

Improving Students' English Speaking Achievement Through a Group Podcast Strategy

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A B S T R A C T

This study aims to improve students' English speaking achievement through the implementation of a group podcast strategy at Wittaya Islamic School, Thailand. This research employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) conducted in two cycles involving planning, action, observation, and reflection. The participants were sixth-grade students who experienced difficulties in speaking due to limit vocabulary, low confidence, and fear of making mistakes. Data were collected through speaking tests, observation sheets of teacher and student activities, and field notes. The findings reveal a significant improvement in students' speaking achievement, with test scores increasing from 52.12% in Cycle I to 84.62% in Cycle II. Teacher activity improved from 68% to 85% while student activity increased from 60.73% to 75%. The results indicate that the group podcast strategy effectively enhances students' speaking skills by promoting collaboration, increasing confidence, and providing meaningful speaking practice.. therefore, group podcasts can be considered an effective digital learning strategy for EFL contexts, particularly in Islamic secondary schools.

Keywords: *English Skills, Strategy, Group Podcast*

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a systematic and planned process that aims to develop individual potential, both in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, so that individuals can function optimally in their personal, social, and professional lives. As a conscious effort, education is not only oriented towards the transfer of knowledge, but also towards the formation of character, attitudes, and skills that are relevant to the demands of the times. In an academic context, education is seen as a fundamental instrument in producing high-quality, competitive human resources with noble personalities, enabling them to make a real contribution to the advancement of society and national development (Saragih et al., 2021).

Language skills are one of the fundamental competencies that need to be developed in the educational process, because language functions as the main medium for thinking, communicating, and understanding the world around us (MUKTI, 2021). The purpose of education is not only to equip students with knowledge, but also to train them to be able to express ideas, feelings, and understanding effectively. With good language skills, students can communicate ideas clearly, logically, and critically, thereby supporting the achievement of educational goals in shaping intelligent and competitive individuals. Speaking skills refer to the ability to articulate ideas verbally, covering aspects such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and structure. This involves expressing thoughts effectively and engaging in communication, which is important for successful interaction in various contexts (Hidayatullah, 2024).

Speaking is a productive language skill that plays a central role in communicative competence. (Brown, 2007) states that speaking involves not only the production of accurate sounds but also the appropriate use of vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and pragmatic

competence in real communication in EFL contexts, learners often face limited exposure to authentic language use, anxiety, and fear of making mistakes, which negatively affect their speaking performance. Therefore, speaking instruction should emphasize meaningful interaction, repeated practice, and supportive classroom environments to facilitate oral communication.

English language proficiency in today's era of globalization has become one of the important competencies that need to be developed through education. English not only functions as a tool for international communication, but also as a means of accessing information, knowledge, and technology, most of which are presented in that language. Therefore, English language education has a strategic role in improving the capacity of students to be able to compete at the national and global levels. In addition to being a communication skill, according to (Khotimah, 2020) Mastery of English also has an impact on improving students' academic skills. Access to scientific literature, international journals, and digital-based learning resources often uses English, so the ability to understand and process information in that language becomes a distinct advantage. This confirms that education that emphasizes English proficiency will broaden students' knowledge and enrich their perspectives in various disciplines.

Furthermore, English proficiency in education also has implications for the development of soft skills, such as confidence, public speaking skills, and cross-cultural collaboration skills (Nurul Muttaqien & Awiria, 2022). Through English language learning, students not only acquire linguistic skills, but also the social skills needed to face the challenges of the world of work and international interactions. Thus, the integration of English language skills into the education system is a strategic effort to produce a generation that is adaptive, communicative, and highly competitive in the global era.

Based on observations made through direct learning and interviews with sixth grade homeroom teachers in Thailand, students' English speaking skills are still classified as low. This condition is evident from the students' limitations in constructing simple sentences orally, their low confidence when speaking, and their limited vocabulary. The factors causing this low speaking ability include a lack of opportunities for intensive practice in class, teaching methods that still focus on reading and writing, and a learning environment that does not support the active use of English. This is a significant problem because speaking skills are one of the main competencies in foreign language proficiency, especially English, which is essential for facing the demands of globalization, continuing studies, and competing in the world of work. Therefore, strategic efforts are needed to improve students' speaking skills through a more communicative and contextual learning approach.

In addition, students' low English speaking skills are also influenced by psychological factors such as shyness, fear of making mistakes, and low motivation in using the language. Many students are reluctant to try speaking because they are worried about being ridiculed by their peers or judged as incompetent by their teachers. On the other hand, the limited availability of interactive learning media and resources is also an obstacle in creating a learning environment that supports the mastery of speaking skills. In fact, this skill is very important for shaping students' communicative competence, which is not only useful in the school environment, but also in their daily lives and future. Thus, improving English speaking skills needs serious attention through the application of innovative, participatory, and practice-oriented learning strategies.

The low level of speaking ability of these students prevents them from communicating globally. Therefore, an appropriate strategy is needed to improve students' English speaking skills. English learning strategies can be defined as a set of plans, methods, and techniques that are systematically designed to facilitate the process of language acquisition, both in terms of receptive aspects (listening and reading) and productive aspects (speaking and writing). In an academic context, learning strategies are understood as pedagogical approaches that aim to create conducive learning conditions, increase active student engagement, and foster communication-oriented language skills. These strategies not only include the selection of teaching methods, but also the use of media, the determination of activities, and the

management of interactions between teachers and students so that English learning objectives can be achieved optimally. Thus, learning strategies play an important role as a conceptual framework that guides teachers in designing, implementing, and evaluating the language learning process to suit the needs and characteristics of learners (Abdimas et al., 2025).

One strategy that is suitable for improving students' English language skills is through group podcast strategies. Podcasts are audio broadcasts distributed via the internet, accessible through various platforms, allowing users to consume content at their convenience. The podcast strategy in learning can be defined as a pedagogical approach that utilizes digital audio media based on voice recordings (podcasts) as a means of delivering material, reinforcing understanding, and developing students' critical and communicative thinking skills. This strategy emphasizes the use of podcasts both as a learning resource and as a learning product produced by students, thereby encouraging active engagement, independent learning, and increased motivation. With its flexible, accessible, and contextual learning experience characteristics, podcasts are a strategic instrument in supporting the achievement of learning objectives, especially in the context of 21st-century education that demands creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy.

A podcast is an audio or video media file that is released periodically via the Internet and can be downloaded through web syndication.⁷ Meanwhile, Beare mentions that podcasts are very attractive to English learners because they provide a means for students to gain access to "authentic" listening sources on almost any subject that interests them. The benefits of the group podcast strategy in learning lie in its ability to foster collaborative skills while improving the quality of material comprehension (Toyib et al., 2024). Through group podcast production activities, students are encouraged to share roles, exchange ideas, and develop effective communication skills. In addition, this strategy also trains critical thinking skills because each group member is required to process information, compile scripts, and present content systematically. Group podcasts provide space for creativity and expression, thereby increasing learning motivation and building self-confidence (Nasution & Saragih, 2025).

Despite the growing body of research highlighting the effectiveness of podcast in improving students' language skills, most existing studies focus on individual podcast use or teacher-produced podcasts. There is still limited research that specifically examines the implementation of Group Podcast Strategies to enhance speaking skills, particularly in EFL secondary school contexts. Moreover, studies addressing students' psychological barriers such as low confidence, fear of making mistakes, and speaking anxiety through collaborative podcast activities remain scarce. This research gap indicates the need for further investigation into group podcast strategies as an innovative approach to improving into group podcast strategies as an innovative approach to improving students' English speaking achievement.

The implementation of the podcast group strategy is expected to be a highly effective strategy for addressing the low speaking skills of Islamic Wittaya sixth grade high school students. The benefits of the podcast group strategy in improving students' English language skills lie in strengthening authentic communication skills based on collaboration. Through this activity, students are actively involved in the process of discussion, planning, and content production that requires consistent use of English. Interaction within the group not only encourages courage to speak, but also improves listening skills, expands vocabulary, and trains more accurate pronunciation. In addition, this strategy creates a meaningful and contextual learning environment, as students practice using language according to real communication needs. Thus, podcast groups can serve as an innovative learning medium that strengthens students' English skills in an integrated manner, both cognitively, affectively, and psychomotorically.

In Islamic school contexts, learning strategies are expected not only to improve academic achievement but also to foster collaboration, mutual respect, and confidence among students. EFL learners in Thailand, particularly in Islamic schools, often have limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom. Therefore, collaborative learning strategies such as group podcasts are highly suitable, as they provide a supportive and low-anxiety

environment that encourages students to practice speaking English actively while aligning with cultural and educational values.

In observing the improvement in students' English language skills through the podcast group strategy, the researcher conducted a study related to "Improving Students' English Speaking Achievement Through A Group Podcast Strategy".

METHOD

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) following the model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart, consisting of planing, action, observation, and reflection. The research was conducted in two cycles at Wittaya Islaim school Thailand, involving sixth-grade students. Each cycle consisted of two meetings focusing on speaking activities through group podcast production. The instruments used in this study included speaking tests to measure students' speaking achievement, observation sheets to assess teacher and student activities, and field notes to record classroom interactions. Speaking performance was assessed based on pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and confidence. Data were analyzed quantitatively using percentage improvement and qualitatively through reflective analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of the group podcast strategy.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data obtained by the researcher regarding students' understanding of the Part of Body material and their ability to speak and recognize body parts as reflected in their test results. The results of the students' tests in the pre-cycle, cycle I, and cycle II can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. Student Test Result

Cycle	Category	Total Score	Improvement
Pre-cycle	Low	48,53%	-
Cycle I	Fair	52,12%	3,59%
Cycle II	Very Good	84,62%	32,5%

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the initial condition before the method was applied (pre-cycle) showed that the average student score was 48.53% in the "low" category, indicating that most students did not understand the material taught related to parts of the body. After applying the podcast media in the first cycle, there was an increase to 52.12% in the "poor" category. Furthermore, improvements were made to the learning process, learning tools, and learning methods, resulting in a score of 84.62% in the second cycle. This increase indicates a category of "very sufficient" with an increase of 32.5% points.

The teacher's skills in the learning process were assessed by conducting observations using observation sheets by the researcher on the teacher in cycle I and cycle II, as shown in the following table

Table 2. Teacher Activity Observation Results

Cycle	Category	Total Score	Improvement
Cycle I	Fair	68%	-
Cycle II	Very Good	93%	25%

The data on teacher activities presented in Table 2 shows an improvement in the quality of teachers' performance in managing learning using the group podcast strategy. In cycle I, teacher activities scored 68% in the "poor" category, indicating that teachers were still in the process of adjusting to the implementation of this new strategy. Several aspects that may still need improvement at this stage include time management, unclear instructions, or a lack of variety in facilitating student group discussions. However, after reflection and improvement in cycle II, teacher activity increased significantly to 85% in the "very good" category, showing an increase of 17%. This improvement illustrates that teachers have successfully addressed the shortcomings of the previous cycle and have become more skilled in applying the group podcast strategy. Teachers became more effective in providing guidance, facilitating group work, giving constructive feedback, and creating a conducive learning atmosphere for students to practice speaking English. This proves that continuous reflection and improvement in Classroom Action

Research are very important for improving teachers' pedagogical competence in implementing innovative learning strategies.

Table 3. Student Activity Observation Results

Cycle	Score Obtained	Percentage	Category	Improvement
Cycle I	1579	60,73%	Adequate	-
Cycle II	1898	75%	Good	14,27%

Table 3 presents observational data on student activity, showing an increase in student engagement and active participation in the learning process using the group podcast strategy. In cycle I, student activity scored 1579 with a percentage of 60.73%, which is classified as adequate. This achievement shows that students began to engage in learning activities, but their participation was not yet optimal because there were still students who were passive, lacked confidence in speaking, or were not yet accustomed to the group work system in podcast production. Some obstacles that may be encountered at this stage are students' lack of understanding of work procedures, uneven distribution of roles, or limited courage to express ideas in English. After improving the strategy and strengthening motivation in cycle II, student activity increased to 1898 with a percentage of 75%, which is in the good category, showing an increase of 14.27%. This increase indicates that students are becoming more active in group discussions, more courageous in expressing their opinions, and showing greater enthusiasm in the podcast production process. This active involvement also has a positive impact on increasing students' confidence in speaking English, their ability to collaborate, and the development of better communication skills.

Table 4. Comparison of cycle I and II Improvements

Indicator	Cycle I	Cycle II	Difference
Teacher Activity	68%	85%	17%
Student Activity	60,73%	75%	14,27%
Test Results	52,12%	84,62%	32,5%

Table 4 presents a comprehensive comparison between the results of cycle I and cycle II, covering three main indicators, namely teacher activity, student activity, and student test results. These data provide a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of implementing the group podcast strategy in improving students' English speaking skills. Teacher activity increased by 17% from 68% to 85%, indicating a significant improvement in teaching quality and classroom management. Student activity increased by 14.27% from 60.73% to 75%, indicating increased student engagement and active participation in the learning process. Most notably, student test scores increased by 32.5% from 52.12% to 84.62%, showing the largest jump among the three indicators. This pattern of improvement illustrates a positive correlation between the improvement in the quality of teacher and student activities and the learning outcomes achieved. As teachers become more skilled at facilitating learning and students become more actively involved in the podcast production process, the impact is clearly seen in a very significant improvement in students' speaking skills. This comparative data proves that the group podcast strategy is effective in improving the English speaking skills of sixth grade high school students at Wittaya Islamic School in Thailand, and shows that continuous improvement through reflection in Classroom Action Research contributes significantly to the achievement of learning objectives.

Discussion of Research Finding

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of the group podcast strategy significantly improved students' English speaking achievement. The most notable improvement occurred in students' test scores, which increased from 52.12% in Cycle I to 84.62% in Cycle II. This improvement indicates that group podcast activities provided students with meaningful and repeated opportunities to practice speaking English in authentic contexts. Through collaborative planning, recording, and presentation, students were encouraged to actively use English rather than passively receive instruction.

The increase in student activity from 60.73% to 75% further confirms that the group podcast strategy successfully enhanced student engagement in the learning process. Students became more confident in expressing ideas, participating in discussions, and performing

speaking tasks. This improvement can be attributed to the collaborative nature of group podcasts, which reduced students' fear of making mistakes and created a supportive learning environment. This finding aligns with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which states that lower anxiety and increased motivation facilitate language acquisition.

In addition, the improvement in teacher activity from 68% to 85% reflects the effectiveness of reflective teaching practices within the Classroom Action Research framework. As the teacher refined instructional techniques across cycles, classroom management and facilitation of group work became more effective. This supports the view that successful integration of digital learning strategies requires not only appropriate media but also teachers' pedagogical readiness and adaptability.

These results are in line with research conducted by (Baharuddin, 2023) and (Muliatik & Alwashliyah, 2024) which reported that podcast-based learning significantly improves students' speaking skills, particularly in terms of confidence and fluency. However, this study extends previous findings by emphasizing the effectiveness of Group-Based Podcast Production in an Islamic EFL school context in Thailand. The collaborative podcast strategy not only improved linguistic competence but also fostered cooperation, confidence, and active participation, which are essential components of effective speaking instruction.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the group podcast strategy effectively improves students' English-speaking achievement in an EFL context. Through two cycles of Classroom Action Research, students demonstrated significant improvement in speaking performance, confidence, and classroom participation. The strategy encouraged collaborative learning, authentic communication, and active engagement, resulting in higher speaking achievement. Pedagogically, this study implies that group podcasts can be integrated as an alternative digital learning strategy to enhance speaking instruction, particularly in Islamic secondary schools where students require supportive and collaborative learning environments. However, this study was limited to a small sample and a short intervention period. Future research is recommended to explore the long-term impact of group podcast strategies and their application in different educational contexts and language skills.

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