

IMPROVING STUDENTS' ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH THE GALLERY WALK TECHNIQUE

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Abstract: *With the requirements of the curriculum outcome and also the workplace, English skills are increasingly receiving special attention. The ability to communicate in English fluently is especially thought to help candidates find a good job after graduation. This research paper is conducted with the aim of improving student's speaking skills through the Gallery Walk technique. The activity provides an opportunity for students to be exposed to the language regularly, which can help them foster and develop pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and fluency. The participants of the study are 36 first-year English major students at a university in Hung Yen. The data collection process was carried out during eight periods over two cycles. Research data collection tools are speaking tests, the action and questionnaires. Both quantitative and qualitative results have shown that students' English-speaking ability has improved significantly in terms of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. Moreover, adopting the gallery walk technique also helps students not be afraid of being judged when speaking English and be able to communicate actively in the real world.*

Keywords: *English, speaking skill, the Gallery Walk technique, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar & fluency.*

I. Introduction

With the appearance of Communicative Language Teaching in the 1970s, a new focus has been brought on “realism” in language learning materials and activities. (Buendgens-Kosten, 2014). Taking this into consideration, there has been a major breakthrough in teaching methodology, lesson procedures, as well

as the application of teaching and learning activities. Krashen and Terrel (1983) claim that the aim of language instruction is to allow learners to understand language outside the classroom so that they can make full use of the real world as well as the classroom, for their own progress. By the same token, the Gallery Walk is regarded as a useful source to help learners use the language in a more natural way.

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This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the Gallery Walk technique in motivating students in speaking lessons at school. To be more specific, this study examines students' participation in Gallery Walk activities in English speaking lessons, and how their speaking skills change before and after joining in the Gallery Walk.

In particular, the researcher carries out this study to address two main questions:

- *To what extent does Gallery Walk technique improve students' English-speaking skills?*

- *Does Gallery Walk improve students' fluency in speaking English?*

As the research inquiries into participation and the improvement in speaking ability through Gallery Walk, it is hoped that other colleagues in the faculty could benefit from it to evaluate the materials, better facilitate future lessons and modify the current course in the teaching materials. Additionally, by giving thorough feedback via the data collection instruments, students stand a chance of self-reflection and self-improvement after a whole semester with Gallery Walk. For researchers who are interested in the field, this study might play the role of a reference for them to base their future research on.

II. Literature review

2.1. English speaking skills

According to Brindley's belief, speaking can be considered as an oral form of communication. In order to communicate effectively, there are definite criteria that a speaker needs

to follow. Nunan (1991) states that effective speaking requires fluency, appropriateness and accuracy. His criteria to achieve successful communication have been stated to include 4 factors. First of all, it is the good command of word stress, sentence stress as well as intonation patterns. Accent has long been stated to cause a lot of misunderstanding in communication; therefore, the good command of word stress and intonation are key to a successful communication. Secondly, a considerable level of fluency is mentioned. This can be understood as speakers do not need to be perfectly fluent. They need to express their ideas without too much or too long hesitation that can affect meaning. The third criteria that Brindley refers to is listening skill. To communicate successfully, not only speaking is an important factor, listening is also regarded as an important factor. It helps speakers to understand their partners in order to respond in an appropriate way. Last but not least, he states that speakers should notice taking short and long speaking turns as communication is understood as a conversation between two or more speakers. Based on the purpose of communication, it is necessary that one speaker should not speak all the time so that others can join the conversation. For example, even a speaker giving a speech avoids speaking all the time by raising questions to the audience or asking them to share their opinions.

Widdowson (1996) refers to speaking as "the movements of the speech to produce sounds which are perceived by the ears." According to his definition, speaking can be understood as the speech

a speaker produces which is received by other listeners. It not only involves the content but it also includes the way that the speaker conveys his message, both of which are significant for communication.

In addition, Littlewood (1998) states that through speaking, the speaker can creatively form the content they want to deliver. Since the speaker directs the conversation, he needs to pay attention to accuracy and fluency so that listeners can understand his message.

2.2. Gallery Walk technique

Gallery Walk technique is a communicative activity, to be more specific, social interaction activity as students can freely decide the way they use the target language.

Gallery Walk is a presentation method in which students work in small groups. They are given time to prepare their tasks and perform it on posters. After that, students walk around the class to view their peers' posters and listen to the presentation. The teacher may ask students to give constructive comments or raise questions about their peers' performance to demonstrate a definite level of understanding. This can be understood that gallery walk allows students to be actively engaged as they walk throughout the classroom. The process also promotes some 21st century learning skills such as collaboration and problem solving. According to Francek's (2006), gallery walk seems to be an opportunity to make learners become more active as they "get out of their chairs" to involve in other groups' performances. By doing this, the method has demonstrated an advantage in

the way that it can enhance various types of intelligence such as for visual learners, kinesthetic learners. Through Gallery walk, students not only can revise their learnt theories, they can also learn from other friends.

2.3. Previous research on applying the Gallery Walk technique

For many years, Nunan (2003) says that teaching speaking has been undervalued and English teachers have continued to teach speaking just as a repetition drills or memorization of dialogues. To bridge the gap, Richard (2006) comments that what is needed to use language communicatively is communicative competence. Communication is effective when there is no misinterpretation between speakers and hearers. Consequently, in order to communicate successfully, the speaker must have communicative competence.

Anwar (2015) has done research on "Enhancing Students Speaking Skill Through Gallery walk technique at SMA". He pointed out that students' participation affects their speaking skill. He claims in his research that students may feel sleepy or not concentrated enough in the lesson but they are too shy to ask their teacher. Students said that English is not their mother tongue and it is difficult; therefore, they are not interested in learning to speak English. In the research, the author arranged two cycles consisting of four steps which are planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. After the experiments, the author indicated that students could enhance their speaking skill after taking part in Gallery Walk activity.

Katemba and Buli (2018) did research on “Improving Speaking Skills Using the Gallery Walk Technique” to find out the difference in student’s speaking skill before and after conducting the Gallery Walk activity. After the experiment, it concluded that Gallery Walk was an effective method to enhance students’ speaking skill. According to the researchers’ opinions, the participants had more motivation to share their opinions and let themselves be heard speaking English in public with less fear of being judged or humiliated. Similar results were stated by Francek (2006), who agreed that “the gallery walk is a discussion technique that gets students out of their chairs and into active engagement.”

In Vietnam, Ngan (2019) studies the benefits and challenges of the application of communicative activities into teaching English speaking skills to secondary students. She claims that teachers gain benefits by paying attention to applying communicative activities, meanwhile students benefit from realizing that their participation in the speaking is essential.

Having consulted the aforementioned studies, the author finds that too many communicative tasks can cause difficulty to evaluate their effectiveness, hence the author decided to study on how students have improved their pronunciation accuracy and fluency after joining the activity. The related studies have responded to the benefits of applying gallery walk such as enhancing students’ participation through preparing for the lesson in advance, encouraging students to share their opinions with their friends more confidently and let themselves be

heard speaking English by others. The studies also mentioned the difficulties such as students did not pay enough attention due to a number of reasons, or lack of participation due to the fear of being judged. The studies’ results showed that students were able to overcome these drawbacks in the end; therefore, the author decided to take the aforementioned studies as references. In rural areas of Vietnam, not many students have the opportunities to practice speaking; therefore, the author hopes that this study can be a reference for those who want to conduct research on improving the students’ speaking skill.

III. Research Methodology

3.1. Research setting

The author adopted mix-methods approach for the research. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) defined mixed-methods research design as a procedure for compiling, analyzing and combining both quantitative and qualitative methods in a research or a series of researches to comprehend a research problem. As the researcher studies her own speaking classes, the methodology is supposed to be classroom action research (CAR).

3.2. Participants

The participants of this action research are a group of 36 first-year English majors’ students at a university. Consent forms and research information are all given among researcher and students.

3.3. Research design

The design is presented as following according to Gay’s theory in 2006:

Pre-test → Action → Post-test

Action was understood as the process of teaching and learning. There were two cycles, each of which consisted of 4 periods for doing Gallery Walk. The steps of each cycle are: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Teacher spent the whole period doing Gallery Walk activity. In each period, the teacher assigned the topic for students to prepare in advance and provided some useful structures for students to use.

Cycle 1 was conducted within 2 weeks. Each week, there was one Gallery Walk for the students. After cycle 1, the author spent 1 week conducting an oral test for students. Cycle 2 was administered within another 2 weeks.

Each cycle consisted of a pre-test and post-test. Post-test of cycle I was utilized to be the pre-test of cycle II. After the two cycles were completed, the author invited 10 participants to join an interview.

3.4. Data collection instruments

3.4.1. Data collection procedure

In order to collect the data, the author followed the following steps: First was piloting the pre-test to students before providing them the action. Students' scores were recorded for later reference. The second step was to apply the action which included 2 cycles. After each cycle, the scores retrieved from the post-test of both cycles were also saved to compare to see if there were any differences. Lastly, all the participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire so that the researcher could find out some more aspects of their improvement. They had been informed that the results from the questionnaire were recorded for research purposes.

3.4.2. Tests

Before conducting the action, a pre-test was conducted so that the author could measure the current score of the participants. To be more specific, the pre-test was taken in the form of an oral test. Each participant spent 10 minutes with the author doing the speaking test.

The post-test was conducted after students had already taken 4 gallery walks in each cycle. The test took place in the form of an oral test, which lasted for 10 minutes for each participant. The topics of the test were taken from the topic that students had met in the gallery walks. There were also some follow-up questions to check the student's reaction to answer immediately in English.

3.4.3. Questionnaires

In this research, questions were used so that the participants could mark themselves according to the level of improvement. First of all, the author invited four students to review the questions to check if there were any confusing words or phrases to them. Next, the author modified the questions according to students' suggestions and then launched the questions in the questionnaire. The questionnaires were sent to all students through Zalo application.

3.4.4. Data analysis

To analyze the data, the researcher has applied the following formulas and theories: calculating students' score in speaking tests, calculating the mean score, and calculating the normalized gain which is to see the improvement of students' performance is moderate or significant

Procedure of action

To begin with, the teacher made decision on which topic the students would talk about in one period. The next step would be informing the students about the topic at least 2 days in advance so that they have time to prepare the content. Lastly, the teacher gave the students some follow up questions so that they could figure out what to ask other groups when listening to their presentation.

To conduct the Gallery Walk, the class was divided into 6 groups based on the available number of students. The teacher spent time explaining the rules of gallery walk to students. To make it easier for the students to understand, the teacher instructed students on how to conduct the six rounds.

Teacher instructs students to their assigned platform. Students have 5 minutes for 1 round. After one round, each group changes their presenter and also moves to the next station to listen

to the presentation from the next group. Teacher also requires students to raise questions and write some comments on other groups' presentations to make sure that they listen as well as learn from their peers. ‘

IV. Finding and Discussion

The research was conducted by applying classroom action research (CAR). The researcher conducted the research in two cycles which were called cycle I and cycle II. Each cycle consisted of four lessons, each of which lasted for one period in class. Moreover, each cycle consists of four stages which are planning, acting, observing and reflecting. The results of each cycle were utilized to analyze the improvement in students' speaking skill in terms of accuracy and fluency after joining the Gallery Walk. The detailed improvement gains of cycle I would be shown in the following table:

Table 1: The Students' Speaking improvement after Cycle I

No	Interval	Qualification	Percentage of Pre-assessment	Percentage of Cycle I	Improvement gain
1	24-21	Excellent	0.00%	2.78%	2.78%
2	20-17	Very good	5.56%	8.33%	2.77%
3	16-13	Good	30.56%	47.22%	16.66%
4	12-9	Average	33.33%	38.89%	5.56%
5	8-5	Poor	25.00%	2.78%	-22.22%
6	4-1	Very poor	5.56%	0.00%	-5.56%

After cycle I, none of the students was classified at “very poor” level. The number of students at poor level also witnessed a sharp decrease to 22.22%. Meanwhile, the number of students at average, good, very good, and excellent levels all increased. The level that witnessed the biggest

increase was the very good level. This can be understood that most of the students who were classified as average or poor at the pre-assessment were the ones who experienced the quickest improvement after cycle I. The detailed improvement gains of cycle II would be shown in the following table:

Table 2: The Students' Speaking ability improvement after Cycle II.

No	Interval	Qualification	Percentage of Pre-assessment	Percentage of Cycle II	Improvement gain
1	24-21	Excellent	2.78%	13.89%	11.11%
2	20-17	Very good	8.33%	50.00%	41.67%
3	16-13	Good	47.22%	30.56%	-16.66%
4	12-9	Average	38.89%	5.56%	-33.33%
5	8-5	Poor	2.78%	0.00%	-2.78%
6	4-1	Very poor	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

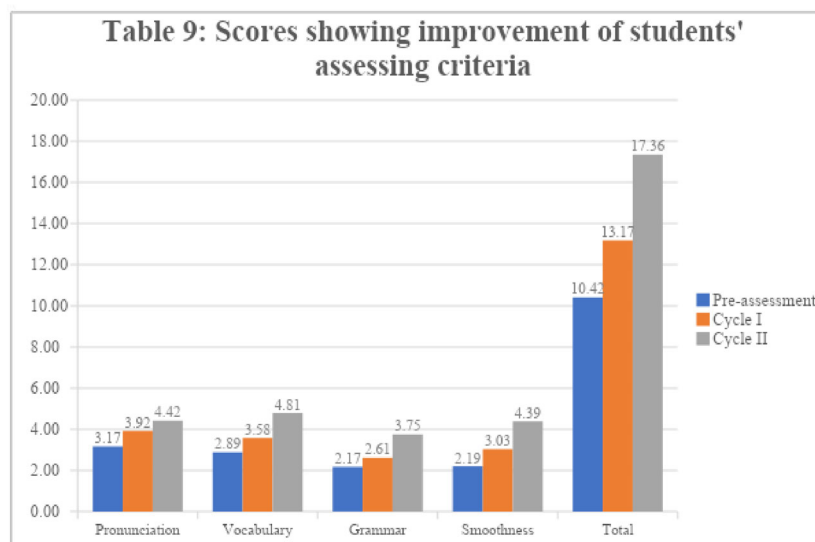
At the end of the actions that the author took, none of the students were recorded as very poor. The number of those who achieved poor, average, and good levels continued decreasing. Meanwhile, the number of those whose scores were at very good and excellent levels witnessed a massive increase.

The author concluded from the statistics that half of the students achieved a very good level, and 30 percent of them

achieved the “good” level. The average score to pass the test is 16.8 which accounts for 70% of the total score, and the mean score of cycle II was 17.36 which surpassed the average score. The statistics proved that students made improvement in speaking skill after joining the Gallery Walk activities.

Students' improvement in each assessing criterion after cycle I and cycle II would be presented in the chart below:

Figure 1: Chart shows improvement of students' assessing criteria



The improvement in each criterion of students can be seen from the chart. The author would like to discuss the mean score from pre-assessment to the end of cycle I to the end of cycle II as follow: The mean score of pronunciation has

raised from 3.17 at pre-assessment to 3.92 (cycle I) and 4.42 (cycle II). The mean score of vocabulary has risen from 2.89 at pre-assessment to 3.58 (cycle I) and 4.81 (cycle II). The mean score of grammar has risen from 2.17 at pre-assessment to 2.61

(cycle I) and 3.75 (cycle II). The mean score of smoothness has risen from 2.19 at pre-assessment to 3.03 (cycle I) and 4.39 (cycle II).

V. Conclusion

Based on the result of the analyzed statistics, the researcher concludes that gallery walk technique can improve students' speaking skill at the university where the researcher did the research. The researcher's conclusion based on the considerable increase in students' score from cycle I to cycle II as: speaking score in pre-assessment to cycle I increased 26.39% and cycle I to Cycle II increased 31.82%. As a result, the improvement of students' speaking score from pre-assessment to cycle II increased 58.21%.

The improvement was also presented in each assessing criterion. For pronunciation, students were more aware of ending sound and word stress when they spoke. For vocabulary, students found it easier to speak out the words they had learnt and they were able to remember the words longer as they had chances to use them in authentic communication. For grammar, which was the most challenging, students were able to apply theories of subject-verb agreement, simple sentence, compound sentence into speaking. Last but not least, weekly practice in class and at home enhanced participant's smoothness as they got familiar with language in communicating.

In conclusion, the implementation of gallery walk technique can make the students pay more attention to the way they use vocabulary, stress the intonation, and apply grammar rules. Besides, it can

help students improve their smoothness thanks to the frequency of using the learnt vocabulary and grammar. They became more active and less afraid of speaking. Furthermore, gallery walk technique can create chances for students to express and share what they want to say and know to others in real life situation, which brings to language closer to learners.

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NÂNG CAO NĂNG LỰC NÓI TIẾNG ANH CHO SINH VIÊN THÔNG QUA KỸ THUẬT GALLERY WALK

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Tóm tắt: Với yêu cầu của chuẩn đầu ra chương trình đào tạo cũng như môi trường làm việc, kỹ năng tiếng Anh ngày càng được chú trọng. Đặc biệt kỹ năng nói qua khả năng giao tiếp bằng tiếng Anh lưu loát được cho là thiết yếu giúp sinh viên sau khi tốt nghiệp tìm được việc làm tốt. Bài báo trình bày nghiên cứu áp dụng kỹ thuật gallery walk với mong muốn cải thiện kỹ năng nói cho sinh viên năm thứ nhất tại một trường Đại học ở Hưng yên. Nghiên cứu được áp dụng trên một nhóm 36 sinh viên với 8 bài giảng áp dụng kỹ thuật này qua hai chu kỳ. Công cụ thu thập dữ liệu nghiên cứu là các bài kiểm tra nói và bảng câu hỏi kèm phỏng vấn sinh viên. Kết quả nghiên cứu định lượng và định tính đã chỉ ra rằng khả năng nói tiếng Anh của sinh viên đã được cải thiện đáng kể ở các thành tố từ vựng, ngữ pháp, và phát âm, giúp sinh viên chủ động và tích cực giao tiếp bằng tiếng Anh hơn trong các tình huống thực tế.

Từ khóa: Tiếng Anh, kỹ năng nói, kỹ thuật gallery walk, phát âm, từ vựng, ngữ pháp.

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