

# The Impact of the 4/3/2 Speaking Technique on EFL Students' Speaking Fluency

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## Abstrak

Penelitian ini menyelidiki dampak teknik berbicara 4/3/2 terhadap kefasihan berbicara siswa EFL di MAN 2 Parepare, Indonesia. Studi ini menggunakan desain pra-eksperimental, satu kelompok, pra-tes dan pasca-tes yang melibatkan 30 siswa kelas sebelas. Kefasihan berbicara siswa dinilai menggunakan rubrik berbicara analitis yang mencakup kecepatan bicara, jeda, koreksi diri, dan kefasihan secara keseluruhan. Perawatan dilakukan melalui enam sesi berbicara menggunakan produksi oral berulang di bawah tekanan waktu yang menurun. Data dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif, Koefisien Korelasi Intrakelas (ICC), uji t sampel berpasangan, dan analisis ukuran efek. Temuan ini mengungkapkan peningkatan yang signifikan dalam kefasihan berbicara siswa setelah perawatan. Skor rata-rata meningkat dari 6,93 dalam pra-tes menjadi 8,25 pada pasca-tes, dengan  $p < 0,001$ . Hasil ICC juga menunjukkan keandalan antar-penilai yang sangat baik. Selanjutnya, analisis ukuran efek mengungkapkan efek yang besar ( $d$  Cohen = 0,91). Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa teknik berbicara 4/3/2 secara efektif meningkatkan kefasihan berbicara siswa EFL.

**Keywords:** 4/3/2 Teknik, Kefasihan Bicara, Pelajar EFL, Pengulangan Tugas, Kinerja Lisan

## Abstract

This study investigated the impact of the 4/3/2 speaking technique on EFL students' speaking fluency at MAN 2 Parepare, Indonesia. The study employed a pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design involving 30 eleventh-grade students. Students' speaking fluency was assessed using an analytical speaking rubric covering speech rate, pauses, self-correction, and overall fluency. The treatment was conducted through six speaking sessions using repeated oral production under decreasing time pressure. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC), paired-samples t-test, and effect size analysis. The findings revealed a significant improvement in students' speaking fluency after the treatment. The mean score increased from 6.93 in the pre-test to 8.25 in the post-test, with  $p < .001$ . The ICC results also indicated excellent inter-rater reliability. Furthermore, the effect size analysis revealed a large effect (Cohen's  $d = 0.91$ ). These findings suggest that the 4/3/2 speaking technique effectively improves EFL students' speaking fluency.

**Keywords:** 4/3/2 Technique, Speaking Fluency, EFL Learners, Task Repetition, Oral Performance.

## Article info

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## INTRODUCTION

Speaking fluency is one of the most important components of communicative competence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Fluency enables learners to communicate ideas smoothly, continuously, and effectively during oral interaction. According to Tavakoli et al. (2020), speaking fluency is a multidimensional construct consisting of speech rate, pause patterns, repair

features, and overall smoothness of speech delivery. Similarly, van Os et al., (2020) explain that fluency reflects the listener's perception of natural and continuous speech production. Yan et al. (2021) further argue that speaking fluency is closely associated with automatic language processing and communicative confidence.

In Indonesian EFL contexts, particularly in Islamic secondary schools (Madrasah Aliyah), speaking fluency remains a major challenge for many learners. Students frequently experience difficulties related to vocabulary mastery, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, and speaking (Alvarez et al., 2024; Menggo et al., 2025). In addition, psychological barriers such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low self-confidence often prevent students from actively participating in speaking activities (Martiningsih et al., 2024; Othman et al., 2024). Hasanah et al. (2024) also reported that students in Indonesian madrasah classrooms tend to avoid speaking English because they feel insecure about their language ability. Similarly, Asiza et al. (2023) found that limited opportunities for classroom interaction significantly reduce students' speaking development.

Several scholars have emphasized that limited communicative practice in Indonesian classrooms contributes to low speaking fluency. Panggua et al. (2020) argue that English instruction in madrasah classrooms often prioritizes grammar and reading comprehension rather than oral communication. As a result, students have minimal opportunities to practice spontaneous speech. Rusdin & Purwati (2023) also state that Indonesian EFL learners require more fluency-oriented speaking activities to improve their oral communication skills.

From a theoretical perspective, speaking fluency development is closely related to automaticity theory and task repetition theory. Automaticity theory explains that repeated language use gradually reduces cognitive processing demands and allows learners to produce language more spontaneously (Suzuki, 2021). De Jong & Tillman (2018) further explain that repeated speaking performance facilitates proceduralization, enabling learners to retrieve linguistic forms more efficiently during communication.

Task repetition theory also provides a strong theoretical foundation for fluency-oriented speaking instruction. According to Ghasemi & Mozaheb (2021), repeated speaking activities help learners become more familiar with task content, vocabulary, and sentence organization, thereby improving speech continuity and reducing hesitation. Sun & Révész (2021) additionally found that task repetition positively affects learner engagement and oral fluency development.

One teaching strategy that reflects these theoretical principles is the 4/3/2 speaking technique introduced by Nation (1989). In this activity, students deliver the same speech three times under progressively decreasing time allocations: four minutes, three minutes, and two minutes. The repeated performance encourages learners to proceduralize language knowledge, while the decreasing time pressure promotes more automatic and efficient speech production.

Several previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of the 4/3/2 speaking technique in improving EFL learners' fluency. Santos & Ramírez-Ávila (2022) conducted a quasi-experimental study and found that the 4/3/2 technique significantly improved students' speaking fluency and speaking confidence. Similarly, Dos Santos & Ramírez-Ávila (2023) reported that learners perceived repeated speaking tasks as beneficial for improving fluency and reducing anxiety. Tran & Saito (2024) also found that fluency-oriented speaking activities increased speech continuity and reduced hesitation among university EFL learners.

Recent studies have also highlighted the importance of fluency-oriented speaking instruction in EFL classrooms. Huang & Liu (2023) found that decreasing-time speaking activities encourage learners to produce speech more automatically and continuously. Gao & Sun (2025) explain that pause frequency and speech continuity strongly influence listeners' perceptions of speaking fluency, particularly in monologic speaking tasks. Furthermore, Limgomolvilas & Sukserm (2025) reported that analytical speaking rubrics combined with audio-based assessment procedures improve scoring reliability and speaking assessment validity in EFL research.

Although previous studies have demonstrated positive effects of the 4/3/2 technique, several methodological gaps remain. First, existing research has rarely assessed speaking fluency using multidimensional analytical rubrics that capture distinct fluency dimensions such as speed fluency, breakdown fluency, and repair fluency separately. Most previous studies relied on holistic or general fluency measures, which do not provide sufficient information about speaking fluency from multiple

analytical perspectives. Second, systematic inter-rater reliability analysis using the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) has rarely been reported in studies examining the 4/3/2 technique, raising concerns about the consistency and dependability of speaking scores in previous research.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the impact of the 4/3/2 speaking technique on EFL students' speaking fluency at MAN 2 Parepare, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Specifically, the study employs a multidimensional analytical fluency rubric to assess speaking fluency across multiple dimensions and applies systematic ICC-based inter-rater reliability procedures to ensure scoring dependability. These methodological approaches are intended to provide more reliable empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of the 4/3/2 speaking technique in Indonesian EFL classrooms.

## METHOD

This study employed a pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design to examine the impact of the 4/3/2 speaking technique on students' speaking fluency. The design was selected because the study aimed to investigate whether students' fluency improved after receiving the treatment. The respondents of this study consisted of 30 eleventh-grade students from Class XI A 3 at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 2 Parepare, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The participants were selected using convenience sampling because the class was accessible and available during the research period. The students had relatively similar English learning backgrounds and had previously learned basic speaking materials in English classes.

The instrument used in this study was a speaking fluency test administered in the pre-test and post-test sessions. Students' speaking performances were assessed using an analytical speaking fluency rubric adapted from [Tavakoli & Wright \(2020\)](#). The rubric measured four dimensions of speaking fluency, namely segmental speed fluency, breakdown fluency, repair fluency, and overall fluency. Segmental speed fluency focused on the speed and continuity of speech delivery. Breakdown fluency measured the frequency and duration of silent and filled pauses during speech production. Repair fluency assessed the occurrence of repetitions and self-corrections produced by the students. Meanwhile, overall fluency evaluated the smoothness and naturalness of students' oral performance as perceived by the raters. Each fluency dimension was scored on a four-point scale ranging from 1 to 4, resulting in a maximum total score of 16.

**Table 1. Speaking Fluency Scoring Descriptors**

Score	Descriptor
1	Very low fluency characterized by very slow speech delivery, very frequent long pauses, excessive self-corrections, and highly fragmented speech.
2	Below-average fluency characterized by noticeable pauses, hesitations, repetitions, and frequent repair attempts that interrupt communication.
3	Adequate fluency characterized by generally continuous speech with occasional pauses and minor self-corrections that do not substantially affect communication.
4	High fluency characterized by smooth, continuous speech delivery with minimal pauses, hesitations, or self-corrections.

The rubric was adapted from [Tavakoli & Wright \(2020\)](#) through a three-stage process. First, the original framework was reviewed and simplified to suit the secondary school EFL context. Second, the adapted rubric underwent content validation through expert judgment by two EFL lecturers with expertise in speaking assessment who evaluated the relevance, clarity, and coverage of each dimension and its descriptors. Minor revisions were made based on their feedback before the rubric was finalized. Third, the raters were briefed on the scoring procedures and conducted a calibration session using sample recordings before the actual assessment. To ensure scoring consistency, the students' speaking performances were assessed independently by two raters: the researcher and an English teacher of MAN 2 Parepare. All speaking performances were audio-recorded during both pre-test and post-test sessions to facilitate accurate assessment and reliability analysis.

**Table 2. Speaking Fluency Scoring Rubric**

Fluency Dimension	Main Indicator	Operational Description
Segmental Speed Fluency	Speech Rate and Continuity	The speed and continuity of speech delivery
Breakdown Fluency	Silent and Filled Pauses	The frequency and duration of pauses during speech
Repair Fluency	Repetition and Self-Correction	The occurrence of repetitions and self-corrections
Overall Fluency	Perceived Fluency	The overall smoothness and naturalness of speech

The research procedures were conducted in eight meetings consisting of one pre-test session, six treatment sessions, and one post-test session. Before conducting the treatment, the researcher explained the objectives of the activity, the speaking procedures, and the assessment criteria to the students.

In the first meeting, the students participated in the pre-test session. They were given the topic "Talk about your favorite room" and were provided with ten minutes of preparation time. During this stage, students were allowed to write brief notes or keywords to help organize their ideas, but they were not permitted to write complete scripts. After the preparation stage, each student delivered a one-minute monologue individually. The students' performances were audio-recorded and later assessed using the analytical fluency rubric.

The treatment was conducted in six meetings using the 4/3/2 speaking technique introduced by Nation (1989). In each treatment session, the teacher introduced a speaking topic and gave students approximately five to ten minutes to prepare their ideas before speaking. The topics were selected based on students' familiarity and daily experiences to encourage spontaneous speaking performance.

After the preparation stage, students worked in pairs. In the first round, Student A delivered the prepared speech to Student B for four minutes. In the second round, Student A repeated the same speech for three minutes. In the third round, Student A delivered the same speech again for two minutes. During these activities, Student B listened attentively without interrupting, correcting, or asking questions. After completing the three rounds, the students exchanged roles and repeated the same procedure.

The six treatment sessions followed the same speaking pattern but used different speaking topics. The repeated speaking activity was intended to help students become more familiar with their ideas, reduce hesitation, and improve speech continuity. Meanwhile, the decreasing time allocation encouraged students to produce speech more efficiently and automatically. During the treatment sessions, the primary focus was placed on fluency development rather than grammatical accuracy.

In the final meeting, the students participated in the post-test session. The post-test procedure was similar to the pre-test procedure. Students were given the topic "Describe your favorite place in your school" and had ten minutes to prepare brief notes before delivering a one-minute monologue individually. The post-test performances were also audio-recorded and assessed independently by the same two raters using the same analytical speaking rubric. The average scores from both raters were then used as the final scores for statistical analysis.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean scores, standard deviations, minimum scores, and maximum scores of both pre-test and post-test results. Inter-rater reliability was measured using the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) to determine scoring consistency between the two raters.

Furthermore, a paired-samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between students' pre-test and post-test speaking fluency scores after the implementation of the 4/3/2 speaking technique. Effect size analysis using Cohen's d was

also conducted to measure the magnitude of the treatment effect on students' speaking fluency improvement.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Prior to conducting further statistical analysis, inter-rater reliability was examined using the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) to ensure scoring consistency between the two raters. The ICC analysis was calculated separately for the pre-test and post-test scores. The results demonstrated a high level of agreement between the raters in both testing conditions. In the pre-test, the Average Measures ICC was .939 with  $p < .001$ , indicating good to excellent reliability. Meanwhile, the post-test showed an even higher Average Measures ICC of .943 with  $p < .001$ , categorized as excellent reliability.

**Table 3. Inter-Rater Reliability Results (ICC)**

Test	Single Measure ICC	Average Measure ICC	p-value
Pre-test	.885	.939	< .001
Post-test	.893	.943	< .001

The descriptive statistics revealed improvement in students' speaking fluency after the implementation of the 4/3/2 speaking technique. The mean score of the pre-test was 6.93, while the mean score of the post-test increased to 8.25, indicating a mean gain of 1.32 points. The findings also showed that students demonstrated varying levels of improvement. While several students showed substantial improvement, others experienced only slight improvement or stable performance. It is important to note that the maximum score in the post-test (15.00) was slightly lower than in the pre-test (15.50). This pattern does not indicate an overall decline; rather, it reflects natural individual variation in performance, where the student who achieved the highest score in the pre-test may have performed slightly lower in the post-test due to factors such as topic familiarity, anxiety on test day, or task difficulty. The collective improvement is more accurately reflected in the mean score, which increased from 6.93 to 8.25, indicating that the majority of students benefited from the treatment even though individual trajectories varied. This observation underlines the importance of interpreting group-level statistical findings rather than relying solely on individual extremes.

**Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Speaking Fluency Scores**

Variable	Pre-test	Post-test
Mean	6.93	8.25
Standard Deviation	2.37	2.23
Minimum Score	4.00	5.50
Maximum Score	15.50	15.00
Mean Gain	-	1.32

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to determine whether the difference between pre-test and post-test speaking fluency scores was statistically significant after the implementation of the 4/3/2 speaking technique. The findings showed that the obtained t-value was -4.96 with  $p < .001$ . Since the significance value was lower than .05, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, the implementation of the 4/3/2 speaking technique significantly improved students' speaking fluency.

In addition, the effect size analysis revealed Cohen's  $d = 0.91$ , which was categorized as a large effect. This finding indicates that the treatment had a strong practical impact on students' speaking fluency improvement.

**Table 5. Paired-Samples t-Test Results**

Variable	Value
Mean Difference	-1.32
t-value	-4.96
Df	29
p-value	< .001
Cohen's d	0.91

The findings indicated that the 4/3/2 speaking technique improved students' speaking fluency. The focus of this discussion is on explaining the mechanisms underlying the observed improvement and exploring its theoretical and pedagogical implications. The improvement in students' speaking fluency can be explained through automaticity theory and task repetition theory. According to [Suzuki \(2021\)](#), repeated language use helps learners proceduralize language knowledge and reduce cognitive processing demands during speech production. From a cognitive perspective, the improvement observed in this study can be attributed to the gradual shift from controlled to automatic processing. In the early stages of the 4/3/2 activity, students required substantial attentional resources to retrieve vocabulary, organize ideas, and monitor pronunciation simultaneously. However, as they repeated the same speech under progressively tighter time constraints, these cognitive demands decreased. The repeated retrieval of the same lexical items and discourse structures likely reduced processing demands during speech production, allowing learners to speak more smoothly and continuously. This proceduralization process is consistent with skill acquisition theory, which holds that declarative knowledge transforms into procedural knowledge through repeated practice ([Suzuki, 2021](#)). Consequently, students in this study appeared to exhibit reduced pause frequency, fewer self-corrections, and more continuous speech by the third round of each treatment session.

The findings also support task repetition theory, which suggests that repeated speaking activities improve fluency by increasing learners' familiarity with speaking tasks ([Ghasemi & Mozaheb, 2021](#)). During the treatment sessions, students repeatedly practiced the same topic under progressively shorter time limits. This repeated exposure addressed two simultaneous cognitive challenges: reducing the burden of content generation and building automaticity in language retrieval. When students no longer needed to allocate cognitive resources to planning what to say, they could redirect their attention toward how to say it – producing speech more fluently, with better pacing and fewer interruptions. This is theoretically significant because it demonstrates that fluency development is not merely a product of more speaking practice in general, but specifically of the structured repetition embedded in the 4/3/2 format. The decreasing time allocation served as an additional fluency trigger, pushing learners to prioritize communicative efficiency over linguistic perfection.

The decreasing time pressure embedded in the 4/3/2 technique also played an important role in improving fluency. As students were required to express the same ideas within shorter time allocations, they were encouraged to minimize unnecessary pauses and produce speech more continuously. This finding aligns with [Santos & Ramírez-Ávila \(2022\)](#), who found that repeated oral production under time pressure significantly improved learners' speaking fluency and confidence. Similarly, [Tran & Saito \(2024\)](#) reported that fluency-oriented speaking activities increased speech continuity and reduced hesitation among EFL learners.

The findings of this study are also consistent with previous studies conducted in other EFL contexts. [Dos Santos & Ramírez-Ávila \(2023\)](#) found that students perceived repeated speaking activities as beneficial for improving speaking confidence and reducing anxiety. Likewise, [Ghasemi & Mozaheb \(2021\)](#) reported that time-pressured speaking tasks significantly enhanced oral fluency performance. Therefore, the present study strengthens previous evidence that the 4/3/2 speaking technique is effective in promoting oral fluency development.

In addition, the ICC findings demonstrated excellent inter-rater reliability in both the pre-test (ICC = .939) and post-test (ICC = .943). These results indicate that both raters consistently applied

the analytical speaking rubric during the assessment process. The high ICC values strengthen the reliability of the findings and suggest that the speaking scores used in the statistical analysis were dependable.

The effect size analysis also revealed a large effect (Cohen's  $d = 0.91$ ), indicating that the 4/3/2 speaking technique had a strong practical impact on students' speaking fluency improvement. Although several students demonstrated only slight improvement or stable performance, the overall class mean increased significantly after the treatment. This finding reflects the natural variation commonly found in EFL classrooms, where students may respond differently to fluency-oriented speaking activities depending on their confidence, vocabulary mastery, and speaking experience.

Another noteworthy observation was that students across varying performance levels appeared to show improvement after the treatment. This suggests the possibility that the 4/3/2 technique may be beneficial for both lower- and higher-performing learners, although further studies with proficiency-stratified analysis are needed to confirm this. The repeated speaking opportunities appeared to help students reduce speaking anxiety and increase confidence during oral performance. This finding supports [Martiningsih et al. \(2024\)](#) and [Hasanah et al. \(2024\)](#), who emphasized that speaking anxiety and low confidence are major barriers for Indonesian EFL learners.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that the 4/3/2 speaking technique can serve as an effective classroom strategy for improving speaking fluency in Indonesian EFL contexts, particularly in Madrasah Aliyah classrooms where opportunities for communicative speaking practice are often limited. The technique is relatively simple to implement, does not require sophisticated learning facilities, and can be integrated into regular classroom speaking activities. English teachers may use the technique as a fluency-oriented activity to encourage students to practice speaking more actively and continuously.

Nevertheless, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study employed a pre-experimental design without a control group, limiting the ability to attribute the improvement exclusively to the treatment. Second, the study involved only one class consisting of 30 students, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Third, the treatment duration was relatively short and focused primarily on fluency development rather than other speaking aspects such as grammatical accuracy and lexical complexity. Therefore, future studies are recommended to employ experimental or quasi-experimental designs with larger participant groups and investigate the long-term effects of the 4/3/2 speaking technique on multiple dimensions of speaking performance.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the 4/3/2 speaking technique significantly improves EFL students' speaking fluency, as evidenced by a statistically significant pre-test to post-test gain and a large effect size (Cohen's  $d = 0.91$ ). The repeated oral production under decreasing time pressure successfully enhanced students' speech continuity, reduced hesitation, and improved overall speaking fluency performance. Theoretically, these findings strengthen the explanatory power of automaticity theory and task repetition theory in the context of EFL speaking instruction. The findings support the view that structured repetition facilitates the proceduralizing of linguistic knowledge, enabling learners to shift from effortful, controlled speech to more automatic and natural oral production. This study also demonstrates the importance of employing multidimensional fluency assessment supported by ICC-based inter-rater reliability analysis to obtain dependable and informative speaking performance data. Pedagogically, the 4/3/2 technique offers a practical and low-resource instructional strategy suitable for Madrasah Aliyah classrooms, where opportunities for oral communication practice are often limited. Teachers can implement this technique as a regular fluency-building activity without requiring specialized materials or facilities. Future studies are recommended to employ experimental or quasi-experimental designs with control groups, investigate the technique's effects on individual fluency dimensions separately, examine its long-term retention effects, and explore its application across different proficiency levels and educational contexts.

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