

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INFORMATION GAP TECHNIQUES IN TEACHING SPEAKING VIA VIRTUAL CLASS FOR MARITIME STUDENTS

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### Abstract

*Nowadays, most of educational institutions or universities in Indonesia adapted virtual learning because of COVID 19 Pandemic. Therefore, the aim of writing this mini research is to find out the effectiveness of the information gap in teaching speaking via virtual learning. This research used an experimental research which the design was a pre-experiment. There were 50 students of the Nautical Department as the subject of this research. According to the result, the paired sample t-test score of sig. (2-tailed) was 0.000 which is less than 0.05, so that the hypothesis H1 was accepted and H0 was rejected. From the discussion, it could be concluded that the information gap technique which was given virtually was effective in teaching speaking and the fluency aspect of students' speaking were better after being taught by the information gap. Therefore, the utilization of the information gap technique in teaching is not only can be done by face to face interaction in the classroom, but also virtually.*

**Keywords:** *Information gap, teaching speaking, and virtual class*

### INTRODUCTION

English has been widely used by almost every country in the world. The role of English itself is as a Lingua Franca when the position of English does not belong to the United State of America (USA) or United Kingdom (UK) people, but also belongs to every country which uses the language as their verbal and written communication needs. Therefore, English is strongly necessary for seafarer students in EFL context when they are sailing abroad or working in maritime industries. English is still considered as a difficult thing to learn, both for students and teachers. That is because English is still regarded as a foreign language and is rarely used in daily conversation (Dhion Meitreyia Vidhiasi, Haryani 2021). Therefore, this skill is the first thing that can be seen by other people in terms of competency. He/She can judge someone's speaking skill by seeing from the spoken skill rather than written one. Therefore, this can be a good consideration for seafarers candidates who are still being

educated in maritime school / academy, to use the language in their life as the second language. This can be helpful while they will work on board, at shore and in the port. In other words, English is not only studied in a formal setting, but also in a virtual one. If someone wants to master English, she/he must study the language based on their willingness in order to be competent in English communication while they are on duty. Brown (2003) stated that speaking is one of the productive skills that can be investigated directly. Speaking English is a communicative way which they must learn.

In some cases, speaking English is really difficult to be implemented by some seafarer students. Based on the researcher's observation, student's are reluctant to use the language in their surroundings like in campus and dormitory, even the regulation from English lecturers have been issued. Brown (2003) stated that sometimes speaking is easy to perform but in some cases it is not easy. Based on the teacher's experience in face to face class, students

still make some mistakes such as incorrect pronunciation, inappropriate grammar, lack of vocabulary, and etc.

There were some previous studies that related to the Information gap technique, Sulaemani et al. (2014) tried to enchant students' speaking skill by using the Information gap technique in Iran EFL classrooms in a language institute for college students. They used a test to get the data. The participants contained 34 students who were divided into experimental groups and control groups. Then, they analyzed the score by using a T-test. The result was that information gap technique can enchant speaking skill. Moreover, the use of information gap technique research also has been conducted by the previous research entitled: "a classroom action research: improving speaking skills through information gap activities". This study was conducted in three cycles following the procedures for action research, namely planning, implementing, observing and reflecting. To collect data, the researcher used instruments of observations, lists, tests and questionnaires. The data obtained was presented in two ways, qualitatively and quantitatively. The findings showed that IGT activities were effective in improving the speaking abilities of the student in class. This can be seen from the improvements after each cycle. This can be seen by the rise in the students' mean scores in the test results: 58.8 in the first cycle, 68 in the second cycle and 81.3 in the third cycle (M.Rizal, 2015).

Another research was also done by Asrobi, et al. (2013), Rahimi (2016), Ghofur (2015), Misianto (2017), Kau (2018), Defrioka (2016), Irona and Ratmida (2018) & Osra (2015) conducted experimental research to investigate the effectiveness of Information gap in teaching speaking for Senior high school students. The results were that the information gap was effective in teaching speaking skill. Misianto (2017) reported that most of the students used appropriate fluency and

pronunciation in speaking skills after using the information gap technique. Not only effective in teaching but also improving speaking ability, Rahimi (2016) also showed the information gap could be a technique that helps students to improve their speaking skill. Also, Mashur (2015) found that the information gap is also useful not only for teaching speaking but also for teaching reading comprehension. The results showed that there was a significant difference of reading ability between high achievement motivation students taught using information gap technique and high achievement motivation students taught using conventional technique and there is no significant difference of reading ability between low achievement motivation students taught conventional technique and low achievement motivation students taught using information gap technique.

The difference of those nine previous researches above were on the technique of collecting the data, as well as the subject of the research. Therefore, the objective of doing this mini research is to find out whether this technique was effective or not while implemented by maritime students in virtual class especially in this Covid 19 Era. Besides, we also want to find out some problems which possibly appear while students practice this foreign language in a maritime setting.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Information Gap Technique**

Based on Harmers (2007) information gap is a technique of the activity when a learner should talk to his partner to solve the puzzle, fill the dialogue or draw a picture in the right order to find the similarities and differences. The information gap allows students to practice speaking by using a clue to solve the vocabulary problems. Information-gap is also an activity when both speakers make conversations sharing information with others to complete their tasks.

Information gap is a technique which is chosen to investigate students' mistakes in speaking English. Richards (2006) stated that the information gap becomes one of the techniques to teach speaking skill in which the students are going to get additional information to practice speaking. Information gap is a technique to help students in real communication practice without repeating and memorizing that sometimes makes students feel bored.

Some experts have discussed the advantages of applying information gap activities in teaching speaking. Hess (2001) states: Information gap activities can provide a comprehensive feedback from the learners, such as a wide diversity of opinions, references, and values, many different experiences and styles of learning. Then, she also adds that information gap activities can foster a learner-autonomous learning style.

It can be concluded that the information gap is the communicative practice in which two pairs of students have the information which they must connect or relate to the other in order to fill in the gaps. The teacher can ask the students to work in pairs, later the teacher can give a form, dialogues or pictures that each of them has some missing parts which need to be completed by changing information. Based on that condition, maritime students in the virtual classroom have their own part or job to give the missing information that belongs to the other students. Hopefully with these effective activities they can change information related with the topic given by the teacher.

### **Speaking Skill**

English is very essential for almost everyone in the world. Basically, the development of the four skills like speaking, listening, reading, writing is integrated, but some people think that speaking is the most difficult one ( Rachmat Ari Wibowo, et al 2020). Therefore,

teachers also should take good consideration in improving students' speaking skill. Nunan (2003) explained that speaking is a productive skill in which the learners produce speech sound and sound patterns. There are some aspects of speaking skill. They are pronunciation, grammar, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

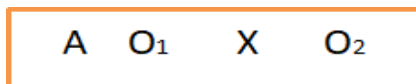
According to Brown and Yule (1983), speaking skill is what students will be judged upon most in real - life situations. It is an important part of everyday interaction and most often the first impression of a person is based on his/his ability to speak fluently and comprehensively. So, the teacher should have competence to make students be able to speak outside of the classroom, especially in the maritime world.

### **Virtual Class**

Virtual class provides students with the ability to study at their own pace, and at their choice of time and place. Besides, the virtual class can also be seen as an educational response to the globalisation that has been occurring and accelerating in other fields like the economy (Holland, 1987; Tapscott,1996) and communications; as Frederick (1993) points out, "we now have the capability to communicate with virtually any other human being on our globe". Virtual class can be used by teacher as an alternative media when the face to face interaction is impossible to be done. This virtual class is also cannot be separated from a virtual teaching as well. Loeb (2020) defined that virtual teaching is a teaching by using technology where the students and the teacher are in the different area. From this argumentation, it can be concluded that when doing " the teaching – learning process" virtually, the teacher can use some applications such as zoom, Google meets, Webex and etc.

## METHOD

The method in this research was quantitative research. Quantitative research was a research that the data was a number from the measurement. This research used an experimental research which the design was a pre-experiment. The analysing the data was based on this following pattern:



Note : A :Single Group of subjects which will be given a test  
 O<sub>1</sub> :Pre-test  
 X :Treatment  
 O<sub>2</sub> :Post-test

In collecting data, the researchers used a speaking test in virtual. The researchers invited students to play roles and made a conversation in a zoom meeting by using

the information gap as being appointed by the teacher. The subject of the research was Nautical Delta & Echo class from batch 55 Politeknik Bumi Akpelni Semarang, which had 50 students. The writer used a T-test to analyze the data. The researchers also used an SPSS application to help the researchers in calculating the raw data.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

There were 50 students as the sample of the research. As a result, there were 50 data of pre-test and 50 data of post-test. Although Most of students got 70 in pre-test, the minimum score of pre-test was 70 and the minimum score of post-test was 75. On the other hand, the maximum score of pre-test was 85 and the maximum score of post-test was 95. The result of data analyzed was shown below:

### Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 pre - post	4.640	5.865	.829	2.973	6.307	5.594	49	0.000

Based on the table of paired sample t-test the score of sig. (2-tailed) was 0.000 which is less than 0.05 so that the hypothesis H<sub>1</sub> was accepted and H<sub>0</sub> was rejected. It meant that the information gap technique was effective in teaching virtual speaking for maritime students.

Information gaps help students to practice fluency and students comprehension. When the students make conversation by trying to get the information by sharing, it helps students' fluency aspect of their speaking skill. The result was in line with Richard (2006) that the information gap forced students to speak English so that the students' fluency was improved.

On the other hand, this technique had weaknesses. The students made many grammatical mistakes and incorrect pronunciation. The students speak by ignoring grammar, and they speak by using their own words that make grammatical mistakes.

## CONCLUSION

From the result of the study above, it could be inferred that the information gap technique was effective in teaching speaking skill virtually for seafarers candidates. The data found from 50 students as the subject of the research. The fluency of the students was better even though they made grammatical mistakes,

and pronunciation errors in the process of the learning.

Information gap can be one of the techniques that can be helpful for students to improve their speaking, and it also helps the lecturers to have narrative technique in teaching speaking. The researchers suggested that when using information gaps the teacher should focus on not only students' fluency but also pronunciation and grammar.

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