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Journal of Advanced Research in Social and Behavioural Sciences

Journal homepage:
https://karyailham.com.my/index.php/jarsbs/index
ISSN: 2462-1951

Digital Chain Drill: A Technology-Enhanced Strategy for Enhancing Learning Outcomes and Speaking Confidence among Tenth-Grade Students A SMAN 1 Sungai Tebelian

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 8 December 2025
Received in revised form 16 December 2025
Accepted 23 December 2025
Available online 31 December 2025

Keywords:
Digital chain drill; chain drill technique; effectiveness; speakingskill

ABSTRACT

English speaking ability plays a crucial role in communication, yet many students still experience difficulties expressing their opinions fluently and confidently. These challenges commonly stem from limited vocabulary, insufficient speaking practice, and low self-confidence. In response to these issues, this study aimed to examine the effectiveness of the Digital Chain Drill, a technology-enhanced version of the traditional Chain Drill, in improving students' speaking confidence and their ability to express opinions in English. This research employed a pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design. The population consisted of all tenth-grade students of SMAN 1 Sungai Tebelian and a purposive sample of 32 students from class XC participated in the study. Data were collected through a speaking performance test supported by digital recording tools and a self-confidence questionnaire. The findings indicated a significant improvement in students' oral communication performance. The mean score increased from 41.75 in the pre-test to 66.25 in the post-test, representing a 58.68% increase. Students also demonstrated greater confidence when expressing their opinions in English, supported by structured digital repetition and technology-assisted feedback. Therefore, the Digital Chain Drill proved to be an effective technology-enhanced strategy for strengthening learning outcomes, boosting students' speaking confidence, and supporting their ability to express opinions more fluently in English.

1. Introduction

Speaking is one of the most essential skills in English learning, as it enables students to express their thoughts, ideas, and opinions effectively. According to Guebba [19], speaking occupies a central role in language teaching and learning because it allows learners to transform linguistic knowledge into meaningful communication. This perspective highlights speaking as an active and productive skill

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https://doi.org/10.37934/arsbs.41.1.238246

through which learners demonstrate their communicative competence by integrating vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and confidence in real-time interaction. In contemporary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, the development of speaking skills increasingly requires the support of digital technologies that can provide repeated exposure, guided practice, and flexible learning opportunities beyond the traditional classroom.

However, in the Indonesian EFL context, speaking remains a major challenge for learners, particularly at the senior high school level, where many students struggle to communicate fluently and confidently in English. Common obstacles include limited vocabulary, inaccurate pronunciation, and low self-confidence, which often cause students to hesitate, remain passive, or avoid speaking during lessons. The lack of authentic speaking opportunities and supportive learning environments further intensifies these challenges. Consequently, there is a growing need for technology-enhanced instructional approaches that can create more engaging, structured, and supportive speaking practice to help students develop meaningful communication skills required in both academic and social settings.

In the past decade, scholars have emphasized the importance of integrating cognitive and affective support in speaking instruction. Lestari *et al.,* [6] highlights that speaking ability reflects students' fluency, accuracy, and confidence in using English. In line with this, Qiann *et al*., [9] affirm that successful speaking development depends on meaningful interaction facilitated through teacher scaffolding, including strategic questioning and supportive feedback. Recent curriculum reforms in Indonesia which is student-centered national education framework, particularly the *Merdeka* curriculum (Freedom Curriculum), also emphasize communicative competence, creativity, and student-centered activities. Nevertheless, classroom realities show that many students still face difficulties expressing their opinions, suggesting a gap between curriculum expectations and actual learning outcomes.

To address this problem, several teaching techniques have been investigated over the past decade to improve students' speaking ability. One method that has shown promising results is the Digital Chain Drill technique. The Chain Drill is rooted in the principles of the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM). According to Djauhar [16], the Audio-Lingual Method requires students to master the target language through intensive listening, memorizing, and repeating expressions and vocabulary presented through teacher-provided dialogues. This systematic, drill-based repetition forms the theoretical foundation of the Chain Drill. In line with this, Lubis *et al.,* [15] explain that a Chain Drill involves a sequence of student-to-student interactions in which learners ask and answer questions in a continuous conversational chain initiated by the teacher. Through repeated and patterned exchanges, students gradually develop fluency, accuracy, and automatisation of language structures. When integrated with digital media, the Digital Chain Drill further strengthens these processes by providing multimodal repetition, increased engagement, and self-paced practice. Recent studies have reported its effectiveness. Anggraini [1] focused on pronunciation accuracy, while Mardotilah [7] emphasized vocabulary gains. Rizki [12] further demonstrated the role of mobile-assisted repetition in fluency development. Although these findings confirm the general effectiveness of the Chain Drill technique, most studies were conducted at the junior high school level and focused on overall speaking ability rather than specific communicative functions such as expressing opinions. This highlights a clear research gap, particularly the absence of studies applying the technique at the senior high school level to enhance students' opinion-expression skills. Moreover, limited research has explored how the Chain Drill can be aligned with the principles of the *Merdeka* curriculum, which emphasizes autonomy, interaction, and active student engagement.

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Furthermore, the integration of technology in speaking instruction requires more than basic digital literacy; teachers must also possess technology-related pedagogical skills to use digital tools effectively in classroom interaction, conducted by Sailer *et al.,* [18]. This aligns with recent perspectives emphasizing that meaningful technology integration shouls enhance-not merely supplement-existing instructional pratices. As Machado *et al.,* [17] notes, the digital age has created a profound impact on organizations, transforming how technology is utilized to increase efficiency and improve performance. Recent developments in technology-enhanced language learning show that digital drilling platforms can greatly reinforce speaking practice. Similarly, Zhao and Yang [13] highlight that digital repetition tools promote automatisation through auditory, visual, and self-paced practice. These findings strongly support the integration of a Digital Chain Drill, which extends structured interactional drills with digital media to strengthen fluency, accuracy, and speaking confidence.

The novelty of the present study lies in integrating linguistic aspects (vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency) with affective dimensions (self-confidence and active participation) through a Digital Chain Drill framework specifically designed for teaching opinion expression. Unlike previous research that focused mainly on traditional Chain Drill applications to improve general speaking fluency or pronunciation, this study incorporates technology-enhanced features-such as digital prompts, mobile-assisted repetition, and instant playback-to strengthen automatisation, accuracy, and confidence. By situating the Digital Chain Drill within the *Merdeka* Curriculum and targeting opinion expression, this research offers new insights into how technology-supported interactional drills can simultaneously enhance students' speaking performance and their psychological readiness to communicate.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of the Digital Chain Drill technique in improving tenth-grade students' ability to express opinions in English and in enhancing their speaking confidence through technology-supported repetition and feedback. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to more interactive, communicative, and student-centered speaking instruction in Indonesian EFL classrooms, particularly by demonstrating how digital tools can extend traditional drills into a more engaging and effective learning experience. Also, this study is significant as it provides empirical evidence on how technology-enhanced drilling can support both linguistic and affective dimensions of speaking within the Merdeka Curriculum context.

2. Methodology

This study employed a pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design to determine the effectiveness of the Digital Chain Drill technique on students' speaking ability. This design was selected because it allows researchers to measure changes before and after a treatment without involving a control group, which aligns with Creswell's [4] explanation that pre-experimental research is suitable for single-group interventions. The research procedure followed Campbell *et al.,* [2] framework, in which students were assessed in a pre-test (O1), given the treatment using the Digital Chain Drill technique (X), and then reassessed in a post-test (O2). This model involved assessing a group at the beginning of the study, implementing the treatment and then reassessing the same group to identify significant changes.

The participants in this study were tenth-grade students of SMAN 1 Sungai Tebelian in the 2024/2025 academic year, with a population of 240 students divided into seven classes. Class XC, consisting of 32 students, was selected purposively based on preliminary classroom observations and an interview with the English teacher, which revealed that this class showed the highest difficulties in speaking English. The study involved two variables: the Digital Chain Drill technique as the

independent variable and students' speaking ability as the dependent variable, assessed through fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension based on Brown [14] criteria. Although the sample size was limited to 32 students from a single class, this selection was intentional to allow focused observation of learners who demonstrated the greatest difficulty in speaking English. Therefore, the findings are context-specific and are not intended to represent all senior high school EFL learners.

The data were collected using speaking tests, a Likert-scale questionnaire, and documentation. Documentation included digital recordings of classroom interactions, students' oral responses, and screenshots of technology-assisted speaking activities conducted during the Digital Chain Drill sessions. The speaking test was administered before and after the treatment, and students' performance was evaluated using a rubric supported by digital audio–video recordings to ensure scoring accuracy. The questionnaire analysis was conducted to assess the influence of the Digital Chain Drill technique on improving students' confidence in speaking. The speaking confidence questionnaire was adapted from the framework proposed by Nemoto and Beglar [8], which has been widely used to measure affective constructs such as confidence and anxiety in language learning contexts. Prior to administration, the items were reviewed by the classroom teacher to ensure clarity and relevance to the students' proficiency level. However, as the instrument relied on self-reported data, the possibility of response bias cannot be entirely excluded. Nevertheless, the responses was calculated in percentage (%) to facilitate data interpretation and analysis. The percentage calculation used the following formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} x\ 100\%$$

Where:

P	= Percentage
F	= Frequency
N	= Number of sampel
100%	= Constant of value

This formula was used to calculate the percentage of respondents at each scale point for every item, both in the pre-test and post-test. The result were then presented in tabel analyzed narratively to observe changes in students' perceptions, attitudes and confidence after using the Digital Chain Drill technique.

The Digital Chain Drill was implemented over four instructional sessions conducted across two weeks, with each session lasting approximately 90 minutes. Each session followed a structured sequence. First, teacher modeling through prerecorded digital audio prompts. Secondly, student-to-student sequential turn-taking in expressing opinions. Next, mobile-assisted repetition using audio playback features and last, immediate feedback through replay and teacher scaffolding. Unlike the traditional Chain Drill, which relies solely on live oral repetition, the Digital Chain Drill integrates digital pronunciation models, instant playback, and self-paced repetition, allowing students to rehearse, review, and refine their responses both during and outside classroom time as shown on Figure 1 below.

Fig. 1 The implementation of digital chain drill technique

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics through SPSS version 26. Descriptive analysis included the calculation of mean, standard deviation, range, and percentage of improvement. Before hypothesis testing, the Shapiro-Wilk test was used to examine data normality. Since the data were not normally distributed, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was employed as the appropriate non-parametric test to determine whether the Digital Chain Drill technique produced a significant improvement in students' speaking ability and confidence.

3. Results

3.1 Finding on Speaking Ability

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of the Digital Chain Drill Technique in improving students' speaking ability, particularly in expressing their opinions. By integrating structured peer-to-peer sequential drills with technology-enhanced features such as audio prompts, digital repetition, and self-paced practice, the Digital Chain Drill was expected to strengthen both linguistic performance and affective readiness. The findings are presented through descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, supported by students' self-confidence questionnaire results, to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the technology-supported Chain Drill impacts fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, vocabulary use, and speaking confidence.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics of pre-test and post-test

Variabel	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	Percentage
Pre-test	32	41.75	9.635	-
Post-test	32	66.25	12.273	58.68%

Based on Table 1 indicates a substantial increase in students' speaking performance following the implementation of the Digital Chain Drill Technique. The mean score improved from 41.75 to 66.25, representing a 58.68% increase. This notable improvement demonstrates that combining structured sequential drills with digital support-such as repeated listening, audio modeling, and guided digital prompts-enhanced students' fluency, pronunciation accuracy, and overall communicative competence. These early results suggest that the Digital Chain Drill provides a more engaging and supportive environment for practice, contributing significantly to students' speaking development.

Table 2
Normality Test (Shapiro-Wilk)

Test	Statistic	df	Sig. (p-value)
Pre-test	.895	32	.005
Post-test	.975	32	.656

Based on Table 2, the Shapiro–Wilk normality test indicated that the pre-test scores were not normally distributed ($p = 0.005 < 0.05$), whereas the post-test scores followed a normal distribution ($p = 0.656 > 0.05$). Since the assumption of normality was not fully satisfied, a non-parametric statistical procedure was considered appropriate. Therefore, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was employed to examine the difference between students' speaking performance before and after the implementation of the Digital Chain Drill Technique. This approach ensured that the inferential analysis accurately reflected the distribution characteristics of the data.

Table 3
Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test result

Test	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test – Post-test	-4.952	.000

Based on Table 3, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test revealed a statistically significant difference between students' pre-test and post-test speaking scores ($Z = -4.952$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). This result indicates that students' speaking performance improved significantly following the implementation of the Digital Chain Drill Technique, suggesting a positive association between the intervention and students' speaking development. The statistical evidence suggests that the observed improvement was associated with the intervention rather than random variation.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that the Digital Chain Drill Technique had a significant positive effect on students' ability to express opinions in English. The descriptive results showed a marked improvement in students' speaking performance following the intervention, while the inferential analysis confirmed that this improvement was statistically significant. Collectively, these findings suggest that the Digital Chain Drill Technique is an effective technology-enhanced instructional approach for supporting students' speaking performance in EFL classroom contexts.

3.2 Finding Based on Self-Confidence Questionnaire

The analysis of the self-confidence questionnaire further reinforces the effectiveness of the Digital Chain Drill technique. Before the intervention, most students demonstrated low to moderate confidence in speaking English. They frequently experienced nervousness, hesitation, and fear of making mistakes, which discouraged them from expressing their opinions during class activities. Many students also lacked the ability to initiate responses and showed limited participation in oral tasks due to uncertainty and low self-assurance.

The implementation of the Digital Chain Drill technique, students' responses exhibited clear positive changes. They reported reduced anxiety and a greater sense of comfort when speaking English. The structured, repetitive, and technology-supported practice provided by the Digital Chain Drill made the speaking process more predictable and manageable, helping students feel more prepared during oral interactions. Students also expressed increased confidence in using opinion expressions, constructing sentences with greater accuracy, and applying new vocabulary in communicative tasks. Additionally, the digital component-such as audio prompts and technology-

assisted repetition-enhanced their motivation and encouraged independent practice beyond classroom interactions.

The overall shift in students' questionnaire responses demonstrates that the Digital Chain Drill technique can contribute to strengthens learners' affective readiness to speak. Enhanced self-confidence plays a crucial role in enabling students to express opinions more fluently, engage more actively in discussions, and participate in classroom communication with greater assurance. These affective gains complement the linguistic improvements found in the test results, suggesting that the Digital Chain Drill benefits students both cognitively and emotionally.

3.3 Discussion

The findings of this study indicates that the Digital Chain Drill technique produced a substantial improvement in students' speaking performance, particularly in expressing opinions. The increase of 58.68% from pre-test to post-test scores indicates that structured sequential practice-supported by digital repetition tools-successfully enhanced students' fluency, vocabulary use, pronunciation accuracy, and overall communicative ability. The integration of digital components such as audio prompts, playback features, and mobile-assisted repetition allowed students to practice intensively in a low-pressure environment, which reduced speaking anxiety and encouraged more active engagement in higher-level communicative tasks.

The questionnaire results further reinforce these findings by showing clear improvements in students' affective readiness to speak. Before the treatment, students frequently reported nervousness, hesitation, and uncertainty when required to express opinions in English. After participating in the Digital Chain Drill sessions, students indicated greater confidence, reduced anxiety, and increased willingness to participate in oral communication. They also acknowledged that digital repetition and instant feedback helped them organize their ideas more effectively and produce opinion expressions with improved accuracy. These affective gains complement the positive improvement in test scores, demonstrating that the Digital Chain Drill strengthens both linguistic performance and psychological readiness to communicate.

Theoretically, the results align with recent research on technology-enhanced language learning, which emphasizes the effectiveness of digital drilling and multimodal repetition for developing speaking proficiency. Rizki [12] highlights that mobile-assisted repetition improves fluency by enabling students to practice continuously beyond classroom time. Similarly, Cahyani *et al.,* [11] report that technology-based drilling supports pronunciation accuracy through unlimited repetition and instant feedback, while Zhao and Yang [13] assert that digital repetition tools facilitate automatisation through auditory, visual, and self-paced practice. These theoretical viewpoints support the effectiveness of the Digital Chain Drill as a modern, technology-supported extension of structured interactional drills.

The novelty of this study lies in applying a Digital Chain Drill specifically to develop the skill of expressing opinions a higher-order communicative competence that requires both linguistic mastery and speaking confidence. By situating this innovation within the Merdeka Curriculum, which promotes autonomy, interaction, and student-centered learning, this study contributes new insights into how digital tools can reinforce structured oral practice while supporting affective and cognitive development.

Overall, the findings indicate that the Digital Chain Drill is effective not only in improving students' speaking performance but also in enhancing their confidence, participation, and willingness to engage in oral communication. The technique is therefore recommended for senior high school English classrooms, especially when learning objectives require structured and confident opinion

expression.

4. Conclusions

The findings of this study suggests that the Digital Chain Drill is an effective instructional strategy for improving senior high school students' speaking ability, particularly in expressing opinions. The 58.68% increase in post-test scores shows that combining structured sequential practice with technology-assisted repetition can contribute in enhancing students' fluency, vocabulary use, pronunciation accuracy, and overall communicative performance. The digital features-such as audio prompts, playback functions, and self-paced repetition-strengthened students' automatisation and accuracy beyond what traditional drills typically offer.

The results of the self-confidence questionnaire further reveal substantial improvements in students' affective readiness for speaking. Students reported reduced anxiety, greater comfort during oral activities, and increased willingness to participate in classroom discussions. The supportive and low-pressure environment created through the Digital Chain Drill, together with multimodal digital assistance, helped students feel more prepared and secure when expressing their opinions in English. These affective gains complement the measurable improvements in speaking performance, indicating that the Digital Chain Drill benefits both linguistic competence and psychological readiness-two crucial components of successful oral communication.

Practically, the findings imply that the Digital Chain Drill can be integrated as an effective preparatory technique in senior high school speaking lessons, especially when learning objectives focus on developing opinion-expression skills. Its alignment with the *Merdeka* Curriculum, which prioritizes interaction, autonomy, and student-centered learning, highlights its potential as a sustainable and impactful approach for strengthening speaking confidence and communicative competence in Indonesian EFL classrooms.

However, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the sample size was relatively small and drawn from a single class in one school, which limits the generalizability of the results. Second, the study employed a pre-experimental one-group design without a control group, making it difficult to attribute improvements solely to the Digital Chain Drill intervention. Third, the intervention was conducted over a short period, which may not fully capture long-term effects on speaking ability and confidence. Finally, the reliance on self-reported questionnaire data introduces the possibility of response bias. These limitations suggest that the findings should be interpreted cautiously and viewed as exploratory rather than conclusive.

Hence, future research is recommended to employ experimental or quasi-experimental designs with control groups to strengthen causal interpretation. Studies involving larger samples, longer intervention periods, and multiple schools would enhance the generalizability of findings. Comparative research examining Digital Chain Drill versus traditional Chain Drill techniques would also provide deeper pedagogical insights. Additionally, replication of this study in different educational contexts and proficiency levels could further validate the effectiveness of technology-enhanced drilling for speaking development.

Acknowledgement
This research was not funded by any grant.

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