

IMPROVING SPEAKING COMPETENCE FOR FIRST-YEAR ENGLISH MAJORS AT THAI NGUYEN UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION THROUGH GALLERY WALK STRATEGY

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<https://doi.org/10.54922/IJEHSS.2025.0995>

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to investigate the effectiveness of the Gallery Walk technique in improving students' speaking competence. Lack of confidence, limited vocabulary, and poor fluency are common difficulties in speaking. Gallery Walk Strategy is a cooperative learning strategy that creates chances for students to move around the classroom instead of sitting in their seat and respond to posters on the wall. Through classroom observations, student interviews, and performance assessments, the research found that the Gallery Walk significantly improved learners' confidence, vocabulary usage, and fluency. In the study, there are 34 English majors students from Thai Nguyen University of Education taking part in. By analysis data from pre-test and post-test, it revealed a statistically significant difference with a p-value (Sig 2 Tailed) of <0.001, implying the enhancement of students' speaking competence. Additionally, the study also collected survey data about students' attitudes toward Gallery Walk Strategy. The students' satisfaction and enthusiasm with the application Gallery Walk Strategy recommended for widespread use in teaching and learning English speaking skills.

Keywords: Speaking skill, Gallery Walk, Teaching Speaking, Active Learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

English has four skills: Reading and Listening are receptive skills, while Speaking and Writing are productive skills. Kosdian (2016) states that speaking seems to be the most important because people who know languages are referred to as 'speakers' of that language, as if speaking includes all other types know the language. It allows us to communicate with others and express our thoughts and feelings verbally. Especially with undergraduates who are majoring in English teaching, the ability to deliver lessons clearly and attractively is very important. With precise instruction, it will enable future educators to present complex concepts in a way that students can easily understand, ensuring better retention. The knowledge that students gain can build a strong foundation for their academic growth. Moreover, in today's globalized world, mastering speaking skills also equips undergraduates with a powerful tool to interact in workplace environments, where effective communication is a key factor contributing to career success. Therefore, speaking is the skill that we need to master when learning English (Grognet, 1997)

For achieving effectiveness in speaking classes, the educator holds a central position in creating an environment that makes students feel comfortable and confident to share their ideas with others. Anggraeni et al. (2020) mentioned that if students are active with the activities in the classroom, they can practice and improve their speaking skill. Several strategies can be applied during class hours to promote their speaking skills. Based on the research carried out by Kayi in 2006, there are thirteen activities that teachers can utilize in speaking class, which are Discussion, Roleplay, Simulation, Information Gap, Brainstorming, Storytelling, Interview, Story Completion, Reporting, Playing cards, Picture Narrating, Picture Describing, and Find the Difference. Strategies such as role-plays, dialogues, and discussions are commonly employed to foster communication skills and make students participate actively in the teaching process (Firharmawan & Heriyanto, 2023)

Considering the challenges many students face in speaking English and seeking solutions, this research focuses on a strategy called Gallery Walk to help improve their skills. Anwar (2015) found that this technique can enhance students' speaking abilities in the teaching and learning process. The study aims to examine the benefits and limitations of this method when applied in ESL classes. Caulfield and Jennings (2005) described the Gallery Walk Strategy as a way for students to add comments, questions, and answers on papers displayed on the classroom walls. Through moving around the room in a clockwise direction, students can participate, look at their classmates' work and give comments and suggestions. According to Francek (2006), Gallery Walk is a method that encourages students to get out of their seats and join in class actively. It brings numerous advantages for both teachers and students. In simple terms, the Gallery Walk is a method in which students are both viewers and creators of the displayed work.

The purpose of the study is to investigate a method that encourages learners to improve their speaking skills actively rather than relying totally on their teachers or instructors, get learners out of their seats and become more active in the lessons (Stewart and Beaudry, 2017). Besides, the study is conducted to evaluate the speaking skill's development of first year English majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education using Gallery Walk Strategy and from that results, the effectiveness of Gallery Walk Strategy will be assessed. Researchers hope that with the result of the study, the Gallery Walk strategy will be applied widely in schools and universities around Viet Nam.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Speaking Competence

The notion of speaking competence can be referred to as the definition of communicative competence. Scholars have numerous interpretations about communicative competence. Light (1989) defined communicative competence as the ability to functionally communicate in normal situations and totally satisfy the requirements of daily communication. Wilson and Sabee (2003) described it as the quality of interpersonal-skill enactment. In the same year, Spitzberg (2003) explained communicative competence as the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately underlying actually observable behavior. Thus, communicative competence can be explained as a person's ability to use language correctly in real social situations. It has a strong link with performance; however, they are not similar. When communicative competence is the same as internal ability, external expression is an appropriate word phrase to depict performance. Communicative competence supports and influences performance. If communicative competence

is high, students will perform well in real-life conversations. In turn, their performance can show us how strong their competence is.

According to Goh and Burns (2012), speaking competence consists of three components: Knowledge of Language and Discourse, Core Speaking Skills and Communication Strategies. Therefore, in order to improve speaking competence, learners have to raise the ability to use those components.

Knowledge of language decides whether the speaking of learners is good or not. According to Canale (1983), linguistic knowledge consists of 4 kinds of knowledge: Grammatical knowledge, phonological knowledge, lexical knowledge and discourse knowledge.

Grammatical knowledge related to the understanding of how words and sentences are formed. In more detail, knowing how to use verb tenses, sentence structures, and grammatical features correctly are elements establishing grammatical knowledge. All of them are the starting point to become a good speaker. Without strong grammar skills, students may find it difficult to build sentences or express complex ideas.

Phonological knowledge is understanding the sound system of languages, which contains correct pronunciation of words, appropriate intonation in sentences, stress on syllables, and suitable use of tone. These help listeners understand the meaning of the speaker's content and also express their feelings. If pronunciation is unclear, misunderstandings and communication breakdowns will be obvious results.

Lexical knowledge refers to the vocabulary a learner knows and how well they can use it. This includes not just the number of words learned but also understanding their meanings in different contexts. Learners often know more words than they can use when speaking. This gap is known as the difference between receptive vocabulary (words recognized and understood) and productive vocabulary (words actively used). Improving lexical knowledge involves expanding vocabulary and practicing how to use it naturally in conversation.

Discourse knowledge is the ability to understand and produce language appropriately in different situations and contexts. It involves organizing ideas in a logical way, using linking words, and adapting language depending on the situation or the people involved. This knowledge helps learners maintain coherent and relevant conversations, making their speech easier to follow

2.2. Gallery Walk Strategy

2.2.1. The definition of Gallery Walk.

Gallery walk is defined in different ways. According to Francek (2006), Gallery walk is a strategy that makes learners get out of their chairs and be more active in lesson activities through discussion. This method is applied flexibly and used for different levels of students. France in Mulyani (2014) declares that walking around like seeing the exhibition and asking questions help all students in class take part in activities more heartily. Furthermore, Makmun et al. (2020) stated that the Gallery Walk strategy helps students learn actively through working together in groups and sharing ideas with each other. This approach encourages teamwork and improves critical thinking because students are more likely to discuss and exchange ideas with their peers.

Moreover, organizing activities with the Gallery Wall strategy requires teachers to go through steps. According to Johnson (2006), applying the strategy needs to follow four steps. Firstly, the teacher prepares three large pieces of paper with titles respectively: Comments, questions, and personal responses. Secondly, students walk around the "exhibition" to explore pictures hung on the wall and ask their questions. Thirdly, after seeing pictures completely, students write their

thoughts in the papers on the board. Finally, students take their seats and share their ideas. On the other hand, Francek (2006) states that the way to apply Gallery walk depends on the purpose of teaching. To increase students' confidence in speaking, teachers can follow instructions: First of all, the teacher divides the class into four to five groups. Then, the teacher gives materials for groups (a text, a part knowledge of the lesson,...). Next, students work in groups to find out the main ideas and display their group's idea on the paper. After that, each group hangs their paper on the wall and members as visitors walk around to take note. In the last session, each group works in groups, shares their members' notes, summarizes notes and gives questions to other groups.

2.2.2. The advantages of Gallery Walk Strategy in teaching Speaking.

The integration of the Gallery Walk strategy in teaching can benefit students in many ways as a typical class that applies it shows proactivity and collaboration (Makmun et al., 2020). One of the strengths of this strategy is the promotion of student participation. Instead of only sitting at their position and practicing speaking by repeating sample audio or asking and answering questions, students have a chance to actively move around the class to explore different stations presenting information, questions, or problems. This movement will increase their blood flow and keep their attention better afterward (Bauernfeind, 2016). Additionally, the Gallery Walk strategy encourages collaboration among peers since students work together in groups. They have to share their personal opinions, listen to others' viewpoints, and give constructive feedback in order to finish their tasks thoroughly. Through the working process, students can learn from their classmates' strengths and weaknesses to fulfill themselves. Besides, the use of this strategy also fosters a friendly environment that encourages students to speak without the fear of being judged. Students can confidently express their thoughts and let others listen to them speak English after being exposed to this strategy for a period of time (Huong, 2024).

Another advantage of the Gallery Walk strategy is that lessons which apply this strategy usually have students to work on their own, so students will have the chance to be proactive. This is not a teacher-centered method so students have initiative most of the time throughout the lesson. The teacher only has to give a request and students will do all other parts until the end of the lesson. This strategy is an effective way to encourage students to be initiative.

2.2.3. The limitations of Gallery Walk Strategy in teaching Speaking.

Controlling the class during the implementation consumes a lot of time and effort. The strategy requires students to move around the class often, as a result, managing students' movement throughout the lesson is compulsory for the teacher (Majiasih, 2012). It is also necessary that the teacher guide the students clearly before implementing the strategy to ensure that the lesson occurs fluently. Therefore, the strategy is time-consuming during both the preparation steps and performing steps.

Gallery Walk is designed as a cooperative learning strategy; however, some students may prefer working alone and refuse to cooperate with other students. Yager (1985) pointed out that oral communication skills benefit from the interactions in a group (presenting ideas, asking questions, making comments,...) a lot. In order to make use of the advantages of gallery walk strategy, the teacher has to divide the groups and monitor the class carefully to ensure that all students have to take part in the activities and have the chance to express their ideas.

Rahmah (2019) stated that the Gallery Walk strategy requires a lot of instructions from teachers before students conduct the activities in order not to make them get confused.

3. METHDOLOGY

3.1. Research questions

The study was carried out using the following questions to investigate the effectiveness of using the Gallery Walk to improve speaking competence for the first-year English Majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education.

- (1) How does the Gallery Walk strategy improve the ability to use vocabulary and the interactive communication in speaking for first-year English majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education?
- (2) What are students' attitudes toward the use of the Gallery Walk strategy in teaching speaking?

3.2. Participants

The research subject is the first-year English majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education. There will be 34 students attending the experiment in the second semester of the academic year 2024-2025. They will be divided equally into 2 groups: the experimental and the control. The students are approximately 18 to 19 years old and have studied English for at least nine years before entering university.

3.3. Data collection instruments

3.3.1. Tests

The study used the FCE tests as pre-test and post-test to see the change of students' speaking competence before and after participating in the research. The two criteria, conversational skills and vocabulary, are easy to assess during the FCE tests. Moreover, they play an important role in one's speaking competence. As a result, conversational skills and vocabulary were the two main criteria which were used to assess students' speaking competence in this study.

3.3.2. Questionnaire

Questionnaire can be simply defined as a list of questions, can be both open-ended or close-ended questions to collect information or opinion. In this research, questionnaires were used to collect students' opinion towards enhancing speaking skill before and after the application of Gallery Walk strategy. Therefore, the experimental group had to complete both type of questionnaire

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Students' speaking competence before the Gallery Walk intervention

4.1.1. The initial vocabulary level of students

The chart below depicts students' initial vocabulary scores in the pre-test of both groups.

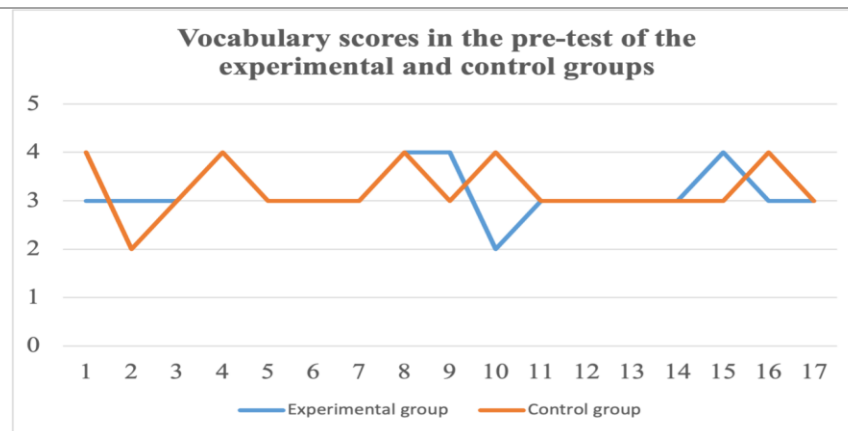


Figure 1. Vocabulary scores in the pre-test of the experimental and control groups

Overall, it can be seen that the distribution is concentrated at the middle level, indicating a generally uniform proficiency. The results of the pre-test from both groups suggest that the level of their vocabulary proficiency is moderate, with no significant gap in score range. Looking at the data of the experimental group, before the intervention, the scores for the figure for students who scored 3 made up the largest proportion, at 70,6%. Whereas the percentage of students who scored 4 and 2 was 23,5% and 5,9%, respectively. Regarding the data from the control group, the figure for students who scored 3 made up 64,7%. Whereas the percentage of students who scored 4 and 2 was 29,4% and 5,9%, respectively.

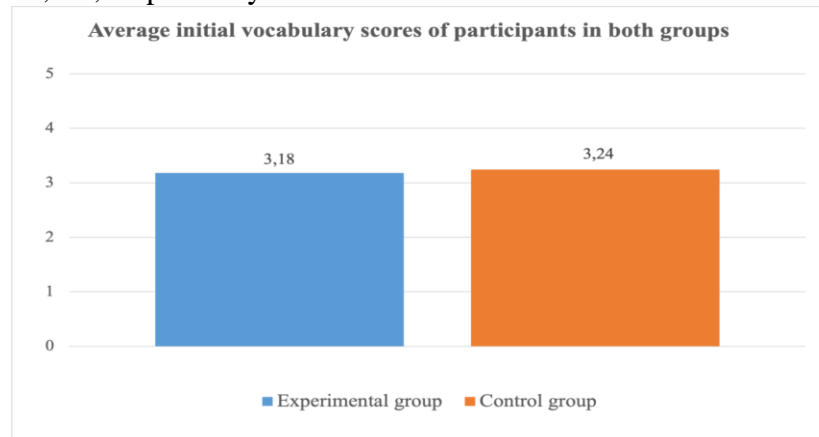


Figure 2. Average initial vocabulary scores of participants in both groups

The mean score of the experimental group is 3.18, while that of the control group is 3.24. To show that the difference is not statistically significant and both groups were at the same level before the treatment, an independent sample T-test was conducted, calculated using Excel. The result of the T-test reveals that there was roughly no difference in the vocabulary level of students in both groups before intervention, as $p = 0,76$, higher than the threshold of 0,05.

4.1.2. The initial interactive communication level of students

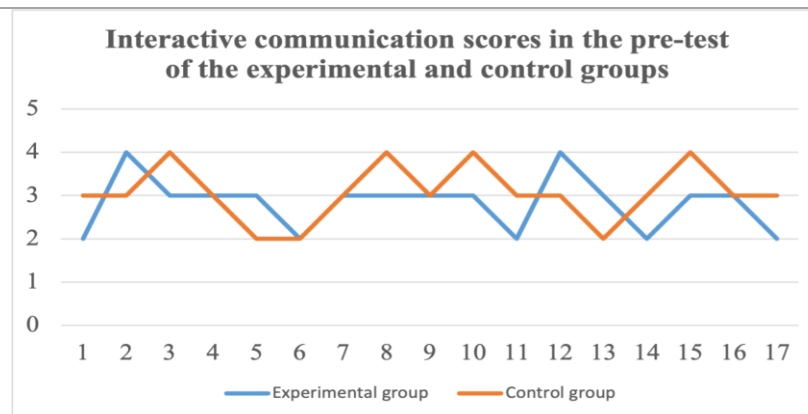


Figure 3. Interactive communication scores in the pre-test of the experimental and control groups

At first glance at the chart, the score range of students stretched from 2 to 4 points and distributed evenly into two groups. This figure indicates that there was no huge gap in the interactive communication of first-year English majors. The number of students who acquired 4 points was lowest with only 6 students, while the opposite was true for the number of students who acquired 3 points with 20 individuals. The proportion of 4 scores in the experimental group was 11,76%, which was also the lowest ratio. The second ranked group was students who got 2 points with roughly 29,41%. The highest number of students recorded was in the 3 points group with roughly 58,82%. In the control group, the results were nearly the same with the similar ratio 58,82%. The only difference of the control group was the percentage of 2 and 4 scores acquired, which was 17,65 and 23,53%, respectively; while their ranks were the same as the experimental group. Through the pre-test results, researchers reached a conclusion that the interactive communication levels of first-year majors English between two groups showed a similarity.

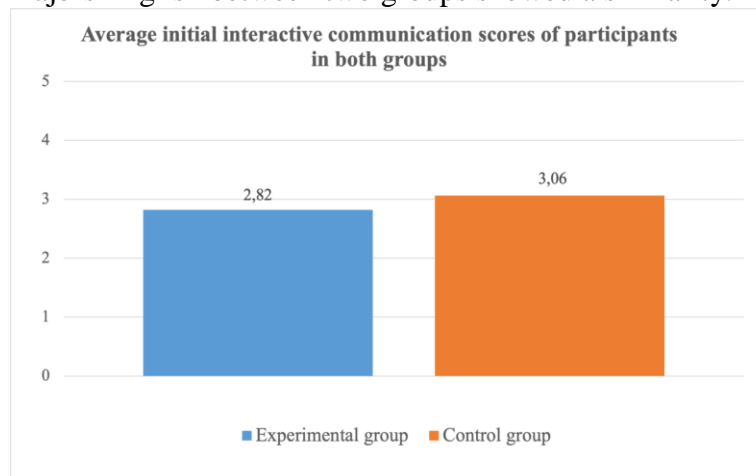


Figure 4. Average initial interactive communication scores of participants in both groups

The bar chart above gives information about the mean score of both groups in the interactive communication pre-test. The mean score of the experimental group was 2,82 and the mean score of the control group was 3,06. The gap between the mean score of two groups was insignificant, proving that the level of students in two groups was the same at the time they took the test. In

addition to reinforce the conclusion, another T-test was taken, giving the result of p value roughly 0,30.

4.2. The improvement of students after implementing the Gallery Walk Strategy in speaking lessons.

4.2.1. The improvement of students in vocabulary after implementing the Gallery Walk Strategy in speaking lessons

The figure below illustrates the vocabulary performance of both groups in the post-test after the intervention.

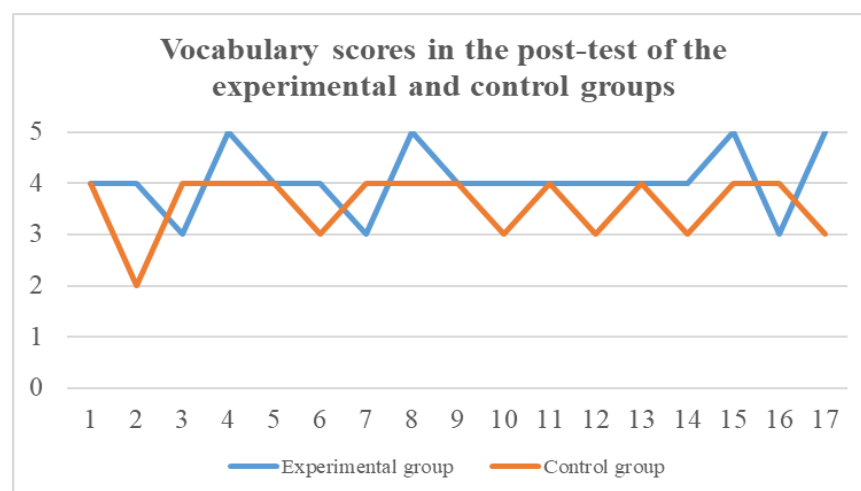


Figure 5. Vocabulary scores in the post-test of the experimental and control groups

The chart presents post-test scores of students in two groups: the experimental group (A1–A17) and the control group (B1–B17). The experimental group achieved generally higher scores, with an average of approximately 4,06, while the control group's average was about 3,59. Four students in the experimental group scored the maximum of 5, whereas no student in the control group reached this level. Additionally, the control group had 35,29% students scoring 3 or below, indicating weaker performance. In contrast, 82,35% students in the experimental group scored 4 or above. These results suggest that the experimental group's learning intervention or teaching method may have a positive impact on their performance. The control group, which likely followed traditional methods, performed less effectively overall. This comparison highlights the potential benefits of the new instructional approach applied to the experimental group.

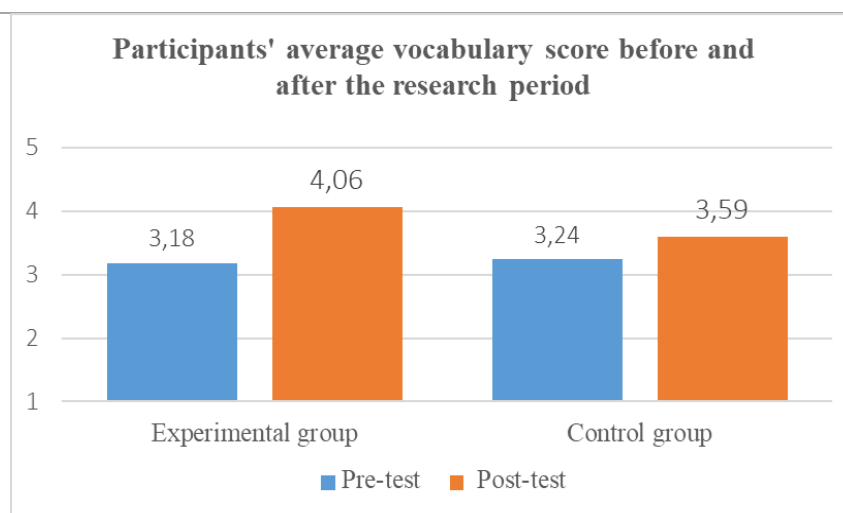


Figure 6. Participants' average vocabulary score before and after the research period

The bar chart shows the Mean vocabulary score of the experimental group and the control group before and after the 8 weeks intervention. By seeing the chart, we can see that average scores of pre- test of both groups at the beginning were around 3. It suggested that both groups were at the same level in starting. However, there was a gap of nearly 1 score between the experimental group's outcome and the control group's outcome. In detail, the average vocabulary score of the experimental group was 4,06, while its of the control group was 3,59. Additionally, although the difference was not too big after the short time of intervention, it hinted at the potential of Gallery Walk Strategy in enhancing vocabulary in speaking ability. However, to be more certain with this, the comparison of the results of the experimental group's pretest and posttest are extremely necessary.

4.2.2. The improvement of students in interactive communication after implementing the Gallery Walk Strategy in speaking lessons.

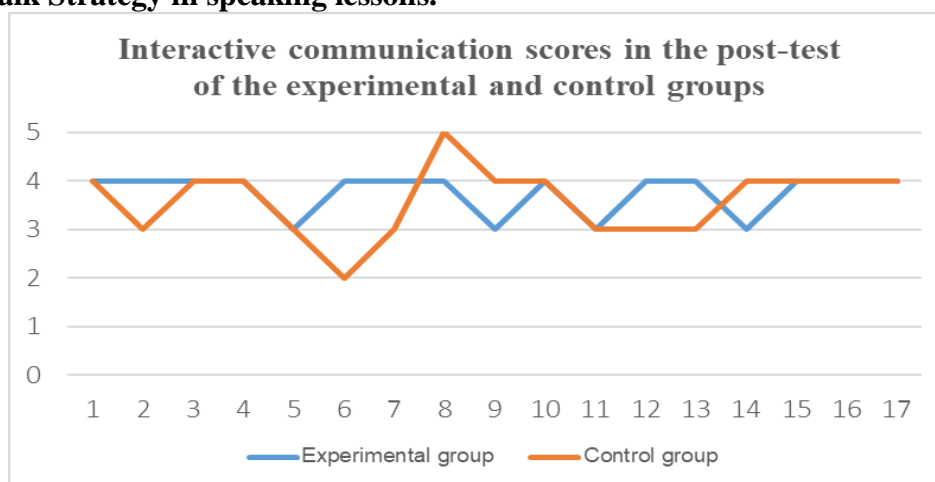


Figure 7. Interactive communication scores in the post-test of the experimental and control groups

Overall, it can be clearly seen that the range score of the experimental group is more even than that of the control group. The data shows that the control group exhibits greater variability among individual participants.

In detail, with the experimental group, the percentage of students who achieved a score of 4 makes up 76,5%, while that of those who achieved a score of 3 is 23,5%. This data indicates that a large proportion of students can initiate and respond appropriately, link contributions to those of other speakers, and at the same time develop the interaction, but may require some support.

Looking at the result of the control group, the percentage of students who achieved a score of 4 makes up 52,9%, while that of those who achieved a score of 3 is 41,2%, indicating that although over half of the students were able to engage in interaction effectively, a notable proportion still struggled to fully meet the criteria for higher-level interaction.

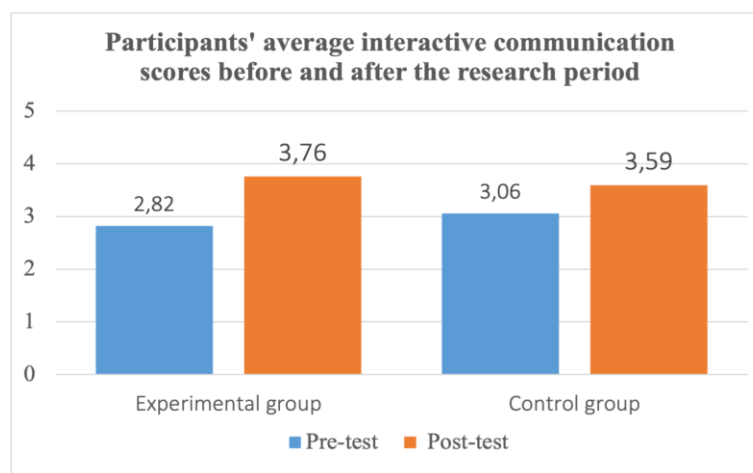


Figure 8. Participants' average interactive communication scores before and after the research period

The bar chart above compares the difference between the average of interactive communication scores in the experimental and the control group. As can be seen, the mean score of both groups witnessed an increase. The data from the pre-test indicates that the average of the control group is higher than that of the experimental group, with a score of 0,24 at the beginning of the research. However, following 8 weeks of the experiment, the mean score of the experimental group increased to 3,76, exceeding that of the control group by 0,17 points.

4.3. The students' attitudes toward the use of the Gallery Walk strategy in English-speaking skills.

To collect feedback on the use of the Gallery Walk in speaking class from students, a questionnaire has been designed and distributed to 17 participants after the intervention. The survey attempts to discover students' feelings, opinions, and attitudes towards some aspects of this strategy when it is implemented.

The questionnaire consisted of 14 questions, with closed-ended questions making up the most, open-ended questions and mixed questions accounting for a minor portion. The application of diverse question types provided both quantitative and qualitative data that helped to analyze students' perceptions toward the use of the Gallery Walk in the speaking class.

The graph below shows students' perspective on employing Gallery Walk strategy in speaking class.

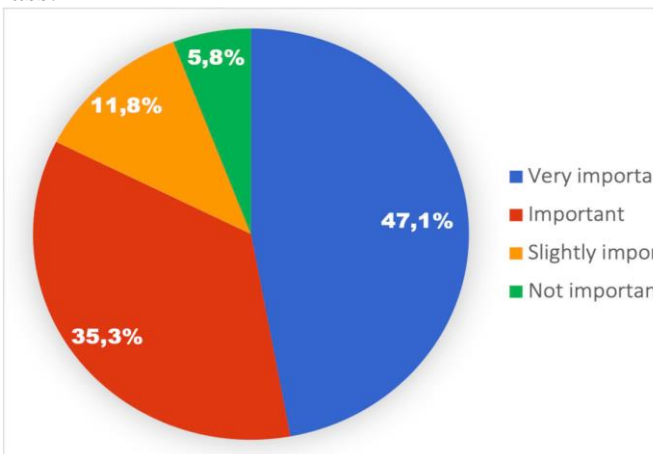


Figure 9. Students' interest in speaking lesson using the Gallery Walk strategy

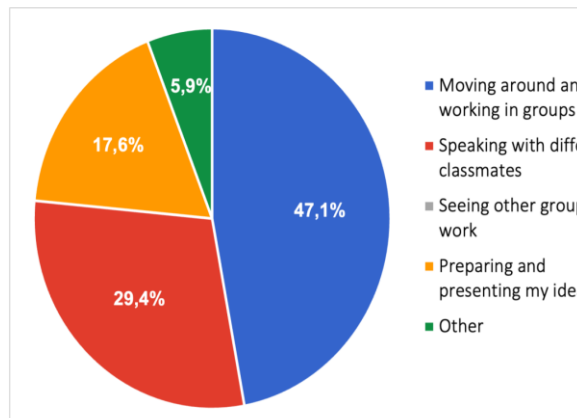


Figure 10. Students' preferred aspects of the Gallery Walk Strategy

Overall, it can be clearly seen from figure 9 that the implementation of this strategy in the speaking class is highly regarded by students. Nearly half of the students enrolling in the research chose "Very interesting" when they were asked about how interesting they found the speaking lesson applying the Gallery Walk strategy. The figures for students choosing "Interesting" and "Slightly Interesting" are 35,3% and 11,8%, respectively. Only a minor portion feels that the lesson applying the Gallery Walk strategy is unattractive, accounting for 5,6%. The positive feedback from students reflect the appeal of the strategy and its ability to create a dynamic learning environment that fosters students to practice speaking.

In general, learners are strongly captivated by the physical movement and the collaborative learning environment. The data in figure 10 indicates that close to half of the participants in the survey chose moving around and working in groups as their most favored aspect during a speaking class employing the Gallery Walk strategy. The proportion of choosing "Speaking with different classmates" is 29,4%, suggesting the excitement for peer-interaction and exchange of information. Whereas, only 17,6% valued the opportunities for self-expression and the improvements in public speaking skills, no students selected seeing other groups' work.

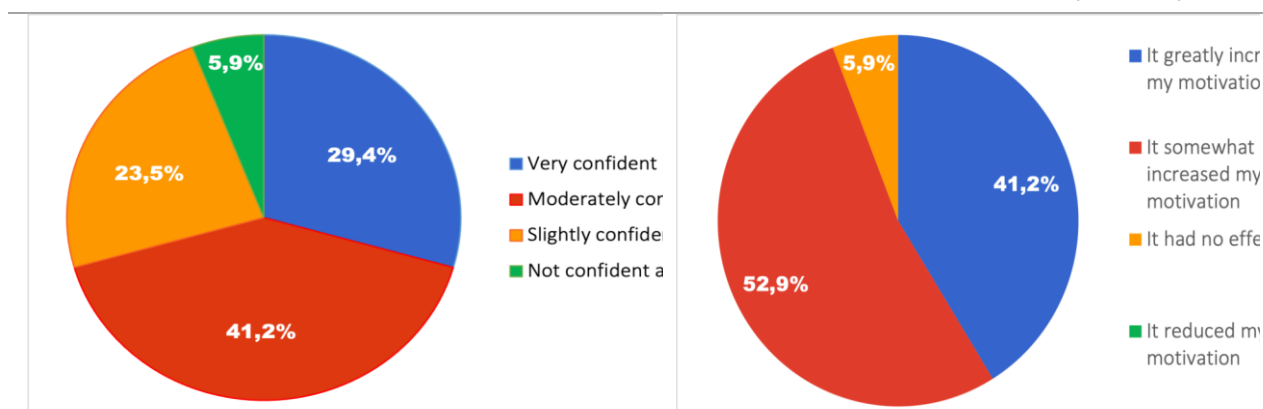


Figure 11. Students' opinions about their confidence after participating in the study

Figure 12. Students' opinions about their motivation after participating in experiment

It can be clearly seen from figure 11 that the implementation of this strategy in the speaking class is effectively improving the students' confidence. More than 90% of participants reported that they had more confidence when speaking in front of people, while only 5.9% said that they still hesitate and feel awkward doing the same task.

After engaging in the experiment, most of the respondents agreed that the Gallery Walk strategy had increased their motivation to speak and practice English to varying degrees extents. The figure 12 reveals that 41.2 % of participants found their motivation significantly increased, and 52.9% stated that it somewhat increased. In contrast, only one student (5.9%) indicated that this strategy had no effect. In a speaking class where the Gallery Walk strategy was applied, students were encouraged to actively move around the classroom, discuss in groups, exchange and present their ideas, which contributing in enhancing students' motivation and reducing the passive learning experience in the traditional classroom.

5. CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study is to investigate the effectiveness of the Gallery Walk strategy on the development of students' speaking competence and their attitude towards this strategy. To find out the result about the student's level before and after intervention, the quasi-experimental design with the participation of 34 English-major students were applied. Through this study, the researchers have come to the following conclusions:

The results of the tests provided proof of the Gallery Walk Strategy effectiveness. Although the improvement was modest, it still indicates a positive trend and suggests that the method is having some positive impact on enhancing speaking competence. Regarding the Interactive Communication criteria, 76.5% of participants achieved scores of 4 following the implementation of the Gallery Walk Strategy in English learning. Compared to their initial performance, students were able to have greater collaboration and could ask more questions when going around to listen to other groups' presentations.

From the outcomes of the questionnaires, it can be concluded that the implementation of this strategy in the speaking class is highly regarded by students. The majority of them felt the class hour was interesting, and they could sustain a high level of attention. Moreover, students reported

that their levels of confidence and motivation had increased after taking part in the experiment. Ultimately, all students in the experiment agreed to continue implementing the Gallery Walk strategy in the future due to the friendly and active learning environment that this strategy created.

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