

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Speaking skill is a crucial component in English language learning, as communication is the primary goal of the learning process. Speaking skill determines students' ability to express ideas, interact, and build meaningful communication. This skill is closely related to various linguistic aspects, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, discourse knowledge, and listening. Therefore, mastery of speaking skill is considered an indicator of success in learning English (Syakur et al., 2020).

However, in the EFL context, opportunities to use English orally outside the classroom are still very limited, making the school environment the primary space for students to practice. This condition results in students not only experiencing difficulties in expressing ideas, selecting appropriate vocabulary, and using accurate structures and pronunciation, but also facing challenges in maintaining fluent communication with their interlocutors (Crisianita & Mandasari, 2022). In addition, the fear of making mistakes and concerns about peer judgment reduce students' confidence to actively engage in conversations. This situation affects the quality of interaction in the learning process therefore, teachers need to implement appropriate strategies and act as facilitators so that students are not only able to speak, but also interact effectively in English conversations (Hamzah et al., 2023).

One effective instructional technique to overcome this issue is the implementation of Information Gap Activities. Information Gap Activities are a communication activity in which students exchange information that they do not have, so that the communication that occurs becomes more natural, authentic, and meaningful (Richards, 2006). According to Thi & Duyen (2021), an information gap refers to a gap in information between two individuals with different data. The information exchange process in this activity aims to bridge this gap so that participants achieve equal understanding (Defrioka, 2017). Furthermore, according to Nurhartanto et al. (2023), information gaps are usually encountered by two people, each possessing different information while the other lacks information. Both students need to exchange information to complete the assigned task. Once completed, they can see that the information they possess complements each other.

There are several previous studies that have examined the use of Information Gap Activities to improve students' speaking skills. The first was conducted by Mahmudah et al. (2025). They investigated the effectiveness of Information Gap Activities (IGA) in enhancing students' speaking skill. The main objective of this study was to determine whether the use of Information Gap Activities could significantly improve students' speaking performance. The study employed an experimental method using a true-experimental research design to measure the impact of IGA on students' oral performance. The findings revealed

that students' speaking skill improved significantly after the implementation of Information Gap Activities.

The second was conducted by Nurhartanto et al. (2023). They investigated the use of Information Gap Activities (IGA) in enhancing students' speaking skill. The main objective of this study was to examine the effectiveness of IGA in improving students' oral performance in the English classroom. Data were obtained through teacher interviews and speaking tests to examine the effectiveness of IGA in the classroom. The findings showed that the use of IGA made students more spontaneous, motivated, and confident in speaking English.

The third was conducted by Oktavia (2021). They investigated the use of Gap Activities to improve Islamic English speaking skill through a classroom action research design. The main objective of this research was to investigate the use of Gap Activities to improve Islamic English speaking skills by employing a classroom action research design. The instruments used in this study were tests and documentation to assess students' learning progress across the implemented cycles. The findings indicated that Information Gap Activities (IGA) significantly improved students' speaking skills, demonstrating its effectiveness in enhancing their English oral performance within an Islamic learning context.

Although several previous studies have shown that information gap activities are effective in improving students' speaking skills, most of these studies have focused on aspects such as fluency, vocabulary and students'

confidence in speaking. However, there are still limited studies that discuss the use of information gap activities in developing students' interactional competence, which refers to their ability to manage and maintain interaction effectively during conversation.

Based on an interview with an English teacher at SMAN 1 Tanjungpinang, speaking instruction in the classroom still tends to focus on students' individual speaking skills, such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Students are often asked to perform monologues individually. Although most students still experience difficulties in interacting naturally with teachers and peers during communication activities. As a result, classroom interactions tend to be less communicative, lack of confidence in dialogue and more teacher-dominated. Therefore, this study focuses on interactional competence because it is considered more relevant in testing students' ability to communicate interactively in real communication contexts than solely assessing individual speaking skills. To address this issue, this study used information gap activities as a technique on the students at SMAN 1 Tanjungpinang. The title of this study is "The Effect of Information Gap Activity on Tenth Graders' interactional Competence at SMAN 1 Tanjungpinang".

1.2 Identification of The Problem

Based on the research background, several problems related to students can be identified as follows:

1. Lack of opportunities for students to speak actively in class
2. Difficulty maintaining a conversation
3. Lack of confidence in dialogue

1.3 Limitation of The Problem

This research was limited to the implementation of Information Gap Activity for four weeks. The research focused on 36 students in Class X-16 at SMAN 1 Tanjungpinang during the 2025/2026 academic year.

1.4 Research Question:

Based on the background of the problem above, the research question was:

- 1) Does the use of information gap activity have a significant effect on tenth graders' interactional competence?

1.5 Research Objective

this study aimed to determine whether the use of information gap activity has a significant effect on tenth graders' interactional competence at SMAN 1 Tanjungpinang.

1.6 The Significant of The Research

The research was expected to provide the significant contribution both for theoretically and practically:

1) Theoretical

The results of this study were expected to enrich studies in the field of English language learning, particularly regarding students' interactional competence. Furthermore, this study could serve as reference for further research in the field of english language education.

2) Practical

a) Students

This study provided more meaningful learning opportunities to interact in english.

b) Teachers

The results of this research were expected to provide a reference for school teachers in finding effective strategies to increase student interaction.

c) Researcher

This research could enrich the knowledge and experience of researcher in researching the use of strategies for student interaction.

1.7 Definition of Key Term

1) Information Gap Activity

Information Gap Activity is a communication activity in which students exchange information that they do not have. In this study, this activity is used as a learning technique to help students practice interacting more naturally.

2) Interactional Competence

Interactional Competence refers to a student's ability to participate effectively in a conversation. This includes the ability to initiate a conversation, ask questions, respond, request clarification, manage turn-taking, and maintain an ongoing conversation.

