

## PROMOTING FOUR CORNERS STRATEGY TO IMPROVE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT SPEAKING SKILL

Rista Junita<sup>1)</sup>, Rahma Dianti<sup>2)</sup>, Nita Ria<sup>3)</sup>

Tridinanti University

ristaajunitaa@gmail.com<sup>1)</sup>, rahma\_dianti@univ-tridinanti.ac.id<sup>2)</sup>,

nita\_ria@univ-tridinanti.ac.id<sup>3)</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** Four Corners is a cooperative learning strategy that drives students to think things through carefully before sharing them with others. This strategy encourages the students to express their thoughts, opinions, and feelings with their peers by creating four opinion corners: strongly agree corner, agree corner, strongly disagree corner, and disagree corner. This research aimed to investigate the effectiveness of the four corners strategy in enhancing secondary school students' speaking achievement and compare the students' speaking achievement between the experimental group and the control group. The researchers employed a quasi-experimental design. 168 students made up the entire population. The research participants were chosen using purposive sampling. 64 students participated as the sample, divided into experimental and control groups. An oral test about asking and giving opinions was used to gather the data. The test was administered twice. The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test and the Mann-Whitney U Test were used to analyze the data since the data were not normally distributed. The results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test revealed that the students showed a considerable improvement in speaking skills when employing the Four Corners strategy. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test showed that students' speaking abilities who got intervention using the Four Corners strategy were better than the students who did not receive the intervention using the Four Corners strategy.

**Keywords:** *Four Corners strategy, speaking skill, secondary students*

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## MEMPROMOSIKAN STRATEGI *FOUR CORNERS* UNTUK MENINGKATKAN KETERAMPILAN BERBICARA SISWA SEKOLAH MENENGAH

**ABSTRAK:** Four Corners adalah strategi pembelajaran kooperatif yang mendorong siswa untuk memikirkan hal-hal dengan hati-hati sebelum membagikannya kepada orang lain. Strategi ini mendorong siswa untuk mengungkapkan pikiran, pendapat, dan perasaan mereka dengan rekan-rekan mereka dengan membuat empat sudut pendapat: sudut sangat setuju, sudut setuju, sudut sangat tidak setuju, dan sudut tidak setuju. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji efektivitas strategi empat penjuru dalam meningkatkan prestasi berbicara siswa sekolah menengah dan membandingkan prestasi berbicara siswa antara kelompok eksperimen dan kelompok kontrol. Para peneliti menggunakan desain kuasi-eksperimental. 168 siswa membentuk seluruh populasi. Peserta penelitian dipilih menggunakan purposive sampling. 64 siswa berpartisipasi sebagai sampel, dibagi menjadi kelompok eksperimen dan kelompok kontrol. Tes lisan tentang bertanya dan memberikan pendapat digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data. Tes dilakukan dua kali. Tes Mann-Whitney U dan Uji Peringkat Bertanda Wilcoxon digunakan untuk menganalisis data karena data tidak didistribusikan secara normal. Hasil tes Wilcoxon Signed Rank mengungkapkan bahwa para siswa menunjukkan peningkatan yang cukup besar dalam keterampilan berbicara ketika menggunakan strategi Four Corners. Hasil tes Mann-Whitney U menunjukkan bahwa kemampuan berbicara siswa yang mendapatkan intervensi

menggunakan strategi Four Corners lebih baik daripada siswa yang tidak menerima intervensi menggunakan strategi Four Corners.

**Kata kunci:** *Four Corners strategy, keterampilan berbicara, siswa sekolah menengah*

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## INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a means of communication from one person to another. Moreover, language functions not only for communication, but also for sharing or expressing ideas, thoughts, opinions, and feelings. Since English is used for communication in both first- and second-language countries, as well as in foreign languages, it is commonly recognized as an international dialect. It suggests that a lot of nations use English as a language of communication. Even in nations where it is not the national language, it is understood, spoken, and learned. According to the Educational Curriculum and Assessment Standards Agency in the Merdeka Mengajar platform, English is one of the languages that is most frequently used in various fields worldwide, including international relations, health, technology, science, law, education, and business. (Kemendikbud, 2021). According to Permendikbudristek No. 12 (2024a), English in primary schools, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, or other educational levels become an optional subject that can be organized according to the readiness of the education unit until the 2026/2027 academic year and switches to a compulsory subject in the 2027/2028 academic year. English is taught from primary school to university level to improve communicative competence in a foreign language.

Communicative competence is as a set of skills required for authentic communicative language use and communication (Sidik, 2018). According to Irawati (2015), improving life skills is one of education's primary objectives. Effective communication is one of the life skills students must have for them to survive in the 21st century. Communication enables the ideas, thoughts, and feelings to be expressed effectively both orally and writing. In short, communicative competence and communication are essential in life because they are used for authentic interactions and to develop life skills that effectively enable ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

Using a variety of technology, students in this digital age can improve their abilities in the English language, especially in speaking. However, opportunities to enhance English speaking abilities have not yet been fully fulfilled because of a variety of obstacles or challenges. The majority of Indonesian students still have trouble speaking English. Speaking issues might have two different causes, according to Sari et al. (2022): internal and external factors. Students' intelligence, motivation to study, interest in and perception of learning, and physical wellness are examples of internal effects. The lifestyles of kids, the methods and strategies of the teachers, and a lack of unsupportive supports are examples of external factors. Next, Fatimah et al. (2021) claimed that there are two reasons why students struggle with speaking English: linguistic and non-linguistic elements. English grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary limitation are examples of linguistic factors. Environment, desire, and lack of confidence are examples of non-linguistic factors. Thus, low vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and lack of courage to practice in everyday situations are the main things preventing Indonesian students from becoming more fluent in English, particularly when it comes to speaking the language.

The researchers did a preliminary study at SMA Muhammadiyah 6 Palembang by interviewing an eleventh-grade English teacher. Based on the interview, it was revealed that mostly the students lack motivation, vocabulary, and confidence, are not fluent in speaking, tend to be too shy to speak English in front of their classmates, teacher employs monotonous teaching strategies, and lack opportunities to practice speaking English. This condition makes students not enthusiastic in speaking class. Therefore, teachers should use interesting teaching strategies to motivate the students to participate actively during speaking class. In addition, Qudsy et al., (2011) stated that teaching methods are part of

the teaching system and assess the effectiveness of learning activities. The more appropriate teacher's method, the more effective the achievement of learning objectives.

The Four Corners strategy can be applied while teaching speaking. According to Guillaume (2007), the Four Corners strategy is a cooperative learning technique that encourages learners to consider their ideas thoroughly before expressing them to others. Geraldine (2018) continued by saying that students can analyze an idea from many different perspectives by using the Four Corners strategy. In addition, Walqui (2000) claimed that the Four Corners is a strategy for encouraging equal participation in a group, each participant takes turns offering or answering questions about the topic under discussion. Furthermore, Schoenherr (2013) said that Four Corners is a strategy that effectively engages all students in discussions about controversial topics. To sum up, Four Corners is a fun exercise that helps students concentrate and encourages students to reflect on their opinions on a particular topic

Numerous scholars have used this strategy. First, the Four Corner strategy was used by Kurnia (2017) as a speaking instruction tool. The finding revealed that students' speaking abilities were enhanced when the Four Corner strategy was used in the classroom. Novrianti (2016) also examined the Four Corners strategy's effectiveness in teaching speaking. This study found that the Four Corners strategy greatly enhanced students' speaking achievement. In addition, a study conducted by Yonantha (2018) compared the effects of group work and the Four Corners strategy on students' speaking abilities. The results of the study revealed that the students who employed the Four Corners strategy had a higher mean score than those who used the Group Work strategy. In conclusion, previous research indicated that the Four Corners strategy is quite effective at improving students' speaking skills and empowering them to explore their perspectives.

Given the foregoing explanation, the researchers conducted an experimental investigation to see whether the Four Corners technique was successful in enhancing the speaking abilities of secondary school pupils.

### **Speaking Skill**

According to Brown (2019, p. 156), speaking is a practical ability that could be immediately or experimentally noticed. As a result, evaluations of oral production tests' validity and reliability are still being conducted. Mart (2012, p.91) said that speaking is the capacity to communicate ideas throughout the use of words. In addition, Argawati (2014, p.74) said that speaking is a social interaction technique used in conversation. Next, Saeed et al., (2018, p.2) stated that speaking is the verbal communication required to share information and ideas. Additionally, Mandasari & Aminatun (2020, p.136) stated that speaking is a two-way oral communication process that involves receptive comprehension and productive speaking skills between a speaker and a listener. When learning English, speaking skills are considered the most important. Each student strives to speak fluently even in difficult situations (Shofi, 2020). According to Shalihah, et al., (2022, p.68), speaking has long been acknowledged as an essential communication skill. Students must therefore improve their speaking skills to effectively communicate with others. Furthermore, Novia, et. al (2023, p. 35) In language, speaking is the most important way of verbal communication to share information and ideas. Speaking is an essential part of learning English because it connects to many other language skills (Anggraini, 2024). To conclude, speaking is the ability to express one's ideas, opinions, or feelings to give or receive information and knowledge from others in communication.

### **The Aspects of Speaking**

According to Brown (2019, p.172), there are some aspects to measure someone's ability to speak, including grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, pronunciation, and fluency. First, grammar refers to the accuracy of sentences such as organizing the composition of clauses, phrases, and words in a language. Next, a language's whole word count is its vocabulary. Without enough vocabulary stock, someone cannot effectively communicate or express their ideas in writing or speech. Next, comprehension refers to the ability to understand oral information based on certain contexts and the ability to give appropriate responses. After that, pronunciation helps students speak with clearer language. It deals with the process of phonological division of grammar consisting of elements and rules that describe the production of various language sound patterns. Last, fluency is the capacity to communicate concisely and clearly without pauses, such as "ums", "ers" and so on. The researchers used these five aspects to assess the student's speaking performance.

### **Four Corners Strategy**

The Four Corners strategy fits under the cooperative learning method since it makes use of small groups whose work is shared with other groups in the class. Four Corners aims to ensure that each unit has diverse and engaging material, provides opportunities to use English naturally, improves integrated skills, and takes part in a range of exciting speaking activities. Guillaume (2007, p. 98) describes the Four Corners strategy as a collaborative learning approach that facilitates student discussion and idea sharing. Next, students can collaborate on group projects when applying the Four Corners strategy since this strategy encourages collaboration (Cara and Eric, 2011, p. 83). This strategy is ideal for students who need physical activity to refocus their attention. Furthermore, Renata, et. al (2014, p.921) stated that the Four Corners strategy focuses on debate skills, but can also help the students to improve their speaking abilities. This strategy encourages students to express themselves personally and confidently and take a position or stand on a given topic. Thus, this strategy is effective in promoting a high-level cognitive discussion and improving student interaction. This is important because social interaction among students during the task can support their cognitive development. As a warm-up or team-building activity, it's a terrific way to begin a lesson and can provide insight into the knowledge and attitudes of your students. This activity is ideal for teachers who want to emphasize that not everyone in the classroom holds the same opinion or that some problems have multiple solutions. Figure 1 displays the Four Corners strategy design.

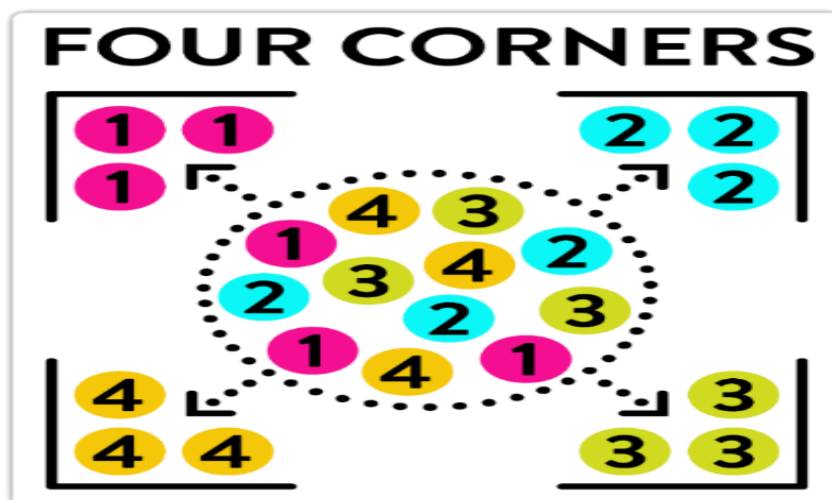


Figure 1. Four Corners Strategy  
 (Source: <https://teacherthrive.com/cooperative-learning-activities-for-grades-3-6/>)

Based on the figure above, students are given a current issue or topic. Then, the students are asked to take a position showing their level of agreement toward the issue discussed. They need to choose the corners based on their level of agreement. Corner 1 signifies that they strongly agree with the issue, corner 2 signifies that they agree with the issue, corner 3 shows that they disagree, and corner 4 shows that they strongly disagree.

**METHODOLOGY**

1. Research Design

Quasi-experimental research was carried out by the researchers. Creswell (2023) defines a quasi-experimental design as an experimental research design in which participants are not randomized to groups at random. The individuals in this design are not assigned randomly. The experimental group receives treatment using the Four Corners strategy, which then will be compared to the control group. Next, each group receives a pre-and post-test to assess speaking performances before and after the treatment. The design of the Nonequivalent (Pretest and Post-test) control group design can be seen in Figure 2.

Group A (Experiment)	O <sub>1</sub> (pretest)	X (treatment)	O <sub>2</sub> (posttest)
Group B (Control)	O <sub>3</sub> (pretest)		O <sub>4</sub> (posttest)

Figure 2. Nonequivalent (Pretest and Posttest) Control-Group Design

2. Research Participants

The research population consisted of 168 eleventh-grade students at SMA Muhammadiyah 6 Palembang in the academic years 2023/2024. The sample was selected

using a purposive sampling technique. 64 students were selected as the sample and they were divided into an experimental group and a control group.

### 3. Technique for Collecting Data

The researchers administered a spoken test to collect data on students' speaking skills. Both groups received a pre and post-test. The pretest was administered before the treatment session and the post-test was given after the treatment session. The students were asked to perform a conversation with their partner for 5 minutes focusing on showing agreement and disagreement and asking and giving opinions based on the given topics. The analytical speaking rubric from Brown (2004) was used to score or rate the students' speaking performance. Following the data collection process, two raters were involved to score the students' speaking performance. The researchers employed inter-rater reliability by using Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis to examine the consistency of the raters' scores. After computing the data, the researchers found that the reliability coefficient of the experimental group's pre-test score was 0.94, and the post-test score was 0.92. The values indicated that the pretest and post-test speaking scores for the experimental group were considered highly reliable. Next, the R-values of pretest and post-test for the control group were 0.80 and 0.93, respectively. This data showed that the control group's speaking performance scores for the pretest and post-test were very highly reliable. The results of the reliability test are presented in Table 1.

*Table 1.* The Summary of Reliability Test

Groups		Pearson Correlation	Sig.(2-Tailed)	N
Experimental Group	Pre-Test	0.94	0.000	32
	Post-Test	0.92	0.000	32
Control Group	Pre-Test	0.80	0.000	32
	Post-Test	0.93	0.000	32

### 4. Techniques for Analyzing the Data

The results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov revealed that the data obtained were not normally distributed. As a result, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test and Mann-Whitney U test were employed as the data analysis techniques. The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was run to examine whether the Four Corners strategy could significantly improve students' speaking skills. Next, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare whether there was a significant difference in speaking skills between the experimental and the control groups.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Findings

#### 1.1 Descriptive Analysis Results of the Students' Speaking Skills

Descriptive statistical analysis was carried out to provide general information regarding the students' speaking performances. The summary of descriptive statistical data analysis results is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The Summary of Descriptive Statistic Analysis

Descriptive Statistics					
Group	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-Test Experimental	32	20	56	32.38	10.127
Post-Test Experimental	32	40	64	46.25	7.531
Pre-Test Control	32	20	40	23.13	5.027
Post-Test Control	32	20	60	28.81	8.604
Valid N (listwise)	32				

The table above shows that for the experimental group's pre-test results, the lowest score was 20, the highest score was 56, the mean score was 32.38, and the standard deviation was 10.127. The post-test results of the experimental group revealed that the lowest score was 40, the highest score was 64, the mean score was 46.25, and the standard deviation was 7.531.

Next, the pretest results of the control group showed that the maximum score was 40, the minimum score was 20, the mean score was 23.13, and the standard deviation was 5.027. Meanwhile, the post-test results for the control group yielded that the minimum score was 20, the maximum score was 60, the mean score was 28.81, and the standard deviation was 8.604.

### 1.2 Frequency Analysis Result

Frequency analysis was run to classify the students' speaking performance before and after the treatment session. This analysis was done using percentage analysis. Table 4 presents the frequency analysis results for the experimental and control groups.

Table 4. The Results of Frequency Analysis

Score Range	Level Category	Experimental Group				Control Group			
		Pre-Test		Post-test		Pretest		Post-test	
		Freq	Percentage	Freq	Percentage	Freq	Percentage	Freq	Percentage
86-100	Excellent	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
71-85	Good	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
56-70	Enough	1	3%	5	16%	0	0%	1	3%
41-55	Low	5	16%	13	41%	0	0%	1	3%
0-40	Failed	26	81%	14	44%	32	100%	30	94%
Total		32	100%	32	100%	32	100%	32	100%

For the experimental group, before implementing the Four Corners strategy, 1 student (3%) was at the enough level, 5 students (16%) were at the low level, and 26 students (81%) were at the failed level. After implementing the Four Corners strategy, 5 students (16%) were at the enough level, 13 students (41%) were at the low level, and 14 students (44%) were at the failed level.

Meanwhile, the frequency analysis results of the control group pretest showed that 32 students (100%) were categorized as failing in speaking skills. Based on the post-test results, it was found that 1 student (3%) was categorized as average in speaking skills, 1 student (3%) was categorized as low in speaking skills, and 30 students (94%) were categorized as failing in speaking skills.



### 1.3 The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Result

Wilcoxon signed-rank test was employed to examine whether the Four Corners strategy implementation could significantly enhance students' speaking skills. This analysis technique measures the paired observations of two data sets. To interpret the test statistic result, two conditions are necessarily considered. First, if the value is less than 0.05, there is a significant improvement, and vice versa. The summary of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test is displayed in Table 6.

Table 6. The Summary of Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Statistics	
	Post-Test Experimental- Pre-Test Experimental
Z	-4.949 <sup>b</sup>
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on Negative Ranks

Referring to the table, the coefficient of Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) of Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test was 0.000, below the critical value (0.005). It suggests that there was a significant improvement in the students' speaking skills after implementing the Four Corners strategy. The results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test affirmed the Four Corners strategy can significantly enhance secondary school students' speaking skills.

### 1. 4 The Mann-Whitney U Test Results

To find out if the means of two independent samples differed, the Mann-Whitney test was created. The Mann-Whitney U test was used in place of the independent t-test in cases where the study data was not normally distributed. If the Mann-Whitney U test's Asymp.sig value was less than 0.05, the hypothesis was accepted; if it was greater than 0.05, it was rejected. Table 7 summarizes the results of the Mann-Whitney U test.

Table 7. The Result of the Mann-Whitney U Test

	Speaking test
Mann-Whitney U	58.000
Wilcoxon W	586.000
Z	-6.134
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

a. Grouping Variable: Group

Based on the data from Table 7, it can be found that the coefficient of Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) of the Mann-Whitney U test was 0.000, lower than the critical value (0.005), indicating that there was a significant difference in the students' speaking skills between the group that received the treatment using the Four Corners strategy and the group that did not. This finding confirms that the experimental group outperformed the control group in speaking achievement after the treatment session was accomplished.

## 2. Discussion

Several interpretations are made by considering the research findings. First, the Four Corners strategy positively impacts secondary school students' speaking

achievement. Before the treatment session, the students' speaking achievements in the experimental group were categorized as very poor. After promoting the Four Corners strategy during speaking class, it turns out that their speaking achievement improved. It could be confirmed through the results of frequency analysis and the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test. The Four Corners strategy is a fun and active way to make students actively involved and participate more in the classroom. It is in line with Kurnia (2017) who proved that the Four Corners debate was effectively successful in teaching speaking. In addition, Rahayu and Jufri (2016) found that the Four Corners strategy can be applied to help students' speaking. Asmara (2019) suggests that the Four Corners strategy invited the students to be directly involved and practice speaking with their partners in the classroom. It provides a rich classroom with direct opportunities to speak up about their ideas and opinions. In addition, Cara and Eric (2018) claimed that in the classroom this teaching strategy can support the growth of students' verbal communication, listening, critical thinking, and decision-making abilities. Furthermore, Renata, et. al (2014, p.921) found that the Four Corners strategy deals with debate skills, but it can develop students' speaking ability.

Second, it was also found that there was a significant difference in the students' speaking achievements between the experimental group students and the control group one. Even though both groups enhanced their speaking achievement after the treatment session, the experimental group outperformed the control group in speaking achievement. It could be confirmed by looking at the results of frequency analysis for both groups. Only two students of the control group increased their speaking achievement level from the failed level to the low and enough levels. Meanwhile, prior to the intervention phase, twenty-six students of the experimental group were categorized as failing in speaking achievement. After they got treatment using the Four Corners strategy, 12 out of 26 students increased their speaking achievement to a low level and enough levels. Further, the analysis results of Mann-Whitney strongly confirmed that the experimental group students performed better in their speaking achievement rather than the control group students. It is in line with Yonantha (2018) who affirmed that the Four Corners strategy is more effective in enhancing students' speaking achievement than group discussion due to this strategy encourages the students to practice expressing their ideas and opinions, supporting direct speaking practice and interaction.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and the discussion of this research, two conclusions can be made. First, promoting the Four Corners strategy to enhance secondary school students' speaking achievement was successful. The findings confirmed that the students' speaking achievement was significantly improved after being taught using the Four Corners strategy. The increasing level of the students' speaking performance also proved that the Four Corners strategy is effective in practicing students' speaking performance. Before the treatment session, all students were categorized as very poor in speaking skills. Fortunately, after the treatment process, it turned out that some students were classified as average in their speaking performance. Second, there was a significant difference in students' speaking skills between those who were taught by using the Four Corners strategy and those who were not. The results of descriptive and inferential statistical analyses confirmed that the students who received the treatment using the Four Corners strategy outperformed the students who did not receive the treatment using the Four Corners strategy.

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