

A STUDY OF THINK-PAIR-SHARE TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE SPEAKING SKILLS OF THE EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS IN KUPANG

Aldi Brillianzha

Widya Mandira Catholic University, Indonesia
aldi.brillianzha@gmail.com

received 29 January 2020; revised 22 November 2020; accepted 8 December 2020

Abstract

This study aims to improve students' speaking skills by using the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) technique for the eighth-grade students in Kupang in the school year of 2017/2018. Three research problems are addressed: 1) how is the TPS technique used to improve speaking skills? 2) What are the advantages and disadvantages of the TPS technique, and 3) does the TPS technique improve students' speaking skill? This classroom action research consists of planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting in each cycle, and it was implemented in two cycles. Twenty eighth-grade students participated in the study. The data was collected using observations, interviews, and tests. The English teachers acted as the observer and rater for the test. The results of the study showed that the use of the TPS technique improves the participants' speaking skills. The technique provides the participants with more opportunities to speak in English. The participants also showed active participation during the teaching and learning process. Some improvements are also apparent in pronunciation, intonation, comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, gesture, and expression. This finding is supported by the test score, where there is an increase from the pre-test of cycle one ($M = 55.18$) to the test in cycle two ($M = 74.63$).

Keywords: *Classroom action research, speaking skills, think-pair-share*

Introduction

Language has a vital role in developing a learner's intellectual, social, and emotional values, and it supports success in learning all subject matters. Confidently, learning other languages will help learners to recognize themselves and other cultures. Also, learning a language can help learners to express their ideas and feeling. It can also help them to participate and communicate in society. Students should acquire four primary language skills in English, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In terms of speaking, students are expected to speak fluently with correct grammar and good pronunciation at the end of a semester. Fraser (1983) states that when people use language, they characteristically do three things: they say something, indicate how they intend the listener to understand what they said and have a definite effect on the listener results.

Hadfield (1999) says that speaking is a bridge between the classroom and the world outside for learners. Thus, to build the bridge, the teachers must allow the learners to practice purposeful communication in meaningful situations. Nevertheless, we should know the problems that the students face in advance. Most of the problems in mastering speaking are the lack of students' speaking proficiency. Vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation are parts of

speaking proficiency, impacting students who are lacking in these aspects. As a result, the students are unable to speak during the speaking class.

There are some indicators indicating students not to speak flawlessly. First, students rarely answer the question verbally given by the teacher spontaneously. Second, they often use pauses and fillers when speaking, whether to answer questions or have a talk. Third, low self-esteem affects their confidence when they try to speak; this might happen because they seldom speak in a public setting. Fourth, they are running out of the idea. Fifth, some language-related issues, such as grammatical error, mispronunciation, and poor vocabulary. Finally, when the teacher asks a question, students often murmur the answer together at once, creating unintelligible noise.

One way to improve students' speaking skills is by implementing Think-Pair-Share (TPS) strategy. TPS is a strategy that is designed to differentiate instruction by providing students time and structure for thinking critically on a given topic. This enables them to think individually and then share their ideas with a peer. This learning strategy promotes classroom participation by encouraging high degree of students' response. In this strategy, a problem or topic is posed by a teacher initially, and then the students will be given time to think about the problem or topic individually. After that, they have to work in pairs to solve the problem. Pairs are determined by who is sitting next to them. Those who are in pairs should share their ideas to conclude the whole idea for the problem or topic given by the teacher. In the end, students are expected to share their ideas with the class. In general, one person from each pair will have an opportunity to speak to share their ideas. This strategy can also be used for daily classroom activities such as concept reviews, quiz reviews, a partner in reading, topic development, and others.

Literature Review

Ladouse (as cited in Nunan, 1991, p. 23) describes speaking as “the ability to express oneself in the situation, or the activity to report acts or situations in precise words or converse or express a sequence of ideas fluently.” Furthermore, speaking could be a way of communication that influences our individual life strongly. Hornby (1989) defines speaking as making use of words, knowing and using language, expressing oneself in words, and making a speech. In other words, speaking is the ability of human beings to perform the knowledge of linguistic in real communication to express feelings, thoughts, and ideas verbally.

Brown (2004) distinguishes between micro-skills and macro-skills of speaking. The micro-skills refer to producing smaller chunks of language such as phonemes, words, morphemes, phrasal units, and collocations. The macro-skills imply the speaker's focus on larger elements such as fluency, discourse, style, nonverbal communication, cohesion, function, and strategic options.

Harmer (2001) highlights that students are often reluctant to speak because they are shy and are not predisposed to expressing themselves in front of other people, especially when asked to give personal information or opinion. Frequently, too, there is a worry about speaking badly and losing face in front of their classmates. Brown (2001) states that shyness and anxiety are considered the leading causes of students' reluctance to speak. It is not easy for learners to verbally deliver their idea under one topic in a classroom. If they do have ideas, then the problem is they do not know how to put their thought into sentences. Some learners may understand what their friends have said, but some cannot produce utterance.

TPS strategy is a learning strategy developed by Lyman (1981). This strategy is considered cooperative learning and an effective way to create variations in-class discussion patterns. The purpose of TPS is to increase academic mastery, teach social skills (Nurhadi,

2004), understand difficult concepts, helps students to cultivate critical thinking skills (Trianto, 2009), and also promotes and supports a higher level of thinking (Kagan, 1994).

TPS structure is also considered beneficial (Nur, 2013); the point is when teacher presenting a lesson; ask students to think the given question individually; then pair with a partner discussion using A-B-A-B, counting heads, or directly say they will be paired with their chair mate in order to collaborate the ideas that they have thought before; finally, the teacher asks students to share their discussion one by one. With this learning model, students are trained to express opinions and respect other students' opinions while still working on the learning material and learning objectives. For influencing students' interaction, TPS requires students to work with each other in small groups.

This study aims to address 1) how is the TPS technique used to improve speaking skills? 2) What are the advantages and disadvantages of the TPS technique, and 3) does the TPS technique improve students' speaking skill?

Research Methodology

This study was conducted as a classroom action research based on the model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart (as cited in Burns, 2010). The goal of action research is to understand some elements of the classroom by collecting data. Action research engages teacher(s) as the researcher(s) in a four-step process (1) identifying an area of focus; (2) collecting data; (3) analyzing and interpreting data; and (4) developing an action plan. This study implemented these four steps based on the above model as depicted in Figure 1.

Planning

This was the beginning of the process to conduct treatments or after making sure about the research problem. The researcher prepares some materials to be used, such as lesson plans, choosing the theme, and preparing the materials needed in the learning process.

Acting

In this phase, the researcher implemented the TPS technique in the teaching and learning process.

Observing

In this step, the researcher observed the situation in class during lessons as well as the response and attitude of students when they were given explanations, doing a task, and seeking to their difficulties in the learning process.

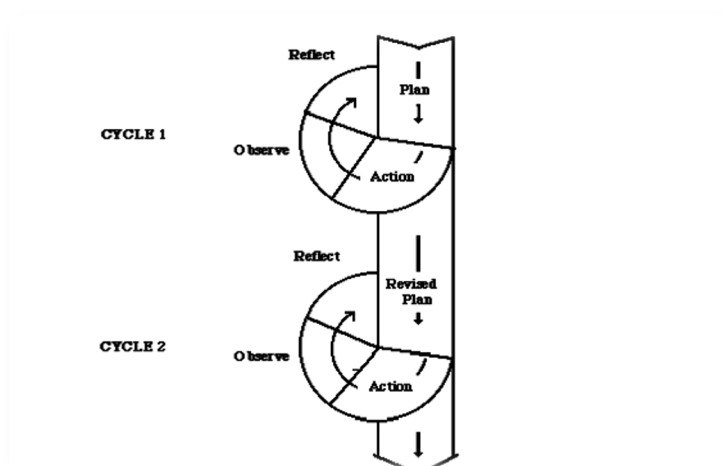
Reflecting

In this stage, the researcher inspected effort on the success or failure to reach temporary purposes to determine the alternative steps that were probably made to gate the final goals or aims of the research.

This study was conducted at a private middle school in Kupang in the academic year of 2017/2018. Twenty-one students participated in this study (eight males, 13 females). Observations, interviews, and tests were used to collect the data. This study implemented two cycles of classroom action research.

Figure 1

Action research cycles by Kemmis and McTaggart



Note. From “Doing action research in English language teaching: A guide for practitioners” by A. Burns. Copyright 2010 by Routledge.

Table 1

Mean Scores of Pre-Test in Cycle I

Rater	Fluency		Content			Appearances	
	P	I	C	G	V	G	E
Rater 1	5.05	5.65	12.2	10.5	11.35	4.85	5.15
Rater 2	5.5	5.65	12.2	11.35	10.65	4.95	5.3
<i>M</i>	5.27	5.65	12.2	10.92	11	4.9	5.22

Note. Fluency (P = Pronunciation / I = Intonation), Content (C = Comprehension / G = Grammar / V = Vocabulary), Appearances (G= Gesture / E= Expression)

The data were analyzed separately based on their type. The qualitative data collected from the observation and interview was analyzed using the steps proposed by Burns (1999). This including assembling, coding, and comparing the data. The quantitative data collected from the test was analyzed by calculating and comparing the post-test mean value in cycle one with that of the post-test two.

The standard of measurement used to measure the participants’ speaking ability ranges from 0-15 as the lowest (classified as *very bad*) to 96-100 as the highest (classified as *excellent*). A speaking rubric was also used as scoring guidelines.

Findings

Two raters (the researcher and a teacher) assessed the participants speaking test using the same rubric. The results are presented in Table 1.

In the pre-test of cycle I, several students committed mispronunciation in English, spoke in flat intonation without paying attention to punctuation, hesitated, and use many fillers while speaking. They also lacked the vocabulary and often misplaced the words. Generating ideas and arranging sentences in proper ways were two of the most challenging things when they speak.

Research Process in Cycle I

The preliminary observation and the interview elicited similar issues concerning the students, the teacher, the media, and the technique. First, regarding the students, they were shy and hesitant to speak in English. During the teaching and learning process, most of them spoke in Bahasa Indonesia. They were also afraid of making mistakes; thus, they were silent when the teacher asked questions. Besides, lack of interest in learning English also become one of the reasons. Since they had limited vocabulary, they do not know how to express good sentences into dialogue. Moreover, their pronunciation and grammar were still at a low level. Since they rarely use English in their daily routines, they prefer to use Bahasa Indonesia; thus, the list of English words was not familiar to them.

Second, the teacher did not create interesting activities during the teaching and learning process. There were no games to break their boredom in learning English, and also there were no songs. The flow of the learning process was too flat. On the other hand, it should be ups and downs in learning which students' participation should be more up than teacher and vice versa. In other words, the teacher was the most dominant in whole session of the teaching and learning process. The monotonous activities did not stimulate students' interest that had low motivation and awareness in learning English.

The last problems were the media and the technique used in the classroom. The media and technique used were monotonous. The teacher often used worksheets. He often asked students to work on everything individually. He also did not give the students enough time to think first before producing words.

Action Implementation

The lesson started with a pre-activity using a song with the lyrics related to the learning material. The researcher sang the song first, then it was sung together with the students accompanying by some movement previously shown by the researcher. The main activity began with listening to a recording of a conversation. Then the researcher asked the students about the expression they have marked on their notebooks. Students responded by raising their hands before answering the questions.

The researcher and the English teacher assessed students' presentation based on the rubric prepared by the researcher. The pre-test result can be seen on Table 2. Based on the result, it can be concluded that students' speaking skills were low. Only half of the class got the average scores of around 56 points.

After the pre-test, the researcher moved to task 2, where students were asked to re-arrange jumbled sentences into a good dialogue. This time, students were given time to think individually first. They were not allowed to ask their partner yet. After arranging the sentences into good dialogue individually, they had to mingle and did the activity, namely "walk and talk." Next, the researcher and the students discussed the task together. A vocabulary practice

Table 2
Mean Scores of Progress Test in Cycle I

Rater	Fluency			Content		Appearances	
	P	I	C	G	V	G	E
Rater 1	6.4	6.5	12.3	11.2	11.55	5.75	5.95
Rater 2	6.7	6.9	12.4	11.45	11.6	6.0	6.1
<i>M</i>	6.55	6.7	12.35	11.32	11.57	5.87	6.02

Note. Fluency (P = Pronunciation / I = Intonation), Content (C = Comprehension / G = Grammar / V = Vocabulary), Appearances (G= Gesture / E= Expression)

related to the words found in the dialogue was also conducted. The researcher pronounced the words correctly and asked the students to repeat after him.

The TPS technique was implemented in task 3. Since it was the first meeting, some students were still confused with TPS. After explaining the technique, the researcher asked the students to do the next task. Students were asked to pair with the person sitting next to them. After receiving the worksheet, most students worked seriously with their partners. The researcher approached students who appeared to focus less on the task and let them know that the task should be done seriously since their result will be graded. In the end, all of the students answer the questions correctly. TPS technique seemed to be quite successful because some students showed improvement in answering the question by speaking it out. Therefore, the researcher decided to move to the next activity.

One by one, the researcher pointed out pairs to present their modifying-dialogue in front of the class. The researcher monitored the class by walking around and observing those who listen to the speakers. The students did the dialogue presentation nervously, while a few of them nailed the presentation in a satisfactory manner and matter. The English teacher and the researcher assessed this progress-test. The results of the progress test can be seen in Table 2.

Findings in Cycle I

In Cycle I, the researcher found out some problems during the implementation of the TPS technique. Several students got bored easily during the lesson. The researcher planned to prepare more energetic activities in the next cycle to avoid boredom to solve this problem. By providing songs and games, the students were expected to enjoy the lesson more.

When students were paired with a partner, some were not actively involved in the discussion. To solve this problem, the English teacher suggested pairing these students with those who appeared to be more active during the discussion. Dictionary issues is a classic problem. The researcher reminded the students that a dictionary is a compulsory thing that they had to have since English is not their first language.

Based on the problems found in cycle I, the researcher decided to do what he has planned previously. Thus, the same problems would not appear again in cycle II. The researcher believed that the students would participate actively in cycle II due to better preparation by adding one additional activity, namely giving a reward. It aimed to attract students' attention during the teaching and learning process.

Action Implementation of Cycle II

Cycle II began with the usual greeting, checking students' attendance, giving questions regarding the materials to check students' readiness. The lesson started with a pre-activity using a song with the lyrics related to the learning material. The song used in the previous meeting was reused. The researcher sang the song first, then it was sung together with the students accompanying by some movement previously shown by the researcher.

The researcher informed the students that he brought five gifts for the active students in the class. After the students knew about the special gifts, they became more interested and actively participated in the teaching and learning process. Then, the researcher continued the activity as planned. He asked the students to listen to a recording. The researcher used the same technique by asking students to listen to the dialogue. However, the researcher used a more complicated dialogue than the one used in cycle I. It aimed to avoid students doing the same thing again and see how the improvement worked in students' speaking skills. The researcher asked the students to write challenging words and some expressions related to the materials in the recording. After listening to the recorded dialogue, he asked the students what the expressions were in the dialogue. Students were able to write all of the expressions mentioned

in the recording. After that, the students were asked to read the dialogue by themselves to check the pronunciation. Mispronunciations were apparent, and the researcher corrected it. The technique that the researcher used was listening to students' pronunciation and then repeating the words.

The next activity was working on task 1. It was a dialogue made by the researcher. He asked students to use the TPS technique before presenting the dialogue in front of the class. Before practicing with partners, the researcher informed that the presentation would be graded based on the rubric. The grading indicators were also explained. Both the researcher and the English teacher were the assessor. The researcher also reminded the students to present as well as possible since he already prepared gifts. Once the students were ready to present the dialogue in front of the class, the researcher randomly called the paired students.

In the next activity, the researcher asked the students to prepare a dialogue by themselves. This was also a post-test of this research. The researcher gave them 5 minutes for a break and mingled with other friends. Then the students were given a chance to make dialogue with a partner. They had to make dialogue related to the asking and giving information about ability.

After they presented their dialogue, the researcher ended the lesson by randomly asking some students to do a reflection in front of the class. Even the passive students got an opportunity to report what she has understood and the difficulty in learning English, especially speaking skill. After the reflection session, the researcher and the students concluded the lesson. The researcher also announced the top five active students in the session. He called them one by one to come in front of the class and receive gifts as a reward for their hard work.

In the post-test of cycle II, the students could correct their own pronunciation when they mispronounced without the researcher's guidance. Most students could speak using falling and rising intonation based on the type of sentences. Most students delivered their speaking fluently without hesitation. They usually could handle elementary construction accurately but did not have the confidence to control the grammar when they speak. As a result, they could prepare a better quality of dialogues without asking its meaning. The students also were creative in making the dialogue with their partners. Table 3 shows the mean score of the progress test in cycle II.

In the post-test, errors in pronunciation were relatively rare. The students had good intonation in almost 70% percent of words pronounced. Control of grammar was quite good. They were able to speak the language with sufficient vocabulary too. They also were good at using appropriate gestures and expressions in their dialogue. Table 4 presents the results of the post-test in cycle II.

Table 3

Mean Scores of Progress Test in Cycle II

Rater	Fluency		Content			Appearances	
	P	I	C	G	V	G	E
Rater 1	7.35	7.5	12.95	12.75	12.7	7.2	7.4
Rater 2	7.25	7.2	12.75	12.65	12.65	7.35	7.3
<i>M</i>	7.3	7.35	12.85	12.70	12.67	7.27	7.35

Note. Fluency (P = Pronunciation / I = Intonation), Content (C = Comprehension / G = Grammar / V = Vocabulary), Appearances (G= Gesture / E= Expression)

Table 4
Mean Scores of Post-Test in Cycle II

Rater	Fluency		Content			Appearances	
	P	I	C	G	V	G	E
Rater 1	7.55	7.9	14.7	14.3	14.3	7.75	7.75
Rater 2	7.55	7.9	15	14.4	14.6	7.8	7.75
<i>M</i>	7.55	7.9	14.85	14.35	14.45	7.77	7.75

Note. Fluency (P = Pronunciation / I = Intonation), Content (C = Comprehension / G = Grammar / V = Vocabulary), Appearances (G= Gesture / E= Expression)

Discussion

This study aims to describe how the Think-Pair-Share technique improves eighth-grade students' speaking skills in a middle school in Kupang. This technique was implemented both in the first and the second cycle. The English classroom, vocabulary practice, giving feedback to the students' pronunciation, and pronunciation drilling were applied in both cycles as well. However, the researcher also provided a reward session in the second cycle. In cycle I, the researcher divided the students based on the position of their seat position. However, in cycle II, the researcher grouped the students based on their ability. It helped the passive students to be active by getting influenced by the active students as their partners. The class management was also improved during cycle II since the researcher managed the class well.

Even though the odd numbers of the students made it less ideal for implementing the Think-Pair-Share technique, the findings showed that the Think-Pair-Share technique was successful in improving the students' speaking skills, particularly in the following aspects.

First, the Think-Pair-Share technique was able to help students gain self-confidence. Previously, they were shy to express themselves. The students were not confident to speak in front of the class. During the implementation of the Think-Pair-Share technique, they have many chances to interact with their classmates in English. This interaction encouraged them to speak English more, yet they should not feel shy because they were still practicing.

Second, the Think-Pair-Share technique was able to give the students more opportunity to speak. The think-Pair-Share technique can improve students' confidence as well as provide more opportunities to practice speaking. The approach of the teaching and learning process was not teacher-centered anymore. The students could explore the knowledge by themselves and through interaction with others. Therefore, they could improve their speaking skills since language is a matter of habit.

Third, the Think-Pair-Share technique improved students speaking skills in some respects like fluency, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and intonation. Using the Think-Pair-Share technique, the students had more opportunities to speak in English since they had a partner to share their ideas and give feedback.

Fourth, the Think-Pair-Share technique was able to increase students' motivation in learning speaking. The students were motivated to show their improvement in speaking because the class situation was active and enjoyable. Besides, in order to increase the students' motivation, the researcher needed to do other actions in improving the students' motivation by providing special gifts to the active students. By giving the reward, the researcher was able to attract students' enthusiasm.

Conclusively, the implementation of the Think-Pair-Share technique provided a positive effect on the students' speaking skills. The students could speak fluently and confidently after they had been taught by using the Think-Pair-Share technique. The steps in conducting the Think-Pair-Share technique facilitated the students to practice and encourage

their motivation to speak English. Therefore, the Think-Pair-Share technique required the students to be active listeners and speakers in every activity during the teaching and learning process.

Conclusion

The speaking performance results in both cycles showed that the students improved their speaking skills. This even applied to passive students. It could be seen from the higher score from the post-test results in cycle II compared to that of the pre-test in cycle I.

There were some implications of this study as follows.

1. The use of the Think-Pair-Share technique encouraged the students to practice their speaking skills during the teaching and learning process. By applying the Think-Pair-Share technique, they got more opportunities to interact with their friends using English, and they could also enjoy the teaching and learning process. It helped the student to formulate what they want to say before expressing their opinions in English. Moreover, it was effective in improving the students' confidence in speaking. This improved their involvement in the teaching and learning process.
2. Using more English in the classroom helped the students to be more familiar with the language. They received considerable exposure to English. Consequently, they were accustomed to English expressions and instructions. This helped them to be more confident to speak in English. In short, it can be implied that using classroom English can make the students more familiar with English.
3. The implementation of vocabulary practices was also able to enrich students' vocabulary mastery. The students' vocabulary knowledge improved. Furthermore, they were able to use more appropriate vocabulary wherever it was needed. It can be implied that vocabulary practice was useful to improve the students' speaking skills.
4. Giving feedback on the students' pronunciation boosted the students' confidence in pronouncing the English words since they had known how to pronounce them correctly. It helped them to repair their mistakes in pronouncing the words. It can be concluded that giving feedbacks made the students more confident.
5. The implementation of the pronunciation drill was able to improve the students' accuracy. They were more aware of their pronunciation, and their pronunciation was also improved. Since the researcher let the students repeat after him as he produced correct pronunciation and avoided the wrong pronunciations. In short, it can be summarized that the pronunciation drill was useful to make students aware of the pronunciation.
6. The implementation of giving reward was an excellent additional idea. It attracted students' participation during the teaching and learning process. It can be seen from the activeness of the students in answering questions both written and orally. Thus, the decision to give reward to the several best students was a good option to increase the number of students' participation during the teaching and learning process.

References

- Brown, D. H. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (2nd ed.). Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
- Brown, D. H. (2004). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices*. Pearson Education, Inc.
- Burns, A. (1999). *Collaborative action research for English language teachers*. Cambridge University Press.

-
- Burns, A. (2010). *Doing action research in English language teaching: A guide for practitioners*. Routledge.
- Fraser, B. (1983). *Some (unexpected) reactions to various American-English dialects*. Fraser Publications.
- Hadfield, J., & Hadfield, C. (1999). *Simple speaking activities*. Oxford University Press.
- Harmer, J. (2001). *The practice of English language teaching*. Longman.
- Hornby, A. S. (1989). *Oxford advanced learners dictionary*. Oxford University Press.
- Kagan, S. (1994). *Cooperative learning*. Kagan Publications.
- Lyman, F. T. (1981). The responsive classroom discussion: The inclusion of all students. In A. Anderson (Ed.), *Mainstreaming digest* (pp. 109-113). University of Maryland Press.
- Nunan, D. (1991). *Research methods in language learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Nur, L. H. (2013). *Critical thinking skills*. Sekolah Pasca Sarjana UPI.
- Nurhadi, A. G. S. (2004). *Contextual teaching and learning*. State University of Malang.
- Trianto. (2009). *Mendesain model pembelajaran inovatif-progres: Konsep landasan, dan implementasinya pada kurikulum tingkat satuan pendidikan (KTSP)*. Kencana.