



## Research Article

# Improving Speaking Participation through Think-Pair-Share in an EFL Classroom

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## Abstract

Speaking participation is a persistent challenge in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, particularly at the elementary school level where learners often experience anxiety and low confidence. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) technique in improving students' participation in speaking activities. The research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design consisting of one cycle: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The participants were 25 sixth-grade students at a public Islamic elementary school in Palangka Raya, Indonesia. Data were collected through classroom observations, field notes, and informal interviews with the English teacher. The results indicate a substantial increase in students' speaking participation after the implementation of TPS. Active participation rose from approximately 20-25% in the initial condition to more than 65–70% by the end of the action cycle. Students also demonstrated higher confidence and willingness to express ideas in English. These findings suggest that TPS provides a supportive and structured learning environment that reduces anxiety and encourages equitable participation. Therefore, TPS can be considered an effective and practical cooperative learning strategy for enhancing speaking participation in elementary EFL classrooms.

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## Introduction

Speaking is widely regarded as one of the most important yet challenging skills for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). In many Indonesian EFL classrooms, particularly at the elementary school level, students tend to show low participation in speaking activities. This issue is commonly associated with affective factors such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and limited confidence, as well as instructional practices that remain teacher-centered.

Previous studies have consistently reported that cooperative learning strategies can improve students' speaking participation by creating opportunities for interaction and peer support. Techniques such as Think-Pair-Share (TPS) have been proven effective in secondary and higher education contexts, where learners generally have higher linguistic readiness and learning autonomy. However, relatively few studies have focused on the implementation of TPS in elementary EFL classrooms, especially within limited instructional time and short action cycles.

Moreover, most Classroom Action Research (CAR) studies employ multiple cycles to demonstrate improvement, while practical teaching contexts such as teaching-practice programs often require immediate instructional solutions within a single cycle. This condition creates a research gap regarding whether a single-cycle implementation of TPS can produce meaningful improvements in students' speaking participation.

Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by examining the effectiveness of the Think-Pair-Share technique implemented in one CAR cycle to improve students' participation in speaking activities in an elementary EFL classroom. By focusing on a single-cycle intervention, this research seeks to provide practical evidence for teachers who face time constraints but require effective strategies to enhance classroom interaction.

## Methodology

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design based on the model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart, which consists of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research was conducted during a teaching-practice program at a public Islamic elementary school in Palangka Raya, Indonesia.

The participants were 25 students of a sixth-grade class, aged between 11 and 12 years. The English teacher acted as a collaborator throughout the research process. Each meeting lasted approximately 70 minutes.

Data were collected using qualitative techniques, including classroom observation sheets, field notes, and informal interviews with the teacher. The observation focused on students' speaking participation, confidence level, and willingness to respond during classroom activities. Data analysis followed a descriptive qualitative approach, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Triangulation of data sources was applied to ensure the credibility of the findings.

In the planning stage, the researcher designed lesson plans integrating the Think-Pair-Share technique, prepared speaking prompts related to daily activities, and developed observation instruments to record students' participation. The lesson plans were aligned with the existing curriculum and adjusted to the students' language proficiency level.

During the action stage, the Think-Pair-Share technique was implemented in the classroom. Students were first given time to think individually about the questions posed by the teacher. Next, they discussed their ideas with a partner before sharing their responses with the whole class. This structured sequence allowed students to gradually build confidence before speaking publicly.

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In the observation stage, the collaborator observed students' behavior, engagement, and speaking participation during the learning process. Particular attention was given to students' willingness to speak, clarity of expression, and interaction with peers.

Finally, the reflection stage focused on evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention. The researcher and collaborator discussed the outcomes of the action, identified strengths and weaknesses of the implementation, and assessed whether the objectives of the study had been achieved.

## Result

This section presents the final results of the Classroom Action Research after the implementation of the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) technique across one cycle. Before the intervention, classroom observation showed that students' participation in speaking activities was relatively low. Only a small number of students were willing to respond orally, while most students remained passive and hesitant to speak in English.

After the application of TPS in a single action cycle, a clear improvement was observed, a clear improvement was observed. Students became more active during pair discussions and more confident during the sharing stage. The classroom atmosphere shifted from teacher-centered to student-centered, with more students voluntarily responding and sharing ideas in English.

Table 1 presents a comparison of students' speaking participation before and after the implementation of the Think-Pair-Share technique.

**Table 1. Students' Speaking Participation Before and After TPS Implementation**

No	Participation Indicators	Before TPS	After TPS Implementation
1	Number of active students (out of 25)	5–6 students	18–19 students
2	Percentage of participation	20–25%	65–70%
3	Students' confidence level	Low (hesitant, anxious)	High (confident, expressive)
4	Frequency of voluntary responses	Rare	Frequent
5	Classroom atmosphere	Passive, teacher-centered	Interactive, student-centered

As shown in Table 1, the implementation of the TPS technique resulted in a substantial increase in students' speaking participation. The improvement was not only reflected in numerical data but also in qualitative changes, such as higher confidence levels and a more collaborative classroom environment.

In addition to the quantitative increase in participation, qualitative observations revealed positive behavioral changes among students. Learners who were previously silent began to initiate responses, while others showed greater enthusiasm during pair discussions. Students appeared more relaxed and less afraid of making mistakes, indicating a reduction in speaking anxiety.

The Think-Pair-Share technique also promoted equal participation. Unlike traditional questioning methods where only confident students dominate classroom interaction, TPS allowed all students to have thinking time and peer support before speaking. This structure encouraged quieter students to

contribute and reduced the gap between active and passive learners.

Furthermore, the collaborative nature of TPS strengthened peer relationships and fostered mutual support. Students often helped each other with vocabulary and sentence construction during pair discussions, which contributed to improved fluency during the sharing stage.

## Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the Think-Pair-Share technique effectively improved students' participation in speaking activities. The structured stages of TPS allowed students to prepare ideas individually before engaging in peer discussion, which helped reduce anxiety and build confidence. This finding supports previous studies suggesting that cognitive preparation and peer interaction play important roles in encouraging students to speak.

The increased participation observed in this study is consistent with earlier research showing that cooperative learning strategies promote equitable engagement among learners. TPS created a supportive learning environment where students felt more comfortable expressing ideas. Compared to traditional teacher-centered instruction, TPS encouraged active involvement and shared responsibility for learning.

From a theoretical perspective, the results align with social constructivist views that emphasize the role of interaction in language development. Through pair discussion and class sharing, students were able to negotiate meaning and receive feedback, which contributed to their communicative growth. Therefore, TPS not only improved participation but also fostered a more collaborative classroom culture.

The effectiveness of the Think-Pair-Share technique in this study can be attributed to its structured and supportive nature. By allowing students to think individually before engaging in discussion, TPS provided cognitive preparation that reduced pressure and anxiety. Pair work further enabled students to rehearse their ideas in a low-risk environment, which increased confidence during class sharing.

These findings support previous studies that emphasize the importance of interaction and scaffolding in EFL speaking instruction. TPS aligns with cooperative learning principles by promoting shared responsibility and peer-assisted learning. Even within a single action cycle, the technique demonstrated its potential to improve speaking participation, suggesting that meaningful pedagogical change does not always require long-term intervention.

In practical terms, TPS offers an effective solution for teachers facing limited instructional time. Its simplicity and flexibility make it suitable for elementary classrooms, where students often need emotional support and structured guidance to develop speaking skills.

## Conclusion and Recommendation

This study concludes that the Think-Pair-Share technique is effective in improving students' speaking participation in an elementary EFL classroom. The implementation of TPS resulted in increased student engagement, higher confidence levels, and a more interactive classroom atmosphere. Even within a single Classroom Action Research cycle, TPS demonstrated its capacity to enhance oral participation meaningfully.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that English teachers incorporate Think-Pair-Share into speaking activities, particularly for learners who experience anxiety or low confidence. Teachers may adapt the technique to different topics and proficiency levels to maximize its benefits.

Future research is encouraged to explore the long-term effects of TPS, involve multiple cycles, or combine qualitative and quantitative approaches. Such studies would provide deeper insights into the impact of cooperative learning strategies on speaking proficiency and classroom interaction.

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