

The usage of spoken word poetry to teach speaking skills in the ESL Classroom

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Abstract: Speaking is always regarded as a difficult task to perform by many ESL learners. Basic knowledge of vocabulary, sentence structures and pronunciation are a must to speak and respond accordingly. Therefore, this paper explores the usage of Spoken Word Poetry (SWP) as an alternative method to teach speaking skills in the ESL classroom. This study engaged a quantitative method approach to collect the data namely experimental method. The aim of this study is to identify the extent to which SWP improves students speaking skills in the ESL classroom. Ninety ESL learners of Health Sciences participated in the study. Students were placed into two groups, an experimental group and control group to test the usage of SWP in the classroom. The findings revealed a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group students receiving SWP approaches. Based on mean, the experimental group showed better score (mean = 15.36) than the control group (mean 11.42) in their post-test. It was observed as well that the experimental group had higher scores of post-test than control group in terms of vocabulary knowledge especially the usage of low frequency words. In addition, at the end of the study, it was seen that the post-test scores of the students in the experimental group were higher than the post-test scores of students in the control group even though they were almost equal before the study. Therefore, based on these findings, the current study shows that it is significant to use SWP as a new approach to teach speaking skills in the ESL classroom as it improved students' proficiency in speaking.

Keywords: Spoken Word Poetry (SWP), Teaching Speaking Skills, ESL Classroom

INTRODUCTION

There are many approaches being used to teach speaking skills in the ESL classroom. The aim of speaking is to interact effectively where students should be able to make themselves understood, respond accordingly and use the correct vocabulary, pronunciations, and proper intonation. There are many methods to promote speaking skills to the students such as role play (Pinatih, 2021), brainstorming (Situmorang et al, 2022), storytelling (Andrian & Faudi, 2020), debate (el Majidi, Graaff, & Janssen, 2021), songs (Ejang, Hashim & Duan, 2020), flipped classroom (Yakob et al, 2023) and picture describing (Hafidz, Abdul, 2020). However, according to Prabu (1990), there is no one method of teaching that is superior to others. Students who determine what method works and what method doesn't work for them. Each of them has a different set of needs and preferences. Therefore, teachers should use a different or a combination of methods and approaches for different teaching contexts because all methods are partially suitable or effective Prabu (1990) and therefore, this study aimed to identify the extent to which Spoken Word Poetry (SWP) approaches improve students' speaking skills in the ESL classroom.

In Malaysia, there are very limited studies that had been done about SWP especially the usage of SWP in speaking class. For instance, Salleh et al. (2019) conducted a study on the use of SWP as an alternative instructional tool to teach literature to lower and upper secondary students. Another study done by a local researcher focused on the current trends of Malaysian poetic writing in English in the 21st Century and how spoken word poets begin to discovered its own audience locally (Jeyam, 2018). Most of the publications on Spoken Word Poetry were written by researchers from United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Sweden, South Africa and Native American.

Spoken word poetry (SWP)

As mentioned earlier, most of Spoken Word Poetry journals / articles were published by researchers from western countries. According to Milsovillan (2011), the performance of Slam Poetry / Spoken Word was initiated by March Smith in 1984 where he conducted an open mic night in a lounge in Chicago. Smith was also known as "the father of Slam Poetry". Based on record, Spoken Word was carried by Griot (storyteller) that brought African song, history, and stories to new continents where their people were enslaved and the roots of SWP were traced back to African-American folk tradition and the Beatniks of the 60s. SWP was used as a medium to transform opinions or disagreement into the public/political and used it to provoke the present circumstances that injustice to them especially by The Beat Generation Movement 1950s and The Black Art Movement 1960s. Also, at that point of time, due to the current political and strong racism practice, they were not able to voice out directly the dissatisfaction and oppression they received. Therefore, SWP was used as a medium to voice it openly to the public. Slam and performance poets employ a mix of raw emotion and poetic technique to connect with their audience and involve them in the issue they are talking about. It challenges its listeners to rethink their perceptions of the current practice by the ruling governing, (Baig, 2014).

In term of characteristic, Jetnil-Kijiner (2014) and Sommer-Willet (2010) stated that Spoken Word Poetry (SWP) also known as slam and performance poetry is written with the intention of being performed for an audience or spoken aloud as opposed to the written poetry that are specifically written for the page. Because it is performed, this poetry tends to reveal an intense use of rhythm, improvisation, free association, rhymes, rich poetic phrases, word play and slang. It is more aggressive than the traditional forms of poetry. Further, Williams (2018),

and Guillen (2017) highlighted that SWP focuses on intonation, stress, sounds as opposed to written poetry. Even though SWP is like traditional poetry, it is meant to be performed, heard, and experienced rather than to be read on paper. Another unique characteristic of SWP is it consists of jazz, rap, hip-hop, folk music, storytelling, theatre, rock, and blues elements that characterized by rhyme, repetition, improvisation and word play, Weiss and Herndon, (2011). All these combinations elements of SWP could be determined individually in a traditional method such as teaching speaking through song, role play, debate, drama and many others.

The advantage of using spoken word poetry in the classroom has been broadly studied by researchers in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and Sweden but to the knowledge of the researchers, little research has been conducted on this subject in Malaysia especially in speaking. SWP has been used for many purposes to educate students and society, for instance, a study done by Lin et al. (2019) focused on the usage of SWP to improve critical thinking in a Malaysian secondary classroom. Michalko (2012) emphasized on the effect of spoken word poetry on the development of voice in writing whereby she suggested that SWP is a writing tool that will help students raise confidence and ascertain their self-identities through the act of performing. Fiore (2015), Burton and Viegen (2021) in their studies highlighted SWP was used in education context as a platform for the black and refugee background students in the urban and suburban classroom in United States to voice out their opinions on sociopolitical issues and injustices relevant to students' lives and experiences and negotiate the conditions of their lives. These experiences engaged with students' linguistic, cultural, and other semiotic resources such as facial expression, the tone of voice, a piece of software, and so forth.

Another interesting study done by Williams (2015) where the author works with members of a spoken word poetry group to develop ways to integrate spoken word into classroom and school communities. Other than that, SWP was used by Tornqvist (2019) as a medium to lower speaking anxiety and increase their motivation for speaking English in class for Grade 9 students in Swedish secondary school. In United States, SWP which is also known as Slam Poetry is a new cultural expression that has become popular in high schools. This type of poetry appeals to teenagers because it allows the students to express themselves in their own language, and it allows them to address issues that they find important, (Yanofsky et al., 2006). Another few SWP studies done by Gates & Curwood (2023) disclosed how spoken word poetry can be integrated into the secondary English curriculum in Sydney to enhance critical literacy and promote social justice pedagogy. Meanwhile Bagwell (2021) states spoken word poetry could provide practical tools for empathy, active listening, and community building in the classroom and can be implemented into the social studies classroom. Based on the cited studies, researcher would like to acclimatize SWP from different perspective, which is language, as a method to educate ESL learners to voice out their opinions and emotions orally which is speaking but in a structure way without any hesitation that they will be penalized or judging by others.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to identify the extent to which SWP improves students speaking skills in the ESL classroom. The learners were 90 Health Sciences students of foundation and diploma levels from various programs namely Pharmacy, Nursing, Physiotherapy, Foundation in Medical Sciences and Medical Imaging. Learners were in mixed groups in terms of proficiency in English. Majority of them were fresh from school where the syllabus was taught in Bahasa Malaysia and most of the time they preferred to converse in Bahasa Melayu except for their English classes. The formal English lessons that based on the traditional method that the learners obtained in primary and secondary schools for 11 years were unable to make them

speak English fluently and accurately.

According to the study done by Yahaya et al (2021), the learners seemed to consider speaking as an uncomfortable task to perform as they were not able to relate and apply the speaking knowledge that they have learned to their daily life. Therefore, the researcher was captivated an alternative method introducing SWP to teach speaking skills to the experimental group at one of the private university in Ipoh as to change such perception. The students in the treatment group were exposed to task fulfilment, discourse management and language in 7 sessions of SWP classes and activities outside their compulsory learning hours. Students in the control group were learning the same topic through the traditional method as stipulated in the university English syllabus during the compulsory English lessons. The progress of the students were analyzed with a comparison of the tests made at the beginning and at the end of the treatment.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

This study engaged a purposive sampling technique to select the respondents as this technique provides the researcher space on her own judgment and expertise in choosing participants in the study. The subject of this study was 90 ESL students. In terms of number of participants, it is no denial that the higher the sample the better the outcome will be. However, based on thumb sample size by some scholars, as stated by Cohen et al., (2007, p.102), experimental methodologies require at least 15 participants. Cohen study was aligned with Gall et. al. (1996) which mentioned that there should be at least 15 participants in control and experimental groups for comparison. Therefore, the 90-sample size for this study was justified to be used. On the other hand, to implement the SWP method, two (2) English lecturers were engaged, lecturer A and lecturer B. Lecturer A handled the control group and using the university syllabus as per university schedule. Meanwhile lecturer B handled the treatment group where short training and briefing was given to her on SWP method. SWP class was conducted outside class hours and was attended by 45 students.

Selection of participants were made based on the following criteria:

- a) They were ESL learners.
- b) They were familiar with poetry and the structure as they had learned them in lower and upper secondary school.
- c) They had completed the English course in Semester 1 at this university.
- d) Average of 11 years of English language learning in school.
- e) Proficiency of English were from average to poor.
- f) Age range: 19 – 24 years old
- g) Willing to join the pre-post, intervention, and post-test sessions.
- h) In term of proficiency, based on the university placement test, they were regarded as average and poor level speakers.

Materials

As part of the intervention session for the experimental group, there were variety of materials used in the SWP sessions such as watching three videos of SWP Performances by local and

external poets namely Sheena Baharudin – All the Bodies We Have Embraced, Jamal Raslan – Human of KL Stories and Sarah Kay – If I Should Have A Daughter. According to Smaldino et al. (2007), watching videos were able to promote perception, understanding and transfer knowledge effectively since it is audio-visual material, especially for novices. By viewing those performances, students have some exposure and ideas how SWP was performed as in week 6, they are required to perform SWP as a medium to polish their speaking skills. After the students were familiarized with SWP performance (videos watching), the next activity was introducing the usage of low frequency words as to polish their vocabularies.

Word Search Puzzle was used by the researcher for the students to search for the low frequency words given. The aim of this activity was to create stress free learning environments. The usage of Word Search Puzzles managed to improve students' motivation and comprehension in English learning, Za et al. (2021). Afterall, word search puzzle is a type of game that is friendly for students, especially for beginners who want to learn vocabulary in a foreign language (Alifudin, 2019; Fitria, 2022b).

Based on the words puzzles, students were required to search for at least another two or three synonym low frequency words as shown in Table 1. Students were required to give the meaning of the word as listed in the first column.

Table 1: High Frequency Words, Meaning and Pronunciation Activities

Low Frequency Word	Another Low Frequency Word	Meaning	Now Pronounce All the words It
Example: Hunger	Staving, famish	Hunger: a feeling of discomfort or weakness caused by lack of food, coupled with the desire to eat	Hunger, Staving, Famish
Influence			
Audience			
Emphasis			
Interruptions			
Eye Contact			
Dialect			
Idiolect			
Pauses			
Effect			
Fluency			
Polite			
Turn-taking			
Jargon			
Context			
Paralinguistic features			
Hesitations			
Purposes			
Stress			
Overlapping			
Gestures			
Slang			
Accent			
Fillers			

By knowing the meaning of the searched words, they will be able to remember the words better. Also, by familiarizing themselves with those low frequency words, students will be able to speak better as it will enrich them with variety of vocabulary based on the context and given situation. Finally, students were required to practice pronouncing those low frequency words in a group of four. Based on the study conducted by Rasyid & Sofyan (2020), students prefer to learn pronunciation material through authentic or real practice activities and using the materials that they like and meet their need and word search puzzle was one of it. Being able to pronounce the words correctly and confidently will motivate students to speak fluently without much hesitation.

After 5 weeks of SWP intervention sessions, the experimental group went through the SWP individually. Table 2 below shows the steps used to initiate simple SWP performance for beginners.

Table 2: Preparation for SWP Performance (Experimental Group Only)

Simple Step to Draft SWP (beginner)

1	Think of one word (example: hate) and this word could be used as your theme.
2	List three things that associated with that word, example – durian, manipulated person, lack of integrity.
3	Elaborate No 2 using concrete words (example low frequency word) and phrases with strong imagery, example personification that your audience will be able to feel it. Use repetition wherever possible as will help to extend that particular thought or image beyond its original meaning.
4	How do you think you can overcome it?
5	Share your experience based on any words in No 2.
6	Incorporate rhyme in your SWP to make your performance more interesting, and entertaining. Be creative and have fun with the theme you choose.

Feedback was given accordingly by the lecturer to all the students immediately after their performances for further improvement based on the rubric in Table 3.

Table 3: Rubric for Spoken Word Performance

	Proficient (3 pts)	Novice (2 pts)	Undeveloped (1 pt)	Points
Content	The poem reflects and expresses a particular theme. The writer's point of view and character is obvious. The writer seems to be writing from a personal place and experiences. Ideas are relevant and original.	Writer attempts to express a particular theme, but parts of the poem are off topic. There is evidence of the writer's character and point of view. Ideas are mostly relevant and original.	The theme of the poem is unclear. The writer's feelings are not revealed. The writing does not seem to "belong" to the writer. Ideas are irrelevant or unoriginal.	
Language	The writer makes excellent use of vivid words, phrases, and details that paint a rich image for the reader. The writer uses effective poetic and figurative language (repetition, simile, hyperbole, metaphor, alliteration, internal rhyme, allusion, etc.) in their poem. Lines are carefully chosen and placed.	The writer uses more than one type of poetic devices or figurative language (repetition, simile, hyperbole, metaphor, alliteration, internal rhyme, allusion, etc.) in their poem. An attempt is made to use vivid words and phrases.	The writer does not attempt to use any type of poetic device or figurative language in their poem. No attempt was made to use vivid details. Language seems every day with no imagery.	
Performance (Voice)	Excellent use of pitch, volume, and pacing. Voice is loud and clear. Delivery is fluent and coherent.	Good use of pitch, volume, and pacing. Voice is mostly clear and audible.	Little use of pitch, volume, or pacing. Voice is inaudible or unclear at times.	
Performance (Body Language)	Excellent use of body language, facial expressions, and gestures. Body language adds meaning to the poetry.	Good use of body language, facial expressions, and gestures to enhance the poetry.	Minimal use of body language, facial expressions, or gestures to enhance the poetry.	
Total Points				

Adopted from: University of Oklahoma. Retrieved on 21st February 2024 from Spoken Word Poetry Rubric, Speak Your Truth at <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/lesson/1624/Spoken-Word-Poetry-Rubric-Speak-Your-Truth.pdf?rev=23318&language=English>

Table 4: Summary of SWP Intervention Session

Week 1	Pre-Test (both control and experimental groups)	Speaking Pre-Test
Week 2	Introduction of SWP Watching selected SWP videos performance (local and abroad)]	Experimental Group Only
Week 3	Drilling on vocabulary (high and low frequency words)	Experimental Group Only
Week 4	Drilling on pronunciation and intonation + drafting SWP	Experimental Group Only
Week 5	Preparing and practicing SWP Mini Performance	Experimental Group Only
Week 6	Performance - SWP	Experimental Group Only
Week 7	Post-Test (both control and experimental groups)	Speaking Post-Test

Data Collection Procedure

Speaking test was used as an instrument by the researcher to collect the data. Speaking test was conducted in week 7. The speaking test consisted of pre-test and post-test. 10 sets of speaking test questions were used as pre-test and post-test questions throughout the study (Table 5). It was adapted from speaking test of Malaysian University English Test (MUET) which was used as parameter to measure the speaking proficiency of the students using SWP as an alternative method to improve speaking skill in both control and experimental groups.

The test was navigated to 90 participated students (45 experimental group students & 45 control group students). As for the pre-test, students were divided into 21 groups consisting of 4 students per group and 2 groups consisting of 3 students per group. Prior to the pre-test, students were quarantined to ensure the confidentiality of the questions.

As mentioned earlier, each group consisted of 4 students. Students were evaluated individually even though they were in a group. When the group was called, they were sited accordingly as instructed by the teacher. One situation was given to all the candidates (Table 5). Each candidate was performed different task. The candidates were given two minutes to read and prepare the task. Each candidate was given 2 minutes to present his/her opinion and they were assessed accordingly by the teacher using Speaking Assessment Criteria (Table 6). The aim of the pre-test was to determine the proficiency level between control and experimental group in terms of task fulfilment, discourse management and language. Both groups were almost equal according to analysis of the pre-test results.

The treatment session was implemented after class hours. The treatment process had 4 sessions for the group and the duration of each session was two hours. The control group practice speaking as stipulated in the university syllabus with variety of techniques based on the preferences of the lecturer unlike the experimental group, their speaking skills were drilled using SWP method focusing on task fulfilment, discourse management and language.

The post-test was applied at the end of the treatment to the groups. The aim of the post-test was to verify the research question of the study as to find out to which extend could SWP improve students speaking skills in the ESL classroom. As to investigate the significant of the intervention sessions, t-test in SPSS 29 for window was used to analyze the pre-test and post-test scores. The results of the analysis were reported accordingly.

Table 5: Pre-Test and Post-Test Questions

Individual Presentation

- You have 2 minutes to prepare your response.
- You have 2 minutes to talk.

Situation Living in a small town has many advantages. What are some of these?
STUDENT A You have to give a presentation to your class. Talk about comfortable neighbourly relations .
STUDENT B You have to give a presentation to your class. Talk about living in a clean environment .
STUDENT C You have to give a presentation to your class. Talk about less competition for job .
STUDENT D You have to give a presentation to your class. Talk about minimal traffic .

Adapted from: Majlis Peperiksaan Malaysia (2023). MUET Session 3, 800/2 (4).

Speaking Assessment Form (Table 6) was used to evaluate the student's speaking proficiency. The range of score are from zero (0) as the lowest and twenty-four (24) as the highest. Students were assessed based on their task fulfillment, discourse management and language abilities. The Speaking Assessment Criteria was adopted from Malaysia Education Council, 2019.

Table 6: Pre-Test and Post-Test Speaking Assessment Criteria

Score Criterion	24-22	21-19	18-14	13-7	6-2	1-0
Task Fulfillment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Address the task effectively with excellent development and ideas ● Content is relevant and appropriate with sophistication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Address the task effectively with good development and substantive ideas ● Content is relevant and appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Address the task satisfactorily with somewhat substantive ideas ● Content is relevant but may not be appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Addresses the task adequately with some development ● Content is mostly relevant but may not be appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Addresses the task adequately in a simple manner ● Content is partially relevant and contains some inappropriacy 	Lack the ability to use the language except for a few isolated words
Discourse Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Very fluent with occasional hesitation ● Speaks coherently using fully appropriate cohesive features 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fluent with some hesitation and occasional stumbling ● Coherence is adequately achieved using appropriate cohesive features 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Generally fluent. Able to keep communication going though with occasional unevenness, light stumbling and groping for words ● Coherence is achieved with use of simple cohesive features. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Moderate fluent. Able to keep communication going although speech is uneven, hesitant, and marked by some unsuccessful groping for words ● Uses simple cohesive features but not always appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lacking in fluency. Speech is frequently jerky, marked by many false starts ● Links basic sentences but repetitious use of simple linkers and some breakdown in coherence 	
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shows excellent control of a wide range of grammatical forms ● Uses appropriate and wide range of vocabulary effectively ● Is highly intelligible, pronunciation is very clear and no noticeable errors in stress and intonation patterns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shows good control of a range of simple and complex grammatical forms ● Uses appropriate and wide range of vocabulary well ● Is intelligible, pronunciation does not interfere with comprehension and no noticeable errors in stress and intonation patterns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shows satisfactory control of simple and complex grammatical forms ● Uses appropriate and wide range of vocabulary satisfactorily ● Is intelligible, pronunciation does not hinder comprehension and only occasional errors in stress and intonation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shows some control of simple grammatical forms ● Use appropriate and moderate range of vocabulary ● Is mostly intelligible, pronunciation causes occasionally misunderstanding, has basic stress and intonation patterns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shows limited control of simple grammatical forms ● Limited use of appropriate vocabulary ● Is partly intelligible, has some issues with pronunciation, stress and intonation, which may cause some misunderstanding 	

Adopted from: *Malis Peperiksaan Malaysia (Malaysia Examination Council), 2019.*

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to identify the extent to which SWP improves students speaking skills in the ESL classroom, students' achievement from the pre-test and post-test was compared. Prior to that, a normality test was conducted to determine whether a sample data has been drawn from a normally distributed population. It is generally performed to verify whether the data involved in the research have a normal distribution. The assumption is that all data is normally distributed, and this could be obtained through Shapiro-Wilk test.

Result from the pre-test data is shown below:

	Tests of Normality					
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pretest	.062	90	.200*	.981	90	.229

Figure 1: Test of Normality for Pre-Test

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Shapiro-Wilk test of normality was conducted to determine whether pre-test data is normally distributed. The results indicate that we fail to reject the null hypothesis for pretest data ($p = 0.229$) and this concludes that data is normally distributed.

Results from the post-test data is shown below:

	Tests of Normality					
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Post-test	.080	90	.200*	.985	90	.364

Figure 2: Test of Normality for Post-Test

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The Shapiro-Wilk test of normality (figure 2) was conducted to determine whether post-test data is normally distributed. The results indicate that we fail to reject the null hypothesis for post-test data ($p = 0.364$) and this concludes that data is normally distributed.

Results of the normality test is shown below:

	Tests of Normality					
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pretest	.062	90	.200*	.981	90	.229
Post-test	.080	90	.200*	.985	90	.364

Figure 3: Test of Normality for Pre-Test and Post-Test

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Shapiro-Wilk test of normality (Figure 3) was conducted to determine whether the data is normally distributed. In Shapiro-Wilk Test, if the value is greater than 0.05, the data is normal. Since the significant value for both, pretest and post-test are $p = 0.229$ and $p = 0.364$ respectively, the data are normal. Due to this, the results indicate that we fail to reject the null hypothesis for the data and this concludes that data is normally distributed. Therefore, the data of pre-test and post-test can be used for T-Test analysis.

Analysis of T-Test

A t-test is a statistical test that compares the means of two samples. The parametric test used to measure whether the sample mean is statistically different from a hypothesized population mean. A paired samples t-test was performed to evaluate whether there was a difference between the mean scores of the control group in their pretest and their post-test.

Results from the control group:

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test	11.47	45	5.155	.768
	Post-test	11.42	45	5.220	.778

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Pretest & Post-test	45	.998	.000

Figure 4: Paired Samples Correlations Control Group – Pretest and Post Test

		Paired Differences		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest - Post-Test	.044	.367	-.066	.155	.813	44	.420

Figure 4: Paired Samples Correlations Control Group – Pretest and Post Test

The results indicated (figure 4) that there was no significant difference between the pre-test mean scores of the control group ($M = [11.47]$) $SD = [5.16]$) and the post-test mean scores of the control group ($M = [11.42]$, $SD = [5.22]$) $t ([44]) = [value of t (0.82)]$, $p=0.42$. This test suggests that the traditional method of learning speaking skills was not showing any significant improvement to control group students speaking proficiency.

Results from the Experimental Group:

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test	10.89	45	4.677	.697
	Post-test	15.36	45	4.964	.740

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Pretest & Post-test	45	.946	.000

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre-test - Post-test	-4.467	1.604	.239	-4.949	-3.985	-18.681	44	.000

Figure 5: Paired Samples Correlations Experimental Group – Pretest and Post Test

A paired samples t-test was performed (Figure 5) to evaluate whether there was a difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in their pretest and post-test. The results indicated that there was a significant difference between the pre-test mean scores of the experimental group ($M = [10.89]$, $SD = [4.68]$) and the post-test mean scores of the control group ($M = [15.36]$, $SD = [4.96]$) $t(44) = [value\ of\ t\ (-18.68)]$, $p = [0.000]$. This test displays that the intervention session was improving experimental students speaking proficiency.

Independent Samples T-Test and Post-Test Analysis

After analyzing the normality distribution of variances, an independent samples t-test was performed to measure the difference between two population mean scores of the control group and the experimental group.

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post-test	Control	45	11.42	5.220	.778
	Experimental	45	15.36	4.964	.740

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Post-test	Equal variances assumed	.308	.580	-3.663	88	.000	-3.933	1.074	-6.067	-1.799
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.663	87.779	.000	-3.933	1.074	-6.067	-1.799

Figure 6: Independent Sample Test

The results indicated that there was a significant difference (figure 6) between the mean scores of the control group ($M = [11.42]$) $SD = [5.22]$ and experimental group ($M = [15.36]$) $SD = [4.97]$ conditions; $t(88) = -3.67$, $p < 0.001$ as experimental and control group students are significantly different in term of their proficiency after the treatment. This result suggests that Spoken Word Poetry does influence the speaking skills of the experimental group compared to the traditional method of learning speaking skills as represented by the control group. It was also observed that after the researcher implemented SWP, the students begin to use low frequency words more frequently when conversed. They begin to be aware and alert to use the vocabulary within the right context to deliver their ideas and responses accordingly. This could be observed during the vocabulary and pronunciation sessions. Their pronunciations also improved, it could be seen when they practiced many vocabularies and pronounced it together and when they spoke up in front of the class, they were able to pronounce it correctly with the appropriate articulation and intonation.

CONCLUSION

From the research, it can be concluded that teaching speaking skills by using SWP as an alternative method is effective since the null hypothesis is rejected. There is a difference in speaking ability between the targeted group which is the experimental and the control group. The difference is signified by the value of the post-test, which is higher than pre-test of the experimental group, it means that there is a significant difference between the means in the speaking ability of the target group. Based on mean, the experimental group showed better score (mean = 15.36) than the control group (mean 11.42) in their post-test. In short, the use of SWP in teaching speaking skills to the foundation and diploma students is effective to improve their speaking ability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results and conclusion of the study, few recommendations are offered to overcome the shortcomings that occurred during the implementation of SWP. Firstly, the duration for each session should be longer to cater for those students that required more time to adapt to activities offered during the intervention session. Students learned at different paces, depending on their proficiency level. By allocating more hours to each session, this will help to cater for those students that require more time to learn new methods. Secondly, since the existing of SWP is not extensively known by many including educators in Malaysia, this interesting method could be implemented as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) focusing on improving speaking skills on the identified specific group. Thirdly, students that participated in this study should be motivated better to ensure their continuous participation in the intervention classes. Since all the sessions were conducted outside class hours, motivation in terms of GHocks (marks that credited for student participation in co-curricular activity at this university) could be credited for their voluntarily participation. Fourthly, a follow-up session or feedback session should be offered individually to all participating students in the experimental group. It will be very time-consuming, but this will help them to overcome their shortcomings during the intervention session. Finally, SWP approaches could be used as a remedy to help students with poor and moderate proficiency in speaking skills at a higher learning institution such as university, and colleges especially the final year students as prepare them for the job interview. This will boost their confidence level to converse in English during the interview session and a better chance to be employed by the potential employer.

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