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The Effectiveness of Direct Methods on Elementary School Students' English Speaking Skills: Literary Studies

Nur Syamsiyah Ekhsan[1], Syamsinah Nur[2], Kristina Diana Sona[3]

Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra Inggris, Universitas Muhammadiyah Maumere

Correspondence: cahayamaumere@gmail.com

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Abstrak: Keterampilan berbicara merupakan salah satu komponen penting dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, khususnya pada tingkat sekolah dasar, karena berkaitan langsung dengan kemampuan komunikasi siswa. Namun, pembelajaran berbicara masih sering menghadapi berbagai kendala, seperti rendahnya partisipasi dan motivasi siswa. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis efektivitas. Metode langsung dalam meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara bahasa Inggris siswa sekolah dasar serta pengaruhnya terhadap partisipasi kelas dan motivasi belajar. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi literatur. Data diperoleh dari artikel jurnal dan publikasi ilmiah relevan yang dianalisis melalui teknik analisis dokumen dan analisis tematik. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa Direct Method berkontribusi positif terhadap peningkatan pengucapan, kefasihan dasar, dan keberanian siswa dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris. Selain itu, metode ini juga mendorong partisipasi aktif dan meningkatkan motivasi belajar siswa melalui penggunaan bahasa target secara langsung. Dengan demikian, Direct Method dapat menjadi alternatif metode pembelajaran yang efektif untuk pengembangan keterampilan berbicara di sekolah dasar.

Kata Kunci: Metode Langsung, Sekolah Dasar, Keterampilan Berbicara Bahasa Inggris, Motivasi Belajar

Abstract: *Speaking skills are one of the important components of English language learning, especially at the elementary school level, because they are directly related to students' communication skills. However, speaking learning still often faces various obstacles, such as low student participation and motivation. Therefore, this study aims to analyze its effectiveness. Direct methods in improving the English speaking skills of elementary school students and their influence on class participation and learning motivation. This study uses a qualitative approach with the literature study method. Data were obtained from journal articles and relevant scientific publications which were analyzed through document analysis techniques and thematic analysis. The results of the study showed that the Direct Method contributed positively to improving students' pronunciation, basic fluency, and courage in speaking English. In addition, this method also encourages active participation and increases students' learning motivation through the direct use of target language. Thus, Direct Method can be an effective alternative learning method for the development of speaking skills in elementary schools.*

Keywords: *Direct Methods, Elementary School, English Speaking Skills, Learning Motivation*

Introduction

Speaking is widely recognized as one of the four essential language skills and is often positioned as a central component of communicative competence in second and foreign language learning (Yonata et al., 2021). Through speaking activities, learners are required to actively produce language, negotiate meaning, and respond spontaneously in interaction This process involves not only the retrieval of linguistic knowledge but also the ability to organize ideas coherently and deliver them appropriately in real-time communication (De Jong, 2026) For this reason, speaking proficiency is frequently regarded as an important indicator of overall language mastery, as it reflects learners' ability to integrate vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and discourse skills simultaneously (Suzuki & Kormos, 2023). English language teaching, particularly in communicative-oriented curricula, the development of speaking skills is therefore often emphasized as a primary instructional objective (Dakhalan & Tanucan, 2024).

In the Indonesian educational context, the development of English speaking skills has gained increasing attention due to the role of English as an international language used in academic, professional, and global communication (Raja et al., 2022). Although English is taught as a foreign language and is not commonly used in daily interaction, learners are expected to develop a basic level of oral communicative competence (Riadil, 2020) Several studies have indicated that early exposure to spoken English can help learners become familiar with the sounds, intonation patterns, and simple sentence structures of the language, which may support later language development (Herlambang & Adri, 2024). However, English instruction at the elementary school level in Indonesia has often been reported to place greater emphasis on vocabulary memorization and grammatical knowledge rather than on meaningful oral practice. As a result, many learners demonstrate limited confidence and fluency when required to speak English in classroom contexts (Setyarini et al., 2020).

From a theoretical perspective, speaking proficiency encompasses a complex interaction of linguistic, cognitive, and affective components (Gao & Ginther, 2022). Linguistically, learners must demonstrate adequate control of vocabulary, grammatical structures, and pronunciation to convey meaning effectively (Uchihara & Clenton, 2023) . Cognitively, speaking requires learners to plan, process, and produce utterances within a limited timeframe, particularly during interactive communication. Affective factors, such as motivation and self-confidence, also play a significant role in learners' willingness to participate in speaking activities (Rifqi Bakhtiar & Suwandi, 2022). Because of these combined demands, scholars argue that speaking skills cannot be developed solely through passive learning or explicit rule instruction. Instead, instructional approaches that provide learners with frequent, meaningful, and supported opportunities for oral language use are considered essential for effective speaking development (Aprilia et al., 2026)

Despite its recognized importance, a substantial body of literature indicates that speaking is one of the most challenging skills for learners of English as a foreign language. Previous studies consistently report that learners experience difficulties related to limited vocabulary resources, inadequate grammatical control, fear of making mistakes, and anxiety when speaking in front of peers (Octaberlina et al., 2022). These challenges are often intensified by classroom environments that offer limited opportunities for oral interaction and rely heavily on teacher-centered instruction (Majidha et al., 2025). (Amanda et al., 2025) note that when (Setyawati, 2025) speaking activities are infrequent or highly controlled, learners tend to become passive language users who lack confidence in expressing themselves orally. Similarly, (Inoue & Lam, 2021) emphasize that instructional methods play a crucial role in shaping learners' speaking performance and participation.

In response to these challenges, various methods of English language teaching have been proposed and implemented to enhance learners' speaking abilities (Liew & Abdul Aziz, 2022). The literature identifies several instructional approaches that are commonly applied in speaking instruction, including the Grammar-Translation Method, the Audio-Lingual Method, and the Direct Method (Djauhar, 2021). These methods emerged as alternatives to traditional teaching practices that prioritize grammatical explanation and translation over communicative use of language. Each method reflects different assumptions about language learning and offers distinct strategies for developing speaking skills. Among these approaches, methods that emphasize oral practice and target language use have received particular attention in relation to speaking development (Spahiu & Kryeziu, 2021).

The Direct Method is characterized by its emphasis on the exclusive use of the target language in classroom instruction. In this approach, teachers avoid the use of learners' first language and instead encourage learners to construct meaning through context, visual aids, demonstration, and continuous oral interaction (Multani, 2019). According to (To'lanboyeva Elyorbek, 2026), the Direct Method aims to help learners think directly in the target language rather than relying on translation. Empirical and review studies further suggest that this method can create an immersive learning environment that supports the development of pronunciation, fluency, and oral confidence, particularly when learners are actively engaged in speaking activities (Hutahean et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, the implementation of the Direct Method remains a topic of debate in the literature, particularly in English as a foreign language contexts. Some studies report that beginner learners may experience confusion or frustration when classroom instruction is conducted entirely in the target language, especially when adequate scaffolding is not provided. Effectiveness of the Direct Method is highly dependent on contextual factors, such as learners' proficiency levels and teachers' instructional skills. Other studies also point out that while the Direct Method may support oral skills, it may offer limited support for the development of literacy-

related skills, such as reading and writing. (Saptopramono & Sari, 2025) these mixed findings indicate that the effectiveness of the Direct Method cannot be generalized across all learning contexts.

Given the varied findings reported in previous studies, a systematic examination of existing research is required to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the Direct Method's effectiveness in teaching English speaking skills. A literature-based approach allows for the comparison and synthesis of results from different contexts and research designs. Therefore, this literature study aims to: (1) analyze findings from previous research regarding the effectiveness of the Direct Method in improving English speaking skills among elementary school learners; and (2) examine how the implementation of the Direct Method, as reported in prior studies, influences students' classroom participation and learning motivation. (Sutrisno et al., 2026) through this review, the study is expected to provide a more balanced and evidence-based understanding of the contribution of the Direct Method to speaking instruction at the elementary school level.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative approach using a literature review method. This method is employed to examine, analyze, and synthesize findings from previous studies that discuss the implementation of the Direct Method in teaching English speaking skills at the elementary school level. As the present study is a literature-based investigation, all data are derived exclusively from secondary sources in the form of journal articles and scholarly publications. No primary data were collected through classroom observation or instructional experiments conducted by the author (Page et al., 2021). The data sources of this study consist of reputable journal articles, research reports, and academic publications relevant to the use of the Direct Method in English language teaching. These sources were obtained from various academic databases and open-access platforms, including Google Scholar, ERIC, Zenodo, and institutional journal repositories. To ensure the relevance and currency of the data, this study prioritizes articles published within the last ten years and available in full-text PDF format, allowing the sources to be directly accessed and verified.

Data collection was conducted through document analysis, which involved selecting, carefully reading, and systematically recording essential information from each relevant source. This process focused on key aspects reported in previous studies, such as research context, learner characteristics, procedures for implementing the Direct Method, and research findings related to the improvement of students' saking skills, classroom participation, and learning motivation. The collected data were subsequently analyzed using thematic analysis. This analysis was carried out by categorizing findings from prior studies into themes aligned with the research objectives, namely the effectiveness of the Direct Method in improving elementary school students' English

speaking skills and its influence on students' classroom participation and learning motivation. The results of the thematic analysis were then critically synthesized and interpreted to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of the Direct Method based on empirical evidence from multiple relevant sources.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results and discussion derived from a critical synthesis of previous empirical studies concerning the implementation of the Direct Method in teaching English speaking skills at the elementary school level. As this study adopts a literature review design, all findings discussed are drawn exclusively from published research rather than from direct classroom observation or experimental procedures conducted by the present author. Overall, the reviewed literature indicates that the Direct Method has been widely reported to contribute positively to the development of students' speaking skills as well as to increased classroom participation and learning motivation (Makrifah & Fauzi, 2024). The analyzed studies consistently report that the Direct Method supports the improvement of elementary school students' English speaking ability, particularly in terms of pronunciation accuracy, basic fluency, and oral responsiveness during classroom interaction. (Rahayu, 2022) through a quasi-experimental study conducted in Indonesian elementary schools, found that learners instructed using the Direct Method achieved higher speaking performance compared to those taught through more conventional instructional approaches. According to the authors, continuous exposure to spoken English and the avoidance of translation encouraged learners to process meaning directly in the target language, thereby facilitating more natural oral language production.

Similar findings are reported by (Hussain et al., 2022) who examined the application of the Direct Method in primary-level English classrooms. Their study revealed that students demonstrated noticeable progress in producing simple spoken expressions and participating in short conversational exchanges after instruction that incorporated real objects, visual media, and teacher demonstrations. The authors argue that the use of concrete and familiar materials enabled learners to comprehend spoken input more effectively and supported speaking development without reliance on the first language. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of the Direct Method is closely related to the contextualization of learning materials that align with learners' cognitive and linguistic development. In addition, (Silva et al., 2024) in their review of communicative language teaching approaches, emphasize that instructional methods prioritizing exclusive use of the target language contribute significantly to the development of speaking skills. Their analysis indicates that repeated exposure to common expressions and phonological patterns through sustained oral practice helps learners internalize language forms more effectively, which gradually leads to improved speaking fluency and confidence. Collectively, these

findings demonstrate that the Direct Method plays a meaningful role in supporting the development of basic communicative competence among elementary school learners.

Despite these positive outcomes, several studies also identify challenges associated with the implementation of the Direct Method. Some elementary learners initially experience difficulty understanding classroom instructions delivered entirely in English, particularly when their prior exposure to the language is limited. Their findings indicate that although learners' speaking ability improves over time, the early stages of implementation may be characterized by hesitation and uncertainty. This suggests that the success of the Direct Method is influenced by learners' readiness and the extent of instructional scaffolding provided by the teacher. Beyond speaking performance, the reviewed literature further indicates that the Direct Method positively influences students' classroom participation and learning motivation. (González-Lloret, 2020) argues that instructional approaches emphasizing oral interaction tend to increase opportunities for student talk while reducing teacher-centered practices. As a result, learners become more actively involved in classroom activities such as oral drills, question-and-answer sessions, and role-playing tasks, which contribute to a more interactive learning environment.

Empirical evidence from Indonesian EFL contexts supports this perspective. Students taught through the Direct Method demonstrated greater willingness to participate orally during English lessons. The authors attribute this increased participation to the use of gestures, visual aids, and real objects, which helped reduce students' anxiety and encouraged them to attempt speaking in English despite limited vocabulary knowledge. This increased participation is viewed as an important indicator of learner engagement, particularly at the elementary school level (Rosaria et al., 2025). From a motivational standpoint, reports that the Direct Method contributes to a more engaging and enjoyable learning environment. Her study indicates that students exhibited higher levels of enthusiasm and attentiveness when classroom instruction involved direct interaction and meaningful oral practice. These conditions were found to enhance learners' self-confidence and reduce fear of making errors, thereby supporting sustained motivation to engage in speaking activities. However, the literature also emphasizes that the effectiveness of the Direct Method in promoting participation and motivation is highly dependent on teacher competence. (Ali, 2020), highlights that teachers must possess adequate English proficiency and pedagogical skills to provide comprehensible input, manage classroom interaction effectively, and create a supportive learning atmosphere. Studies suggest that insufficient teacher preparation may limit the potential benefits of the method and lead to reduced student engagement (Adzanil et al., 2025).

In summary, the synthesis of findings from previous studies indicates that the Direct Method contributes positively to the improvement of elementary school students' English speaking skills while simultaneously enhancing classroom participation and learning motivation. These outcomes are influenced by contextual factors

such as teacher proficiency, instructional materials, and learners' prior exposure to English. Overall, the reviewed literature suggests that when implemented appropriately, the Direct Method offers meaningful support for the development of basic speaking competence in elementary school English instruction.

Conclusion

Based on the synthesis of findings from previous empirical studies, it can be concluded that the Direct Method demonstrates considerable potential in supporting the development of English speaking skills among elementary school students. The reviewed literature consistently indicates that this method contributes to improvements in key aspects of speaking performance, including pronunciation accuracy, basic fluency, and students' ability to respond orally during classroom interaction. These outcomes are largely attributed to continuous exposure to the target language and the emphasis on direct meaning construction without reliance on translation. In addition to enhancing speaking skills, the Direct Method is also reported to have a positive influence on students' classroom participation and learning motivation. Studies reviewed in this literature indicate that the use of visual aids, real objects, gestures, and meaningful oral interaction creates a more engaging learning environment, which encourages students to participate actively in speaking activities. Increased student involvement and reduced anxiety when using English orally are identified as important factors contributing to learners' motivation and confidence at the elementary school level.

However, the literature also highlights that the effectiveness of the Direct Method is not universal and is influenced by several contextual factors. Teacher proficiency, instructional skills, and the ability to provide appropriate scaffolding play a crucial role in ensuring successful implementation. Without adequate support, students particularly those with limited prior exposure to English may initially experience difficulty in understanding classroom instruction delivered entirely in the target language. Overall, this literature study suggests that the Direct Method can be an effective instructional approach for teaching English speaking skills in elementary schools when applied appropriately and supported by competent teaching practices. The findings of this review contribute to a clearer understanding of how the Direct Method functions in different educational contexts and provide a theoretical basis for educators and researchers interested in speaking instruction. Future research is recommended to further explore the application of the Direct Method in diverse learning settings and to examine its integration with other communicative approaches to maximize students' speaking development.

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