Teaching Speaking Skills by Using Snowball Throwing Technique to the Junior High School Students

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of the Snowball Throwing technique in improving the speaking skills of junior high school students. Speaking is considered a crucial aspect of English language learning, requiring students to communicate ideas clearly and confidently. Traditional methods often fail to stimulate active participation, prompting the need for more engaging approaches. The Snowball Throwing technique offers an interactive alternative that involves students writing questions on pieces of paper, crumpling them into balls, and throwing them to classmates who answer them verbally. This activity fosters spontaneous speech, peer interaction, and critical thinking. A quasi-experimental design was used with two classes: an experimental group taught using the Snowball Throwing technique and a control group taught using conventional methods. Before the treatment, the average score of the experimental group was 62.4 and the control group was 62.2. After the application of Snowball Throwing Technique, the experimental group's post-test score increased to 82.6, while the control group only reached 68.5. The Mann-Whitney U test results showed a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), which means there is a significant difference between the two groups. This technique proved to be effective in improving speaking skills, especially in the aspects of fluency, accuracy, and comprehensibility. In addition, this technique also increased students' confidence and active participation, in line with Vygotsky's theory that social interaction in cooperative learning accelerates language acquisition.

Keywords: teaching, speaking, snowball throwing technique

INTRODUCTION

There are some skills that students have to master. They are speaking, listening, writing, and reading. According to Andreas et al. (2024) Students must be able to employ their speaking skills in daily situations. However, students face substantial hurdles in gaining proficiency in their second language. In this instance, the researcher hopes to help the students' speaking skills. This is caused by the fact that the majority of students still struggle with speaking. It is the oral exchange of thoughts, opinions, and ideas. Morever, speaking also crucial for society as a whole and for students in particular. Speaking is one of the fundamental language abilities that is used in communication. According to Rao (2019), speaking skill is the most crucial ability for learning a foreign or second language. Speaking is thought to be the most crucial of the four essential language abilities for learning a foreign or second language. In accordance with this, Brown (2004) characterizes speaking as a productive skill that can be observed.

The most effective approach for people to verbally clarify messages and exchange ideas is through speaking. People can share their thoughts, opinions, and knowledge with others via speaking (Selimović-Korjenić, 2025). However, speaking involves more than just understanding linguistic elements (Kulsum et al., 2025). It also involves having the capacity to comprehend the information and features of the language at that particular moment. Speaking can be defined as the capacity for someone to directly produce words in addition to comprehending language elements. Producing a voice to communicate concepts, facts, and meanings in order to engage with others is a useful talent (Selimović-Korjenić, 2025). Speaking is frequently regarded by English language learners, including students, as a challenging ability to acquire (Fitriyanti & Malihah, 2024; Kulsum et al., 2025). This is evident from the fact that the majority of students still struggle to speak English clearly and effectively even after years of study (Franscy & Ramli, 2022). The ability to use language in social interactions is a prerequisite for speaking skills.

Therefore, according to Mandasari & Aminatun (2019), teaching speaking becomes one of the most crucial abilities to teach when teaching English. The goal of speaking skills instruction is to enable students to speak English fluently. According to Hughes & Reed (2016) in the domain of second language instruction, considerable emphasis is placed on the skill of speaking. English proficiency is required for international communication. There are several issues with teaching English speaking in Indonesia, including lack of vocabulary, weak grammar, and low speaking confidence. Nasution & Sukmawati (2019) report that the lecturer disclosed that the students were experiencing three main issues: (1) a lack of confidence in their ability to speak, even though they would speak if asked to do so; (2) a persistent belief that making grammatical errors when speaking is embarrassing; and (3) a limited vocabulary that causes them to stutter when speaking. According to Arianto et al. (2023), building students' confidence is essential in developing their speaking skills, as it encourages greater participation and reduces anxiety during speaking activities. Self-confidence can assist students in speaking English smoothly during the teaching and learning process, whether in a group discussion or giving a presentation in front of the class. It is critical to recognize that self-confidence is an emotional component that influences how successfully pupils learn English as a foreign language.

These three main obstacles prevent students from improving their speaking skills. The lecturer or teacher must use the proper speaking instruction tactics in order to overcome these obstacles. The Minister of Education and Culture introduced the Emancipated Curriculum in 2021 as a means of addressing Indonesia's long-standing learning crisis, which has worsened as a result of the pandemic.

According to Khairita et al. (2023), English lessons are one of the main subjects covered in the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Spoken and written communication are the two main ways that people can communicate their ideas. According to the Junior High School competency standard for the *Kurikulum Merdeka* students must be able to interact and communicate such as exchanging ideas, opinions, and experiences. Kurikulum Medeka offers project-based learning for students and encourages the use of English in authentic situations. Students are expected to be able to communicate effectively in order to convey ideas, information, and experiences during social and academic interactions. Meanwhile (Marbes & Idayani, 2022) reveal that in 2013 curriculum, strong speaking abilities are expected of students but speaking is more complicated. It is a challenging skill because a variety of elements need to be considered, such as vocabulary, grammar, fluency, pronunciation, and comprehension.

The researcher conducted a preliminary observation at junior high school and found that students faced a variety of problems when learning English in the classroom, such as a lack of confidence, limited vocabulary, and lack of fluency or proper pronunciation. These problems can be attributed to two main factors affecting students' speaking skills. The first factor is psychological, where students lack the confidence to speak and express their opinions, often leading to hesitation and anxiety during speaking activities. The second factor is linguistic, where students face difficulties such as a limited English vocabulary, improper grammar usage, and difficulties in pronouncing certain words, making it hard for them to communicate effectively. These issues hinder their ability to improve their speaking skills and engage in meaningful conversations. Furthermore, the teacher's limited teaching techniques have not fully supported students in overcoming these obstacles. Although various approaches have been used to improve students' speaking skills, there are still gaps in the research. Most studies tend to focus on one aspect only, for example, only on vocabulary improvement or only on confidence improvement.

There are several techniques that can be used to help students develop their speaking skills. One of them is the Snowball Throwing Technique. According to Susanty (2016), this technique is a cooperative learning teaching method that enables students to collaborate in groups, give each other their full attention, and provide opportunities to talk and share knowledge. This is accomplished by a student unannouncedly tossing a paper ball to another group member. They must therefore pay close attention to what their friends are saying when working in groups, as they might be asked to respond to a question at any time. Additionally, students create paper balls containing questions for their classmates, making the learning process more enjoyable and engaging. Considering the advantages offered by the Snowball Throwing Technique, the researcher applied it in the speaking classes to address students' struggles with confidence, vocabulary mastery, and fluency (Silaban et al., 2024). This approach helped to create a more interactive and supportive environment, where students felt more encouraged to speak.

Unfortunately, research that specifically examines the effectiveness of Snowball Throwing Technique in improving junior high school students' speaking skills, especially within the framework of Merdeka Curriculum, is still very limited. Therefore, this study aims to fill the void by testing whether the use of Snowball Throwing technique can improve the speaking skills of junior high school students. This study also aims to see the extent to which the technique is able to overcome students' psychological and linguistic barriers simultaneously in the context of learning in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum.

METHOD

This study employed a quasi-experimental method to measure the effects of a program intervention on a specific group. Two groups were involved in this study: an experimental group that received treatment using the Snowball Throwing Technique, and a control group that did not receive such treatment. This design enabled the researcher to measure the effectiveness of the Snowball Throwing Technique in enhancing students' speaking skills. The research was conducted at SMPN (*Sekolah Menengah Pertama Negeri*) 16 Palu during the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year, from February to April 2025. The subjects of the research were ninth-grade students, totaling 149 students across five classes. The researcher used a simple random sampling technique to select two classes as the sample, namely IXA as the control group and IXE as the experimental group, each consisting of 25 students. Random sampling is used to improve research results by reducing errors in sample selection.

The instrument used in this study was a speaking test administered both before (pre-test) and after (post-test) the treatment. The test was designed to assess three core aspects of speaking skills: fluency, accuracy, and comprehensibility. The scoring was based on a predetermined and validated rubric. The procedure began with administering a pre-test to both groups. The experimental group then received the treatment over five sessions using the Snowball Throwing Technique, while the control group received conventional instruction. After the treatment phase, both groups completed a post-test to measure improvement in speaking skills.

During the Snowball Throwing Technique implementation, students were divided into small groups and throw a paper into another students. This activity was designed to promote active participation and build students' speaking confidence. The data analysis technique was conducted quantitatively using SPSS. The analysis included normality testing (Shapiro-Wilk Test) and hypothesis testing using the Mann-Whitney U Test to compare the results of two groups and determining the significant difference between them. Since the post-test data were not normally distributed. The decision criteria were as follows: If the p-value < 0.05, reject the null hypothesis (H_0), indicating a significant difference between the control and experimental groups and if the p-value ≥ 0.05, accept the null hypothesis, indicating no significant difference. The results showed a significant improvement in the speaking skills of the experimental group after being treated with the Snowball Throwing Technique compared to the control group, demonstrating the technique's effectiveness in English speaking instruction. The research design can be illustrated as follows:

Figure 1. Design of the research

Based on the picture above, a quasi-experimental research design was used. Before the treatment, both groups were given a post test to determine their initial abilities. After that, the experimental group received treatment while the control group did not.

Finally, the two groups were given a post test to determine whether the snowball throwing technique had an effect on students' speaking skills.

In this research, several instruments were employed to collect data on the effectiveness of the snowball throwing technique in improving students' speaking skills. These instruments included a pre-test and a post-test, which assessed students' fluency, accuracy, and comprehensibility the primary aspects targeted by the technique. During the implementation of the treatment, the snowball throwing technique was successfully applied, and the assessment instruments effectively measured the improvement in students' speaking skills with a high degree of precision. The Pre-Test is administered to participants before the treatment to establish a baseline measurement of their speaking skills. This allows the researcher to compare the changes in speaking skills after the application of the snowball throwing technique. In this study, the Pre-Test will take the form of a conversation or dialogue involving questions to assess students' fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary usage. A scoring rubric will be used to evaluate these aspects, with specific criteria for each of the three components. By conducting the Pre-Test, the researcher can gather an initial picture of students' speaking skills, which will later be compared to the Post-Test results to determine the effectiveness of the snowball throwing technique. Meanwhile The Post-Test is administered after the treatment phase to measure the extent of improvement in students' speaking skills. The form of the Post-Test will be identical to the Pre-Test, consisting of a conversation or dialogue with questions that assess fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary usage. The Post-Test results was analyzed using SPSS to determine if there are significant differences between the experimental and control groups. Statistical tests, such as homogeneity tests, normality tests, and t-tests, were conducted to analyze the data and determine the effectiveness of the technique.

The researcher used a rubric that rated fluency, accuracy, and comprehensibility on a scale of 1 to 5, in order to ensure assessment validity. Accuracy evaluated vocabulary and grammar usage, comprehensibility evaluated listener comprehension, and fluency involved speaking smoothly. Students gave their informed consent prior to the study, with the school's approval. Confidentiality was ensured, and participation was entirely voluntary. To protect participants' rights and guarantee responsible research practices, ethical protocols were adhered to. Rubric scoring can be seen in table 1.

Table 1. Scoring Rubric

No	Aspects assessed	Criteria	Score
1.	Comprehensibility	Almost Perfect	5
		There are some mistakes but they don't understand the meaning.	4
		There are some errors and distort meaning.	3
		Many mistakes and distort meaning.	2
		Too many mistakes and distort meaning.	1
2.	Accuracy	Almost Perfect	5
		There are some mistakes but they don't understand the meaning	4
		There are some errors and distort the meaning	3
		Lots of errors and distorted meanings	2

		Too many mistakes and distort meaning.	1
3.	Fluency	Very smooth	5
		Fluent	4
		Pretty smooth	3
		Less fluent	2
		Not smooth	1

From Table 1, there are 3 aspects that need to be assessed in the speaking test. Namely fluency, accuracy and comprehensibility. In this study, a scale of 1 is used which is the lowest to 5 which is the highest. The total amount of the scale will be processed and the final result is what determines the student's ability.

The technique of data analysis in this study involved a structured process of managing and interpreting data using SPSS (Statistical Product and Service Solutions) to answer research questions and test hypotheses. The analysis began with data collection through pre-tests and post-tests, which were then inputted into SPSS either manually or via data import from Excel. Descriptive statistics such as mean, median, mode, and standard deviation were generated to summarize the data, and visual representations like histograms and boxplots were created to aid interpretation. Before proceeding to inferential analysis, assumption testing was conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk Test to assess data normality; the results indicated that the post-test data were not normally distributed. Consequently, the researcher employed a non-parametric test, namely the Mann-Whitney U Test, to compare the speaking skills between the experimental and control groups. The analysis focused on interpreting p-values and confidence intervals to determine the statistical significance of the results. A significance level of 0.000 confirmed that the Snowball Throwing Technique had a positive effect on students' speaking skills. The results were then reported through tables, graphs, and narrative explanations, ensuring clarity and comprehensiveness, with further validation steps taken as needed to ensure the reliability of the findings.

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS
Findings

In this study, the researcher employed a quasi-experimental research design involving two groups: an experimental group and a control group. Each group consisted of 25 ninth-grade students, bringing the total number of participants to 50. The primary aim of this research was to investigate the effect of the Snowball Throwing Technique on students' speaking skills. To assess the students' initial capabilities, a pre-test was administered to both groups before any instructional intervention was implemented. This pre-test served as a baseline measure to determine whether the two groups had similar levels of speaking proficiency at the outset of the study. Following the pre-test, the experimental group received treatment through the implementation of the Snowball Throwing Technique during English speaking activities, while the control group continued with the conventional teaching method without exposure to the technique. After the intervention period was completed, both groups were administered a post-test with the same criteria as the pre-test. This post-test aimed to measure any changes in students' speaking performance and to determine the effectiveness of the applied technique. For the data description can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Pre-Test and Post-Test Result

Group	N	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean
Experimental	25	62.4	82.6
Control	25	64.2	68.5

The summary of the students' mean scores for both the pre-test and post-test in each group is presented in Table 2. As seen in the data, the experimental group showed a significant improvement to a post-test mean, indicating a considerable increase in speaking skills after the application of the Snowball Throwing Technique. On the other hand, the control group's mean score rose slightly in the post-test, suggesting only a modest improvement under conventional teaching methods. To ensure the appropriate statistical tests were used, a normality test was first conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk Test, the results of which are displayed in Table 2. The normality test for the pre-test scores showed a significance value of 0.064, which is greater than the threshold value of 0.05. This result implies that the pre-test scores are normally distributed, validating the use of either parametric or non-parametric tests for further analysis. However, the post-test scores had a significance value of 0.023, which is less than 0.05, indicating that the post-test scores are not normally distributed. Due to the non-normality of the post-test data, the researcher employed a non-parametric statistical test, namely the Mann-Whitney U Test, to compare the differences between the two groups.

Table 3. Normality Test (Mann-Whitney U Test)

Phase	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-test	0.957	50	0.064
Post-test	0.946	50	0.023

According to the results of the normality test conducted, the pre-test data exhibited a significance value of 0.064, which exceeds 0.05. This indicates that the pre-test data are normally distributed. Conversely, the post-test data yielded a significance value of 0.023, which is less than 0.05, leading to the conclusion that the post-test data are not normally distributed. Furthermore, the results of the Mann Whitney U test are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Test Statistic

Phase	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test	214.000	539.000	0.053
Post-test	106.500	431.500	0.000

In Table 4, this result implies that there is no statistically significant difference between the control and experimental groups before the treatment, suggesting that both groups had relatively similar speaking skills at the beginning of the study. This equivalence is crucial in experimental research to ensure that any observed changes in performance are attributable to the intervention rather than pre-existing differences.

In contrast, the post-test indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in the post-test scores between the experimental and control groups. Such a result strongly suggests that the Snowball Throwing Technique had a positive and significant effect on the speaking skills of the students in the experimental group. The improvement

was not only substantial in terms of raw scores but also statistically validated through the Mann-Whitney U test. Therefore, based on the statistical evidence, the null hypothesis (H_o) which posited that there is no significant difference in students' speaking skills between those taught using the Snowball Throwing Technique and those who were not is rejected. The alternative hypothesis (H_a) which states that there is a significant difference between the two groups is accepted.

In conclusion, the findings of this study provide compelling evidence that the Snowball Throwing Technique is an effective instructional strategy for enhancing students' speaking skill. The technique promotes active participation, peer collaboration, and verbal expression, which are essential components for developing communicative competence in a language learning classroom. This is in line with Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory (1978), which argues that meaningful learning occurs through social interaction, allowing learners to construct knowledge collaboratively. Educators are encouraged to consider incorporating this method into their teaching practices to foster more dynamic and interactive language learning environments.

Discussion

The findings of this study provided clear empirical evidence that the Snowball Throwing Technique (STT) significantly improved students' speaking skills. Prior to the intervention, both the experimental and control groups displayed similar proficiency levels, as indicated by the pre-test results. This initial balance allowed the researcher to attribute post-intervention differences more confidently to the treatment rather than to pre-existing disparities. Following the application of STT, the experimental group demonstrated a marked improvement in speaking performance compared to the control group, as indicated by the post-test results.

The success of the Snowball Throwing Technique can be linked to its inherently interactive and cooperative nature. By encouraging students to write and answer questions in a dynamic format, the technique creates a participatory learning atmosphere that naturally increases engagement, particularly in speaking activities. This format also fosters spontaneity in speaking and allows students to use the language in authentic contexts, thereby improving their fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and oral confidence. These findings are consistent with research conducted by Fitriya et al. (2022) and Mogea (2023), who found that the technique reduced speaking anxiety while promoting collaborative learning. It also aligns with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), which underscores the role of social interaction in cognitive development. Through peer-to-peer exchanges, students not only practice their language skills but also co-construct meaning, thus enhancing both individual and collective language competence which argues that meaningful learning occurs through social interaction, allowing learners to construct knowledge collaboratively. Yusmi et al. (2021) found that the Snowball Throwing approach increased students' motivation and active participation in class activities while also boosting their speaking skills. Another study conducted by Williana et al. (2020) used the snowball throwing game to increase students' desire and passion for learning English. Through this method, students were actively engaged in the learning process, as they generated questions, tossed paper "snowballs," and responded orally to their peers. This activity promoted spontaneous speech, encouraged peer interaction, and reduced speaking anxiety. The technique also allowed students to practice English in a supportive setting, which helped increase their confidence, enrich their vocabulary, and improve their fluency and accuracy.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of STT in supporting language acquisition also resonates with the pedagogical principles proposed by Harmer (2007), who suggests that successful speaking activities must balance input with output. The Snowball Throwing Technique achieves this by immersing students in both roles: as listeners and as speakers. Students are required to process the language they hear and respond accordingly, fostering both receptive and productive skills. Additionally, the technique helps alleviate common psychological barriers to speaking, such as fear of making mistakes or embarrassment when mispronouncing words, issues which have been widely documented in second language learning. The relatively informal, game-like nature of the technique creates a psychologically safe space that encourages risk-taking in language use, which is essential for oral language development.

Despite its success, the application of STT in this study was not without limitations. The most prominent challenge was the small sample size, only 25 students per group, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to broader student populations. A larger and more diverse participant pool could help verify the results across different contexts and demographics. In addition, the duration of the intervention was relatively short, spanning only five sessions. While positive results were evident within this time frame, a longer intervention period might yield even more significant and lasting outcomes. Another challenge observed was the initially low level of student confidence. Many students hesitated to speak at the beginning, fearing they might make errors. Although the Snowball Throwing Technique gradually helped reduce this anxiety, building strong self-confidence remains a long-term endeavor that requires continued support from teachers.

Moreover, it is important to consider the influence of external variables that were not directly measured in this study, such as students' motivation, prior exposure to English outside the classroom, and the classroom atmosphere shaped by the teacher's facilitation style. These factors may have subtly contributed to students' performance during speaking activities. Future studies could include qualitative instruments such as interviews or classroom observations to capture these contextual dynamics. In addition, combining STT with other methods such as project-based learning, role-play, or digital tools may further enrich the learning experience and optimize language acquisition outcomes.

In conclusion, while this study strongly supports the use of the Snowball Throwing Technique as an effective method for improving students' speaking skills, it also highlights several areas for future development. It is recommended that subsequent research increase the sample size since this study only used 50 samples. Extend the duration of the intervention, and explore hybrid instructional models that integrate STT with other communicative approaches. Teachers are also encouraged to receive proper training on how to effectively facilitate this technique in varied classroom conditions. Ultimately, STT represents a promising tool for fostering meaningful, interactive, and confidence-building speaking activities, in line with the goals of *Kurikulum Merdeka* and the broader vision of communicative language teaching in Indonesia. Despite its strengths, this study has certain limitations. The most apparent is the small sample size and short intervention period. With only 25 students in each group and five sessions of treatment, the generalizability of the findings is limited. Future research should involve more schools and conduct longitudinal studies to measure long-term effects of STT.

Additionally, this study relied solely on quantitative measures. Further research using qualitative methods such as interviews, classroom observations, or student journals could provide deeper insights into students' emotional responses and engagement with

the technique. Combining quantitative and qualitative data would enrich the understanding of how and why STT affects language learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of the Snowball Throwing Technique in improving the speaking skills of ninth-grade students at SMPN 16 Palu. Using a quasi-experimental design involving an experimental group and a control group, each consisting of 25 students, both groups underwent a pre-test and post-test. Based on the result of data analysis indicates that Snowball Throwing Technique proved to be an effective technique to improve students' speaking performance in classroom situation. These findings led to the rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis, indicating that the Snowball Throwing Technique has a positive and significant effect on students' speaking performance. Based on the cooperative learning theory, the Snowball Throwing Technique promotes an active learning setting in which students create knowledge together through social interaction.

These findings emphasizes the role of social interaction in language acquisition. The technique facilitated meaningful communication among students, which is crucial for developing speaking skills. Moreover, it aligns well with the goals of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which encourages authentic communication and collaborative learning. The improvement observed in the experimental group illustrates how interactive strategies can overcome common barriers to speaking, such as fear of making mistakes and lack of vocabulary. However, this study also faced some limitations. The relatively small sample size of only 50 students and the short duration of the intervention (five sessions) may restrict the generalizability of the results. Furthermore, some students initially exhibited low self-confidence and hesitation in speaking English, especially during the early stages of implementation. Although the Snowball Throwing Technique gradually helped address these issues, building confidence is a long-term process that may require more sustained and supportive measures. External factors such as student motivation and classroom environment were also not controlled in this study, though they may have influenced the outcomes. Therefore, English teachers are encouraged to integrate this technique into their teaching practices, particularly in speaking classes. Teachers are recommended to apply this strategy in small groups and they should also create speaking tasks which are related to students' interest to promote their motivation and language production. For future research, it is recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples, extend the duration of the intervention, and explore additional strategies that can complement the Snowball Throwing Technique to further support students' speaking development.

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