



Enhancing Rural Area Students' Speaking Ability Through SMART Spelling: An Action Research

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Abstract

Non-native students must cultivate speaking skills to acquire a foreign language proficiently. Enhancing middle school students' speaking performance is considered essential, as is the case in vocational schools, which require students to possess specific skills. This study aims to assess the impact of Smart Spelling on students' speaking performance. This study employed a pre-experimental approach including 28 students from rural primary schools. The study's findings indicated that pronunciation exhibited the highest mean in speaking skills, whereas grammar demonstrated the lowest mean. This investigation revealed a significant difference, despite the total elements being greater than in the last test. It suggests that pupils utilizing Smart Spelling techniques had enhanced speaking skills.

Keywords: *Speaking; Primary Students; SMART Spelling*

1. Introduction

To express messages that are distinct from those that are written down, speaking is essential. Oral communication is distinguished from written communication by how it is delivered. Spoken language can convey information through a wide range of expressive ways, such as intonation, facial expression, pitch, sign language, articulation, rhythm, and many more (Afandi, 2020). Written language, on the other hand, does not include these components. According to Rao (2019), speaking as a corresponding talent makes it easier to articulate ideas, goals, and points of view.

In the digital age, the Alpha Generation must be able to communicate in foreign languages, particularly English. In addition, one of the skills that must be acquired is the ability to speak English, along with listening, reading, and writing. Learning English as a foreign language is of utmost significance, particularly for individuals who are not native speakers of the language. This is due to the fact that English is widely utilized for communication on a global scale in both native-speaking and non-native-speaking countries. The rapid development of information and communication across national and international borders is the cause of this phenomenon, which forces the speaker to use and comprehend common languages such as English. This phenomenon came about as a result of the internet. This is

something that needs to be addressed appropriately in the context of social development, communication, and other areas.

According to Alfaki and Alharthy (2014), social media networking can help enhance English speaking skills. Khanh (2021) stated that ICT is highly recommended and can help students improve their speaking skills. Indeed, cell phones can serve as a medium for a wide range of applications that demand speaking skills. This tool is crucial, if only because it is one of the more adaptable and reasonably priced communication options available, aside from having an internet connection. Furthermore, as long as a creator has access to their support resources, anyone may become a content creator in today's world.

While many Indonesian students are still learning the language, many of them are not proficient in it. Since they tend to be more reserved, they are unable to talk on their own (Purwadi, 2022). The student's nervousness also has an impact on this circumstance. There are fewer than fifty per cent of those who claim that anxiety makes it difficult for them to communicate in English (Plantika & Adnan, 2021). To add insult to injury, in contrast to pupils who attend regular high school, those who attend vocational high school should be prepared for the workforce by the time they graduate. As a result, they must improve their active abilities, such as communication, particularly while speaking in English (Suratmi, 2022). Since the year 2015, Smart Spelling was implemented in Victoria Australia. This method has been of assistance to a great number of educators in southern Australia who are teaching English in primary schools. In particular, for early-year students. Smart Spelling is an evidence-based program well-established in many schools. It was a tool in Australia developed by Michelle Hutchison (2015) as a sensible way to teach spelling. Within the realm of education, the concept of sustainability may pertain to approaches that exhibit enduring efficacy. Sustainable spelling instruction may encompass pedagogical approaches that are regularly implemented and effectively maintained by learners.

Spelling education can include a variety of activities that involve visual, aural, and kinesthetic modalities in order to facilitate the recognition and manipulation of letters and words (Hutchison, 2015). As it relates to the field of education, the idea of sustainability may be used to refer to methods that demonstrate effectiveness over an extended period. Sustainable spelling education can include pedagogical approaches that are consistently implemented and effectively maintained by students. Following the concept of simplicity, the instruction of spelling should be basic and free of any complication that is not necessary. A major improvement in the process of successful learning can be achieved through the provision of clear explanations and assignments that are less complicated.

Junior high school students need to prioritize the development of their speaking skills as part of their English language studies. Fluency in a language is denoted by the term "speakers", hence, the skill of successful verbal communication is crucial. Brown (2003: 142) defines micro skills in speaking as the ability to break down language into smaller components, such as phonetic sounds and lexical knowledge. Conversely, they prioritize fundamental aspects of language such as verbal communication and proficiency. Before achieving fluency in English, students need to exhibit proficiency in a range of micro-speaking skills. The abilities encompassed in this list are pronunciation, pragmatics, phonetics, turn-taking phonology, dictionaries, spelling, and grammar. To communicate successfully in English, students must acquire a high level of proficiency in the micro-skills indicated above. There exists a distinction between the ability to converse effectively and the proficiency in written or spoken English. As students learn to speak, they develop the capacity to successfully communicate and get significance from their language.

According to Smart Spelling's description above, Smart Spelling is a technique that helps foster unity in the classroom between students and teachers as well as among students themselves. On the other hand, students find it easier to comprehend the information that the teacher presents in class. The table below shows the steps for conducting Smart Spelling.

Table 1. Smart Spelling Sequence*SMART Routine*

S	I say the word and you repeat it aloud
M	I tell you what the word means and use it in a sentence
A	I analyse and break up the word in 2 steps - individual sounds using fingers to show (if it's a long sound I do syllables first) - break into letters putting a finger up for each sound – I do this on the board using lines to show the breaks
R	To help us remember by looking for the bits we already know and we ✓ the easy bits. “Which part could someone else find tricky?”
T	I teach the word, saying the letter names and using fingers to show the parts “Teach it to me”

According to the table 1, the first step in the Smart Spelling is to focus students' attention. This practice, referred to as "echo reading" or "choral repetition," entails the teacher vocally giving a word or phrase, followed by the students repeating it aloud. This activity strengthens pronunciation and vocabulary and promotes active involvement and participation in the classroom. By echoing the teacher's words, students actively participate in the learning process, which helps them remember and understand the subject better. Moreover, it offers a chance for students to enhance their speaking and listening skills in a nurturing setting, fostering self-assurance in their language proficiency. This participatory method generally fosters a cooperative learning environment while strengthening important linguistic principles.

The second step is initiated by the teacher acquainting the students with unfamiliar vocabulary terms and offering explicit definitions or explanations to elucidate their meanings. After the students have acquired a fundamental vocabulary comprehension, the teacher encourages them to employ these words in sentences. This stage pushes students to utilize their mastery of the terminology in a specific situation, thus improving their understanding and ability to remember the information. Students can either work independently or collaborate in groups to construct sentences utilizing the recently acquired vocabulary. The teacher can support scaffolding by providing sentence starters or guiding questions to help students develop coherent sentences.

After formulating sentences, the teacher can organize a sharing session where students present their sentences to the class. This step facilitates peer learning and enables students to observe how their classmates employ the terminology in diverse circumstances. Moreover, it offers a chance for the instructor to evaluate students' comprehension of the vocabulary and their proficiency in using it proficiently. This activity enables students to enhance their vocabulary and cultivate their language proficiency via sentence construction and syndication. This methodical approach to learning new words generally encourages students to participate actively and gain valuable knowledge in the classroom.

The third step is focused on phonological awareness and decoding abilities, the teacher initiates the process by choosing an analysis word. The selected term should ideally correspond to the student's existing level of phonemic comprehension. The teacher proceeds to demonstrate the initial stage by segmenting the word into distinct phonetic units, employing their fingers to symbolize each unique sound. For example, if the selected word is "cat," the teacher might employ their fingers to represent three

phonetic units: /k/ /a/ /t/. This stage facilitates pupils in identifying the distinct phonemes within the word and enhancing their capacity to segment sounds.

Following the demonstration of the initial phase, the teacher then proceeds to the subsequent stage, which entails the act of dividing the word into individual letters, assigning each finger to represent a certain letter. Using the aforementioned example of the word "cat," the teacher would elevate three fingers, with each finger symbolizing a distinct letter: C-A-T. This step enhances the connection between letters and sounds in words, reinforcing the understanding of letter-sound correlation. During the activity, the teacher offers direction and assistance, motivating pupils to actively engage in the process of evaluating and deciphering words. Through the process of analyzing words into their constituent sounds and letters, students cultivate crucial phonemic awareness abilities that serve as the basis for achieving competence in reading and spelling.

The fourth step is that The teacher encourages students to identify familiar components within the material being learned while also recognizing potential challenges that others might face in this classroom activity, which is focused on aiding students in remembering and understanding new concepts. In the initial phase, the teacher assists students in the process of breaking down the new concept or information into smaller, more manageable components. Students can establish anchor points for their comprehension by deconstructing the material to identify components that they are already acquainted with or possess knowledge of.

The teacher encourages students to identify the components of the concept that may be challenging for others to understand after they have identified the familiar ones. This step fosters the development of empathy and a more profound comprehension of the learning requirements of their classmates. Students can proactively assist their peers and participate in collaborative learning by identifying potential obstacles. Furthermore, this activity fosters critical thinking skills by requiring students to evaluate the material from a variety of perspectives and examine the different levels of comprehension. In general, this approach enables students to approach new information with a more comprehensive understanding and a readiness to support their classmates by emphasizing familiarity and potential difficulties.

The last step is for Students to assume the role of educators in this classroom activity, which is designed to encourage peer learning and reinforce vocabulary acquisition. While teaching, the students use their fingers to represent each letter and start the letter names audibly and visually. This multisensory approach improves students' comprehension of letter-sound correspondence and facilitates memory retention. Additionally, students supplement their learning and cultivate leadership and communication abilities by instructing their peers. The teacher ensures that each student has the opportunity to effectively teach their assigned word by providing guidance and support throughout the activity. In general, this interactive and collaborative activity cultivates a positive learning environment in which students actively participate in the material and collaborate to support one another's academic development.

Using these five processes in the classroom provides a thorough and participatory learning environment for students to learn about the many facets of linguistic development and the student's apprehension. Starting with echo reading, pupils actively interact with fresh words, improving pronunciation and vocabulary and thereby promoting confidence in language ties. Turning to vocabulary acquisition through sentence structure, students improve their knowledge by using fresh context, fostering active learning and group participation. As children dissect words into component sounds and letters, developing their phonological awareness and decoding abilities lays a basis for good reading and spelling. Students grow empathy, critical thinking, and a better knowledge of the topic by spotting known elements and possible difficulties grasping fresh ideas. Lastly, assuming the position of teachers, students validate their knowledge by developing leadership and communication abilities, therefore fostering a conducive classroom where group learning is a priority. These actions taken together provide a dynamic and

inclusive learning environment that enables students to actively participate, interact with the faculty, and help each other progress academically.

As previously stated, there are numerous approaches, tactics, methodologies, and the like to enhance the crucial speaking abilities of students. Technology and social networks are effective tools for enhancing the development and practice of speaking skills. Nevertheless, there are constraints on the available resources that hinder technology's ability to facilitate learning; redeploying appropriate approaches to address diversity is imperative in certain circumstances.

According to the information provided, several isolated regions in Indonesia lack extensive internet access, specifically remote areas, and islands in the North Halmahera district of North Maluku province. Utilizing smartphones to enhance speaking abilities is not widely seen as a notable alternative method for students to improve their skills outside of formal academic instruction. Thus, to enhance their skills, individuals still require formal education to enhance their capabilities.

Teaching methods are employed as alternate approaches to cater to their specific requirements. Thus, in this study, the researcher aimed to determine the impact of using the Smart Spelling method on the students' speaking skills a Juniohool situated in a remote area of North Maluku Province.

2. Methodology

This research utilized a quantitative technique to determine the impact of improving speaking practice among junior school students in rural areas. The population consisted of students enrolled in the Junior school at SMPN 9 Halmahera Utara, specifically located in a rural section of the city. This research employed a qualitative method, utilizing a variety of data collection tools, including interview sheets, observation checklists, and speaking tests. Data was collected across three cycles of classroom action research, each adhering to the four-step process: planning, action, observation, and reflection. This iterative approach allowed for continuous refinement of teaching strategies based on the data collected throughout the research. A total of 28 students participated freely in the sample process and received treatment during 9 meetings. The treatment utilized Smart Spelling for around 90 minutes per session. The research utilized a speaking rubric performance as the instrument, which was derived from the work of Alfehaid (2018). The questions used in the study were adapted from Terzaghi (2014). At each meeting, the subject was different. Nonetheless, descriptive text was the primary focus of grade VII as outlined in the curriculum. Here are the items from the speaking rubric performance table:

Table 2: Speaking performance rubric

Content: Descriptive text (Things, Persons, and Animals)			
Vocabulary	Grammar	Pronunciation	Fluency
range of Vocabulary	choice of grammatical	phonetic accusation	rate of speech
use of Vocabulary	structure	comprehensible	communication
appropriate	grammatical accuracy	pronunciation	strategies
use of collocation	self-correction strategies	word stress	utterance length
		appropriate intonation	

The purpose of the pretest was to determine the student's baseline level of speaking competency. As part of the speaking test, the students had to identify themselves by providing their full name, age, address, phone number, and siblings. They also had to fill out some general information like the date, weather, outfit, favourite veggies, fruits, drinks, and habits. The identical questions were used for the post-test administered following the treatment.

Table 3. Table score

High	Medium	Low
75% - 100%	50% - 74%	0% - 49%

Moreover, their treatment is depicted as follows:

Table 4:

<i>Pretest</i>	<i>Treatment</i>	<i>posttest</i>
X1	V	X2

3. Findings

The findings of this research are categorized into two sections: descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Biographical data was used for descriptive analysis, while t-test results were used for inferential statistics. The drained from the test, which was segmented into a tent, was participated by 13 males who participated in the treatment tents and 15 female students. Approximately twelve students were thirteen years old, while the remainder were twelve years old. Due to the lack of internet connectivity in their location, they were unable to access social media or the internet. They claimed to lack internet connectivity at their residence. This scenario is prevalent in rural regions with extremely limited internet connectivity and certain situations. Students struggle to comprehend the subject content due to their insufficient grasp of foundational English by the sixth year of elementary school. A fundamental comprehension of language and listening abilities may provide an obstacle. Students without fundamental English skills may struggle to articulate their thoughts in both spoken and written forms. This may impair their proficiency in English communication. Due to their inadequate proficiency in English, students may encounter worry or apprehension when required to engage in learning activities. Consequently, their eagerness to acquire English language abilities is impeded by a lack of interest arising from their insufficient comprehension and grasp of the language's core characteristics.

An inferential statistical analysis was performed to see whether there is a relationship between the use of Smart Spelling and individuals' speaking skills. Some indications were utilized to assess proficiency in speaking. The four main aspects to consider are accuracy, fluency, grammar, and pronunciation. The image below illustrates the comparison between the pre-test and post-test in terms of the speaking assessment.

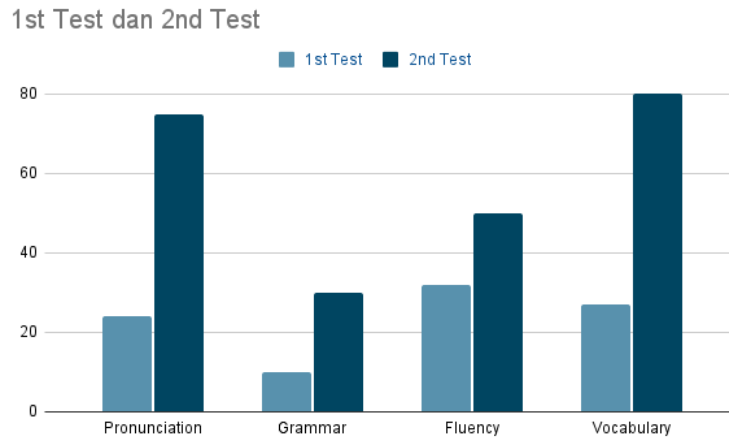
Chart 1. The mean of both test

Chart 1 demonstrated that the percentages from the pre-test and post-test had a significant range following the treatment. When it comes to pronunciation, students significantly influence the treatment. The pretest's mean was 32.17, which is considered low. However, the post-test's mean increased to 75, which is the highest.

Based on the SPSS enumeration, it was determined that the pretest mean was 32.17, while the post-test mean increased to 75.01. Based on this outcome, it is evident that the posttest score increased significantly in comparison to the pretest. The test's significant value was $0.05 < .00$ ($r: .827$), which indicated that there was a relationship between the pre-test and post-test. In contrast, the two-tailed sign indicated that the pretest and posttest means differed, with a significance level of $.000 < .05$. The difference between the pretest and posttest was -42.84 .

4. Discussion

For rural students especially in settings without internet access, using the Smart Spelling techniques in the classroom might be quite helpful. This technique depends much on the first phase of echo reading. Echo reading provides a quick yet quite efficient way for students to actively interact with new vocabulary in rural environments with few resources. Through repeating words spoken by the teacher, students not only improve their pronunciation but also increase their vocabulary in a group environment. Regardless of students' access to digital resources, this exercise helps them to become confident and involved. Rural students better understand the English language by participating in spoken language activities including echo reading. This basis provides a springboard for more education, allowing students to build on their language abilities and approach more complex ideas. It is imperative to consider classroom conditions and management assurance.

The SMART Spelling method, which focuses on systematically developing spelling skills, can significantly improve overall English proficiency. The correlation between spelling and speaking skills suggests that good spelling mastery can contribute to students' increased confidence in communicating. The application of this method to rural students can be done in a way that is more relevant to their lives, for example, by using examples from the neighborhood. In addition, collaboration between students and positive feedback are also very important to support the learning process

English educators need to concentrate not just on enhancing students' speaking proficiency but also on advancing their total English competence. An efficient approach to attain this objective is utilizing

the SMART Spelling method, which serves as a valuable instrument in enhancing English education, particularly in developing students' speaking abilities. This method encourages children to engage more actively in spelling, pronouncing, and utilizing words in an enjoyable and participatory manner. When educators develop activities that are more effective, engaging, and aligned with students' interests, the teaching and learning process becomes more fun.

The aggregate mean of the speaking item (vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and pronunciation), the standard deviation of the pre-test and post-test, and the comparison between the post-test can be used to illustrate the students' speaking performance of students in SMPN 9 Halmahera Utara can be significantly improved by implementing a learning process, particularly through the use of Smart Spelling. Moreover, in rural areas where English language exposure could be restricted outside of the classroom, the immersive character of echo reading becomes especially important. Teachers generate chances for students to become acquainted with the sounds and rhythm of spoken English by surrounding them in the classroom. This immersion prepares rural students for effective classroom, e of the classroom, bridging the gap between official education and practical language use.

Furthermore, as students have to carefully pay attention to the teacher's pronunciation before repeating the words themselves, echo reading helps active listening abilities. This sensitivity' generally improves students' general comprehension, strengthening their grasp of English language foundations as part of the Smart Spelling strategy reading, providing rural students with dynamic and easily available paths to English language acquisition. Even without online resources, teachers can use spoken language activities in the class to enable rural students to acquire fundamental language abilities and boldly negotiate English language learning. This focus on active participation and immersion gives students the instruments they need to fit in both academic and practical, laying a strong basis for their linguistic development.

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