IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL THROUGH
READERS THEATRE

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Abstract: The objectives of this study were to find out whether or not: (1) there was any significant improvement in speaking skill of the eleventh grade students of SMA N 14 Palembang after they were taught by using Readers Theatre, (2) there was any significant improvement in each aspect of speaking skill of the eleventh grade students of SMA N 14 Palembang after they were taught by using Readers Theatre, and (3) there was any significant difference in speaking skill between students who were taught by using Readers Theatre and those who were not taught by using Readers Theatre. The sample of this study was 60 eleventh grade students of SMA N 14 Palembang, who were divided into control and expreimental groups, and each group had 30 students. To collect the data, each group was given a pretest and a posttest. The data were analysed using paired sample t test and independent sample t-test. The result showed: (1) there was a significant improvement in students' speaking skill of the experimental group after they were taught by using Readers Theatre (mean diff=22.10; p-value=.000), (2) the mean score of each aspect of speaking skill in the posttest was higher than in the pretest and p-values were <0.05 and (3) the mean difference of posttest of experimental group was significantly higher than the control group (p-value=.000). In conclusion, Readers Theatre can be used to improve student's speaking skill.

Key words: *Improving Speaking Skill, Readers Theatre, eleventh graders*

Communication takes many forms and one of them is through oral communication or speaking. Chaney and Burk (1998, p.13) define Speaking as "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts". It means that speaking holds an important role in communication because by speaking, people can share their ideas. For this reason, it is worth saying that oral communication is the fundamental way for people to interact with others.

According to Ur (1996, p.120), "Of all the four skills (listening,

speaking, reading, and writing), speaking seems intuitively the most important: people who know a language are referred to a 'speakers' of that language, as if speaking included all other kinds of knowing, and many if not most foreign language learners are primarily interested in learning to speak." It is implied that someone who has good proficiency in English speaking is likely to be addressed as a person who is good at English although he or she may not be good at the other three skills.

Taking into consideration the role of English as an International language, the ability to communicate in English is important. For example, for the students who have good speaking proficiency, they will not have a problem when they are invited as a presenter in an international conference. Considering the importance of English as an international language used for communication among countries in the world, Indonesian government has set English as one of the compulsory subjects which is taught at secondary school. As stated in Law of National Ministry of Education No 22 year 2006, in Indonesia, the teaching of English for senior high school students should emphasize on the students' ability to achieve high proficiency in the four language skills; they are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The importance of the four language skill is also pointed out by Harmer (2001, p.52) who states, "one skill cannot be performed with another. It is impossible to speak in conversation if you do not listen as well, and people seldom write without reading." It can be said that speaking is very important, but it must be taught integratedly with other skills so that

students can improve their English proficiency.

As previously mentioned, in Indonesia, English is a foreign language so that the learning of English, especially speaking skill is very challenging for Indonesian students. It is because the opportunities for the students to use English outside the classroom is limited. The problems relating to English speaking are also highlighted by Ur (1996, p.121) who outlines some problems that may prohibit the students to develop their speaking skill, such as lack of ideas, shyness, low participation, and preference to use mother language.

English speaking is also a problem for Indonesian students. Based on the data published by Education First English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) 2012, Indonesia was at rank 27th out of 54 countries. The EF EPI data published in 2013 also showed that Indonesia was at number 25 out of 60 countries and the earliest data in 2014 showed that Indonesia was at number 28 out of 63 countries. Although the EPI data did not measure oral communication in particular, but the lower score in English proficiency suggested that the students have problem in oral communication.

Problems in English speaking also faced by the students of SMA N 14 Palembang. Based on the observation that the writer did at SMA N 14 Palembang (South Sumatera), most of the eleventh grade students still face many difficulties to communicate in English. For examples, when the teacher did the brainstorming activity at the beginning of the learning process, the students would rather use their own mother tongue language in giving their responses answering the teacher's

question. The writer also noticed that when the teacher asked them to read aloud the passage, they miss pronounced many words. Next, whenever the teacher involved them in a conversation or a talk, most of the students refused if they were pointed as the first students to perform in front of the class, it indicates that they were lack of confidence. In addition, the observation result also showed that even though most of the English teachers at SMA N 14 Palembang have an English academic background, teaching speaking is still considered far from expectation. This is indicated by the teachers' reluctance to speak English during the teaching and learning process. Moreover, the English teacher also face the problem of getting an idea about how to make an interesting speaking class activities in order to avoid boring speaking class. It is because the teacher only uses book as the media and does not use any other technique that can encourage students' interest of learning English speaking. All those problems effect the score of their daily exercises in English subject. The scores were between 50-75, while the criteria of minimum score for English subject was 75. This fact was also supported by the answers that writer got from the English teacher that the writer interviewed.

Taking into consideration the importance of speaking and the problems in Speaking English faced by the eleventh grade students of SMA N 14 Palembang, the writer applied Readers Theater (RT) to teach the students in order to improve their ability in speaking. Kelleher (1997) defines Readers' Theater as "the oral interpretation of literature presented by readers who bring forth the full expression of the literature through their oral reading" (p.6). One of previous studies that applied RT was the one conducted by Martha and Ardi (2013) who got involved senior high school students in Padang. Martha and Ardi (2013) found that there was a significant improvement in the students speaking skill after they were taught by using RT. It was because this strategy gave a chance for the students to express their feeling, emotion, and ideas all together. Furthermore, Martha and Ardi (2013) found that the lack of vocabulary problem could also be solved. In addition, the previous study done by Patrick (2008) in Taiwan showed that EFL students did have positive experiences by using RT in learning communication skills. RT also helped EFL learners to communicate their ideas in group setting when discussing the script.

McRae (1985, p.7) states that if one group of students presents a scene to the class, the stresses and intonations used can be picked up and evaluated by the 'audience.' This exercise goes beyond comprehension, taking students closer to the heart of spoken interaction, finding what possible underlying discourse there may be not expressed in words. Therefore, it can be inferred that Reader's Theatre (RT) boosted students' confidence in handling spoken English by giving them opportunities in using direct speech to make suggestions, offer opinions, or to disagree.

Based on the description, this present study was conducted to answer the following research queations: 1) Is there any significant improvement in speaking skill of the eleventh grade students of SMA N 14 Palembang after they are taught by using Readers Theatre?, 2) Is there any significant

improvement in each aspect of speaking skill of the eleventh grade students of SMA N 14 Palembang after they are taught by using Readers Theatre?, 3) Is there any significant difference in speaking skill between students who are taught by using Readers Theatre and those who are not taught by using Readers Theatre?

METHODOLOGY

This study applied a quasi experimental design. There were control and experimental groups. The population of this study was 317 eleventh grade students of SMAN 14 Palembang, and the sample was 60 tenth grade students; each control and eperimental group had 30 students.

The technique used to choose the sample was purposive sampling, in which the researcher applied some steps to select the sample: taught by the same English teacher and shared similar number of students. In addition, based on the interview with the English teacher of both classes, the students' speaking performance was considered low among the other three skills. Only the experimental groups that was given the treatment; the students were divided into several groups, and each group was given different stories. First, the students had to read the story and then rewrote it in form of script based on their own words. Finally, they have to perfom the story by reading it aloud in front of the class.

Both experimental and control groups were given a speaking test in the form of pre-test and post-test. The test was constructed based on content validity (i.e., experts' judgment). To check the reliability of the results of the students' speaking test, inter rater reliability was used. The raters scored the test by using a rubric provided by the writer. Based on the correlation analysis, the reliability coefficient of pre-test and post-test of experimental group and pre-test and post-test of control group were 0.945, 0.816, 0.839, and 0.501, respectively and it suggested that the results of the students' speaking test checked by the two raters were considered reliable.

To analyze the data, paired sample t-test and independent sample t-test were applied. Paired sample t-test was used to analyze data gathered from pre-test and post-test of experimental group, whereas independent sample t-test was used to analyze data gathered from experimental group and control group.

FINDINGS
The Score Distribution based on Five Categories

The result of students' speaking skill were analyzed based on following five categories: Excellent, Good, Average, Low, and Fail.

The score inverval was between 1-100 (Table 1).

Table 1
Result of the pretests and posttests of exp groups (N=30)

Score Interval	Category	Control Group			
		Pretest		Posttest	
		N	%	N	%
86-100	Excellent	0	0	4	13.3
71-85	Good	0	0	22	73.3
56-70	Average	21	70	14	13.3
41-55	Low	7	23.3	0	0
≤40	Fail	2	6.6	0	0
Total		30	100	30	100

As shown in Table 1, there were 21 students in the experimental group whose pre-test score belonged to Average category, while 7 students (23.33%) were in Low category and 2 students (6.6%) were in Fail category.

After the students were exposed to the treatment, 4 students got score that belonged to Excellent category (13.33%), 4 students belonged to Average category, 22 students belonged to Good category (73.34%), and no more students belonged to Fail and Poor categories.

Table 2
Result of the pretests and posttests of control groups (N=30)

Score Interval	Category	Control Group			
		Pretest		Posttest	
		N	%	N	%
86-100	Excellent	0	0	0	0
71-85	Good	3	10	9	30
56-70	Average	21	70	18	60
41-55	Low	6	20	3	10
≤40	Fail	0	0	0	0
Total		30	100	30	100

Table 1 also shows the results of the pre-test and post-test for the control group. There were 21 students who got pre-test score belonged to Average category, 6 students (20%) were in Low category, 3 students (10%) were in Good category.

The result of the post-test showed that 3 students (10%) were still in Low category, 18 students (60%) were in Average category, and 9 students (30%) were in Good category. However, there were no students in Excellent category.

The Results of Normality and Homogeneity Tests

Before doing a statistical analysis, the normality of the data distribution was checked. Each of the data from the pre-test and post test of the experimental and control groups was analyzed by using One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

The results showed that the significance values of the experimental group's pre-test and post-test data were .070 and .309, respectively. Meanwhile, the control group's pre-test and post-test data showed significance values that were higher than .05 (.090 and .119). Since the p-values of the data from both groups were higher than 0.05, it can be concluded that the data obtained were considered normal.

Next, homogenity tests were conducted to know whether the sample groups from the sample had similar variances. The writer used Levene's test to know the homogenity in groups (experimental and control groups). The data were homogeneous if significance > 0.05. Because the results showed that the significance values of the pre-test and post-test in the experimental group was (.000<0.05) and in the control group was (.001<0.05), the results of the significance of the pre-test in the experimental and control groups was (.433>0.05), and the results of the significance of the post-test and post-test in the experimental and control groups was (.262>0.05). It could be stated that data in experimental and control groups were homogeneous.

The Result of Paired Sample t-test and Independent Sample t-test

To conduct the paired sample t-test and independent sample t-test, raw scores of the students' speaking skill test were used.

Paired sample t-test was used to answer research question number one (*Was there any significant improvement in speaking skill of the eleventh grade students of SMA N 14 Palembang after they were taught by using Readers Theatre?*).

The result of paired sample t-test is presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Result of Paired Sample t-test in the Experimental Group

Group	Test	Mean	Mean Diff	Sig. (2-tailed)
Exp Group	Pretest	57.13	22.10	.000
	Posttest	79.23		
Control Group	Pretest	60.93	6.73	.000
	Posttest	67.66		

As shown in Table 3, the mean score of the posttest (79.23) was higher than the mean score of the pretest (57.13), with the mean difference 22.10. Since the p-value was less than 0.05, it could be said that there was significant improvement in the speaking achievement of the eleventh grade students of SMA N 14 Palembang after they were taught by using Readers Theatre.

Meanwhile, the result of paired sample t-test in the control group showed that the mean score of the posttest (67.66) was higher than the mean score of pretest (60.93), with the mean difference was 6.73. Since p-value was less than 0.05, it could also be concluded that there was a significant improvement in control group.

Paired sample t-test analysis was also conducted for all the aspects of speaking skill in the experimental group to answer research question number two (*Was there any significant improvement in each aspect of speaking skill of the eleventh grade students of SMA N 14 Palembang after they are taught by using Readers Theatre?*).

The result of paired sample t-test analysis for each aspect of students' speaking achievement is presented in Table 4. As shown in Table 4, there was significant improvement in each aspect of students' speaking achievement,

suggesting that there was a significant improvement in each aspect of students' speaking achievement after they were taught by using Readers Theatre.

Table 4
Result of Paired Sample t-test for Each Aspect of Speaking Skill of Exp Group

Aspect of speaking	Pretest Posttest of Exp. group		Mean diff.	Sig.
Content	10.80	16.60	5.80	.000
Fluency	12.53	15.86	3.33	.000
Pronunciation	11.73	15.00	3.26	.000
Vocabulary	11.13	16.66	5.53	.000
Grammar	10.93	15.13	4.20	.000

However, in the control group (Table 5), there was one aspect (pronunciation) which did not significantly improved because the p-value was .083.

Table 5
Result of Paired Sample t-test for Each Aspect of Speaking Skill of Control Group

Aspect of speaking	Pretest Posttest of Cont. group		Mean diff.	Sig.
Content	12.13	14.46	2.33	.000
Fluency	13.20	13.86	.66	.010
Pronunciation	11.73	12.13	.40	.083
Vocabulary	12.40	14.60	2.20	.000
Grammar	11.60	11.60	1.00	.005

To answer research question number three (*Was there any significant difference in speaking skill of the eleventh grade students of SMA N 14 Palembang between students who are taught by using Readers Theatre and those who are not taught by using Readers Theatre?*), independent sample t-test analysis was applied. Table 4 presents the result of independent sample t-test of post test scores of both groups.

Table 6
Result of Independent Sample t-test for the Posttest

Aspects	Post test Ex.	Posttest Control Group	Mean Diff	Sig. 2 tailed
Content	16.6	14.46	2.13	.000
Fluency	15.8	13.86	2.00	.000
Pronun Citation	15.0	12.13	2.86	.000
Voca Bulary	16.6	14.60	2.06	.000
Grammar	15.1	12.60	2.53	.000

Table 6 shows that the mean difference of the posttest scores of control and experimental groups was significantly different since the *p*-value was less than 0.05. It can be concluded that there was significant difference in the posttest between the experimental and control groups. The analysis of the Independent Sample t-test for each Aspect of Students' Speaking Skill was also done. The statistical analysis for speaking skill score per aspects is shown in Table 7.

Table 7
Result of Independent Sample t-test

Group	Mean	Mean Diff	Sig. (2-tailed)
Exp	79.23	11.56	.000
Control	67.66		

Table 7 shows that there were significant differences in the mean score between postest of control and experimental group for each aspect of students' speaking skill. Next, further analysis –Multiple regression- was conducted.

Multiple regression analyses was conducted to know the significant contribution in each aspect of the students' speaking skills after they are taught by using Readers Theatre. Even though this was not the focus of the study, but it was considered important to know which aspects that gave significant contributions to students' speaking achievement.

Table 8
Result of Multiple regression

Model	R	R Square	Change Statistics	
			R Square Change	Sig. F Change
1	.874[a]	.764	.764	.000
2	.960[b]	.921	.157	.000
3	.979[c]	.958	.037	.000
4	.993[d]	.987	.029	.000
5	1.000[e]	1.000	.013	

a. Predictors: vocabulary

b. Predictors: vocabulary, pronunciation

c. Predictors: vocabulary, pronunciation, content

d. Predictors: vocabulary, pronunciation, content, grammar

e. Predictors: vocabulary, pronunciation, content, grammar, fluency

Table 8 shows that each aspect of speaking gave contribution to the students' speaking achievement; the contributions were as follows:; *Vocabulary* gave contribution 76.4%, *Pronunciation* 15.7%, *Content* 3.7%, *Grammar* 2.9%, and *Fluency* 1.3%.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of this study, the writer found that there was a significant improvement before and after the students were taught by using Readers Theatre. Based on students' speaking achievement score distribution, there was no more students whose scores were in Fail and Low categories. There was also significant improvement in control group. The students' speaking achievement scores of both experimental and control groups improved significantly as shown in their pretest to posttest. However, the experimental group showed much

better improvement than the control group.

The result of paired sample t-test showed that the mean differences of pretest and posttest in experimental group were significantly improved. It could be concluded the students made significant improvement in their speaking performance after they were taught by using Readers Theatre.. Furthermore, the mean difference between the posttest and pretest in the experimental group was higher than the mean difference between posttest and pretest in the control group, suggesting that the improvement in experimental group that was taught by using Readers Theatre as the strategy was better than the control group that was not given any treatment.

The results of this present study were in line with what the previous studies that also applied Readers Theatre found. For example, Leong and Boutcher (2001) found that Readers Theatre enhanced the oral skills of EFL learners as they learned to experiment with their voices by varying the pitch and volume to portray the character; it also boosted their confidence in handling spoken dialogue. In addition, McKay (2008) found that Readers Theatre increases students' comprehension, literature appreciation and their engagement. Similarly, Prescott (2003) reports that Reader's Theatre can boost students' listening and speaking skills, enhance confidence, and transform reluctant readers into book lovers. Readers theatre is a hands-on approach that values different learning modalities. It blurs the boundaries between reading and drama.

Based on the result of the independent sample t-test it showed that there was significant difference between the mean score of posttest in the experimental and control group. The mean score of the posttest in the experimental group was higher than the mean score of the posttest in the control group. It can be concluded that there was significant difference in the posttest between experimental and control group. The paired sample t-test analysis also showed that Readers Theater could improve the aspects of students' speaking achievement.

The result of multiple regression analysis also showed that each aspect of speaking achievement gave significant contribution to students' speaking achievement after the students were taught by using Readers Theatre. The highest contribution for the speaking skill was vocabulary (76.4%). The writer could interpret that the students' progress on vocabulary was influenced by the implementation of the strategy. The writer also used many different stories in order to expose the students with the vocabulary that they were unfamiliar with. The stories given enable them to know the meaning of its vocabularies. In addition, by knowing so many new vocabularies, they also practicing the way to pronounce the words correctly, that is why the second contribution was pronunciation. The third contribution was from content; it was likely because a narrative story has the exact content that the students could not change. Meanwhile, the contribution of grammar was lower than the aspects above. The writer assumed that the limitation of time made the students did not have more time to get grammar in the intervention class. The last, the lowest aspect was fluency. The students learnt to speak fluently mostly by reading during the teaching and learning English by using Readers Theatre strategy. The writer could

interprete that the students had a limitation time to speak freely without text in order to help them speak fluently because they only practiced to speak when they commented on their friends' performance.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The writer concluded that Readers Theatre is significantly effective to improve the students speaking skill. It can be seen that the students in the experimental group showed significant improvement from prettest to posttest in speaking achievement and all aspects of speaking achievement. In addition, the result of this present study showed that there was significant difference in speaking achievement between the students in the experimental group and control group. Significant contributions were also given by each aspect of speaking achievement to the students' speaking achievement.

Based on the results of this study, the writer offered some suggestions for the English teacher, for the students, and other researchers related to this field. English Teachers are expected to know and apply a strategy of teaching that helps their students learn English speaking effectively. This study shows that Readers Theatre strategy may become an alternative in teaching English, especially for speaking skill. In relation to the teaching and learning English speaking using Readers Theatre strategy, the students should be active because Readers Theater strategy requires them to work together and help them express themselves. For future study, data collection by using interview can be conducted so that the information about the challenges that the students have in relation to the application of Readers Theater can be obtained.

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