Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Science (JAHSS)

ISSN: 3006-9491 (Online)

Volume 2 Issue 2, (2025)

https://doi.org/10.69739/jahss.v2i2.582

https://journals.stecab.com/jahss

Published by
Stecab Publishing

Research Article

Mastering The Art of Speaking: Enhancing Grade 11 Students' Speaking Skill Through Speakup Scaffold

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About Article

Article History

Submission: April 16, 2025
Acceptance : May 19, 2025
Publication : June 02, 2025

Keywords

Action Research, Information Gap Technique, Scaffolded Instruction, Speaking Anxiety

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ABSTRACT

This action research examined the effect of the SpeakUp Scaffold, a guided speaking intervention, on the oral communication competencies of thirty-two Grade 11 senior high school students. The research was initiated due to ongoing speaking problems among students in the form of limited vocabulary, stage fright, fear of negative judgment, unfamiliarity with the language of English, and low self-esteem issues. The research was intended to establish the extent to which the incorporation of scaffolded speaking activities would impact students' speaking performance and levels of anxiety. The research utilized both qualitative and quantitative data gathering instruments in the form of pre- and post-intervention speaking performance rubric, teacher observation, and student reflective journals. The four-week intervention included progressively challenging speaking exercises to improve confidence, vocabulary utilization, fluency, and coherence. The results showed that trainees' speaking abilities had significantly improved. Notably, students demonstrated better thought organization, increased use of scholarly language, and higher levels of talkativeness. Scaffolded input also assisted in curbing speaking anxiety as guided preparation, peer traffic, and explicitly organized expectations benefited the students. The research establishes the fact that scaffolded speaking activities like the SpeakUp Scaffold can be an efficient learning approach in the development of students' oral communication skills, particularly in cases where speaking nervousness is an embedded hindrance. Recommendations are made for the integration of scaffolded speaking habits in the everyday curriculum and offering extended, structured time for students to enhance practice in using English and gaining confidence in expression.

Citation Style:

Ahmed, A. M. J. P., Ildefonso, L. D., Lubbong, O., & Blanza, J. (2025). Mastering The Art of Speaking: Enhancing Grade 11 Students' Speaking Skill Through Speakup Scaffold. *Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Science, 2*(2), 112-117. https://doi.org/10.69739/jahss.v2i2.582

1. INTRODUCTION

Effective communication in both oral form and otherwise is an indispensable skill required for university success and career development. Effective speaking skills enable students to participate in meaningful discussions, state their viewpoints clearly, and communicate their ideas effectively. However, it has been realized that students in Grade 11 have been found to have serious weaknesses in terms of their speaking skills. This problem is reinforced by their poor performance in speaking activities as well as their refusal to participate in school oral communication activities. Based on teachers' observations, the majority of students lack fluency, coherence, and confidence when speaking. This lack of competency prevents them from communicating properly.

Many students experience fear, hesitancy, and a lack of confidence when asked to speak in front of their peers, which impedes their overall language development. The problem is exacerbated by high class numbers, insufficient time for personalized instruction, and a lack of systematic scaffolding approaches to help students develop their speaking skills. Without focused interventions, students may remain passive learners, unable to communicate eloquently or confidently in English.

This action research examined the effect of the SpeakUp Scaffold, a guided speaking intervention, on the oral communication competencies of thirty- two Grade 11 senior high school students. This study is consistent with recent studies on the benefits of scaffolded learning in language acquisition. Scaffolded learning strategies improve student engagement and retention of English language skills when compared to traditional methods, while also addressing diverse student needs and fostering motivation (Pashayev *et al.*, 2024). By analyzing students' progress through structured speaking activities, this study adds to the growing body of research on effective strategies for developing speaking proficiency in English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. The findings provide teachers with significant insights into designing structured speaking treatments that alleviate students' resistance and improve their general communication abilities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The issue of speaking difficulty among students has been extensively documented in language learning. Common issues mentioned are shortcomings in pronunciation skills, lack of competence in speaking fluently, limited lexis, and anxiety hindering successful communication in English (Efrizah *et al.*, 2024; Kulsum *et al.*, 2025; Noori & Asir, 2024). Psychological factors such as fear of judgment and shyness also heighten these issues precipitating less active engagement in speaking activities (Harmawati *et al.*, 2024; Noori & Asir, 2024). Inhibitions in teaching also dominate in the form of too much attention on grammar and insufficient usage of appropriate communicative teaching methods, which contribute to the problems of the students (Efrizah *et al.*, 2024; Noori & Asir, 2024). The necessity of creating a motivational classroom environment and providing rich speaking practice is emphasized as key in promoting students' proficiency and confidence (Harmawati *et al.*, 2024; Malik *et al.*, 2025). Addressing these issues with pedagogical methods suitable to the students can significantly promote speaking skills among the students in both higher education and vocational learning (Efrizah *et al.*, 2024). Correspondingly, Boonkit (2021) refers to the fact that students require organized practice for the attainment of fluency and emphasizes the fact that in the absence of proper guidance, students resort to using memorized expressions rather than using spontaneous speech.

Recent study has focused on interventions for the development of speaking abilities in high school students. According to research, pronunciation and interaction play a big role in speaking skills (Eslit & Valderama, 2023). New approaches, such as the use of music and Computer-Assisted Pronunciation Training, have been shown to be effective in enhancing oral abilities in English (Zhang, 2024). The Student Talking Time technique has been shown to boost student confidence and active participation in speaking, resulting in improved speaking abilities (Ali & Ismail, 2023). Furthermore, incorporating Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Language Teaching principles, such as role-playing and technology-assisted activities, has resulted in significant increases in interaction and pronunciation fluency (Nieto Herrera *et al.*, 2024).

Ahmad and Yunus (2019) posited that a collaborative learning intervention method improves high school students' speaking fluency by lowering fear and constraints. Rakhmaniar *et al.*, (2024) claimed that in Indonesia, public speaking training focused on interactive and experiential methods, which resulted in increased self-perceived confidence and decreased fear in students. In addition, Peterson and Ukraine (2023) suggested that Sketch and Speak technique has been proven to be useful in interventions aimed at language-specific learning difficulties in teenagers, improving expressive and receptive discourse skills.

Vygotsky's theory, specifically the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), posits that learners learn most when given supported guidance, which gradually declines as they develop self-regulation. The SpeakUp Scaffold abides by the tenet by first engaging learners with structured paired and group activities and then shifting to solo delivery of a speech. Moreover, the intervention aligns with the frameworks proposed by Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) and Affective Filter Hypothesis (1985) and stipulate learners acquire the language better in a low-anxiety setting where they receive comprehensible input and opportunities to exercise meaningful communication. By initiating with paired and group activities, the SpeakUp Scaffold lowers the learners' affective filters and decreases their apprehensiveness of speaking to advance toward independent speaking tasks. A supporting theory includes Swain's Output Hypothesis (1995) since it underscores the value of producing the language to achieve fluency and precision. The intervention provides learners with increasingly challenging tasks to engage in speaking, compelling them to plan and articulate their messages better, thereby improving their speaking ability.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research method

A common strategy in action research to gauge the success of an intervention is the one-group pretest-posttest design, which was used in this study. To ascertain the effect of the SpeakUp Scaffold on students' speaking abilities, a single group of participants is evaluated both before and after it is put into use.

3.2. The intervention

The SpeakUp Scaffold is an organized speaking intervention aimed at developing the oral communication skills of Grade 11 students using a gradual progression of speaking tasks. The intervention targets the students' reticence to speak by slowly building complexity and independence of speaking tasks. There are three levels in the intervention.

Level one is group discussion through the use of the Information Gap Technique. Each of the four members in each group was given varying tasks according to a topic presented. The members have to communicate well in order to successfully finish the discussion. Level two is a paired speaking task with a guided structure. Students were paired in discussing a specific topic using the VOICE structure: Verify (definition), Observe (description), Illustrate (use/importance), Compare (advantage), and Evaluate (disadvantage). Individual impromptu speeches at level 3 have students being required to give a speech in response to a prompt. Students used the SPEAK approach: Stating the main idea, Presenting a reason or example, Elaborating with supporting details, Assessing different viewpoints or counterpoints, and Keeping strong closure. This scaffolding allowed the students to progress from tightly structured and collaborative activities to independent speech, then develop in confidence and fluency gradually.

3.3. Participants

The subjects of this action research were thirty-two students in Grade 11. The students completed the SpeakUp Scaffold intervention for three weeks, and their improvements were assessed using a one-group pretest-posttest model.

3.4. Data gathering method

To supplement the findings and deepen the understanding of students' speaking difficulties, the research obtained information from various sources. Firstly, pretest and posttest outcomes were used to assess students' improvements. Pretest was administered to the students before the intervention to the students. When the students had completed the activities of the SpeakUp Scaffold, posttest was administered in order to compare gains in terms of fluency, coherence, pronunciation, grammar, and confidence. Moreover, teacher observations were recorded before the intervention, whilst it was being implemented, and after it had taken place. Student engagement and participation levels as well as confidence in speaking activities were the items observed. Student thoughts and feedback were also gathered using informal interview where they narrated their experiences, challenges as well as improvements.

3.5. Ethical consideration

To maintain ethical integrity, all the participants and their parents gave their informed consent. The researchers explained to them the goals of the study. They were informed that their participation is entirely voluntary and that they can withdraw from it any moment without facing any repercussions. Further, all information gathered was handled with utmost confidentiality. Students were given numbers and their real names were never included in the study.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Level of speaking skill of the students in their pretest and post-test

Table 1. Level of speaking skills of the students in their pretest and post-test scores

Group	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Pretest	11	16	13.656	1.310
Posttest	14	18	15.625	1.264

From the information documented in Table 1, the speaking skill level of the students in Grade 11 improved from the pretest to the post-test performance of the students at the Grade 11 level. On the pretest, students ranged from the lowest of 11 to the highest of 16 with a mean of 13.656 and standard deviation (SD) of 1.310. This indicates that before the introduction of the SpeakUp Scaffold, the speaking ability of the students was generally at the moderate level with minimal difference in performance across the population.

On the other hand, the post-test outcome shows a remarkable increase in performance. The score ranged from 14 to 18 with an improved mean score of 15.625 and decreased standard deviation of 1.264. This rise in the mean score signifies that as a whole, the students had better speaking ability following the intervention. The drop in the standard deviation also suggests more homogeneous performance among the students as it implies that the majority of them improved in the same manner using the scaffolding learning strategy.

These results identify the positive effect of the SpeakUp Scaffold on the speaking skills of the students. The increase in the mean score as well as the lessening of the distribution of scores between the pretest and the post-test suggest that the pedagogical intervention worked in favor of helping develop the speaking skill of the students at the high school grade 11 level.

Scaffolding interventions greatly improve students' speaking skills in different learning environments. The result of the study dovetails with that of Pishadast (2022) who opined that scaffolding interventions greatly improve the speaking skills of students. Another research that supports the findings of this study is that of Obando *et al.*, (2024) which shows that seventh-semester students demonstrated the mean change of speaking grades from 6.8 to 7.7 out of 10 following scaffolding strategies on in five sessions. Liekwise, the research of Nguyen and Alsaqqaf (2023) supports the findings of the present study. The authors found that the increase in speaking performance was significant as pre- and post-test improved from 5.5 to 6.7 endorsed the efficacy of a guided scaffolding model.

In addition, peer scaffolding has been found to establish an enabling environment for learning where it greatly enhances students' confidence in approaching speaking tasks. Studies conclude that peer interaction through guided activities like collaborative projects not only enhances the number of language practice opportunities but also eases anxiety and builds teamwork among learners (An & Hien, 2024; Nhan, 2024). For example, research on vocational students found

peer scaffolding enhanced their speaking skills as peer support gave them opportunities for mutual support to promote active involvement in speaking tasks (Azir, 2019). In addition, students felt more motivated and became more confident during peer counseling activities further as seen in the positive effect of teamwork on their speaking skills (Romadlon, 2022).

The findings of both the researches as well as the instructors confirm the positive effects of the intervention. Comparison of student performance both before and after the introduction of the SpeakUp Scaffold indicates notable improvement as seen in the post-intervention scoring sheets. Students had better organization of ideas as well as higher confidence in their performance during speaking tasks.

Teacher A saw a marked enhancement in students' self-expression during the second round of impromptu speeches, noting that their delivery was more structured and their ideas more clearly articulated compared to their initial performance. This implies that students were able to internalize the elements of successful speech delivery thanks to the scaffold's structured support.

Teacher A: “In the second round of impromptu speech, most of the students’ speeches are more organized. The way they express their thoughts are better compared to when they had their first impromptu speech activity”.

In a similar vein, Teacher B attested that most students' speaking abilities had improved noticeably. The teacher stressed that the scaffold significantly aided in the improvement that was visible among the majority of kids, even if she acknowledged that some still required more practice.

Teacher B: “The improvement in the students’ speaking performance is apparent. Though there were students who need more practice, we can see that most improved thanks to the intervention given.”

Teacher C concurred with this, stressing that after the intervention, the students were more confident and had enhanced clarity in their speaking. The teacher verified that the scaffolding played an integral part in initiating students' speaking skills to enhance, although it was realized it required persistent practice and extra support.

Teacher C: "After the intervention, the students' performance improved significantly." They spoke more confidently. Their ideas are well arranged. However, I must say that they require more practice and intervention. Still, I can state that the intervention helped the children improve their speaking skills in some way."

All of these insights and observations support the SpeakUp Scaffold's efficacy as a teaching tool. By giving students a useful framework for organizing and delivering presentations, they show how planned, scaffolded speaking exercises can effectively address typical oral communication difficulties. In addition to helping students improve their speaking abilities, the intervention increased their self-assurance and participation in class discussions.

4.2. Students’ experiences

The student interviews also support and confirm the teacher's observation of the intervention's effectiveness. Student A emphasized the fun nature of speaking activities during the interview, labeling them "fun" and stating that the experience benefited him through learning how to organize ideas and prepare a speech.

Student A: “The speaking activities are fun. It helped me learned how to organize ideas and how to make my speech.”

This is in line with the intervention's objective of making speech more structured and less frightening. In a similar vein, Student B highlighted the scaffold's importance in offering a precise structure for organizing ideas.

Student B: “The scaffold helped me organize my ideas. At least now I have idea how to construct my speech.”

This response demonstrates the value of having the guided framework, particularly for students who had historically difficulty producing and organizing language for speaking tasks. In addition, Students C and D's responses indicate another success of the scaffolding process: the capacity to link ideas with logical sequencing.

The use of “steps” to guide the student as to what to say next indicates the efficacy of the VOICE formula (Verify, Observe, Illustrate, Compare, Evaluate) in directing students through the construction of coherent and significant speech. Taken as a whole, these responses also reveal that the intervention succeeded not just in enhancing students' confidence but also in increasing their skill in planning, organizing, and presenting spoken material with more clarity and intention.

Student C: “I learned how to support my ideas. The steps helped me know what to say next.”

Student D: “It is easier to write what to say because there are steps to follow. The given structure guided me so I don’t feel lost when speaking”.

Student F stated, “The activity is fun. More fun than just the teacher teaching,” while Student C remarked, “I like it (the activities) more than ordinary listening to my teacher.” These answers demonstrate a notable change in perspective and involvement among students as a result of the SpeakUp Scaffold intervention. It is evident from both statements that interactive, student-centered activities are preferred over conventional teacher-centered instruction.

The SpeakUp Scaffold helps students have meaningful opportunities to practice the language. The move from listening passively to actually speaking empowers students, builds their confidence and makes the learning process more dynamic as well as fun. These qualitative findings indicate that the scaffolded speaking tasks not only make learning interesting but also facilitate the development of speaking ability in a manner which is both motivating and appealing to students. That the students have shown interest in such tasks indicates that the students will be more engaged and put in efforts, which can ultimately develop better oral communication skills. The intervention in effect targets both the affective as well as the cognitive level in encouraging participation while at the same time producing the language learning outcomes.

The findings support the contention that an organized, scaffolding speaking program can enhance students' speaking skills considerably by dividing the process of speaking into the manageable step-for-step stages.

4.3. Difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the learners

Table 2. Paired sample t- test on the comparison between the scores of the participants before and after the implementation of the speakup scaffold

Test	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretations
Pre	32	13.656	1.310	-9.247	31	.000	Significant
Post	32	15.625	1.264				

Table 2 presents the paired sample t-test findings on the difference between pretest and post-test scores of the Grade 11 students following the introduction of the SpeakUp Scaffold. The sample was made up of 32 subjects. The mean pretest score was 13.656 and had a standard deviation of 1.310 while the mean post-test score was higher at 15.625 and had a standard deviation of 1.264.

The calculated t-value was -9.247 with 31 df, and the p-value (Sig. 2-tailed) was .000, less than the acceptance value of the significance of 0.05 or 5%. This implies that the difference in the pre-intervention and post-intervention scores is statistically significant. The implication is that the SpeakUp Scaffold had a positive and significant impact on the students' speaking skills. The fact that there was a significant increase in the mean score from pretest to post-test implies that the intervention worked, hence rejecting the null hypothesis of lack of difference in the pre- and post-intervention levels of speaking skills.

Table 3. Cohens d on the effect of implementing the speakup scaffold in the speaking skills of the grade 11 students

N	t-value	Cohens d	Remarks
32	-9.247	1.916	**Large Effect**

The outcome of the Cohen's d calculation is shown in Table 3 from which the effect size of the SpeakUp Scaffold on Grade 11 students' speaking skills can be ascertained. Using a sample of 32 and t-value of -9.247, the calculated Cohen's d was found to be 1.916. This indicates a large effect on the basis of the generally accepted interpretation where 0.2 signifies small effect, 0.5 identifies the effect as being of medium size, and 0.8 and above signifies it as large.

A Cohen's d of 1.916 well exceeds the threshold for large effect and shows that the introduction of the SpeakUp Scaffold had a greatly significant impact on the learners' speaking abilities. This implies not just that the change in the performance of the students from the pretest to the post-test was statistically significant but also educationally significant and practically significant.

The findings indicate that the SpeakUp Scaffold made a significant contribution to the development of students' speaking skills. When paired with the findings of the paired sample t-test and Cohens d squared value, the high effect size also further supports the conclusion that the intervention was extremely successful in the development of speaking skills of Grade 11 students.

5. CONCLUSION

The implementation of the SpeakUp Scaffold intervention markedly improved the speaking skills of Grade 11 students. Post-intervention observations revealed that students became more engaged, articulate, and coherent in their oral communication. The structured nature of the scaffold enabled them to organize their thoughts more effectively, manage speaking anxiety, and deliver their ideas with increased confidence. Central to this success was the VOICE framework (Verify, Observe, Illustrate, Compare, Evaluate), which systematically guided students through the process of speech construction and delivery.

The SpeakUp Scaffold proved to be a highly effective pedagogical tool, addressing key barriers such as disorganized content, low self-esteem, and fear of public speaking. The substantial improvement in speaking performance, supported by quantitative gains in assessment scores and positive qualitative feedback from both students and teachers, underscores the practical value and transformative impact of the intervention. As such, the SpeakUp Scaffold holds strong potential for broader application in enhancing students' oral communication skills across diverse educational contexts. This shows that scaffolding strategies can be included in the curricula for language classes as these helps students develop their oral communication skills in a systematic manner. Scaffolding helps students build their confidence, fluency and ability to speak incrementally. This is because scaffolding strategy allows the teachers to dissect challenging speaking activities into manageable chunk.

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