



The Effectiveness of the Direct Method in Enhancing Public Elementary Students' Speaking Skills

Bejo Sutrisno¹

bejo.sutrisno@uai.ac.id

Applied Linguistic Department, Faculty of Knowledge and Culture, Universitas Al-Azhar Indonesia

Silvia Sanusi

silvia_sanusi@stibaiec-jakarta.ac.id

English Departement, Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing IEC Jakarta

Budi Rachmawati

b.rachmawati@stieimp.ac.id

Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Mulya Pratama

Sutrisno, B., Sanusi, S. and Rachmawati, B. (2026). The Effectiveness of the Direct Method in Enhancing Public Elementary Students' Speaking Skills. *Journal of English Language and literature*, 11(1), 37-52 doi: 10.37110/jell.v11i1.342

Received: 12-10-2025

Accepted: 17-02-2026

Published: 02-03-2026

Abstract: This study examines the effectiveness of the Direct Method in improving elementary students' English speaking skills and explores students' responses toward learning English through this approach. The research was conducted at Bu Lani's Tutor House in Depok and involved 12 first-grade students from public elementary schools. A mixed-methods design was employed, combining a quasi-experimental approach with descriptive qualitative analysis, in which the researcher also acted as the instructor. Data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews. Students' speaking skills were assessed using five criteria: vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and consistency. The findings indicate a significant improvement in students' speaking skills after 22 instructional sessions using the Direct Method. Pre-test results showed very low proficiency, with most students scoring 0 or 1 and a total score of 12. This substantial increase from a total pre-test score of 12 to a post-test score of 140 underscores the significant positive impact of the Direct Method. Improvements were particularly evident in fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and consistency, although grammatical accuracy remained relatively challenging, some students showed minor improvements in simple sentence structures. In conclusion, the Direct Method is effective in enhancing young learners' English speaking skills and promoting positive attitudes toward English learning, even in non-bilingual educational settings. The study suggests that the Direct Method is a viable approach for public elementary schools, though further research could explore its long-term effects or adaptations for larger class sizes.

Keywords: *Direct method, speaking skills, beginner Learners, TEFL, quasi-experimental research*

INTRODUCTION

As an international language, English plays a crucial role in global communication, access to information, and educational advancement.

Proficiency in English enables learners to acquire new knowledge, engage with diverse sources, and participate in international academic and professional communities. In the Indonesian context, however, English is still regarded as a

¹ Corresponding author

foreign language rather than a second language, which limits students' exposure and opportunities to practice the language meaningfully. According to the EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI, 2023), Indonesia is ranked 80th out of 133 countries, placing its overall English proficiency in the low category. This position contrasts sharply with that of neighboring countries such as Malaysia and Singapore, which demonstrate significantly higher levels of English proficiency.

Although research suggests that children tend to acquire foreign languages more easily than adults, early English instruction in Indonesia remains limited (Rosaria et al., 2025; Wulansari & Hardianto, 2025). English is not mandated as a compulsory subject from the first grade of elementary school, and in many schools it is taught only once a week. This limited instructional time may hinder students' language development and reduce their potential to achieve communicative competence at an early age (Acosta et al., 2023; Almanea et al., 2024; Buacokrung et al., 2025). Consequently, the lack of early and intensive exposure to English may contribute to Indonesia's relatively low English proficiency level compared to other countries in the region. It is known that international schools have a better reputation for producing students with stronger English skills compared to those following the national curriculum. There is a lack of research on the methods that elementary school teachers in Indonesia use in their classrooms. Based on the writer's experience as a teacher, the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is the most commonly used method by English teachers in Indonesia, particularly in non-English-based schools, while the Direct Method is more commonly used in international (English-based) schools. (Masduqi et al., 2021; Munzaki et al., 2017). Since it is widely known that students in international or bilingual schools are able to speak English better, the writer intends to use the methods employed by these schools (International or bilingual school) for public elementary students.

According to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) in *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*, the Direct Method is characterized by a fundamental principle that prohibits the use of translation in language instruction. The method derives its name from the emphasis on conveying meaning directly through the target language, without reliance on learners' native language. Instead, meaning is communicated through demonstration, visual aids, realia, and contextualized examples. This approach is intended to promote natural language acquisition by encouraging learners to think and respond in the target language, thereby fostering direct associations between form and meaning.

Previous studies have consistently reported positive effects of the Direct Method on students' speaking skills across different educational levels. The implementation of the Direct Method in junior high school contexts led to significant improvements in students' speaking performance, particularly in terms of accuracy and fluency (Dakhalan & Tanucan, 2024; Kotani & Yoshimi, 2021; Rosaria et al., 2025; Yafei et al., 2024). Similar findings were reported by Haliwanda (2019), whose study at the senior high school level demonstrated that students showed noticeable progress in their oral communication skills after being taught using the Direct Method. Furthermore, Dewi (2023) revealed that the application of the Direct Method in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) at a bilingual elementary school was successfully implemented and contributed positively to the learning process. Collectively, these studies suggest that the Direct Method is effective in enhancing students' speaking abilities and can be applied across various educational settings.

Based on the studies reviewed above, there is limited evidence indicating that the Direct Method has been widely implemented in public elementary schools in Indonesia, where the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is still predominantly used. Existing research on the application of the Direct Method in the Indonesian context remains scarce (Dalilah &



Ashila, 2024; Daud et al., 2022; Kotani & Yoshimi, 2021), with most studies focusing on secondary-level learners. While several studies have examined the effects of this method on adolescents, considerably fewer have explored its impact on younger learners, particularly at the elementary level. Moreover, research specifically investigating the use of the Direct Method in public elementary schools, as opposed to bilingual or international school settings, is notably limited (Gurzynski-Weiss et al., 2024; Silva et al., 2024). This gap highlights the need for further empirical studies to examine the effectiveness of the Direct Method for improving English learning outcomes among young learners in public elementary education contexts.

Based on the reviewed studies and the researcher's professional experience, the Direct Method at the elementary level in Indonesia has been predominantly implemented in private international or bilingual schools, where it has shown positive effects on students' vocabulary development and speaking skills (Dakhalan & Tanucan, 2024; Fitriani et al., 2025; Rosaria et al., 2025). Learners in these educational settings tend to benefit more readily from the Direct Method due to their prior exposure to English. Many students in international and bilingual elementary schools have been introduced to English from an early age through private tutoring, enrollment in bilingual or international preschools, or additional language instruction at home. In some cases, parental proficiency in English also contributes to a supportive language environment (Al-Jarf, 2022; Harmanto, 2022; Irfan et al., 2023). In contrast, students in public elementary schools generally have more limited exposure to English, which may influence the effectiveness of communicative teaching approaches such as the Direct Method. Therefore, this study aims to investigate whether the Direct Method can produce similarly positive outcomes for students in public elementary schools, particularly in comparison with learners from bilingual educational contexts and those at higher educational levels, such as junior and senior high schools

As some of the research stated that Direct method (in higher level, bilingual, and international school) is very useful and had a positive outcome to the learner, it was never mentioned that it have the same outcome for people that had never exposed to English like in the first grade of public school. This study aimed to answer two primary research questions: (1) How do beginner learners feel about the Direct Method? and (2) Does the Direct Method have the same positive outcome for beginner learners who have never been exposed to English before? Thus, The primary objective of this study is to examine the effectiveness of the Direct Method in enhancing the speaking skills of first-grade public elementary students in Indonesia.

Speaking is a fundamental aspect of language use that involves oral communication between two or more individuals to express ideas, negotiate meaning, and share information (Dakhalan & Tanucan, 2024; Makrifah & Fauzi, 2024; Silva et al., 2024). Alkhubata (2022) defines speaking as the use of spoken language to interact with others in social contexts. Beyond the accurate production of sounds and intonation, speaking requires the ability to convey meaning effectively and manage interactional aspects of communication, such as turn-taking and responsiveness to interlocutors. As a core component of language learning, speaking plays a crucial role in demonstrating learners' communicative competence. This competence can be observed through students' performance during classroom learning activities, where their ability to use language meaningfully reflects their overall language development (Nggawu & Thào, 2023).

In summary, speaking is a central component of language learning that involves interactive communication to express and exchange ideas. It encompasses not only clear and accurate oral production but also the ability to convey meaning effectively and manage interaction appropriately, including turn-taking. Learners' progress in language acquisition can be observed through their spoken performance during classroom

activities, which reflects their developing communicative competence.

Direct Method

The Direct Method, which emerged in the late nineteenth century, developed as part of a language teaching reform movement that sought to overcome the limitations of the Grammar Translation Method. Rather than relying on translation, instruction in the Direct Method is conducted entirely in the target language, encouraging learners to develop direct associations between form and meaning. Teachers employ real objects, pictures, and demonstrations to clarify grammatical concepts and vocabulary, thereby facilitating comprehension without recourse to learners' first language. Although communication is emphasized, the method maintains a strong focus on sentence-level structures, with accuracy considered a central instructional goal (Harmer, 1987). According to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) in *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*, a defining principle of the Direct Method is the prohibition of translation, as meaning is intended to be conveyed directly through the target language using visual aids and contextualized demonstrations.

When students encounter unfamiliar vocabulary, teachers employing the Direct Method explain meaning through concrete and contextual techniques, such as using real objects (realia), drawing or illustrating items, presenting visual images, or demonstrating how words are used in context. Instruction is typically carried out through interactive conversational activities, particularly question-and-answer exchanges that require students to respond using complete sentences. As the primary goal of language

learning within the Direct Method is effective communication, vocabulary development is emphasized more strongly than explicit grammatical instruction. Consequently, grammatical rules are generally not taught directly but are expected to be acquired inductively through repeated exposure and use. Richards and Rodgers (2001), in *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (2nd ed.), describe the Direct Method—also referred to as the Natural Method—as an approach in which the learners' first language is excluded from instruction, and meaning is conveyed through actions, demonstrations, and contextualized input. They further note that the effective implementation of the Direct Method is often facilitated when teachers possess near-native or native-like proficiency in the target language, enabling them to model accurate and natural language use.

METHOD

Place and Time Table

This study was conducted at Bu Lani's Tutor House, located in Pancoran Mas, Depok. The site was purposively selected because it accommodates a considerable number of first-grade elementary school students, making it an appropriate context for investigating early English language learning. In this study, the researcher also assumed the role of the instructor during the instructional implementation. The research was carried out over a three-month period, from 11 January to 23 March 2025. Data collection and instructional activities were conducted regularly every Saturday from 13:00 to 15:00 and every Sunday from 09:00 to 11:00. The detailed schedule of the research activities is presented in the following timetable.



Table 1. Time table of the research

Day	Time	Activities
Saturday	13:00 – 13:30	Circle Time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greeting • Sing a song • Reviewing calendar (Date, day, month, year) • Reviewing weather • Count from 1-100
	13:30 - 14:45	Teaching and observation
	14:45 – 15:00	End of the day routine time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing what we learned • Counting the star scores
Sunday	09:00 – 09:30	Circle Time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greeting • Sing a song • Reviewing calendar (Date, day, month, year) • Reviewing weather Count from 1-100
	09:30 - 10:45	Teaching and observation
	10:45 – 11:00	End of the day routine time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing what we learned • Counting the star scores

Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental design with a qualitative component to investigate the effectiveness of the Direct Method in enhancing public elementary students' speaking skills and to explore their experiences. The quasi-experimental aspect involved pre-test and post-test measures to assess speaking skill improvement, while the qualitative component, utilizing classroom observations and interviews, provided in-depth insights into student perceptions and learning processes. A mixed-methods approach was adopted to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Direct Method's effectiveness. The quantitative data from pre- and post-tests offer objective measures of speaking skill development, while the qualitative data from observations and interviews capture the nuances of student engagement, attitudes, and the implementation process, offering richer context and explanation for the quantitative findings.

The Direct Method was implemented over 22 instructional sessions. Lessons typically began with a 'Circle Time' including greetings, songs, and calendar review, followed by the main

teaching segment. Teacher-led activities focused on vocabulary acquisition and simple communicative tasks. For example, new vocabulary was introduced using flashcards and realia (e.g., actual fruits during a lesson on food). Demonstrations and gestures were extensively used to convey meaning. Question-and-answer sessions were conducted entirely in English, with the teacher modeling clear pronunciation and simple sentence structures. Students were encouraged to respond using complete sentences when possible. Play-based activities, songs, and games were integrated to foster engagement and provide opportunities for communicative practice

Population and Sample

The population of this study comprised all students enrolled at Bu Lani's Tutor House. From this population, the sample was purposively selected and consisted of 12 first-grade students from public elementary schools who voluntarily participated in the research. The selection of the sample was based on the research objectives, particularly the focus on early English learning among students with limited prior exposure to English.

The Technique of Collecting Data

The data in this study were collected from 12 first-grade students who attended Bu Lani's Tutor House. The participants resided in the Pancoran Mas area and were enrolled in nearby public elementary schools. Over a period of three months, the students received English instruction using the Direct Method through regular classes held every Saturday and Sunday. The participants were selected to provide in-depth insights into their learning experiences, which served as the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the Direct Method in teaching English at the elementary level. Furthermore, this study employed both primary and secondary data sources to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the teaching and learning process.

Primary Sources

The main data came from observing the classes while the Direct Method was being used. During the observation, the researcher used a checklist and took notes. The researcher also used pre-test and post-test to show the improvement of this research. Lastly, the researcher interviewed the students to hear about their experiences and thoughts on learning English using the Direct Method. The researcher used an audio recorder to record the interviews. The data from the students' responses are primary because they came directly from the students themselves.

Secondary Sources

Secondary sources of this research were taken from articles and books that are explained about direct method and other teaching methods that were mentioned above. One important book that is used is *Techniques & Principles in Language Teaching* by Diane Larsen-Freeman and Marti Anderson (2011), which gave useful information about the Direct Method.

The Technique of Analyzing Data

Data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests, classroom observations, and student interviews. First, the researcher compared students' performance on the pre-tests and post-tests to identify any improvement in their English skills, particularly in vocabulary mastery and speaking ability. The test results were analyzed by examining the accuracy of students' responses, their pronunciation of target vocabulary, and their overall speaking performance. The oral pre-test and post-test were designed to assess five key

speaking criteria: vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and consistency. Specific tasks included identifying pictures of common objects (e.g., fruits, animals), naming colors, counting, responding to simple questions (e.g., 'What is your favorite fruit?'), and describing simple actions. The tests were piloted with a small group of similar-aged children to ensure clarity and appropriateness.

Second, audio recordings of the student interviews related to the implementation of the Direct Method were transcribed verbatim into written texts. The researcher then identified key points from the interview data and grouped similar responses into thematic categories. These categories were subsequently organized under broader themes such as interest, understanding, and challenges. Selected student and teacher statements were presented using direct quotations to preserve the original meaning and ensure the authenticity of participants' perspectives. This process enabled a deeper understanding of students' attitudes and perceptions toward learning English through the Direct Method.

Finally, classroom observation notes were used to triangulate and support the findings from the tests and interviews. The researcher focused on classroom interactions, student responses, and levels of engagement to gain a comprehensive view of how the Direct Method functioned in actual classroom practice. A structured observation checklist was developed based on observable student behaviors related to engagement, participation, and task completion within the Direct Method context.

Ethical Consideration

This study adhered to ethical research principles. Informed consent was obtained from the parents or guardians of all participating students prior to their involvement in the study. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. All data collected were anonymized to protect participant confidentiality, and findings are reported in aggregate form.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Finding

The researcher completed the study through a series of teaching, observation, and interview activities involving first-grade students from public elementary schools who attended Bu



Lani's Tutor House. The findings of this study are presented based on data obtained from classroom observations, pre-test and post-test results, and student interviews, which together provide a comprehensive overview of the research outcomes.

Observation

In this study, the researcher, who also served as the teacher, systematically observed students' behavior, participation, and responses to the implementation of the Direct Method during the teaching-learning process. A structured observation checklist and field notes were used to record significant events and classroom interactions. Observations were conducted in every meeting to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how students responded to the use of the Direct Method in learning English.

With regard to students' affective responses to the Direct Method, observations indicated that during the initial meetings, beginner learners demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm toward the learning activities. This was evident from the number of students who paid close attention to the teacher's explanations and actively participated in the classroom activities, as the method was new and engaging for them. However, as reflected in the data presented in the table above, students' enthusiasm gradually declined over subsequent meetings. This decrease was attributed to students' confusion and boredom with the teacher's instructions and explanations, which were expressed directly to the teacher. Consequently, students became less attentive and showed reduced engagement during learning activities.

The data indicate a significant increase in the number of students who met checklist items 1 and 2 by the fifth meeting. This improvement occurred after the teacher identified that most students showed a stronger preference for activities involving physical movement and play, such as standing, running, jumping, and competitive games. Among these activities, game-based learning was particularly favored, as students demonstrated high levels of enthusiasm and competitiveness during group or versus games that incorporated physical interaction with their peers. Prior to the fifth meeting, classroom activities were predominantly sedentary, requiring students to remain seated with minimal physical engagement. Following the adjustment of the teaching approach to include more physically active and interactive tasks, the

number of students meeting the criteria for checklist items 1 and 2 remained consistently high across subsequent meetings.

While criteria 1 and 2 represent students' affective responses toward the Direct Method, criteria 3 to 8 were used to examine the method's impact on the development of students' English skills. Based on the data presented in the table above, students encountered no significant difficulties in meeting criterion 3 from the initial to the final meetings, as they were generally able to follow and repeat the teacher's utterances with ease. In contrast, the number of students who met criteria 4 and 5 remained relatively low. Despite the teacher's clear and slow explanations and the extensive use of gestures and facial expressions—such as mimicking eating a banana, using thumbs-up or thumbs-down gestures, and expressing liking or disliking when asking questions like “Do you like bananas?” most students were unable to respond appropriately in English or follow the instructions accurately. Only a small number of students were able to respond through non-verbal means, such as nodding, shaking their heads, or using thumbs-up gestures. Furthermore, none of the students met criteria 6 to 8 during the initial meetings. This outcome was considered expected, given that it was the students' first experience participating in a fully English-mediated classroom environment.

Pre-Test and Post-Test

In this research, the students were given a pre-test and a post-test to find out whether the Direct Method had a positive outcome for beginner learners, which in this case was first-grade students at a public elementary school. This research focused on the students' English speaking ability; therefore, both the pre-test and post-test were conducted orally. This section presents the results of the speaking test from 12 students, both before and after learning through the Direct Method.

Pre-Test

The pre-test was administered on Saturday, 11 January 2025. It was conducted individually, with each student assessed one at a time. At the beginning of the first meeting, the researcher explained the purpose of the class in Indonesian to ensure students' understanding. The students were informed that they would participate in a research project employing the Direct Method for learning English and that English would be used as the primary medium of instruction during the

lessons. The pre-test took the form of an oral assessment, in which students were required to respond to questions posed by the researcher. To facilitate comprehension, the researcher employed visual aids, including flashcards, gestures, and facial expressions. While one student was being assessed, the remaining students waited and listened to a cartoon played on the researcher's laptop to maintain engagement. A simple point-based scoring scale was used to evaluate each student's ability to respond to basic English prompts. The test items included identifying objects such as fruits and animals, naming the colors of objects, counting, responding to simple questions (e.g., "Do you like bananas?" and "What is your favorite fruit?"), and identifying the position of objects.

The results of the pre-test indicated that the majority of students obtained very low scores across all five assessment criteria. In terms of vocabulary, most students received a score of 0, indicating that they were unable to recognize or produce words related to the test items. Only four students demonstrated limited vocabulary knowledge by identifying a small number of words. Similarly, students' pronunciation scores were predominantly low. With regard to grammar, fluency, and consistency, none of the students received any points, as they were unable to produce simple phrases or sentences and did not demonstrate independent oral language use in English.

Post-Test

The post-test was administered at the end of the final meeting to evaluate and compare students' English speaking abilities after several instructional sessions using the Direct Method. Similar to the pre-test, the post-test was conducted individually. The test items were largely identical to those used in the pre-test to ensure comparability; however, minor modifications were made by introducing a greater variety of objects to assess students' ability to apply their knowledge in slightly different contexts. As in the pre-test, the researcher employed supportive strategies such as gestures and facial expressions for students who required additional assistance in understanding the questions.

After 22 instructional meetings employing the Direct Method, the post-test results demonstrated a substantial improvement in students' English speaking skills. Across all five assessment criteria—vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar,

fluency, and consistency—most students showed notable progress when compared to their pre-test performance.

1) Vocabulary

In the post-test, 10 out of 12 students scored 3 in vocabulary, meaning they could recall and use many English words. Even students who previously scored 0 were able to name and use some vocabulary during the test. This suggests the students remembered the words taught and could apply them during speaking.

2) Pronunciation

Pronunciation also improved greatly. Almost all students received a score of 3, showing that they could pronounce English words clearly. This improvement shows how regular exposure and repetition in the Direct Method helped them get used to English sounds.

3) Grammar

Although none of the students scored 3 in grammar, they had improved compared to the pre-test. The students were still confused about how to use 'I' and 'My' in sentences like "I like apple" and "My favorite fruit is apple." They also still did not understand how to use 'to be' verbs such as "is" and "are."

4) Fluency

While only 4 students achieved a score of 3, many others reached 2, meaning they could speak more smoothly although with some hesitation. Students who previously stayed silent or needed full guidance were now able to say a few sentences.

5) Consistency

Consistency means that what the student says should stay on topic and make sense. Since the questions given by the teacher only required simple answers, all the students were considered consistent in their responses. For example, a sentence like "Yes, I like dog" was still understood and stayed on topic.

Conclusion of pre-test and post-test

The score recapitulation indicates that all students demonstrated improvement from their pre-test results. For instance, Aqilla's total score increased from 2 in the pre-test to 14 in the post-test, while Rita, who initially scored 0, achieved a score of 12 in the post-test. These results reflect a substantial enhancement in students' speaking abilities, as they became more fluent and demonstrated greater independence in using English. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Direct



Method had a positive impact on students' English speaking skills, with all participants showing improvement across all assessment criteria.

Interview

The interviews were conducted twice: on the first day of the study, prior to the completion of the pre-test, and on the final day of the instructional period, after the post-test had been administered. Following the completion of the post-test, the researcher interviewed the students to explore their feelings toward learning English and their experiences with the Direct Method. Unlike the pre-test and post-test, which were administered individually, the interviews were conducted collectively, with all students participating at the same time in a single setting. The purpose of these interviews was to obtain deeper insights into the students' affective responses to learning English as a foreign language and their perceptions of the Direct Method as an instructional approach.

The interviews were conducted in the students' mother tongue, Indonesian, as their ability to engage in extended conversations in English was still limited and not sufficient for this type of interview. All interview sessions were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed into written form in accordance with Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI) guidelines. The transcribed data were then translated into English to facilitate analysis. The complete English translation of the interview transcripts is provided in the appendix. The following section presents the interview questions administered prior to the pre-test and before the implementation of the Direct Method.

1. Do you like learning English?
2. Have you ever learn English outside of school? For example, in an English course or enrichment program? Where?
3. Does your English teacher at school teach using only English, without using Indonesian language?
4. How would you feel if we learn English by using only English without any Indonesian word in it (direct method)?

Based on the responses to the first interview question, eight out of twelve students reported that they did not like learning English. They perceived English as a difficult subject to understand, which often made them feel confused and overwhelmed, particularly due to the differences between English pronunciation and

Indonesian phonological patterns. One student, for example, highlighted the discrepancy in the pronunciation of the word "monkey", noting that it is pronounced differently from how it would typically be read in Indonesian. In contrast, the remaining students who expressed a positive attitude toward English stated that they enjoyed learning the language because they aspired to become proficient and speak English fluently.

Based on responses to the second interview question, all students reported that they had never participated in any English enrichment programs or learned English outside of formal schooling. They stated that their engagement with English at home was limited to completing school assignments, usually with assistance from their parents or guardians. Responses to the third interview question revealed that English teachers at their schools commonly used a combination of English and Indonesian during instruction. According to the students, this code-switching practice was intended to facilitate comprehension of the learning materials. Furthermore, in response to the fourth interview question, ten students expressed that they would feel confused if English were taught exclusively through English in the classroom. They believed that such an approach would make it difficult for them to understand the teacher's explanations and indicated a lack of confidence in their ability to follow lessons delivered entirely in English.

Overall, the interview findings revealed that most students held negative perceptions of English, viewing it as a difficult and confusing subject, primarily due to unfamiliar pronunciation patterns. Only a small number of students demonstrated positive attitudes toward learning English, motivated by their desire to become more knowledgeable and to speak English fluently. None of the participants had received English tutoring outside of school, and their exposure to the language was limited to classroom instruction and completing homework with parental assistance. In addition, all students reported that their English teachers commonly used both English and Indonesian during lessons to support comprehension. Consequently, the majority of students expressed that they would feel confused if English were taught exclusively through English, as they believed they would struggle to understand the teacher's explanations without the use of Indonesian.

Below was the questions of the interview on the last meeting, before post-test:

1. After using the Direct Method, how do you feel about learning English?
2. What activities did you enjoy the most during the English lessons? (e.g., games, songs, videos, pictures)
3. What did you enjoy the least about learning English here? (e.g., games, songs, videos, pictures, real objects)
4. Did you like it when the teacher spoke only in English? Why or why not?
5. Do you feel more confident speaking English now?
6. Which one do you prefer: an English class taught entirely in English or one that mixes English and Indonesian?

Table 2 Recapitulation of Interview After Using Direct Method

No	Summary of Response	Reasons
Q1	9 Students liked English	To get smarter, to speak English, to learn English through games, and to be able to teach others the English language
	1 student had mixed feelings about the English lesson	Fathan liked English lessons, but he felt the teacher talked too much in English
	2 Students didn't like English	English is a hard lesson
Q2	4 students liked all the activities	All of them were fun
	7 students liked games	The games were fun and could make them smart
	1 students liked realia	Liked to tasted the fruits (during fruits lesson)
Q3	9 didn't have any part they disliked	Liked every part of the lessons
	3 students didn't like conversational part	Had to think how to say it in English,
Q4	10 students liked when the teacher use direct method	It made them able to speak in English, communicate with foreigners, and gave them a greater chance to go overseas (to England)
	2 students didn't like direct method	They preferred to speak in Indonesian and were confused by the explanation
Q5	10 students felt confident	Already able to speak in English
	3 students felt less confident	Like Indonesian language more than English, cannot speak to foreigner yet
Q6	7 students liked direct method more than grammar translation method	More fun, lots of games, got appreciation from her mom
	3 students liked both	Both methods could make them smarter, their English teacher at school is also kind
	2 students didn't like both method	They didn't like English lesson

Based on responses to the first interview question, nine out of twelve students reported feeling happy about learning English. They expressed a sense of pride in being able to begin

speaking English with the teacher and stated that they felt more confident and capable because they could understand the teacher's explanations during the lessons. Responses to the second interview question indicated that four students



enjoyed all of the activities provided by the teacher, while seven students specifically preferred game-based activities. One student additionally mentioned enjoying activities involving real objects, particularly fruits, as these activities allowed them to see, touch, and taste the items, which made the learning experience more engaging. Furthermore, responses to the third interview question revealed that almost all students reported positive perceptions of the instructional content delivered by the researcher. However, several students noted that they did not enjoy speaking in English, as they perceived oral production to be the most challenging aspect of the learning process.

Based on responses to the fourth interview question, most students reported that they enjoyed lessons conducted exclusively in English. They perceived this approach as beneficial, as it made them feel more capable and improved their comprehension and speaking fluency. Several students also expressed aspirations to communicate with native English speakers and to visit other countries. Responses to the fifth interview question revealed that most students experienced an increase in self-confidence, particularly in their ability to make simple requests in English. Regarding the sixth interview question, seven out of twelve students stated a preference for learning English through English-only instruction, while the remaining students indicated that both approaches—using only English or combining English and Indonesian—were acceptable and perceived as helpful for learning.

Discussion

This research was conducted at Bu Lani's Tutor House in Depok and involved students who voluntarily participated in the study over a three-month period, with instructional sessions held on Saturdays and Sundays. The study aimed to examine beginner learners' (first-grade students') perceptions of the Direct Method and their overall learning experiences when taught using this approach. In addition, the research sought to investigate whether the Direct Method yields similarly positive outcomes for beginner learners with no prior exposure to English, as has been reported in studies conducted in higher grade levels as well as in bilingual and international school contexts.

Learner's Feeling About the Direct Method on Beginner Learners

Based on the interviews conducted prior to the pre-test and the implementation of the Direct Method, it was found that most students held a negative attitude toward learning English. During the pre-test interviews, only four out of twelve students reported that they liked English, primarily because they were motivated by the desire to be perceived as intelligent and admired individuals who could speak the language fluently. In contrast, the remaining eight students expressed negative perceptions, describing English as difficult, confusing, and hard to understand. Furthermore, when asked about the potential use of the Direct Method in the classroom, almost all students reported feelings of concern and anxiety, fearing that they would not be able to comprehend the lessons if English were used exclusively as the medium of instruction.

However, after learning through the Direct Method, the students' attitudes toward English changed in a positive direction. In the post-test interviews, most students expressed enjoyment and enthusiasm when learning English through this method. In line with one of the key principles of the Direct Method, which emphasizes the use of realia and meaningful classroom activities, many students reported that they particularly enjoyed games and the use of real objects provided by the teacher. Several students also shared that they had begun to use English outside the classroom, such as asking for permission to go to the restroom or requesting water in English at home. These findings support Diane Larsen-Freeman's argument in the second edition of *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching* (2010) that the Direct Method facilitates natural language acquisition, particularly in developing learners' speaking ability. Overall, the results indicate that the Direct Method contributed to increased student motivation, enjoyment, and confidence in learning English.

The Direct Method Has Positive Outcome For Beginner Learners As Seen in Higher Level, Bilingual, and International School

Based on the observational findings, the implementation of the Direct Method contributed to the improvement of first-grade elementary students' speaking skills at Bu Lani's Tutor House. The data indicated that students became increasingly able to use English in simple conversational contexts. Overall, the observations revealed a positive development in students'

English speaking abilities following instruction through the Direct Method.

The results of the pre-test and post-test also demonstrated significant positive progress in students' speaking abilities. During the pre-test, only a small number of students were able to identify objects independently, and most experienced difficulties in responding to even very simple questions. Following instruction through the Direct Method, the post-test findings revealed improvement across all assessed aspects for every student. These results are consistent with previous studies, such as Haliwanda's (2019) research conducted at SMK Negeri 1 Bener Meriah, Aceh, which reported improvements in students' pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension, as well as Cece's (2017) study at SMP PGRI 1 Talamare, which found notable gains in students' fluency and accuracy. Collectively, these findings suggest that the Direct Method is an effective approach for teaching speaking skills, including for young learners.

This study further demonstrates that beginner learners taught using the Direct Method can achieve positive outcomes comparable to those reported in international and bilingual school contexts. The implementation of the Direct Method resulted in measurable improvements in students' speaking abilities, even though the participants had no prior exposure to English through bilingual or international education. These findings are in line with previous studies conducted at NCIPS International School by Anakaboy and Suryasa (2019) and at North Bali Bilingual School by Dewi, Utami, and Pratiwi (2023), which also reported significant gains in students' speaking performance following the use of the Direct Method. Despite differences in educational background, students at Bu Lani's Tutor House demonstrated similar patterns of improvement, suggesting that the Direct Method can be effectively applied beyond international or bilingual school settings.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to explore beginner learners' perceptions of the Direct Method and to examine whether the Direct Method yields similar positive outcomes for beginner learners as those reported in higher-level, bilingual, and international school contexts. Based on the study conducted at Bu Lani's Tutor House in Depok, as well as the

findings and discussions presented in the previous chapters, several conclusions can be drawn.

First, the implementation of the Direct Method significantly changed students' perceptions of learning English. Prior to the intervention, most students expressed uncertainty and anxiety about learning English through the Direct Method, particularly due to the absence of Bahasa Indonesia in classroom instruction. Their initial perceptions of English were predominantly negative, as they viewed it as difficult, confusing, and hard to understand. However, after experiencing instruction through the Direct Method—characterized by the use of pictures, videos, realia, games, and other interactive activities—students' attitudes toward English shifted positively. They became more interested, motivated, and engaged in the learning process. Most students reported that English was more enjoyable and easier to understand when taught through meaningful and interactive activities. Notably, several students began using simple English expressions at home, indicating a reduction in negative perceptions and a growth in self-confidence.

Second, the findings indicate that the Direct Method was effective in improving students' speaking skills across multiple aspects, including vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and consistency. This improvement is evidenced by the substantial increase in students' total scores, which rose from 12 in the pre-test to 140 in the post-test. In addition, observational data collected throughout the learning process revealed a steady increase in the number of students who met the observation checklist criteria. By the end of the instructional period, seven students were able to engage in simple conversations with their peers, demonstrating meaningful progress in spoken English.

Importantly, this study contributes to the existing body of research by providing empirical evidence that the Direct Method can be effectively implemented with beginner learners in public elementary school contexts, even among students with no prior exposure to English. The findings suggest that the Direct Method is not limited to bilingual or international school settings and can serve as a viable alternative for improving young learners' speaking skills and motivation in non-bilingual educational environments.

A limitation of this study is the small sample size of 12 first-grade students, which may affect



the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the dual role of the researcher as both instructor and observer could potentially introduce bias. Future research should aim to replicate these findings with larger and more diverse participant groups in public elementary school settings and consider independent observation. The findings suggest that educators in public elementary schools can effectively utilize the Direct Method to enhance young learners' speaking skills. Practical implications include the need for teacher training programs focused on the principles and techniques of the Direct Method, as well as the provision of appropriate resources such as visual aids and realia. Policymakers may consider incorporating the Direct Method into the curriculum for early English language education in public schools to improve English proficiency levels across the nation.

REFERENCES

- Acosta, H., Cajas, D., Garnica, DIR. (2023). Linking Teachers' Profiles to their Capability in Curriculum Implementation: Analysis of Factors that Shape and Influence EFL Classes. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 22, 518-537. <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.22.5.26>
- Al-Jarf, R. (2022). English Language Education at the Elementary School Level in Saudi Arabia: A Parents' Perspective. *British Journal of Teacher Education and Pedagogy*, 1, 31-44. <https://doi.org/10.32996/bjtep.2022.1.3.4>
- Alkhubaba, M. (2022). Social Intelligence and General Self-Efficacy as Predictors of Public Speaking Skills among University Students. *World Journal of English Language*, 12, 189. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v12n8p189>
- Almanea, M., Mohsen, M., Mahdi, HS. (2024). Is "The Earlier, The Better" for EFL in Saudi Arabia? Insights from Early Grades EFL Teachers at Saudi Primary Schools. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 23, 123-155. <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.23.10.7>
- Anabokay, Y.M. and Suryasa, I.W. (2019). 'TEFL methods in Indonesia', *International Journal of linguistics, literature and culture*, 5(2), pp. 13-24. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.21744/ijllc.v5n2.612>.
- Buacokrung, U., Tanunchabutra, P., Pinagalung, S. (2025). A Needs Analysis for Developing a Blended Learning-Driven Communicative Language Teaching Instructional Model to Enhance Primary Students' English Communication Skills. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 15, 373. <https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v15n1p373>
- Dakhalan, AM., Tanucan, JCM. (2024). The Direct Method in Language Teaching: A Literature Review of Its Effectiveness. *Lingeduca: Journal of Language and Education Studies*, 3, 130-143. <https://doi.org/10.70177/lingeduca.v3i2.1354>
- Dalilah, W. K., & Ashila, L. (2024). Penggunaan Dua Model Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris The Direct Method dan The Grammar Translation Method. *Karimah Tauhid*, 3(5), 5534-5547. <https://doi.org/10.30997/karimahtauhid.v3i5.13230>
- Daud, D., Yasim, S., & Munawir, A. (2022). The comparison between Direct Method and Grammar Translation Method in improving students' reading comprehension. *English Language, Linguistics, and Culture International Journal*, 2(2), 91-101. <https://doi.org/10.24252/elstic-ij.v2i2.26393>
- Dewi, R.C., Utami, I.L.P. and Pratiwi, N.P.A. (2023). Implementation of Direct Method in teaching English for 1st grade of Students. *Lingua Scientia*, 30(1), pp. 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.23887/ls.v30i1.45718>.
- EF EPI (2023). Available at: <https://www.ef.edu/epi/regions/asia/indonesia/>.
- Eleonore Smalle (2024) Why do children learn languages more effortlessly than adults?
- Fitriani, Abin, R., Karimuddin, Zakaria, Astiantih, S., & Suryadi, R. (2025). Improving Vocabulary Mastery through Direct Instruction. *Research Horizon*, 5(3), 955-964. <https://doi.org/10.54518/rh.5.3.2025.587>
- Freeman, D.L. and Anderson, M. (2011) *Techniques-Principles-Language-Teaching*. Available at: <https://acasearch.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/techniques-in-language-teaching.pdf>.

- Haliwanda, U. (2019). The effect of using Direct Method in teaching speaking skill at the second year of SMK Negeri 1 Bener Meriah-Aceh. *Jurnal Basis*, 6, 155. <https://doi.org/10.33884/basisupb.v6i2.1411>.
- Harmanto, B. (2022). How Socio-Economic Status Contributes to Parents' Views on English Teaching For Young Learners. *JEELS (Journal of English Education and Linguistics Studies)*, 5, 279-297. <https://doi.org/10.30762/jeels.v5i2.82>
- Harmer, J. (1987). The practice of English language teaching. London: Pearson Education, 4th ed', *Curriculum Inquiry*, 17(3), pp. 293–318. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.1987.11075294>.
- Irfan, A., Mirizon, S., Amrullah, A. (2023). Parents' investment in English language schooling: A Study at SMP Alam Lubuklinggau. *VELES (Voices of English Language Education Society)*, 7, 416-430. <https://doi.org/10.29408/veles.v7i3.20287>
- Kotani, K., Yoshimi, T. (2021). Prediction of general ESL proficiency considering learners' dictation performance. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 102, 01003. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202110201003>
- Larsen, D.F. (2010). Techniques and principles in language teaching. New York Oxford University.pdf.
- Lestari, V.A., Mutawally, A.N. and Juwita, R. (2024). The use of direct method and audio-lingual method in improving students' speaking ability', 02, pp. 622–632.
- M. Icsan Waly Yafei, , Nukman Nukman, , Akhirudin Akhirudin, (2024). The effectiveness of the direct method on the eloquence of Arabic language for seventh-grade students at Harsallakum Bengkulu secondary school. *El-Syaker : Samarinda International Journal of Language Studies*, 1, 117-129. <https://doi.org/10.64093/esijls.v1i2.30>
- Mahtawarmi, Y. (2018). Improving students' speaking skill by using problem based learning (PBL) model. <https://repository.ar-raniry.ac.id/id/eprint/7288/1/SKRIPSI.pdf>.
- Makrifah, N. ., & Fauzi, N. (2024). Pengaruh Direct Method terhadap keterampilan berbicara bahasa Inggris siswa di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. *Jurnal Edukasi Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, 2(2), 86–97. <https://doi.org/10.61815/jemi.v2i2.420>
- Masduqi, H., Fatimah, F., Subiyanto, A. (2021). Qualitative Research into Reading in English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia – Quo Vadis?. *Indonesian TESOL Journal*, 3, 76-87. <https://doi.org/10.24256/itj.v3i2.1805>
- McNiff, Jean and Whitehead, J. (2011). <http://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/4045/>, 0785.
- Moleong, L.J. (2000). Metodologi penelitian kualitatif. Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Munzaki, DF., Suadah, L., Risdaneva, R. (2017). Teaching methods used by students of department of English language education of UIN AR-RANIRY in teaching English at English course. *Englisia Journal*, 4, 10. <https://doi.org/10.22373/ej.v4i1.1023>
- Nggawu, LO., Thao, NTP. (2023). The impact of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach on students' speaking ability in a public Indonesian University: Comparison between introverts and extrovert groups. *International Journal of Language Education*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.26858/ijole.v7i3.50617>
- Permendikbudristek. (2024). Struktur kurikulum merdeka. <https://pusatinformasi.guru.kemdikbud.go.id/hc/id/articles/14179832698137-Struktur-Kurikulum-Merdeka>.
- Richards, J.C. and Rodgers, T.D. (2001). Approaches and methods in language teaching, <https://doi.org/10.59646/methodsengteach/108>.
- Rosaria, SD., Gunantar, DA., Ellyawati, HC., Nurdiah, D. (2025). Direct method impact on the students' speaking ability: A case of non-English department students of Semarang University. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 399-



406. https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-366-5_36
- Saepudin .(2014). An introduction to English learning and teaching methodology, Yogyakarta : Trust Media.
- Silva, ARd., Hitotuzi, N., Barbosa, NS. (2024). The Direct Method in English language instruction for primary school students in Santarém-PA: An Experience of TESOL Undergraduates. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 13, 42. <https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v13n4p42>
- Silva, ARd., Hitotuzi, N., Barbosa, NS. (2024). The Direct Method in English language instruction for primary school students in Santarém-PA: An Experience of TESOL Undergraduates. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 13, 42. <https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v13n4p42>
- Susiyanti, D. (2019). Teachers' difficulties in teaching English as a foreign language at SMK Muhammadiyah 3 Makassar (A Descriptive Qualitative Research)', pp. 1–99.
- Utami, E.P.N., Islamiah, N. and Perdana, I. (2020). The Implementation of Direct Method in Teaching Speaking at Junior High School', *Proceeding of SHEPO 2020 (International Conference On Social Sciences & Humanity, Economics, And Politics)*, 2020, pp. 43–45. Available at: <https://ojs.uniska-bjm.ac.id/index.php/PIUOK/article/view/3951>.
- Wulansari, N., & Hardianto, D. (2025). Enhancing elementary students' language development through speaking skills and interactive teaching: A systematic literature review. *Jurnal Obsesi : Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 9(1), 336–349. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v9i1.6779>

Bejo Sutrisno, Silvia Sanusi & Budi Rachmawati

The Effectiveness of the Direct Method in Enhancing Public Elementary Students' Speaking Skills