give and ask directions, share information, and practice activities with peers or in groups. IGT motivates learners to express views in English, making learning an engaging experience.

The theoretical foundations of IGT draw from constructivism and socio-cultural theories of learning. IGT aligns with constructivism, allowing learners to actively construct knowledge through meaningful interactions. Socio-cultural theory underscores the importance of social interactions, and IGT promotes social interaction and collaborative learning. By creating an environment mirroring real communicative situations, IGT plays a crucial role in promoting communication skills (Mislawiyadi, 2023). Learners utilize language as a tool for practical goals, fostering the ability to express ideas and comprehend language nuances through information gap activities.

The use of IGT aligns with language acquisition theories, such as the Input Hypothesis and Interaction Hypothesis, providing learners with meaningful input and fostering linguistic interaction (Astuti & Chakim, 2023). IGT, deeply rooted in constructivism and socio-cultural learning theories, stands as a valuable pedagogical tool. By emphasizing authentic language use in interactive settings, IGT promotes communication skills and contributes to language development, making it a powerful method for educators seeking to cultivate communicatively competent and linguistically proficient learners in diverse language education contexts.

Information Gap Activities (IGA) have shown a positive impact in enhancing students' speaking abilities in English as a Foreign Language context and second languages. Studies have demonstrated that IGA can improve speaking performance, increase students' confidence, motivate students, create opportunities for collaborative learning, provide students with valuable opportunities for peer or group communication and foster trust. (Almziad, 2020; Argawati & Suryani, 2019; Ismaili & Bajrami, 2016; Masluha, 2023; Owen et al., 2019). Furthermore, applying the Information Gap Technique not only made learning to speak English enjoyable but also increased their activity in communication, boosted courage and confidence, and prevented boredom through diverse and interesting activities (Rosalinah & Khilda, 2019). Even though those studies have discussed the great impact of implementing IGT, information and studies about challenges in implementing the Information Gap Activities have not been discussed and need further research.

The above studies indicate that IGT could be an effective activity that provides students with numerous opportunities to practice their speaking skills in real-life contexts. It is appropriate for English students of all levels and ages. Therefore, the researchers suggested implementing the Information Gap Technique (IGT) in the class to see how it comes with students' speaking skills in a vocational high school in Sleman, and the researchers elaborated on the potential challenges that could appear in the classroom, so teachers can implement it wisely and use the technique with full of consideration and preparation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of Speaking Skills

Speaking is a fundamental aspect of language, involving the oral expression of thoughts, ideas, and emotions. In language education, speaking goes beyond articulating words and involves pronunciation, intonation, rhythm, and fluency. It is a dynamic process that enables effective communication in diverse social and cultural contexts (Gutiérrez et al., 2022). Speaking serves as a bridge between linguistic competence and communicative competence, showcasing the practical

application of language skills in real-world scenarios. Speaking skills encompass a spectrum of abilities, including pronunciation accuracy, grammatical precision, vocabulary selection, and nuanced language use. Developing speaking skills goes beyond rote memorization, focusing on coherent articulation, dynamic responses to conversational contexts, and effective interpersonal communication (Pitura, 2022). The acquisition of speaking skills is linked to the broader goals of language education, aiming to empower learners to navigate social interactions and convey thoughts with clarity and impact (Jundi & Nabila, 2023). Theoretical frameworks surrounding speaking skills in language education include Communicative language teaching (CLT), Task-based language teaching (TBLT), sociocultural theories, and cognitive theories. These frameworks contribute to a holistic understanding of speaking skills, informing instructional practices and pedagogical approaches in language education.

2.2 Concept of Information Gap Technique

The Information Gap Technique (IGT) is a dynamic language teaching method that focuses on real-life communication and language development (Serrano-Bersosa & Guamán-Luna, 2022). It involves creating situations where learners encounter a knowledge gap and actively seek, process, and exchange information with their peers to fill it (Alshurraian, 2023; Masluha, 2023). This task-oriented approach engages learners in purposeful communication, mirroring authentic language use in real-world contexts.

IGT is a learning method that combines constructivism and socio-cultural theories. It encourages learners to engage with language in authentic scenarios, promoting social interaction and collaborative learning. Bailey & Nunan's (2005) IGT is a task-oriented approach that emphasizes purposeful communication for learners to achieve specific objectives. It aligns with the communicative language teaching paradigm and is adaptable to various proficiency levels and learning environments.

IGT is a dynamic and interactive approach to language learning that involves task-based learning, group work, oral sharing, and using language to bridge gaps. Bailey & Nunan (2005) highlight the intentional introduction of information gaps within learning situations, encouraging active participation in the exchange of information. This intentional gap promotes communicative competence and fosters meaningful communication in language learning. Furthermore, IGT helps learners develop communication skills by creating an environment that mirrors real communicative situations (Mislawiyadi, 2023). It also aligns with language acquisition theories, such as the Input Hypothesis and the Interaction Hypothesis, by providing meaningful input and fostering linguistic interaction. IGT provides learners with meaningful input as they strive to comprehend and convey information in a collaborative setting (Astuti & Chakim, 2023). IGT's interactive nature allows learners to receive corrective feedback and refine their language skills. It is a valuable pedagogical tool that promotes communication skills and language development by creating situations that require information exchange. Its emphasis on authentic language use in interactive settings makes it a powerful method for educators to cultivate communicatively competent and linguistically proficient learners.

Bailey & Nunan's information gap technique (2005) involves assigning specific tasks to students, dividing the necessary material into two segments (Students A and B), requiring collective decision-making from peers, and allowing students to use language to express ideas and gain knowledge on relevant topics. This technique helps bridge the information gap and promotes effective learning in students. In addition, IGT is characterized by its focus on collaboration, interaction, and the

application of language skills in meaningful ways. It is a beneficial activity where students can improve their classroom communicative abilities. Teachers divide students into two groups, each working collaboratively to describe a cartoon, image, or text in a second language. This helps learners participate actively, leading to increased enthusiasm for learning more information (Penny, 1996 in Ismaili & Bajrami, 2016).

Dandu et al. (2021) propose that information gap activity (IGA) aids L2 learners in improving their classroom communication by filling in missing knowledge through language-speaking tasks such as expressing opinions, giving directions, and conveying messages through telephone. IGT offers advantages such as teaching students how to give and ask directions, share information with classmates, practice in pairs or groups, encourage learners to express their views in English and provide an entertaining learning environment, eliminating dreary information in the classroom (Dandu et al., 2021). Overall, IGT helps L2 learners communicate effectively and effectively in the classroom. It encourages collaboration among learners, fostering a social constructivist approach to language acquisition. It facilitates language learning and nurtures critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and effective communication in the classroom. IGT creates situations where learners actively engage in language use to bridge information gaps. The communicative nature of IGT tasks allows learners to express ideas, negotiate meaning, and work collaboratively towards shared goals (Masluha, 2023). Empirical evidence supports the claim that IGT not only enhances speaking proficiency but also contributes to communicative competence.

Furthermore, the literature highlights the adaptability of Interactive Graphics (IGT) in language education, making it a valuable tool for language educators. IGT aligns with communicative language teaching principles and provides a pedagogical framework that mirrors real-world language use (Ilmasrurroh et al., 2019). It is not just an instructional strategy but a paradigm shift, acknowledging the importance of interactive and collaborative learning experiences in language development. The literature supports IGT's effectiveness in promoting speaking skills and communication, making it a promising methodology for language educators in the 21st century.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since this research aims to describe the challenges encountered by teachers and students in implementing IGT in the classroom, this research is a qualitative method with a classroom action research approach. The main data in this research is from classroom action research that the researcher conducted. As with other classroom action research, this research deploys four steps in investigating the challenges: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research is conducted in two cycles, with two meetings per cycle. Each meeting is conducted in 90 minutes, and the schedule is twice a week. Because the objective of this research is focused on the challenges of the implementation process, not the results, the data will be displayed in the form of words.

The respondents were tenth-grade students from a vocational high school in Sleman. The class was selected due to their low English speaking ability and shyness when performing in front of the class, which required improvement, particularly to boost their confidence. The class consists of 36 students, with six of them being interviewed. The data sampling used was intentional. Six students were chosen based on scores; each of them had high, middle, and low scores. The research was done after the midterm test in the odd semester in 2023. In this research, the researchers were the teachers. Two teachers were in this implementation, and two researchers observed the process.

The researchers taught the new technique, the Information Gap Technique, to improve students speaking skills in English.

The research procedure of CAR used is from the Kemmis and McTaggart (2011, as cited in Yaumi & Muljono, 2016) Scheme. In the planning section, researchers conducted pre-cycle activities such as asking the original teacher about the students' lack of speaking skills. The researchers also looked up the students' speaking scores. In the short interview and the students' speaking scores, the researchers concluded that they still can improve their speaking. The average pre-cycle score of the students' speaking performance is 78. It is higher than the minimum completeness criteria score or cut score, but it could be more. So, after knowing the problem, the researchers made a teaching module.

Then the researcher implemented the action, which is implementing IGT in the classroom. In the action phase, the teachers gave the students comprehension material about the topics of advertisements and announcements. The students were then divided into groups of two. The students were given tasks on the student's worksheet, and then they were asked to practice IGT with their peers. Before the IGT implementation, the teachers gave purpose and concepts along with the example of IGT. The students were also asked to assess their peers, but at the end of the cycle, the teachers also assessed the students using the video IGT performance the students submitted. During the implementation, the researchers observed the students' responses and the teachers' strategies, styles, and methods. At the end of the cycle, the researchers reflected on the first action, and so on until the researcher had data on the process of implementation.

Because the objective of this study is to describe challenges in implementing the Information Gap Technique in the classroom, the main instruments for this research are observation, interview, and documentation. The observation is to know the teachers' teaching style, strategies, techniques, media, and engagement. Besides, the observation also identified students' engagement, enthusiasm, and participation. An interview is used to collect the students' and teachers' perspectives during the implementation, such as the challenges, feedback, reactions, and suggestions. The interview also asked about the teachers' teaching experiences before implementation and the teachers' proficiency. Lastly, documentation is also deployed in this research instrument to collect the module, students' outcomes, and interview transcription.

The data are analyzed by using the interactive model analysis of Miles et al. (2019). The interview is analyzed using thematic analysis. The researchers collected data using interviews, documentation, and observation. After the data had been collected, they were condensed, for instance, in coding, generalizing themes, and making analytic notes. The data condensation was done in every step of the analysis. Then, the data are concluded and displayed.

To prevent inaccuracies and misinformation, the data triangulation is needed. This research utilizes four types of triangulations to assess data validity: sources, techniques, theory, and time. Sources are examined through comparisons and confidence-level assessments. Technique triangulation involves cross-referencing field diverse theoretical frameworks. Time triangulation reviews interviews and observations at various intervals, ensuring data accuracy. By employing these triangulation methods, the study not only bolsters data validity but also establishes a robust foundation for reliable qualitative findings. Besides, this research is examined by more than one researcher, so other researchers can evaluate one another.

4. RESULTS

4.1. The Extend of IGT Implementation in Classroom

Because the data from this study come from CAR, the researchers explain the implementation of IGT in cycles.

4.1.1 Cycle 1

The first cycle consists of two meetings. In the first meeting, the teachers give the diagnostic test as the emancipated curriculum told them to do, to check the student's initial comprehension of the material. After that, the teachers reviewed their diagnostic test results and gave the material about the announcement text (definition, social function, language features, and structure). Teachers asked students to arrange the structure of announcements and gave feedback. In the second meeting, the teachers reviewed the previous meeting about the announcement text. Next, the teachers showed the video of IGT by the British Council via projector to teach students about the concept of IGT. Then, teachers demonstrated it in front of the class, and students paid attention to it. Before the IGT practice the teachers provided some vocabularies and language features to get the students' understanding of the material. Then, the students started to perform the IGT in pairs based on the task that the teacher gave. The students were asked to assess their peers based on the speaking rubric. Then, at the end of the meeting, the teachers gave students assignments to make IGT video performances in the fourth meeting.

In the observing phase, the observer observed the students' response, participation, achievement, and everything which were found during the teaching and learning process. Observers found that most of the students had engaged and were involved in the learning activities. Some of the students did not engage and were actively involved in the learning activities because they faced confusion with the new material. Students seemed to be having problems with vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. The students had not mastered the structure of the announcement. Some of the students showed a wider vocabulary than the researchers expected. The students seemed to enjoy the technique even though when the researchers approached them, they still felt shy. However, the main speaking activity was good, and the students' engagement improved from the previous meeting. Some students felt confused about how to assess their pairs, but some of them gave comprehensive/detailed comments.

After taking action and observing, the researchers reflected that the teacher must be aware of time management. The teacher needed to prepare the device well before the IGT started. In the process, it was hard to observe all members (36 students) in class. But overall, the researchers could get the overall judgement from the students' performance.

4.1.2. Cycle 2

In cycle 2, the teachers changed the material into advertisements. In the first meeting of the second cycle, the teachers gave material about advertisement (definition, social function, language features, structure, and example). After that, the teachers gave quizzes about advertisements to check the students' understanding of the content. Then, the teachers reviewed their quiz results, asking the confusing part of the question and giving the correct answers. In the second meeting of the second cycle, the teachers reviewed the previous meeting about advertisements and then gave the students the language features of advertisement text to start the IGT practice. Next, the students started to perform the IGT in pairs based on the task that the teachers gave. The students were asked to assess their peers based on the speaking rubric.

Challenges in Implementing the Information Gap Technique

In the observation phase, the teachers found out that the students had a high engagement, and this could be seen from the results of Quizizz, which received scores above the average. Overall, the students already understood about advertisements, both language features and content contained in an advertisement. Some students had high engagement when giving a lot of questions to the teacher. Some students had known well about how to implement IGT and perform well with their partners. Generally, there were significant developments in the acting phase in the second cycle. The classroom situation can also be controlled when students perform IGT with their pairs. Furthermore, for the reflection phase, the teachers should write information on each aspect of the speaking rubric given to students. So it will be easier for them to assess their partners.

After two cycles of IGT implementation, the students showed improvement in the speaking performance score (see Figure 3). This means that the IGT significantly improved the students' speaking skills. Some students also enjoyed it because they did not need to be shy about coming in front of the class anymore. This IGT is very comfortable for shy students. The students' level of confidence was also improved. This is also acknowledged by one of the interviewees and supported by the observation field note.

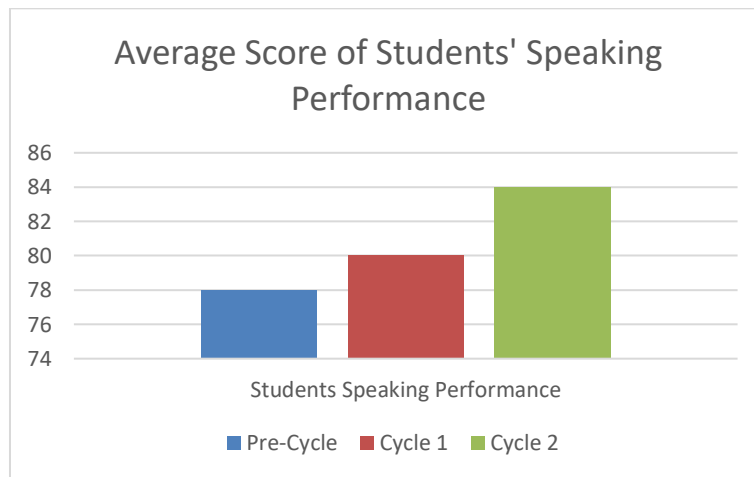


Figure 1. Chart of Average Score of Students' Speaking Performance

4.2. Teachers' Interview about the Implementation and Challenges

After conducting action research, the teachers were interviewed to deepen the teacher's thoughts on the process of IGT implementation. The questions are about the teachers' English proficiency, qualification, teaching experience relating to speaking technique, knowledge about IGT, and perspective, along with possible challenges and opportunities of IGT implementation.

From the interview, the educators possess qualifications that include a bachelor's degree in English Education, with ongoing pursuit of a master's degree in the same field. Both instructors boast a minimum of one year of teaching experience at the Elementary level, and one of them has accumulated over two years of experience in teaching at the intermediate and advanced levels. This collective teaching experience significantly contributes to their proficiency in managing classrooms effectively. According to student feedback, there are no obstacles related to the teachers' English proficiency, as students express a clear understanding of the instructional content.

The educators prefer interactive and communicative teaching methods, with engaging activities to increase student involvement. Their focus on creating a positive and enjoyable learning atmosphere influences students to actively participate and ask questions. Students express their appreciation for the teachers' engaging approach and the introduction of the Information Gap Technique (IGT), which fosters a dynamic and skilful learning environment.

In addressing the diverse needs of learners, the teachers emphasize adaptability by tailoring their teaching styles and methods based on individual student characteristics, background knowledge, and learning pace. One teacher underscores the importance of observing students' responses in the classroom to gauge their comprehension. To foster a positive and participatory classroom, the instructors prefer employing group-based games and occasionally incorporating rewards at the end of sessions.

Regarding specific teaching techniques, one teacher has employed role-playing to enhance pronunciation and speaking skills, while the other has utilized a bingo game to prompt quick thinking and guessing, encouraging students to speak actively using basic vocabulary. However, both teachers acknowledge unfamiliarity with the IGT technique before this context, presenting challenges in monitoring students' use of the technique due to limited visibility. Challenges also arise in evaluating students' performance, necessitating active observation and correction.

Considering the IGT implementation, teachers highlight the necessity of creating multiple worksheet packages to deter cheating. Despite the time and energy required for this task, no issues related to facilitations within the school were reported. However, obstacles surfaced concerning students' initial struggle to grasp the concept of the IGT, requiring explicit examples from the teachers.

Notwithstanding the challenges, educators recognize the potential of IGT in enhancing students' speaking skills, as it encourages overcoming language-related fears and promotes active participation, even with errors and simple vocabulary. They suggest periodic integration of IGT into the classroom, either independently or in conjunction with other techniques. A cautionary note is sounded regarding accurate assessment and monitoring, advising increased teacher mobility and detailed explanations to students on how to assess their peers effectively.

4.3. Students' Interview about Implementation and Challenges

In another chance, a semi-structured interview transpired upon completing the second cycle. The researchers embarked on their exploration by delving into the students' nuanced perspectives on the English subject, focusing on developing their speaking skills. The unanimous sentiment among all respondents underscored the indispensability of English, particularly in professional spheres where effective communication with foreign entities and collaboration with international companies are imperative. Notably, two out of the six students articulated English as a global language, further justifying a comprehensive and profound engagement with its study. In the context of school life, the prominence of English was emphasized, given its mandatory status and inclusion in regional education standardization assessments (ASPD).

Most students expressed a favourable view of the Information Gap Technique (IGT), recognizing it as a valuable tool for enhancing their speaking skills. They are forced to speak English despite the barriers in this technique. Students are enthusiastic about the new teachers and the new techniques that they have introduced. The majority of them were happy and excited about the teachers and techniques, but one student was shocked because the teaching method and style were

very different from the original teacher. Nonetheless, the student was enthusiastic about the new teaching method and style.

The instructors provided comprehensive examples, definitions, and goals related to the IGT as a prelude to the actual classroom activities. While some students initially struggled to grasp the complexities of the technique, subsequent explanations and illustrative examples helped to alleviate concerns. Students not only gained proficiency but also demonstrated significant improvement in their speaking fluency over time. The provision of vocabulary and pronunciation guidance was a notable aspect of the teachers' facilitation, earning praise from students who found the instructional materials more lucid and comprehensible than those supplied by the original teacher.

After observing and interviewing them, six out of six students stated that IGT implementation in the classroom was very enjoyable. The students expected more of this (speaking assessment) because they rarely do English-speaking performances. The students also agreed that the learning and teaching process using IGT could be repeated in the future for any material or topic. Furthermore, all students interviewed agreed that this technique can help them improve their speaking skills, particularly fluency. This is consistent with their attitudes during the class activity; students appear to have enjoyed the Information Gap Technique process. Teachers assisted students in overcoming difficulties during implementation, such as when it was difficult to form question sentences. Students actively question the teacher in this case.

Student experiences during the IGT varied, with some deriving enjoyment from assessing peers, answering questions, or listening to their partners respond. Almost all students stated that the most difficult part of implementing IGT was asking their peers to complete the tasks. Students were perplexed as to what utterance to use or what grammatical rules to follow. Most of them also struggle to pronounce correctly when answering or asking questions. Some students must spell for their classmates in order for them to understand what they are saying. According to the observations, a large number of students spell in Indonesian or Javanese. Furthermore, students have difficulty assessing their peers because they are unaware of their peers' competencies.

In resolving challenges, students sought assistance from classmates, teachers, or online resources. Teachers responded with clear explanations, while students adopted strategies such as speaking slowly or spelling words to aid their peers. Overall, students expressed contentment with the IGT, deeming it ideal for fostering active English communication. They acknowledged the technique's flexibility across diverse English materials.

Overall, the students were pleased and enthusiastic about the information gap technique. Students face difficulties as well, particularly with pronunciation and vocabulary. They are unsure how to structure some questions for their friends and are afraid of failing to provide answers. Students frequently asked their classmates in other pairs or the teachers right away. The IGT is also very adaptable and can be done with any English material. The students felt the IGT's improvement and impact as well. Improvements include fluent speaking, increased confidence, and improved pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.

5. DISCUSSION

This research delves into the efficacy of employing an action learning strategy, specifically the Information Gap Technique (IGT), to enhance students' proficiency in spoken English. The IGT, chosen as a pivotal teaching strategy, was strategically integrated into the curriculum to foster not

only conversational skills but also to facilitate the acquisition of relevant vocabulary essential to the subject matter. The research findings illuminate the positive impact of IGT activities conducted in pairs, with students expressing enjoyment and recognizing tangible improvements in their speaking abilities. Nevertheless, the study also unravelled inherent challenges, such as instances of communication breakdowns between partners, necessitating the need for students to spell out words for clarity.

A deeper examination of the observations underscores the influential role of students' foundational knowledge and proficiency in English on their speaking performances. Those with a robust grasp of the basics exhibited not only comprehensive responses but also accurate pronunciation. Conversely, students with a fair knowledge base were prone to errors and occasional code-switching between their native language and English. This problem with students' language proficiency or linguistic level can hinder students' speaking performance (Ferdiyanto & Suciati, 2023). The inherent variance in students' linguistic abilities posed a practical challenge for teachers, especially in offering nuanced and individualized feedback, given the sheer volume of students. The Information Gap Technique, endorsed by Dandu et al. (2021), emerges as a pedagogical gem for L2 learners, fostering not just language proficiency but also critical thinking and problem-solving skills. It encourages students to articulate their perspectives in English, thereby cultivating active participation and engagement in the language learning process.

In the practical implementation of the research, where the researcher took on the role of a teacher, the study demonstrated that IGT effectively enables students to not only give and receive directions but also to share information and engage in language activities collaboratively. In alignment with Dandu et al., (2021), IGT is positioned not only as a tool for language acquisition but also as an enabler for infusing an element of enjoyment and dynamism into language classes, thus averting the risk of monotony.

The comprehensive exploration of the research unearthed a spectrum of advantages and disadvantages associated with the implementation of IGT in the classroom. On the positive side, the benefits encompass heightened confidence levels, improved pronunciation, enriched vocabulary, a better grasp of grammar, and heightened engagement. In line with Rafsanjani et al. (2020), using IGT in teaching speaking is effective for low-confidence students. Furthermore, Caballero et al. (2023), found that IGT helps students improve their fluency by allowing them to produce sentences with fewer pauses due to their rich vocabulary. Nevertheless, challenges persisted, including the demand for teachers to seamlessly play the roles of observers and correctors simultaneously, coupled with the potential risk of students developing over-reliance on teachers during IGT activities. These results align with Yanti Rosalinah & Khilda (2019), IGT has several challenges, such as taking a long time because students need to find information and one person may become more active than their partner.

In addressing these nuanced challenges, the research underscores the critical importance of meticulous activity design, taking into account varying proficiency levels among students, issuing clear and concise instructions, and fostering a supportive classroom environment. Additionally, integrating diverse teaching techniques and an astute awareness of individual learning styles are highlighted as indispensable elements for fortifying the language learning experience and mitigating potential pitfalls associated with the Information Gap Technique.

5.1. Challenges Encountered in Information Gap Technique (IGT) Classroom Implementation

As teachers embark on the implementation of the Information Gap Technique (IGT) in classroom activities, they grapple with various challenges, encompassing class and time management, the creation of students' worksheets, activity monitoring, and student assessment. In accordance with Humaera et al. (2022) found that using IGT in teaching speaking skills can be time-consuming, especially if students need time to understand the task or if the conversation goes off-topic. The intricacies of managing both time and class dynamics surface during the formation of student pairs, initially resulting in a disorganized classroom layout. Students' adjustments to make themselves comfortable often lead to disorderly room management. It is challenging to maintain student focus on the task at hand during activities, particularly in larger classes where some students may deviate from the activity or engage in off-topic discussions (Arjuna & Rozimela, 2021). Reflecting on this, teachers intervene by instructing students to arrange their chairs and tables in an organized manner, emphasizing the need to be mindful of time allocation during the activity. In line with Triana & Anita (2022), monitoring the progress of students engaged in activities by circulating the room, providing assistance when necessary, and establishing clear expectations regarding behaviour and participation can help to maintain student focus and ensure that they are on task.

The task of crafting students' worksheets poses another significant hurdle for teachers. Generating multiple sets of worksheets to deter cheating demands considerable effort and time, with the added complexity of aligning worksheet content with the lesson's topic. Consequently, when dealing with multiple topics, crafting IGT worksheets becomes a formidable undertaking. Amalia (2019) stated that creating or selecting appropriate worksheets for the students can be time-intensive for teachers because the worksheets need to be carefully designed to ensure they are at the right difficulty level and engage all students.

The challenge intensifies with the need to continuously monitor student activities during IGT implementation. In a paired or group setting, teachers must circulate the classroom, offering guidance and addressing queries. This multitasking aspect requires a delicate balance between individualized support and the overall management of the class.

Assessing student performance in IGT activities presents yet another layer of complexity. Teachers might find it hard to evaluate individual contributions, fluency, and language use effectively (Ortiz, 2019). Traditional assessment methods may fall short of capturing the dynamic and interactive nature of the speaking skills honed through these activities. Exploring alternative assessment approaches, such as rubrics or peer evaluations, becomes imperative to comprehensively evaluate each student's communication proficiency and contribution.

Beyond these challenges, maintaining an optimal learning environment is a critical consideration. The initial untidiness resulting from students rearranging furniture underscores the importance of effective room management during IGT activities. Teachers are pivotal in guiding students to organize their workspace efficiently, minimizing disruptions and fostering a focused learning atmosphere.

In reflection, addressing these challenges underscores the necessity for teachers to not only grasp the nuances of the IGT technique but also exhibit effective classroom management skills. Flexibility, proactivity, and adeptness in handling unforeseen situations become essential traits for teachers aiming to create a positive and productive learning environment conducive to enhancing students' speaking skills. As these challenges are navigated, teachers can refine their approach to

IGT, transforming it into a seamless and beneficial component of language education within vocational high schools.

5.2. Opportunities Presented by the Information Gap Technique (IGT) in Educational Settings

The Information Gap Technique unfolds a myriad of opportunities within the educational realm, enriching learning experiences, nurturing critical thinking, and cultivating collaborative skills. Specific opportunities within the educational context encompass interactive learning environments, language acquisition, teacher-student interaction, and assessment and evaluation.

Focusing on language learning, particularly in the domain of speaking skills, the Information Gap Technique leverages information gaps to bolster oral proficiency. It can provide learners with a good opportunity to use the sentences they learn; it also allows learners to talk, exchange information, and interact over time, and the tasks will make students use the target language and motivate them students to speak more than their teacher (Dilber, 2022). This method involves providing students with distinct pieces of information, compelling them to communicate and fill in gaps collaboratively, thus practising language skills in authentic, real-life contexts. Such tasks necessitate active listening, question formulation, and responding to inquiries, fostering a comprehensive development of listening and speaking skills.

Moreover, the Information Gap Technique (IGT) introduces a dynamic and enjoyable dimension to student engagement in the learning process. IGT are often interactive and collaborative, which can increase students' motivation and engagement (Veda, 2019). Its interactive nature ensures active participation, making learning an enjoyable endeavour. The challenge of completing a task or solving a problem together can make learning more enjoyable (Prasetianto, 2019). This versatility allows IGT to seamlessly integrate with various materials and teaching techniques, enhancing excitement and variety across language classes, science courses, or vocational subjects.

The adaptability of IGT proves particularly advantageous in language learning, notably for improving speaking skills. By incorporating real-life scenarios and communication tasks, IGT establishes an authentic language-learning environment, promoting not only oral proficiency but also practical application of language skills. IGT is useful in training the students to use the target language to communicate in real life by asking the students to share information with peers (Pitura, 2022). The element of enjoyment embedded in IGT activities aids in alleviating anxiety, fostering a conducive atmosphere for students to express themselves confidently in the target language.

Crucially, IGT is a potent tool for building students' confidence, particularly for those inclined to introversion or shyness. Working with classmates allows students to support one another, which allows them to learn from their peers and boost their confidence as they see others making mistakes and learning together (Almziad, 2020). The structured yet interactive nature of IGT allows students to practice speaking in a supportive setting. The collaborative aspect of information gap activities instils teamwork, contributing to students' comfort in articulating their thoughts and ideas.

IGT unfolds a spectrum of opportunities within the educational backdrop, with a focused emphasis on language learning and the enhancement of speaking skills. Its enjoyable and interactive characteristics, applicability to diverse subjects, and confidence-building attributes underscore its efficacy. However, teachers should remain mindful of challenges such as time management, worksheet creation, and assessment methods.

For teachers aiming to implement IGT successfully, meticulous planning and organization take precedence. This involves crafting clear and engaging worksheets, adeptly managing class time, and employing suitable assessment strategies. Additionally, fostering a positive and collaborative classroom culture enhances the overall IGT experience for both educators and students. Regular reflection on challenges and successes further refines the integration of IGT into the educational landscape, maximizing its benefits for language learning and overall skill development.

This study provides a nuanced perspective on the challenges in implementing IGT to enhance students' speaking skills in vocational high schools. While previous research has highlighted the positive impact of IGT, our investigation addresses the gap between curriculum recommendations and actual classroom practices, revealing specific hurdles faced by teachers and students in Sleman. The proposed strategy of active teacher circulation and peer assessment offers context-specific solutions. This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by not only recognizing the benefits of IGT but also by presenting practical insights to overcome its challenges. As language educators move forward, a balanced and judicious incorporation of IGT, considering both its advantages and drawbacks, becomes imperative for maximizing the benefits and fostering an enriched learning environment in vocational high schools.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research underscores the critical role of careful activity design in language learning, emphasizing the need to cater to diverse student proficiency levels, provide clear instructions, and cultivate a supportive classroom atmosphere. The implementation of IGT brings forth challenges, including managing class dynamics, time, and student assessment. Creating and aligning worksheets with lesson topics, continuously monitoring student activities, and assessing speaking skills require innovative approaches beyond traditional methods. Teachers must navigate these complexities by balancing individualized support with overall class management. Maintaining an organized learning environment and exhibiting strong classroom management skills are vital in ensuring the success of IGT activities. Ultimately, teachers' flexibility, proactivity, and ability to handle unexpected situations are key to fostering a productive learning experience that enhances students' speaking skills. There are many opportunities to improve language acquisition with IGT, especially when it comes to speaking proficiency. IGT promotes active communication and collaboration by establishing scenarios in which students are required to exchange information in order to complete a mission. This approach not only encourages the practical application of language in real-world situations but also assists students in developing self-assurance as they confront speaking and listening challenges in a supportive environment. IGT encourages student engagement and participation by making learning more fun and dynamic.

Furthermore, IGT is especially useful for pupils who are introverted or shy. They can practice speaking without the pressure of a public performance by working closely with peers in a controlled environment, which progressively boosts their confidence. By promoting communication in a more authentic and interactive context, IGT helps students become more comfortable and fluent in the target language, making it a valuable tool for educators aiming to create an inclusive and effective language-learning environment.

IGT offers substantial opportunities for enhancing language learning, particularly in developing speaking skills, it also presents specific challenges that require careful consideration. Teachers must balance the benefits of IGT with practical constraints like time management, worksheet

preparation, and appropriate assessment methods. This study highlights the importance of meticulous planning and fostering a collaborative classroom culture to optimize the IGT experience. By addressing the disconnect between curriculum goals and classroom realities, particularly in vocational high schools, this research sheds light on the unique challenges faced by educators and students in Sleman. The proposed strategies, such as active teacher involvement and peer assessment, provide viable solutions tailored to these specific contexts. Ultimately, the study underscores that a thoughtful and well-executed integration of IGT can significantly enhance language learning, making it a valuable approach in vocational education.

7. REFERENCES

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