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ADVANCES IN SOCIAL HUMANITIES RESEARCH

Enhancing Students' Speaking Skills Through the Implementation of Graphic Organizers: A Classroom Action Research

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Abstract

This study aimed to improve students' speaking skills through the use of graphic organizers at MTs Cahaya Ilmu. The research employed a classroom action research (CAR) design consisting of two cycles, preceded by a pretest, with each cycle conducted over two meetings. The participants were 77 seventh-grade students. Data were collected through speaking tests, classroom observations, and field notes. Quantitative data were analyzed by comparing students' mean speaking scores across the research stages, while qualitative data were analyzed using classroom observations and field notes to identify changes in students' participation and speaking performance. The findings demonstrated a progressive improvement in students' speaking skills, as reflected in the increase in mean scores from 68 on the pretest to 70 in Cycle I and 75 in Cycle II. Classroom observations also indicated that students became more active, confident, and focused when organizing and expressing their ideas during speaking activities. These findings suggested that graphic organizers contributed positively to the development of students' speaking skills by facilitating idea organization, supporting clearer verbal expression, and encouraging active participation in classroom discussions. The study concluded that graphic organizers were a useful instructional strategy for enhancing students' speaking performance in the classroom action research setting.

INTRODUCTION

English speaking proficiency is an essential component of communicative competence, enabling learners to express ideas, exchange information, and participate effectively in oral interactions. Unlike receptive language skills, speaking requires the simultaneous organization of ideas, retrieval of vocabulary, selection of appropriate grammatical structures, and production of intelligible pronunciation. These cognitive and linguistic demands present considerable challenges for learners with limited exposure to spoken English and low confidence in classroom interactions (Rao, 2019). Consequently, speaking instruction at the junior secondary school level should provide not only opportunities for oral practice but also appropriate instructional support to help students organize their ideas before engaging in speaking activities.

Preliminary observations at MTs Cahaya Ilmu revealed several difficulties experienced by seventh-grade students in developing their English speaking skills. Students frequently

requested English equivalents of unfamiliar vocabulary, struggled to organize ideas into coherent explanations, relied on repetitive expressions, and demonstrated hesitation when speaking in front of their classmates. These challenges were consistent with previous findings concerning speaking anxiety, inadequate preparation, and linguistic difficulties among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners (Prayuda, 2021; Riadil, 2020). Such conditions highlighted the need for an instructional intervention that could facilitate idea organization, reduce cognitive demands during speaking activities, and encourage students to participate more confidently in oral communication.

Graphic organizers represent a potential instructional strategy for supporting speaking development by visually illustrating relationships among ideas and information. Visual tools such as flowcharts and sequence charts can assist students in identifying main ideas, organizing supporting details, and establishing logical sequences before delivering oral presentations. Previous studies have demonstrated the potential benefits of graphic organizers in facilitating idea development, language organization, and oral communication in language learning contexts (Aprianto & Murapi, 2020; Nabilah et al., 2022). However, their instructional effectiveness may depend on the suitability of the organizer format, the complexity of the speaking task, and students' language proficiency and learning needs.

Recent research has further explored the application of graphic organizers in EFL instruction. (Al Halim, 2024) examined graphic organizer strategies in language teaching, while (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2025) investigated EFL learners' perceptions of using graphic organizers to support speaking performance. These studies contributed to the growing understanding of visual planning tools as instructional scaffolds for language production. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of specific graphic organizer formats may vary across learning contexts and speaking tasks. In procedural speaking activities, students are expected to communicate instructions or processes in a logical sequence, making the organization of information particularly important. Therefore, examining both students' speaking achievement and their classroom learning experiences is necessary to understand how different graphic organizers support oral communication.

Despite increasing interest in graphic organizers for language learning, limited context-specific evidence is available regarding the use of different organizer formats across successive classroom action research cycles to improve seventh-grade students' speaking skills in procedural text activities. Previous studies have generally emphasized the overall benefits of graphic organizers, while comparatively less attention has been given to how particular visual formats support idea sequencing, oral explanation, and classroom participation. This study addressed that gap by examining changes in students' speaking performance, confidence, and participation during instruction using different graphic organizer formats. However, the classroom action research design was intended to document instructional improvements within a specific educational setting rather than establish the independent causal effects of individual organizer types.

The urgency of this research arose from the need to address students' difficulties in organizing and expressing ideas during English speaking activities through an adaptable instructional strategy. Classroom action research provided opportunities to identify learning

challenges, implement instructional interventions, observe students' responses, and refine teaching practices through successive cycles. In this study, flowcharts were introduced during the first cycle, followed by sequence charts in the second cycle, with both formats focusing on procedural speaking tasks. The contextual novelty of the research lay in examining these two graphic organizer formats through successive instructional cycles while considering changes in students' speaking achievement, confidence, and classroom participation. This approach provided practical insights into how visual scaffolding and iterative instructional adjustments could support speaking development.

Accordingly, this study aimed to examine improvements in seventh-grade students' English speaking skills and classroom participation through the use of graphic organizers at MTs Cahaya Ilmu. Specifically, it investigated changes in students' speaking performance from the pretest through two classroom action research cycles and explored the instructional implications of using flowcharts and sequence charts to support procedural speaking activities. The findings were expected to provide practical guidance for English teachers in selecting appropriate visual learning tools, facilitating idea organization, and developing structured speaking activities that encourage student confidence and participation. Furthermore, the study sought to contribute context-specific evidence to EFL instructional research and provide a foundation for future comparative investigations into visual scaffolding, speaking fluency, linguistic accuracy, and learner confidence.

METHOD

This study employed a classroom action research (CAR) design based on the planning, action, observation, and reflection model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). The research was conducted at MTs Cahaya Ilmu in Jambi City during the 2025/2026 academic year, with classroom interventions implemented in November 2025. The participants comprised 77 seventh-grade students from three existing classes (A, B, and C), purposively selected based on speaking difficulties identified during preliminary observations. The researcher served as the classroom teacher and collaborated with a senior English teacher who observed classroom activities and assisted in reviewing students' speaking assessments.

Data were collected through speaking performance tests administered during the pretest and at the end of each instructional cycle, supported by classroom observation sheets, field notes, and instructional documentation. Speaking performance was assessed based on five criteria: fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and task completion. The criterion for classroom success was established as at least 75% of students achieving scores above the minimum mastery criterion (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal, KKM), accompanied by improvements in classroom participation. The intervention consisted of two cycles, each conducted over two meetings. Cycle I involved the use of flowcharts to help students organize and communicate procedural information. Following reflection on the first cycle, Cycle II incorporated sequence charts, more structured pair practice, and targeted feedback to address the difficulties identified during the preceding cycle. The collaborating teacher participated in classroom observations and assessment reviews to support the consistency and credibility of the findings.

Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively using IBM SPSS Statistics to compare students' speaking performance across the pretest, Cycle I, and Cycle II. The analysis included mean scores, minimum and maximum scores, and the percentage of students exceeding the established mastery criterion. Qualitative data obtained from classroom observations and field notes were analyzed thematically to identify patterns in student participation, speaking confidence, hesitation, and responses to the graphic organizers. Findings from the speaking assessments were interpreted alongside observational evidence to examine changes in students' speaking performance and classroom engagement throughout the intervention. The results were interpreted as improvements observed across successive classroom action research cycles rather than definitive evidence of a causal effect attributable to a particular graphic organizer format.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the researcher presents the results of the classroom action research conducted by the researcher. The data obtained by the researcher include observation findings and the results of the students' pre-test and post-test speaking tests. The results of this study consist of two cycles, each using different graphic organizers. This research began with the first cycle in November 2025. The actions taken were adjusted to the English lesson schedule at MTs Cahaya Ilmu in each class, with each cycle requiring two meetings or 4 x 40 minutes. The data studied were 77 seventh-grade students at MTs Cahaya Ilmu, grouped into three classes.

The results of this classroom action research show that the implementation of graphic organizers has different impacts on students' speaking skills, depending on the type of graphic organizer used. This can be seen in the table below:

Table 1. Students' Speaking Performance Across Research Cycles

Stage	Min	Mean	Max	% students > KKM
Pre-test	55	68	75	30%
Cycle 1	60	70	79	45%
Cycle 2	61	75	88	79%

Source: Students' speaking assessment scores reported in the manuscript.

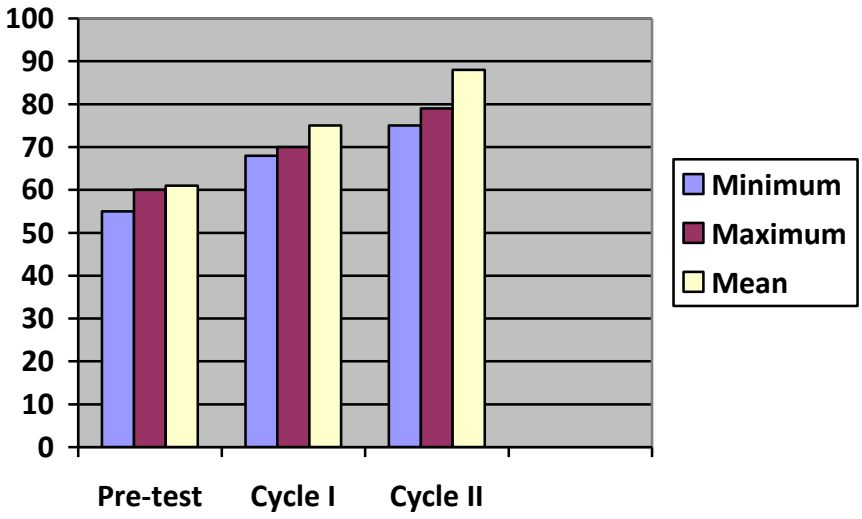


Figure 1. Speaking scores across the pre-test and two intervention cycles
Source: Graphic presented in the original manuscript.

The table above shows that at each stage of the research, there were changes in students' speaking skills. In the pre-test, the average student score was 68, with a minimum score of 55 and a maximum of 75. Furthermore, only 30% of students achieved scores above the Minimum Competency (KKM). These results indicate that in the initial stages of the research, student performance was still relatively low, and most students were unable to express their ideas orally.

In Cycle I, the application of graphic organizers in the form of flowcharts was proven to help students organize ideas sequentially in procedural texts. This finding is consistent with the view that graphic organizers function as visual aids to facilitate the organization of ideas before they are developed verbally. This is consistent with the results of the student speaking test in the final session of Cycle I, which showed progress with an average score of 70, a minimum score of 60, and a maximum score of 79. The percentage of students achieving the Minimum Competency (KKM) increased to 45%.

However, although students began to systematically sequence the steps in procedural texts, this improvement was not accompanied by significant progress in fluency and accuracy. This suggests that the ability to organize ideas structurally does not automatically translate into fluent speaking. When examined more deeply, the limited results in cycle I were not solely due to the lack of speaking practice, but also to the characteristics of the flowchart.

Flowcharts require students to understand symbols, arrow directions, and logical relationships between sections, which for seventh-grade students actually increases cognitive load during learning. In cycle I, students focused more on the technical aspects of constructing the flowchart than on preparing to speak. As a result, the time and cognitive energy that should be used to practice speaking is reduced. This finding aligns with John Sweller's cognitive load theory, as explained by (Clark, C. & Kimmons, R., 2023), which emphasizes that excessive cognitive load can hinder the learning process, particularly in tasks that require simultaneous language production.

Reflections on Cycle I also revealed that low student confidence was not only caused by limited vocabulary or grammar, but also by a lack of gradual and supportive speaking practice. Presentations conducted directly in front of the class without sufficient structured practice resulted in most students relying on worksheets and being reluctant to speak spontaneously. Thus, it can be concluded that although flowcharts are effective as a tool for organizing ideas, this medium is less aligned with the main objectives of the study, namely increasing fluency, accuracy, and confidence in speaking.

Improvements made in Cycle II through the use of sequence charts showed more significant results. The linear and simple sequence charts have been shown to reduce students' cognitive load, allowing them to focus more on conveying their ideas orally. The results of the speaking test at the end of Cycle II showed significant improvement. The average student score was 75, the minimum score was 61, and the maximum score was 88. The number of student presentations achieving scores above the Minimum Competency (KKM) also increased to 79%. This improvement demonstrates that the appropriateness of the graphic organizer type and the characteristics of the speaking task plays a crucial role in learning success. In addition, the learning design in cycle II which emphasizes pair practice, feedback, and continuous motivation also contributes to increasing students' confidence when speaking in front of the class.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the application of graphic organizers can gradually improve students' speaking skills. This finding is in line with Robert's, (2001) opinion that graphic organizers function as a tool to help students organize ideas and build relationships between concepts. Furthermore, these results align with research by (Widiarini et al., 2023) and (Saindra, 2018), which confirms that graphic organizers can help students organize ideas before speaking.

In this context, graphic organizers function more as cognitive scaffolding that facilitates students' thinking processes before speaking. However, increased fluency cannot be attributed solely to media use, as other factors such as repeated practice and increased student familiarity with the task also potentially influence outcomes. This is evident in the increase in students' scores on the fluency aspect of the assessment rubric, but the accuracy score did not show the same. Furthermore, the research findings align with the trade-off theory proposed by (Skehan, 2024), which states that limited cognitive capacity prevents learners from processing all aspects of language simultaneously. This finding is supported by research conducted by (Yang, 2025), where students prioritized fluency, resulting in increased fluency but decreased accuracy and complexity.

The comparison also has a practical implication: a visual organizer may be useful only when its complexity matches the students' language proficiency and the speaking task. The sequence chart was introduced alongside more structured practice and feedback, so the additional improvement observed in Cycle II cannot be attributed exclusively to the change of organizer type.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that the use of graphic organizers is effective in improving students' speaking skills, particularly in helping them organize their ideas before speaking, enabling them to convey information more clearly and in a more structured manner.

However, this study also revealed clear limitations, suggesting that improving linguistic aspects requires a different approach.

Therefore, this study indicates that the implementation of graphic organizers improved students' speaking skills to some extent, particularly in fluency and idea organization, but not optimally in linguistic aspects. Therefore, the termination of the action in Cycle II can be considered adequate because the research's success criteria had been achieved, in accordance with the established focus, namely, at least 75% of students achieving scores above the Minimum Completion Criteria (KKM). However, the limitations identified indicate the need for additional approaches more oriented towards developing accuracy in future research.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this classroom action research demonstrated progressive improvements in seventh-grade students' English speaking performance through the use of graphic organizers in procedural speaking activities. The mean speaking score increased from 68 on the pretest to 70 at the end of Cycle I and 75 at the end of Cycle II. Similarly, the percentage of students exceeding the minimum mastery criterion (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal, KKM) increased from 30% on the pretest to 45% in Cycle I and 79% in Cycle II. The use of flowcharts in Cycle I helped students organize their ideas sequentially, although some experienced difficulties interpreting and arranging the visual elements. In Cycle II, the introduction of simpler sequence charts, structured pair practice, and targeted teacher feedback was associated with improvements in speaking fluency, confidence, and classroom participation. The predetermined classroom success criterion was achieved in Cycle II, although students continued to experience challenges in grammatical accuracy and pronunciation. Overall, the findings suggested that graphic organizers, combined with structured speaking practice and instructional feedback, supported students' speaking development within the classroom action research setting.

Future research should investigate the effectiveness of different graphic organizer formats while distinguishing their contributions from repeated speaking practice, teacher feedback, and students' increasing familiarity with instructional tasks. Further studies are recommended to incorporate comparison groups, standardized speaking assessment rubrics, interrater reliability assessments, and follow-up evaluations to examine the consistency and sustainability of learning improvements. From a pedagogical perspective, English teachers should select graphic organizers that correspond to students' language proficiency and cognitive abilities while integrating visual planning activities with guided oral practice and constructive feedback. Given that this study involved 77 seventh-grade students from a single school and did not employ a controlled experimental design, its findings should be interpreted as context-specific evidence of instructional improvement rather than definitive proof of a causal relationship between graphic organizer use and speaking achievement.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author states that there is no conflict of interest in the preparation of this article.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

All authors contributed to conceptualization, search and synthesis of literature, interpretation of results, manuscript preparation, and critical review of manuscripts. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE USAGE STATEMENT

The authors declare that Generative Artificial Intelligence (Generative AI) was used solely to assist with language refinement, grammatical correction, and improvement of manuscript readability. All scientific concepts, interpretations, literature synthesis, analyses, and conclusions were developed by the authors. All AI-assisted content was carefully reviewed, verified, and revised by the authors, who take full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and final content of the manuscript.

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