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Improving The Speaking Skills of The Tenth-Grade Students at SMA Negeri 1 Sindue Through the Song Interpretation Method

Fadila Palmai[1], Abd. Kamaruddin[2], Moh. Abraham Akbar Eisenring[3], Zarkiani Hasyim[4]
[1,2,3,4]Universitas Tadulako, Palu, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Many learners continue to struggle with English speaking skills, particularly in achieving accuracy and clarity of comprehension. This study aimed to investigate the effect of the Song Interpretation Method on enhancing the speaking performance of tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Sindue during the 2025/2026 academic year. The research focused on two main aspects of speaking ability: accuracy and comprehensibility. A quantitative approach was implemented through a quasi-experimental design involving pre-test and post-test control groups. The sample consisted of two classes selected through random sampling, with one designated as the experimental group and the other as the control group. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS software, and the Mann–Whitney U Test was employed to assess the differences between the two groups. The findings indicated an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.035, which is lower than 0.05, signifying a significant difference between the post-test scores of the groups. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis (Ha) was accepted, confirming that the Song Interpretation Method substantially enhanced students' speaking proficiency, particularly in terms of accuracy and comprehensibility. These findings suggest that integrating songs into English instruction can foster communicative competence, increase classroom interaction, and motivate learners in EFL contexts.

Corresponding Author:

Fadila Palmai
Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Department of Language and Art Education, Tadulako University
Email: fadilapalmai987@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a fundamental component of language proficiency that allows individuals to share ideas, opinions, and emotions effectively. It not only serves as a medium of communication but also contributes to enhancing students' confidence and clarity in self-expression. According to Richards [1], speaking represents the essence of communicative competence because it mirrors how language is used in authentic interactions. Likewise,

Nunan [2] asserts that the ability to speak well is crucial, as it reflects learners' overall mastery of the target language. At the senior high school stage, students transition from basic understanding to more complex application; therefore, improving their speaking ability becomes essential for both academic achievement and social engagement. As noted by Crowther et al. [3] and Harmer [4], teaching speaking should emphasise both communicative competence and linguistic accuracy, enabling learners to express their meaning effectively and confidently.

In addition, music can support language learning by creating a stimulating and enjoyable classroom environment. According to Murphey [5], songs encourage students to be more open and willing to participate, while Harmer [4] notes that speaking activities that emphasise both accuracy and understanding can enhance communication skills and boost confidence. Medina [6] suggests that songs aid in improving vocabulary and pronunciation. Despite these benefits, previous research has mainly concentrated on listening, vocabulary acquisition, or pronunciation. There is still limited investigation into how songs directly affect students' speaking accuracy and comprehensibility, especially in the context of Indonesian senior high schools. Moreover, few studies have examined the influence of music-based methods on learners' motivation and confidence when speaking. This study aims to address this gap by examining the effect of the Song Interpretation Method on the speaking performance of tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Sindue.

Based on the interview conducted with the teacher at SMA Negeri 1 Sindue, it is known that the school has implemented the *Merdeka Curriculum*. Therefore, the researcher will apply this curriculum to enhance students' speaking skills through more opportunities for practice and self-expression. Although this goal is expected to help, the researcher gathered information that Many students continue to encounter challenges in developing their English-speaking ability. Most of the students' difficulties stem from their lack of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, resulting in sentences that are not constructed correctly when spoken. Students also lack confidence when speaking English in class and in front of the class because they are afraid of making mistakes, especially in pronunciation and vocabulary. Young [7] also argues that students who experience speaking anxiety are less likely to participate actively in class discussions. Similarly, Syahid and Aghayani [8] point out that motivation plays a crucial role in overcoming affective barriers in language learning. Although teachers give guidance throughout the teaching and learning process, many students still encounter various difficulties. The students' deficiency in accuracy and comprehensibility results in substandard speaking skills. For example, students only speak a few words when the teacher asks them to introduce themselves. Students failed to follow the teacher's directions due to their fear of making mistakes while speaking. A lack of motivation in learning English is that students do not focus when the teacher explains, they lack enthusiasm for learning about the topics presented, and sometimes they easily lose focus, show little interest in the subject, and become sleepy during the lesson. Thus, this research addresses the problem that many students at SMA Negeri 1 Sindue struggle with speaking English, facing difficulties in vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and confidence. The objectives of this study are to investigate whether the Song Interpretation Method can

enhance students' speaking accuracy and comprehensibility, and to explore how using English songs can increase students' motivation and confidence in speaking English.

To address these issues, the researcher decided to apply the song interpretation method as an alternative learning strategy. Brown et al. [9] explain that speaking practices focused on accuracy and comprehension enhance students' communication skills and their confidence. This indicates that the song not only improves students' vocabulary but also helps students to feel more confident when speaking. According to Kim et al. [10], music fosters a relaxed and enjoyable classroom atmosphere, helping students become more open and motivated to learn. Therefore, this study utilises English songs as a medium for song interpretation, allowing students to understand the meaning and message conveyed through the lyrics. Through this approach, students can enrich their grammar and vocabulary, enhance pronunciation, and build greater confidence in speaking English. Specifically, the researcher will utilise simple and familiar English pop songs to facilitate students' engagement and support the improvement of their speaking skills. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of creative and effective teaching strategies that enhance students' speaking performance and encourage teachers to incorporate music-based activities into English language classrooms.

2. METHOD

This study adopted a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design. According to Creswell [11], quasi-experimental designs are frequently employed in educational research when randomisation is not feasible, yet a comparison between groups is still necessary. In line with this approach, the present study investigated the influence of the song interpretation technique on enhancing the speaking ability of tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Sindue. The research design consisted of two groups: an experimental class that received instruction through song interpretation and a control class taught using conventional methods. The researcher applied the research design proposed by Cohen et al. [12] as follows:

Experimental	O_1	X	O_2
Control	O_3		O_4

Where:
O_1 : Pre-test in the experimental class
O_2 : Post-test in the experimental class
O_3 : Pre-test in the control class
O_4 : Post-test in the control class
X : Treatment for experimental class

The participants of this study were all tenth-grade students of SMA Negeri 1 Sindue in the 2025/2026 academic year, comprising 250 students across seven classes (X-A to X-G). They were selected as the population since they possessed similar educational experiences, age characteristics, and curriculum exposure. This study involved two classes as samples, with Class A serving as the experimental group and Class B functioning as the control group. The researcher chose these two classes because Class A still required

improvement in English language skills, which were at a lower level than those of Class B. This made class A an ideal candidate for the implementation of innovative teaching methods.

Meanwhile, Class B had better English language skills, allowing it to function as a stable control group. From the total population, two classes were selected by a random sampling technique. The experimental class received treatment using song interpretation, whereas the control group received instruction through traditional teaching techniques. Conventional teaching methods employed traditional strategies in delivering classroom lessons [13].

The research instrument consisted of two tests, namely a pre-test and a post-test. Tests were conducted with students twice, namely before the treatment (pre-test) and after the treatment (post-test). The pre-test aimed to assess the students' speaking abilities before the treatment, while the post-test was used to determine whether the use of song interpretation improved the students' speaking skills. The test items consisted of songs and lyrics. The researcher evaluated the elements of speaking, namely accuracy and comprehensibility. According to Lund and Winke [14], speaking assessment should include aspects such as fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and comprehension to reflect a learner's communicative competence. Students were asked to interpret the meaning of a song and convey it orally to the teacher. To monitor students' progress from pre-test to post-test, the researcher adapted a band score assessment system for the oral proficiency test, which included accuracy and comprehensibility, as proposed by Heaton [15]. The assessment rubric was presented in the following tables.

Table 1. Speaking scoring system

Score	Accuracy
4	Pronunciation is clear and easy to understand, with slight influence from the mother tongue, but it does not cause mistakes that lead to confusion.
3	Pronunciation is fairly good, but is often influenced by the mother tongue.
2	Pronunciation can be confusing due to the influence of one's mother tongue, leading to disruptions in communication.
1	The pronunciation is very difficult to understand, with numerous grammatical errors and a lack of proficiency in language skills.

Table 2. Scoring Rubric for Listening Comprehensibility

Score	Comprehensibility
4	Understand nearly everything at normal speed, although repetition may be necessary occasionally.
3	Understand most of what is said at a normal speed without repetition.
2	Has great difficulty following what is said. Can comprehend only "social conversation" spoken slowly and with frequent repetitions.
1	Cannot be said to understand even a simple conversation.

The speaking test's validity was verified through expert judgment to ensure that the content and rubric accurately measured students' speaking skills, particularly in accuracy and comprehensibility. Its reliability was confirmed through inter-rater scoring by the

researcher and an English teacher, whose consistent results indicated that the test was dependable.

After conducting a pre-test, the researcher provided treatment in the form of song interpretation, which was carried out in four sessions over a period of three weeks, with each session lasting 45 minutes. In each session, the researcher began by explaining the learning material, then demonstrated the song interpretation process, distributed the lyrics handout, and played the song. After that, students were asked to verbally interpret the meaning of the song. Students were also allowed to discuss in groups. Afterwards, the learners were asked to come forward and present the outcomes of their work to the class. According to Murphey [5], songs are powerful language learning tools because they contain authentic and repetitive linguistic patterns that enhance pronunciation, vocabulary retention, and emotional engagement. Similarly, Medina [6] found that songs significantly contributed to improving language comprehension and speaking ability, as they provided contextualised input and meaningful repetition. This treatment aimed to improve learners' speaking ability, with a specific focus on enhancing accuracy and comprehensibility. In this study, SPSS software was used to evaluate learners' speaking performance at SMA Negeri 1 Sindue based on the instructional methods implemented. SPSS 24 is a widely used tool in quantitative research due to its accuracy and efficiency in data processing. To determine whether there are any changes following therapy, the data obtained from the initial and final tests of the song interpretation activity were processed using SPSS software.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis results revealed that applying the song interpretation technique in speaking instruction improved the speaking performance of tenth-grade learners at SMA Negeri 1 Sindue. The data collected from the students' initial and final tests showed that the song interpretation approach effectively enhanced their speaking proficiency.

3.1. Result

Data collected from the treatment and comparison groups were analysed to assess the impact of the Song Interpretation Technique on enhancing learners' speaking performance. The speaking assessment included both an initial and a final test administered to the two groups. An initial test was administered before the treatment to assess learners' baseline ability, while a final test was conducted afterwards to evaluate their progress in speaking performance. The results from the treatment and comparison groups were then analysed to determine the mean, minimum, and maximum scores. According to Sugiyono [16], data analysis in experimental research aims to determine the effect of a treatment by comparing the results between the experimental and control groups. The results of these calculations are presented in Table 3 below.

The descriptive analysis revealed that the experimental group's mean score increased from 32.86 to 52.14, while the control group's mean rose from 31.60 to 42.36. These results indicate that both groups showed improvement, yet the progress achieved by the experimental group was greater. The experimental group demonstrated approximately a 58%

improvement, compared to about 34% in the control group, highlighting the more substantial effect of the song interpretation technique.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Pre–Test and Post–Test Scores

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-Test Experiment	35	38	25	63	32.86	12.159
Post-Test Experiment	35	63	25	88	52.14	19.527
Pre-Test Control	36	50	25	75	31.60	12.132
Post-Test Control	36	50	25	75	42.36	16.168
Valid N (listwise)	35					

After calculating the mean scores from both the initial and final tests, a normality test was conducted to determine whether the data followed a normal distribution. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov method was applied, and the outcomes are shown in the following table.

Table 4. Tests of Normality

	Class	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Results of Speaking Skills Learning	Pre-Test Experiment (Treatment)	.399	35	.000	.676	35	.000
	Post-Test Experiment (Treatment)	.169	35	.013	.917	35	.012
	Pre-Test control (conventional)	.403	36	.000	.620	36	.000
	Post-Test Kontrol (conventional)	.221	36	.000	.855	36	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

In this study, the normality test was conducted using two methods: the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests. The significance values for all tests were below 0.05, indicating that the data did not meet the assumption of normal distribution. Therefore, a non-parametric test—the Mann–Whitney U Test—was applied to determine whether a significant difference existed between the two groups. According to Tilwani et al. [17, non-parametric tests, such as the Mann–Whitney U Test, are appropriate when the data do not meet the assumption of normality, allowing researchers to compare two independent groups effectively. Before performing the Mann–Whitney U Test, the researcher conducted a homogeneity of variance analysis to verify whether the two groups had equal variances. According to Ghozali [18, an appropriate statistical procedure is required. The outcome of this analysis is presented in the table below.

Table 5. Test of Homogeneity of Variance

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Students' Learning Outcomes	Based on Mean	1.848	1	69	.178
	Based on Median	1.327	1	69	.253
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.327	1	64.928	.254
	Based on the trimmed mean	1.729	1	69	.193

A review of the results in Table 5 indicates that the obtained significance scores were 0.178 for the mean, 0.253 for the Median, 0.254 for the adjusted Median, and 0.193 for the trimmed mean. Because all these probability values are higher than the 0.05 significance level, it implies that the data variability between the two groups is consistent, meaning the samples come from populations with equal variances. After confirming that the data were homogeneous, the researcher proceeded to perform the Mann–Whitney U Test to examine whether a significant difference existed between the post-test scores of students in the experimental and control groups. The findings of this analysis are displayed in the following table.

Table 6. Mann–Whitney U Test Ranks

	Class	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Results of Speaking Skills Learning	Experimental Class (Song Interpretation)	35	41.13	1439.50
	Control Class (Conventional)	36	31.01	1116.50
	Total	71		

Table 6 presents the ranking outcomes derived from the Mann–Whitney U Test. The experimental group, which was taught using song interpretation, obtained a higher mean rank of 41.13 compared to the control group, which had a mean rank of 31.01. These findings demonstrate that students in the experimental class performed better on the post-test than those in the control class. Therefore, it can be inferred that the use of song interpretation contributed to an improvement in students' speaking skills. After confirming that the dataset was homogeneous, the researcher proceeded to apply the Mann–Whitney U Test to evaluate whether a statistically significant difference existed between the students' final assessment scores in the treatment and control groups. The results of this analysis are presented in the following table.

Table 7. Mann–Whitney U Test Results

Test Statistics[a]	
	Learning outcomes of speaking skills
Mann-Whitney U	450.500
Wilcoxon W	1116.500
Z	-2.114
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.035

a. Grouping Variable: Class

Referring to the Mann–Whitney U Test outcomes, the obtained significance value ($p = 0.035 < 0.05$) indicates a meaningful difference in students' speaking performance between the treatment group, which received instruction through song interpretation, and the control group, which learned through conventional methods. This suggests that the application of the Song Interpretation Technique had a stronger and statistically significant influence on enhancing learners' speaking proficiency. Practically, students in the experimental group showed an average improvement of nearly 20 points, while those in the control group improved by around 11 points. This result demonstrates the effectiveness of

the song interpretation method in improving accuracy, comprehensibility, and overall speaking performance.

3.2. DISCUSSION

The results revealed a notable difference between the final assessment scores of the treatment group, which was instructed through the song interpretation technique, and the control group, which received instruction via a traditional teaching approach. The Mann–Whitney U Test produced an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.035, which is lower than 0.05, indicating that the song interpretation strategy had a statistically significant positive influence on students' speaking performance. This outcome aligns with the findings of Sobaihi [19], who reported that music-integrated learning substantially improves learners' oral proficiency and motivation in EFL contexts. The distinction between the two groups was also evident in their average scores, where the treatment group achieved a higher mean rank of 41.13 compared to the control group's 31.01. This suggests that students who learned through song interpretation experienced greater improvement, particularly in aspects of accuracy and comprehensibility, compared to those taught using conventional methods.

These results further support the theoretical view that incorporating music into language learning fosters greater learner motivation and participation. According to Tilwani et al. [17], songs promote implicit vocabulary learning and pronunciation improvement through repetition and rhythm. Through interpreting songs, Students not only enrich their vocabulary but also develop higher self-assurance when expressing ideas orally. Similarly, Wahyuni et al. [20] stated that integrating English songs can substantially enhance students' speaking performance by increasing their confidence, pronunciation accuracy, and engagement in classroom activities. The success of this method lies in its ability to deliver multimodal input through the combination of melody, rhythm, and lyrics, which simultaneously stimulates cognitive and emotional involvement, lowering learners' affective filters and fostering a more relaxed speaking environment. Therefore, educators should effectively guide classroom interactions, provide constructive responses, and encourage students with low confidence so that all participants can benefit equally from the learning process. The group discussion activities on the meaning of song lyrics encouraged students to think critically while practising public speaking skills. This result is consistent with the study by Dahler [21], which revealed that the use of songs can enhance learners' oral proficiency across several aspects, including pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary development, fluency, and overall comprehension.

However, several challenges appeared during the implementation. Some students were still hesitant to express themselves in front of their classmates, particularly in the early meetings. Similar findings were also reported by Young [7], who emphasised that speaking anxiety limits learners' willingness to communicate in public settings. In addition, several students tended to be passive in group discussions, resulting in less improvement compared to their more active classmates. This indicates that the application of song interpretation requires teacher guidance to ensure that all students participate actively. In line with this, previous studies have highlighted the positive impact of music and lyric-based learning on students' speaking performance. Hasibuan et al. [22] reported that integrating English songs

into classroom learning encourages pronunciation practice and vocabulary development through lyric-based interaction, which activates students' speaking performance. Similarly, Firmansyah et al. [23] found that incorporating songs in English into the learning process helps learners develop greater fluency, pronunciation, and self-confidence in speaking. Overall, the findings confirm that song interpretation is an effective and innovative method for improving students' speaking skills, particularly in creating an enjoyable and interactive learning environment that motivates students to participate actively in class. Kusuma et al. [24] emphasised that English songs create an enjoyable and interactive classroom atmosphere that promotes oral fluency, although teacher supervision is still required to ensure equal participation among students. Putri et al. [25] demonstrated that the song interpretation technique can effectively enhance learners' speaking ability in EFL classrooms. Generally, applying this technique offers several pedagogical benefits, including reducing students' speaking anxiety, providing authentic pronunciation and intonation practice, enhancing vocabulary retention through memorable lyrics, and fostering collaboration during group activities. Theoretically, this approach aligns with the Affective Filter Hypothesis [26], which emphasises that enjoyable and meaningful learning experiences, such as those facilitated through music, can lower anxiety levels and support more effective language development. It also agrees with the multimodal learning theory, suggesting that the combination of auditory, visual, and emotional channels contributes to deeper understanding and better memory retention. Nevertheless, this research has certain limitations, particularly the small sample size and the brief duration of the intervention, which may limit the broader applicability of its results.

4. CONCLUSION

This study indicates that implementing the Song Interpretation Method can foster a supportive and engaging environment that effectively enhances students' speaking abilities, particularly in terms of accuracy and clarity. The results suggest that teachers can regularly incorporate song interpretation activities to make English lessons more interactive and to strengthen students' oral fluency and confidence. Additionally, curriculum developers may consider incorporating music-based approaches to enhance communicative competence further. Despite these positive outcomes, the study is limited by its focus on tenth-grade students and the relatively short duration of the intervention, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future studies could investigate different age groups, more extended intervention periods, or comparisons with other speech-improvement methods to provide broader insights. Overall, this research demonstrates that simple, enjoyable learning tools, such as songs, can significantly support students' speaking development while offering practical guidance for educators and the broader educational community.

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