

# ENGAGING STUDENTS IN GALLERY WALKS: SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH SPEAKING PROGRAM

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## Abstract

This article reports the findings of case study research on the deployment of gallery walks in English-speaking classrooms in senior high schools in Indonesia. The research uses a case study design. Drawing on thematic analysis, empirical findings showed that the students engaged actively in the topic in which they were interested and that they could work collaboratively through small peer-led discussions. Empirical data also revealed that students could practice speaking by presenting and discussing the topics they chose in front of the class. This empirical evidence supports the use of gallery walks as a procedure in speaking programs for the purpose of engaging students in collaborative learning through teacher scaffolding. Three important instructional implications can be drawn from the results of the study. Additionally, gallery walks can be used to engage students in speaking programs during discussion and presentation activities. It helps students build their knowledge and speaking skills. A teacher can also bring a variety of topics to make students have more opportunities to explore, broaden, and deepen topics based on their interests. In the future, researchers can document the impact gallery walks have on students' speaking fluency and accomplishment in a different context.

**Keywords:** Engagement, Gallery Walks, Speaking

## INTRODUCTION

Recently, the position of English as a language of international communication continues to strengthen, and the teaching of speaking skills has become increasingly important in the contexts of English as a second or foreign language (ESL or EFL). The teaching of speaking skills is also critical, given the large number of students who wish to study English in order to be able to communicate effectively in the language. Teaching speaking has become a priority in many language programs, and teaching strategies cannot be discounted as a factor affecting teaching outcomes. The strategies used to develop the ability to write and speak would be distinct, as the objectives of each skill are distinct. The former is concerned with the capacity for written language production, whereas the latter is primarily concerned with oral language production. In terms of teaching speaking, the authors found that most secondary school students could not speak English fluently. Additionally, secondary school graduates lack sufficient English speaking ability because English teaching in Indonesia is considered unsuccessful (Nur, 2004; Renandya, 2004). In the context of Indonesian senior high school English speaking classes, the teaching and learning process are still employed through teacher-centered learning, in which teachers provide lesson materials systematically and explain them to the students without giving them the opportunity to learn by themselves (Simbolon, 2014). In this type of teaching and learning process, teachers particularly emphasize the lesson on assigning students to memorize the speaking dialogues from textbooks instead of allowing them to speak naturally in English. In other words, the speaking teaching and learning process focuses on language shape and composition driven by teachers in order to prepare students for passing tests rather than carry out their needs (Qamar, 2016).

As a consequence, this type of teaching and learning process could simply make students remain silent due to certain difficult problems that arise from within students and the approach used in the classroom (Aubrey et al., 2020; King, 2013). The prominent factor which leads students to disengagement is linked to the students' experience of speaking English (Aubrey et al., 2020). For instance, teachers generally tend to ask students to have the same certain responses as others in the performance dialogues, which has caused several students to persistently practice common responses in some contexts. Such teaching pattern drills do not provoke students to meet the opportunity to share and use the language properly and only lead them to one of the many English-speaking failures (Coskun, 2016; Tokoz-Goktepe, 2011). In short, students are unable to be active and engage in genuine communication.

Some research has proved that speaking has a positive function in language learning and teaching. Goh and Burns (2012) state that speaking is a necessary part of second language acquisition since it has affected both individual and academic achievement in the language process. They also add that speaking skills are more likely to engage learners in classroom communication. Speaking also plays an important role in starting communication with people because it provides a way to express feelings and deliver information. Hence, students need to get accustomed to speaking with the purpose of having fluency in English. In other words, they are supposed to be learning how to speak in order to reach their goals.

For this reason, gallery walks are recommended in learning English speaking programs, which are believed to allow students to be actively engaged in the teaching and learning process. The gallery walk is such a discussion activity where students are required to walk around the classroom while viewing and comprehending material products, then start giving comments on them (Bowman, 2005). The gallery walks are also a fun way for students to learn together because they have to communicate, observe, and share their thoughts on certain subjects.

Recent previous studies (e.g., Makmun et al. 2020; Namaziandost et al. 2018) show that the gallery walks allow students to be actively engaged in the speaking practices and emphasize students' collaborative learning skills by discussing various topics in groups. The gallery walks have been well discussed in the EFL context all around the world. However, the implementation of this instructional procedure in the senior high school students' context remains under-explored. To fill this gap, the study reports results, drawing on case study research on the adaptation of gallery walks in one senior high school speaking class. Therefore, the present study aims to observe students' engagement using gallery walks in an English-speaking classroom. Two research questions guide this study:

1. In what ways do students engage in gallery walks?
2. What are the students' responses to this activity?

## **METHOD**

This study uses a case study design. We recruited forty secondary school students at the first-grade level, consisting of 19 males and 21 females. Before the empirical work was conducted, the authors organized a meeting with one of the English teachers and the forty students to assign consent forms, which students were required to read and sign off on to ensure that all data would be used only for research purposes. The consent form was intended to serve as proof of their willing participation in the study. The students have had formal English instruction for 10 years. The students' age ranges between 16 and 17 years old. In conducting the study, one of the

authors acted as the teacher, implementing gallery walks to one speaking classroom in order to engage students in speaking practices. In order to encourage students to practice speaking based on the given situation, this lesson was conducted in a regular class. In this case, we identified a variety of students' responses and explored their speaking interests. The class met once a week and ran for an hour per meeting. Before the students started learning speaking skills through the gallery walk activity, the teacher asked the students to listen to the instructions given.

Firstly, the teacher and the students agreed on how to form groups. The students chose their own groups, with about four people in each group. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of gallery walks used in online learning was delayed. In this case, the teacher utilized the Zoom application for conducting the classroom. The teacher gave about five topics for students to choose from, based on their own interests and hobbies. Then, at the next meeting, they had to present their products. Each student was divided into ten breakout rooms on Zoom, which consisted of four different group members. Then, the students were required to explain their products for about five minutes. Finally, after each person had already delivered their explanation of the products, the students were required to be involved in the 20-minute sharing discussion by giving their own perspectives regarding other products. Before beginning the gallery walk activity, the teacher incorporated all of the students and demonstrated to them how to present the material topic. The teacher also told them to write down what they were going to say and to look up words on an online dictionary if they didn't understand them. The teacher only observed the process of students presenting their products during the discussion session. There were some students who did not talk as much as other students because of their confidence while being observed by the teacher. Hence, the teacher decided to move to another breakout room to allow those students to be confident in uttering responses and to ensure that all students were engaged in the activity.

The authors employed interviews and focus-group discussions to gather data. Interviews and focus group discussions were needed to explore participants' responses and reactions to the gallery walks and what was unseen in the observations. The authors interviewed ten students to investigate their experiences of using gallery walks in learning to speak. In the interview sections, which took an hour, participants were asked about their experiences in speaking activities, their reactions towards gallery walk use, and their opinions about their interactions within collaborative work. In the focus group discussions, students were divided into groups, which consisted of ten pupils in each group. The pupils were asked questions about their engagement in speaking practices using gallery walks. The obtained data sets were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis aims to describe meanings; it is a method for "identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The authors used Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis method. They used six stages to get the patterns of meaning they needed (e.g., getting to know the data, making initial codes, looking for themes, reviewing possible themes, defining and naming themes, and writing the report).

1. Familiarization with the data

This stage requires authors to critically think about the data by reading and rereading the obtained data (e.g., interview transcripts, responses to qualitative surveys) and listening to voice recordings or watching video data. The voice recordings can also be listened to during the same period of time as reading the interview transcripts. Another part of this stage is allowing the author to take notes on data while reading or listening as well. Taking notes helps the author to highlight the important meaning, analyze the early pattern of participants' meaning, and assume the actual intention of participant

words. Braun and Clarke (2006) stated that notes play a pivotal role in the process of analysis since they are the trigger for memorization

2. Generating initial codes

The second stage is coding the data. Codes serve as basic roots to support data that is related to research questions. Codes can be close to the participants' meaning and the point of the data, yet they cannot be the participants' meaning, and the authors need to make an interpretation about the point of the data. All data transcripts are not supposed to be coded in that particular time period because some data cannot be coded. In the coding process, the authors can freely modify and replace the previous codes to adjust to what the participants say.

3. Searching for themes

The analysis process does start from codes to themes in this stage. A theme contains the important data which is relevant to research questions and consists of all meanings level in the data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006, pp. 89; Braun and Clarke, 2012). The stage is also about reread the coded data to see the resemblance and connect the codes. The early process of constructing themes and subthemes is by distinguishing codes based on its characteristics which if arranged will produce content that is connected and form a pattern that makes sense.

4. Reviewing potential themes

The theme is being rechecked for relevance to coded data and all data sets in this analysis stage. Braun and Clarke (2006) assume that this stage aims to see the quality of the themes by questioning reflective questions (e.g., if it is a theme, what is the quality of this theme? Does it tell me something useful about the data set and my research question? The next step is to ensure that all of the data represents the whole data, which consists of important and related aspects of the data, meaning similarities and relevance to research questions.

5. Defining and naming themes

Braun and Clarke (2006) stated that a good theme is a theme that contains only one focus, is relevant to each theme yet does not occur in repetition of names, and answers the research questions of the study. Themes that use quotes could give a direct and clear understanding of the themes themselves, which still consider the participants' language and ideas.

6. Producing the report

The purpose of making a report is to convey a series of content formed from existing data using analysis. The series of contents must be convincing and complex because the description of the contents must produce arguments that can be used to answer the research questions of the study. Themes must be formed in a logical way and be relevant to all of the other themes in order for a report to have a sense of unity.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

Based on selective data analysis, two result themes were identified, such as (1) the efficacy of gallery walks and (2) gallery walks as a tool for collaborative speaking activities. The results are described in a narrative format, followed by discussion.

## The Efficacy of Gallery Walks

The participants mostly realized the benefits of employing gallery walks in learning to speak. Most of the students might have a very positive response towards gallery walks as they freely chose their speaking topic and practiced speaking it naturally. Some of their perspectives in the interview are shown below:

In my opinion, learning how to speak in English through the use of gallery walks was enjoyable because I was allowed to choose my favorite theme (topic) and did have some options given by teacher in the learning process (MR, January 2022).

I initially was afraid when I needed to speak in English because I had a lack of vocabulary, but through this gallery walks, I was able to choose the theme (topic) which I thought the easiest when delivering and explaining to other friends in English (CW, January 2022)

I had an opportunity to practice my English in this instructional technique because all I needed to do was to convey messages through explaining what topic that I chose with no longer depending on textbooks (MB, January 2022).

Allowing students to be dominant in the teaching and learning process is one of the goals of student-centered approaches. In this case, students are able to make and choose their own products based on varied themes given by the teacher. The products are posters and images on which the themes are relevant to students' lesson materials. These posters and images helped students recognize some aspects further. The teacher elaborated on how posters and images as media engage students in the learning process and help them identify their own interests.

Working in groups, students were required to discuss the interest posters with their group members before they presented the posters to other group members. The students had to understand clearly and were supposed to give detailed information regarding the posters they made for the purpose of making other students comprehend well. Based on the interview data, the students indicated that they perceived that choosing their own theme allowed them to explore their interests and what they wished to learn. Moreover, it could provoke students' habits of using basic words of English as they automatically practice speaking as they explain the products.

Additionally, it was interesting that students also uttered their other reasons why they chose such a theme in order to make a poster based on their interest topic. That is, it can also bring students together to build their convenient discussion as they enjoyed and found it easy to depict to other group members.

## Gallery Walks as a Tool for Collaborative Speaking Activities

Based on the interview data, the sharing discussion in presenting each poster collaboratively indicated that the students could practice their English speaking skills. They learned how to

convey meaning coherently and how to support each member if they had difficulties expressing some opinions. In this session, the students focused on collaborative topic understanding activities, which included students' comprehension and students' interpretation in altering meaning from English to Bahasa Indonesia as their mother tongue or first language. Additionally, during these exercises, students adjusted to one another's learning styles. With this in mind, working cooperatively with peers can result in a variety of different outcomes. The following is the evidence of the interview responses:

While I was trying to explain the posters, I was suddenly confused about what I was trying to say, but my friends helped me to give signals, so I was able to continue the explanation (CW, January 2022).

Through this session, I could improve my skills both in speaking and listening, because there were moments when I had to interpret what I listened to and ask a question to my friends when I did not understand some points (RA, January 2022).

I was able to ask and give my opinion about the topic which my friends presented in these sharing discussion activities, while I also used an online dictionary when I was presenting my poster to peers because I did not know the meaning of some words (BA, January 2022).

Based on the empirical evidence of gallery walk activities, the students were allowed to use an online dictionary to assist them when each member could not support the new vocabulary that came from other group members. As in this section, all the group members allowed different group members to ask questions and give different perspectives on their posters. The purpose of using the online dictionary was not only to give them assistance in finding and expressing new words, but also to give them the actual meaning of the learning process as they attempted to figure out their obstacles. The teacher was only being an observer in this section, so students needed to find a way to solve their problems in this case.

## **Discussion**

The findings of this research show that students engaged in speaking practices, allowing them to explore their speaking interests and building collaborative learning skills in solving speaking difficulties while presenting their products. In this case, gallery walks are able to embrace students and be engaged in the learning process as they take the opportunity to learn how to speak naturally without depending on textbooks or memorizing the dialogue. Additionally, the English teacher is able to design a more supportive learning environment since the students could deepen their understanding of the interesting topics brought up by other students in the sharing discussion and it could create their own learning experiences. Rodenbaugh (2015) and Hogan and Cernusca (2011) assert that the gallery walks produce physical movements and create fun, informal instructional circumstances as well. The fun circumstances emerged because of students' actively moving from one topic to another, as presented by some peers. Consequently, it brought joyful moments and reduced students' anxiety about performing in front of the classroom. The students showed that other peers from different groups members in the process of presenting their products helped them to continue and say particular words related

to their presentation when they did not know some words to describe and explain their materials. The findings also indicated that the gallery walks allow students to share and provide a discussion room for them to practice presenting products and exchange different perspectives while comprehending the meaning of the topic they presented. With this in mind, they could learn collaboratively in groups. Students were also helped to comprehend and interpret meanings from different languages (e.g., English to Bahasa Indonesia). Through gallery walk activities, students were also allowed to use an online dictionary while presenting their posters and images if they did not know the words to express themselves. In addition, Puspitasari (2019) shows that the gallery walks helped the students express their responses because the environment was not too formal and judging but supportive. With this in mind, the adaptation of gallery walks is useful for some reasons, particularly in engaging students in speaking practices, allowing them to explore their speaking interests, and building collaborative learning in solving speaking difficulties while presenting their products. Another research conducted by Ramsaroop and Peterson (2020) proved that gallery walks helped Africans engage in the learning process, create new knowledge from the discussion practices, and experience a real work situation.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the adaptation of gallery walks in the senior high school English speaking program obviously empowers and engages students in the teaching and learning of speaking activities. The present study has shown how gallery walks worked in a speaking program. In the classroom, students enjoyed learning speaking skills through discussion sessions since they allow them to practice new words, challenge themselves to be confident, and become accustomed to using English. For this reason, gallery walks made students satisfied with the process of teaching and learning English. Therefore, teachers could use this instructional procedure as their option to teach speaking skills to students. Three important instructional implications can be drawn from the results of the study. First, gallery walks can be used in speaking programs that focus on both enhancing students' confidence and exploring students' interests. Second, the results suggest that the use of this instructional procedure can engage students in speaking programs during discussion and presentation activities that help students build their knowledge and speaking ability. Finally, teachers can also bring a variety of topics to give students more opportunities to explore and deepen topics based on their interests. The authors acknowledge that there will be a more complete picture of the purpose of starting gallery walks activity in the speaking program that can be provided in future research. For instance, research can be conducted to look at to what extent gallery walks speaking programs influence students' speaking fluency and accomplishment. Future research aims to document more empirical evidence about the use of gallery walks in engaging students in different contexts.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This research received no financial support from any funding agenda. It complied with the ethics of research with human beings. The authors express our sincere thanks to the participants under study who volunteered to take part in this research project. We acknowledge there was/is no conflict of interest between the participants and the researchers as they are the authors of the recent article.

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