

Using Poetry to Improve the Speaking Skills of Eleventh-Grade Students

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ABSTRACT

Speaking is a crucial skill in learning English because it enables students to achieve communication goals. However, many students still experience difficulties in speaking due to limited vocabulary, pronunciation problems, and lack of confidence. This study aimed to investigate the implementation of poetry in speaking and to determine its effectiveness in enhancing the speaking skills of eleventh-grade students at MAN 1 Surakarta during the 2025/2026 academic year. This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) in two cycles, each consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The participants were 36 students of class XI F-11. The data were collected through observation, interviews, speaking tests, and documentation. Students' speaking performance was assessed using a speaking assessment rubric adapted from Brown (2007). The results revealed that poetry improved students' pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, grammar, and comprehension, as the mean score increased from 49.4 in the pre-test to 76.6 in post-test 2. Therefore, poetry can be considered an effective medium for improving students' speaking skills.

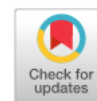
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INTRODUCTION

Language is an essential tool for human communication. Among the languages spoken worldwide, English is recognized as an international language that serves as a lingua franca, enabling communication across countries, languages, and cultures. It is commonly used in various fields, including education, business, technology, science, and international communication (Rao, 2019b). Therefore, English has become an important subject taught at different levels of education in Indonesia, from kindergarten to university level.

English in Indonesia serves as a foreign language studied by many people. In studying English as a foreign language, students must master four main skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Among these skills, speaking is considered the most important skill in this global generation because it allows students to express ideas and opinions clearly to achieve their academic and future goals (Rao, 2019a). Through speaking activities, students can practice English in real situations and improve their confidence in interacting with others. However, students still face difficulties in mastering speaking, caused by both linguistic factors such as limited vocabulary and poor pronunciation, in addition to psychological factors like anxiety (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017).

The difficulties also faced by Indonesian students in mastering English, especially in the speaking aspect, even though they have learned English since kindergarten. Melansari et al. (2025) stated that these challenges stem from interconnected factors, including linguistic limitations such as limited vocabulary and grammatical errors. Psychological obstacle where students facing anxiety and fear of making mistakes, and pedagogical constraints, where teacher-centered learning methods limit students' opportunities to practice. Since students do not use English daily because it is not their mother tongue, school becomes the primary environment for developing oral skills. Nevertheless, when schools do not use engaging

materials and effective learning media to encourage students to use English, the students' ability remains stuck, and they feel afraid to use English. Therefore, effective learning media are needed to overcome these obstacles and build better students' speaking proficiency.

Based on preliminary observations at MAN 1 Surakarta, the difficulties in learning English speaking were also faced by the students, especially in eleventh grade. The students' speaking skills were still weak due to several problems, such as: many students showed low motivation and interest in English, they lacked confidence in speaking English; frequently refused to speak English in front of the class or with their friends, they assumed that English is a difficult subject to understand, and they were worried about making mistakes because they did not know the vocabulary and pronunciation. In addition, the classroom atmosphere was also uncondusive to the teaching and learning process. The students were busy with their mobile phones and not focused on the learning activities.

The speaking problem at MAN 1 Surakarta was reflected in students' speaking scores. The minimum score, or *Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal* (KKM) for English, was 75, yet the students in class XI F 11 did not reach this standard. Their low speaking skills were influenced by limited vocabulary, weak fluency, poor pronunciation skills, frequent grammatical errors, and low speaking comprehension. These conditions indicated that students needed more meaningful and engaging learning media to encourage them to speak English better.

Techniques to address this problem are various; one of them is poetry. Poetry is a type of literature that uses beautiful words, sound patterns, and language features; it is an effective medium for learning to speak, which helps students improve communication skills through enriched vocabulary, fluency, creativity, sentence formation, and syntax (Deepa & Ilankumaran, 2018). Unlike other conventional approaches such as spontaneous speech or role play, which often include a high level of speaking performance anxiety because students are forced to simultaneously formulate grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation under pressure. In contrast, poetry provides students with structure that reduces cognitive overload, which makes students focus on practicing pronunciation, intonation, stress, and expression while enhancing their confidence in speaking.

Poetry was selected since it offers students opportunities to practice by reading and performing poetry; poetry has a good impact on enhancing speaking components, especially vocabulary, fluency, and pronunciation (Suhadi, 2023). Rhythm and rhyming guide students to master word stress and accurate articulation through pronunciation drills. Students can also learn new vocabulary through context. Regarding fluency practice, repeated oral recitation trains students to reduce hesitation and speech disfluency. Poetry can also make the classroom atmosphere more enjoyable and help students feel more confident in speaking. Furthermore, poetry encourages students to express their ideas and emotions through spoken language, which can support their communication skills and increase their active participation in the classroom.

Several studies have examined the use of poetry to help students improve speaking skills. Aftinia (2025) stated that despite students having difficulty with figurative language, poetry can positively enhance students' speaking skills. Wulandari (2016) stated that poetry can be a medium to solve problems faced by students in speaking class. Hayuning et al. (2022) used poetry as the material in teaching English speaking, covering the explanation, social purpose, structural pattern, and linguistic features of poetry, while the teacher has 6 roles used in the teaching and learning of speaking: controller, prompter, resource, assessor, organizer, and tutor.

Although previous studies have contributed to the understanding of the use of poetry as a learning medium in English language teaching, various research gaps still remain to be addressed. First, most previous studies used a descriptive qualitative approach that focused on observing and describing students' perceptions and classroom procedures. Consequently, previous studies have not examined how the systematic approach of Classroom Action Research (CAR) impacts students' speaking skills specifically in each aspect of speaking, such as vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, pronunciation, and fluency. Second, limited research has examined the use of poetry to enhance the speaking skills of eleventh-grade

students in Indonesian senior high schools. To bridge these gaps, this recent research used CAR not only to describe the implementation of poetry in teaching speaking but also to provide both qualitative insights and quantitative evidence on the use of poetry as a learning medium to enhance students' speaking skills, especially among eleventh-grade students at MAN 1 Surakarta.

Based on the gaps identified above, this research aims to 1) explore the implementation of poetry as a medium for teaching speaking, and 2) determine its effectiveness in improving the speaking skills of eleventh-grade students at MAN 1 Surakarta during the 2025/2026 academic year.

Speaking

Speaking is one of the essential skills in learning English that has an important function in communication. [Brown \(2003\)](#) explains that speaking is an interpersonal process of communication, founded on the creation, reception, and interpretation of meaningful information. [Harmer \(2007\)](#) defines speaking as the ability to use language in a fluent way and for an appropriate purpose. Speaking activities provide students with a chance to practice in real situations to develop confidence. Similarly, [Nunan \(2003\)](#) states that speaking is the skill of expressing ideas, opinions, and feelings clearly so that they can be understood by the listener. Speaking is not only uttering words, but also includes the ability to produce, receive, and interpret information in real communication situations. Through speaking, listeners can understand the speaker's ideas, feelings, and opinions.

In line with that, speaking skills mean using grammatical knowledge and vocabulary in real communication by generating speech, adapting it to context, and responding to the speaker ([Bygate, 1987](#)). Also, [Thornbury \(2005\)](#) describes speaking skills as the ability to communicate smoothly, fluently, and clearly to manage the flow of conversation among the speakers.

Speaking Activities in the Classroom

Speaking activities in the classroom are designed to allow students to practice speaking in meaningful situations. These activities help students to improve their ability to communicate verbally effectively. [Harmer \(2007\)](#) divides these activities into six parts, namely performing from a given script, games of communication, discussions, prepared speech, questionnaires, and simulation and role play. Performing from a given script is the activity in which students perform prepared dialogues or texts; through this activity, students can practice speaking in a controlled way. Games of communication are activities that expect students to exchange information with their partners or groups to solve problems; these activities encourage students to speak more actively, fluently, and focus on the meaning of their messages. Moreover, discussions allow students to share ideas, opinions, and feelings with their friends; this activity provides students to practice critical thinking while speaking. Prepared speeches require students to give presentations or speeches about the topic they prepared; this helps students organize their thoughts and improve their ability to express ideas in more detail. Questionnaires are activities where students ask and answer questions to collect information. Lastly, simulation and role play involve students acting in certain real-life situations based on specific characters or backgrounds.

Poetry

Poetry or a poem is a medium for expressing emotions, thoughts, and ideas through beautiful and meaningful language. The words used in poetry convey deeper meaning than ordinary language. Poetry is a type of literary work that conveys ideas more deeply than common conversation ([Perrine, 1963](#)). It means poetry emphasizes the choice and arrangement of words to create emotional meaning. [Kennedy & Gioia \(1995\)](#) state that to understand meaning in poetry requires more than reading but also feeling each word written. It needs deep involvement from the readers, because poetry is created in a unique context. Similarly,

Oliver (1994) defines poetry as an expression of human experiences and feelings that is created in a historical context and keeps developing over time.

There are some elements of poetry based on Johnson & Arp (2018), including diction, imagery, figurative language, tone, theme, and rhyme. Diction is the word choices to give correct meaning, be pleasant in sound, and have connotation. Imagery is using words to give a better understanding of the meaning. Figurative language is a unique language to express something beautifully. Also, tone is the feeling or attitude that the speaker expresses about a subject; it helps others to understand the message of the literary work. Theme refers to the main idea and message expressed through the poet's thoughts and experiences. Lastly, rhyme is the repetition of identical words, usually found at the end of lines in poems.

Types of Poetry

Poetry can be divided into several types based on purpose and form. There are three types of poetry, such as lyric, narrative, and dramatic (Kennedy & Gioia, 1995). Lyric poetry refers to poems that focus on expressing personal feelings and emotions of the speaker; it often uses a short form to emphasize emotional expression related to an experience or subject. Narrative poetry is a type of poetry that describes a story by presenting events, characters, and places; it aims to deliver a storyline using poetry. Likewise, dramatic poetry is a form of poetry where a character speaks directly to express their thoughts and feelings; the poet allows the character to express ideas through a monologue.

METHOD

Research Design

This study used a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design to improve the teaching and learning activities in the classroom at MAN 1 Surakarta. Classroom Action Research was selected because it allows the researcher to identify problems faced by the students and provide appropriate solutions. CAR contains a repeated cycle that includes planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988).

Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in eleventh grades students of MAN 1 Surakarta, especially in class XI F 11 during the 2025/2026 academic year. The class consists of 36 students, involving 18 male students and 18 female students. The class was chosen because the students still had low speaking skills. Based on the pre-test results, many students achieved speaking scores below the minimum score, or *Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal* (KKM) for English, which was 75. They still had limited vocabulary, pronunciation mistakes, low fluency, and low confidence.

Procedures

The researcher used poetry as a learning medium; students were required to read poems aloud in front of the class to improve their confidence and speaking ability. This study follows the procedure of CAR by Kemmis & McTaggart (1988); the steps of CAR are described as follows:

Planning

At the first stage of the study, the researcher observes the classroom activities to identify the problems related to speaking learning. After finding the problem, the researcher prepared an action plan to improve students' speaking skills by using poetry as the learning medium. The poems selected were lyric poems with a self-motivation theme; the selection was based on the students' intermediate English proficiency level. Additionally, the researcher prepared learning materials, formulated a teaching module, prepared research instruments such as a scoring rubric, observation field notes, and interview guidelines, and lastly determined clear indicators of success, which was 75 in English.

Action

The researcher implemented poetry to address problems identified in the previous section. In cycle 1, the researcher focused on introducing poetry to the students, analyzing word meaning in poetry, and pronunciation drills. In Cycle 2, the researcher focused on how students read poetry with appropriate intonation and facial expression. In the post-test, students read poetry in front of the class. Activities were conducted based on the plan, then observed and evaluated.

Observation

Observations were conducted during the teaching and learning activities in the classroom. The researcher collected data to determine whether the activities were effective. The data were collected through observing student behavior, reviewing students' work, conducting interviews, using field notes, and using video recordings.

Reflection

The reflection stage is a process of reviewing and evaluating the results of action and observations. At this stage, the teacher or researcher examines whether the activity helps solve the problem, determines students' progress in acquiring knowledge, and evaluates the success of the research. If the performance result did not achieve a minimum score in English, the researcher would conduct the next cycle until the criteria of success were fulfilled.

Data Collection

Test

There were several types of tests, such as pre-test and post-test. The pre-test was applied to determine the students' initial performance by asking the students to speak spontaneously in front of the class. Meanwhile, the post-test was conducted to measure the improvement of students' speaking skills by asking students to read poems in front of their friends using appropriate intonation and expression.

Non-tests

This study used certain types of non-test instruments, such as observation, interview, and documentation. Observation was conducted to determine the initial conditions by observing the students and the classroom (Creswell, 2012). The researcher used an observation sheet and field notes to record students' participation. Besides that, interviews were used to gather information through direct questions between the researcher, the teacher, and the 3 students as representatives of the class. Also, documentation is a method of collecting written and visual information related to the learning process.

Data Analysis

The pre-test and post-test data were measured using a scoring rubric by Brown (2003), which evaluated five aspects: pronunciation, grammar, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The study used qualitative and quantitative analysis. The qualitative based on Miles & Huberman (1994); there are four main steps, including (1) data collection, (2) data reduction, (3) data display, and (3) conclusion drawing. The data helps researcher to understand events, behavior, and the teaching and learning process in the classroom. In addition, Quantitative data were gathered through pre-test and post-test. It used the mean score formula and t-test formula were used by Ary et al. (2010). The mean score to determine whether there is an improvement from pre-test to post-test. Moreover, the t-test was used to determine whether there is a considerable enhancement from pre-test scores to post-test.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to explore whether poetry could address the speaking problems faced by the XI F 11 students of MAN 1 Surakarta. Based on classroom observation and the pre-test results, many students experienced difficulties in speaking. Therefore, this study explored two key areas related to the use of poetry in teaching speaking at MAN 1

Surakarta: (1) the implementation of poetry as a medium for teaching and learning speaking, and (2) the effectiveness of poetry in improving the speaking skills of the eleventh-grade students during the 2025/2026 academic year.

Finding 1: The Implementation of Poetry as a Medium for Teaching and Learning Speaking

The first finding explored the implementation of poetry as a medium for teaching and learning speaking in the classroom. Poetry was applied through several activities during the two cycles.

Cycle One

In the first cycle, the researcher introduced poetry to students; the activities focused on defining poetry, enhancing vocabulary, and practicing pronunciation. In this cycle, the students still looked afraid and hesitant to speak English in front of the class. Also, when the researcher gave trigger questions, only a few of the students participated in answering the questions, while most of the students were still passive. Meanwhile, compared to the preliminary condition, the students showed willingness to participate in the activities using poetry. However, the result of post-test 1 still did not reach the success criteria, which was 68.

Cycle Two

In the second cycle, the activities focused on intonation, word stress, and pauses in poetry. Through these activities, students had more opportunities to practice speaking. Classroom observation in cycle two showed better changes than in the previous cycle. In this cycle, most of the students actively participated in the classroom discussion and demonstrated higher confidence in reading poetry. In addition, the results of post-test 2 reached the success criteria for English. The mean score was 76.6, which was higher than the minimum score for English.

The findings after the implementation showed that using poetry as a learning medium improved the students' speaking skills. This improvement was evident in the increase of their speaking scores.

Table 1. The Results of Pre-Test, Post-Test 1, and Post-Test 2

Test	N	Mean Scores
Pre-test	36	49.4
Post-test 1	36	68
Post-test 2	36	76.6

The mean score in Table 1 improved from the pre-test score of 49.4 to 68 in the first post-test and then to 76.6 in the second post-test. The post-test 2 result was higher than the minimum score (KKM), which was 75 for English. In addition, the number of students achieving KKM also increased from the pre-test, where only 5.5% could pass the KKM, to 16.67% in post-test 1 and 72.22% in post-test 2. In addition, the students also demonstrated progress in several aspects of speaking skills, including vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and comprehension. The table below shows the improvement in every speaking aspect.

Table 2. Final Result of Comparison between Pre-Test, Post-Test 1, and Post-Test 2

Test	Grammar	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Fluency	Pronunciation
Pre-test	2.3	2.36	2.61	2.27	2.58
Post-test 1	3.69	3.47	3.36	3.27	3.33
Post-test 2	3.97	3.75	4.02	3.72	3.69

Table 2 shows that students' speaking skills improved in all aspects after the implementation of poetry. The students showed positive progress in grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and pronunciation. The significant improvements were in grammar, from 2.3 in the pre-test to 3.97 in post-test 2, and fluency, from 2.27 in the pre-test to 3.75 in

post-test 2. Meanwhile, the smallest increase was shown in pronunciation, which increased from 2.58 in the pre-test to 3.69 in post-test 2. Although pronunciation showed the smallest improvement, students demonstrated an improvement in their articulation between before and after the poetry activity was implemented. In addition, vocabulary and comprehension also showed a stable increase. Vocabulary increased from 2.36 in the pre-test to 3.75 in post-test 2, and comprehension increased from 2.61 in the pre-test to 4.02 in post-test 2, which means comprehension is the highest score students achieved.

The improvement of students' speaking skills was influenced by the use of poetry as a meaningful learning medium. Poetry gave students opportunities to practice speaking through reading, performing, and understanding the meaning of poems. The repeated practice helped students to understand vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency while also encouraging them to use appropriate intonation, stress, and pauses. Furthermore, poetry performance and classroom discussion increased students' confidence and motivation to speak English.

Language used in poetry is different from other writing. The use of figurative language in poetry allows the writer to express their feelings, opinions, and ideas beautifully. Through speaking activities using poetry, students have a chance to learn how to communicate and express the meaning of the poetry with intonation in a natural way. Therefore, students can pronounce English words correctly and confidently.

This finding was also in line with [Oliver \(1994\)](#), who stated that poetry provides students with opportunities to express ideas, feelings, opinions, and emotions naturally through repeated speaking practice, which can help them improve their vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, and confidence. In this research, the students repeatedly practiced reading poetry and used appropriate pronunciation and intonation, which made them more fluent and confident when performing in front of the class.

Furthermore, this research's findings are similar to [Aftinia \(2025\)](#), who also found that students had positive perceptions that poetry can improve speaking skills while they still had problems with figurative language. Although the language used in poetry is not literal, the students have to interpret the implied meaning rather than relying on the direct meaning of individual words. On the other hand, students in this research actively participated in the learning activities and were motivated to understand the meaning of the poems. Although they initially had difficulties in understanding the figurative language in poems, they actively asked the researcher and discussed the meaning with their peers.

Finding 2: The Effectiveness of Poetry in Improving Speaking Skills

The second finding explored the effectiveness of using poetry in improving students' speaking skills. The results showed that the implementation of poetry as a learning medium had a positive effect on students' speaking performance. The students demonstrated significant improvement, which was reflected in the increase in their mean scores from the pre-test to the post-tests and the results of the t-test analysis.

Table 3. Result of the Research

Pre-test	Post-test 1	Post-test 2	T-Value of cycle 1	T-Value of cycle 2
49.4	68	76.6	17.1	10.75

The T-test results in Table 3 supported the improvement in students' speaking skills. The degree of freedom was calculated as $df = N - 1 = 36 - 1 = 35$. With a significance level of 0.05 (5%), the t-table value was 2.03. The t-values obtained were 17.10 in Cycle 1 and 10.75 in Cycle 2; both were higher than the t-table value. This result indicated that the improvement after using poetry was statistically significant.

In addition, the classroom conditions also improved. At the beginning, the observation results showed that the students were passive in the teaching and learning English activities. Only a few students actively participated, while the others felt hesitant to speak in English. The interview also indicated that the students considered English a difficult subject to learn because they didn't understand the vocabulary or correct pronunciation. Next, in cycle 1, the

classroom situation also had a positive change. Compared to the preliminary condition, the students became more responsive and confident throughout the speaking process. They showed willingness to participate in the activities using poetry. However, the result has not yet reached the success criteria. In cycle 2, most of the students actively participated in the classroom discussion and demonstrated higher confidence in reading poetry.

Based on the findings above, the researcher concluded that poetry is effectiveness to improve students' speaking skills. The findings indicated improvements in the students' test scores, classroom participation, confidence, and speaking performance. In addition, using poetry as a teaching medium gave students meaningful opportunities to practice speaking English interestingly and enjoyably. Therefore, poetry can be considered an effective alternative medium for supporting English speaking learning, especially in helping students overcome difficulties and improve their speaking abilities.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that poetry can effectively support speaking instruction for eleventh-grade students at MAN 1 Surakarta, particularly class XI F-11. Implemented over two cycles, the intervention focused on vocabulary and pronunciation in Cycle 1 and intonation in Cycle 2. These activities fostered a more collaborative classroom, increasing students' attention, participation, interest, and confidence. Speaking scores improved from 49.4 in the pre-test to 68 in post-test 1, when 16.67% of students achieved the minimum mastery criterion (KKM), and 76.6 in post-test 2, when 72.22% achieved the KKM of 75. The statistically significant t-test result ($t = 10.75 > t\text{-table} = 2.03$) and progress in grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency further support the intervention's effectiveness. Poetry therefore offers an engaging alternative for developing speaking skills and encouraging active learning. Future research should examine poetry-based instruction across different educational contexts and language skills. Teachers are encouraged to integrate poetry to strengthen students' confidence, pronunciation, and fluency.

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