

IMPROVING STUDENTS' CLASS PARTICIPATION BY OPTIMIZING THE USE OF THINK-PAIR-SHARE TECHNIQUE

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Abstract: An effective and successful language learning process can only be achieved when students actively participate in the class. This research aimed to improve students' class participation by the optimization of Think Pair Share (TPS) technique. This research was conducted as classroom action research whose subject was the tenth grade students of DPIB B class in a vocational highschool in Surakarta in the academic year of 2018/2019. The data were gathered from the research instruments, such as: observation, interview, questionnaire, research diary, and photographs. The data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative. The findings of the research showed that implementation of TPS was successful in improving students' participation with the increase in the number of: (1) students asking and answering questions; (2) students' interaction during the class; (3) students paying their attention during the class; (4) students interacting during group discussion; and (5) students speaking in front of the class. There were also some challenges that the researcher faced during the implementation of TPS technique, such as: (1) the familiarity of the technique to the students; (2) teacher's control of the class; (3) students' readiness in receiving the lesson; (4) difficulty in expressing opinion and ideas; (5) lack of confidence in speaking; (6) low grammar mastery; and (7) lack of vocabulary.

Keywords: *students' participation, think pair share, classroom action research.*

INTRODUCTION

Learning can be described as a process of acquiring new or modifying existing knowledge. According to Vygostky (1978) theories, knowledge is a social construct, which means that knowledge comes from social interactions and understanding. As a result, participation requires some kind of interaction from its participants. In the context of classroom environment, this means the interaction that students and teacher made.

The students' interactions can be observed through their involvement in class activity, such as: interaction during class discussions (Cohen, 1991, p. 699),

responding and answering to teachers' questions (Fassinger, 1996, p. 27), or even their class attendance (Fritschner, 2000, p. 352). According to Vandrick (2000, p. 2), participation could be described as what students generally speak in the class, such as: answering questions, asking questions, making comments, or join in class discussions.

Class participation is an integral part of teaching as well as an important aspect of students learning. Students who actively participate in the learning process learn more than those who do not (Weaver & Qi, 2005, p. 570). Participations also provide means to enhancing the teaching instruction

and bring educational process upon the students (Cohen, 1991, p. 699).

It is important to note that students' participation in the class is not always equal. Some students may join in class discussion willingly and eagerly participate in activities, while others may just sit silently during the course (Fassinger, 1996, p. 25). Jun Liu (2001, p. 72) has identified four classroom participation patterns that commonly present among the students: (1) Total Integration, where students are active participant; (2) Conditional participation, where students participation are limited by some factors; (3) Marginal Interactions, where students are active listeners but rarely made spoken interactions; and (4) Silent Observation, where students completely withdrawn from vocal classroom participation and discussions. Ideally, all students in the class should be able to participate in class activities as in total participation without issue. However, in reality, teachers are often faced with the lack of students' participation during classroom activity.

In his study, Tsui (in Liu, 2001, p. 43), find five factors that contribute toward the lack of student participation: (1) Students' low English proficiency; (2) The fear of making mistakes and being ridiculed by classmates; (3) Teachers intolerance of silence, which denying students' time for thinking; (4) Unequal speaking opportunities afforded each student by the teacher; and (5) Overly difficult teacher language input. This suggests that the class environment, students' personality traits, and learning styles used are very influential toward students' participation in the classroom. It is also important to consider that teachers have an influence on class participation through the method used in their teaching (Fassinger, 1995, p. 31).

In the previous researcher's internship or Teaching Practicum Programme (PPL) in a vocational highschool in Surakarta, five indicators of students low participation were observed: (1) very few students dared to comment or give opinions; (2) very few students asking questions; (3) very few students respond to teacher questions; (4) very few students able to keep their focus or worked seriously; and (5) very few students participating in the class discussion. These problems need to be dealt with accordingly as to not hamper students' participation and their English language learning and performance in the class.

Collaborative learning could be described as the activity of a group of students working together to achieve shared learning goals (Barkley, Cross, & Major, 2005, p. 4). It is based on the Lev Vygotsky's (1978) theories of learning. He stated that knowledge created from social interaction rather than just founded in nature. This means that the acquisition of both new and existing knowledge comes from the agreement and shared understanding of a topic through the interaction of different individuals with different level of knowledge (Caplow & Kardash, 1995, p. 208).

As a form of group learning, collaborative learning places its emphasis on each participant's resources and skills (knowledge sharing, peer-evaluation, and peer-reviewing) in working as a group instead of individually. It encourages students to become responsible for their teammates' learning as well as their own (Barkley et al, 2005, p. 10), while also gives more freedom on identifying both what they feel they needed to learn and how they will learn it (Caplow & Kardash, 1995, p. 208).

TPS learning technique is a collaborative learning technique (CoLT) developed by Frank Lyman and associates of the University of Maryland in 1981. It is a collaborative learning technique that encourages student classroom participation, particularly in helping students in forming individual ideas, sharing and discussing it with their peers. It was an improvement on the collaborative discussion with an emphasis on the individual understanding by providing students with a chance to think about a given topic by giving them the time to formulate their individual ideas and thought.

According to McTighe & Lyman (1988, p. 19), the TPS activity is divided into three stages: the thinking stages, pairing stages and sharing stages. Firstly, students will listen to a question or presentation then pausing for a bit to have time to think individually (Think), then they will talk with each other in pairs (Pair), and finally, students are giving responses by sharing their thought to the larger group (Share).

According to Rowe (1986, p. 44), giving students time to think and solve the problem individually would result in the use of better language and logic to enhance their responses. It also enables students to construct longer and more elaborate answers, better argumentation, responses, participation, and achievement (Butler, 2001, p. 259). Also, the “pair” and “share” step encourage learners to compare and contrast their understanding with those of another (Barkley et al, 2005, p. 104). It provides students with an opportunity to practice speaking in low-risk environment first before going public with the whole class therefore improving the quality of students’ contributions and increase the willingness and readiness to speak.

According to Allen (2007, p. 120), TPS advantages compared to other technique are: provides students with think time prior to discuss, allows for independent and collaborative learning, gives students opportunities to collaborate to refine definitions, invites more equal participation as all students share with one other and then with another pair of students, engage students in active learning, and invites students to share their understanding in kinesthetic and visual modes.

Based on these past studies and literature, it can be conclusively proven that TPS technique is able to improve students’ participation. Therefore, the researcher conducted this research with the aims to test this hypothesis.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, Classroom Action Research (CAR) was used as the research method. Action research could be simply described as “the study of a social situation with the view to improving the quality of the action in it” (Elliott in Burns, 2010, p. 5). According to Burns (2010, p.2), action research involves taking a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring teachers’ teaching contexts. Action research is a way to evaluate ones practice by investigate and explore their own context by taking part in it, identify about the problem that arises among the participant, and intervene deliberately in the problematic situation to bring about changes and, even better, improvements in practice. In other words, CAR is a research method that evaluates the current practice to improve the quality of the practice.

Kemmis and McTaggart (in Burns 2010, p. 8) explain the four broad phases in a cycle of action research. Those four phases are: Planning, Action, Observing, and Reflection. Every research cycles usually

consisted of these four phases. Also, the first cycle may become a continuing, or iterative, spiral of cycles which recur until the action researcher has achieved a satisfactory outcome and feels it is time to stop.

This research took place in a vocational highschool in Surakarta. The subjects were taken from tenth grade student from DPIB B class which consists of 36 students. The research was carried out on February-April 2019 with the TPS implementations as discussion technique delivered on a weekly basis in order to improve the students learning participation.

In this research, the data were collected in both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative research data from this research were analyzed using qualitative technique provided by Burns (2010, p.104-105), while quantitative data was presented by comparison of mean score from the result of observation in the pre-research, cycle 1, and cycle 2.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings and the analysis of the data proved that the use of TPS teaching technique was able to improve the participation of the students during the classroom activities. Students were actively involved in class activities and discussions and able to speak confidently when asking questions or presenting their works.

Before implementing CAR, the researcher conducted pre-research activities during PPL in order to gather data about the class conditions. The interview with the teacher revealed that the X DPIB B class was rather poor in terms of students' participation. Students were generally passive and rarely made significant interactions during the class while being very reliant on teacher's instructions to participate. The observation and

questionnaire results confirm the low students' participation in the class. Students very rarely interacted with the teachers, they were shy in asking questions to the teacher and would rather have a chat with their classmates during the lesson.

During the first implementation cycle, the researcher observed a slight increase in the students' participation. Students were mostly willing to do group discussion activities. However, there were still a large number of passive and unmotivated students who did the presented task half-heartedly. Many students were more interested in talking out-of-topic with their friends instead of listening to the lesson or doing the task given, although this also made them more interested in the group discussion. Interestingly, during the second meeting's activity "*The Class Extraordinaire*", the students seemed to be overenthusiastic in speaking their opinion that it instead became too noisy and caused troubles.

The major difficulty observed during this cycle was the unfamiliarity of students with the technique used. Even though explanations were already given to them, including the steps and information about the activities they would do, many students still made mistakes. As a result, it took a lot more work to guide students' in doing the activity. The common mistakes that students made included: using the wrong comparison, forgetting the comparative or superlative form of the certain verb. While other mistakes, such as wrong tenses or improper grammars were more grammatical in nature. Even so, this activity did make students became more active in searching for information and asking more questions during the class.

Another problem that has been observed was students' difficulty in expressing their

idea and opinion. While students were not really shy, they were still afraid of making mistakes. In addition, their vocabulary and grammar mastery was low, which made speaking English a gruelling task for them. Fortunately, the implementation of group discussion did help alleviate this problem. Group discussion gave students more freedom in delivering their thought and exchanging ideas with other students. It provided stimulus to them in developing ideas and provide a comfortable environment in which they can improve their confidence.

During the second implementation, it has been found that students' participation has been improved. Their class participation was increasing with many students participating in the class activity, asking and answering teacher questions, and able to speak confidently. The ice-breaking activity was able to grab their attention and train their concentration. It also helped shape a more comfortable learning environment in the class by making students get a lot of fun in doing this activity.

The students' improved familiarity with the TPS technique also made them able

to follow the instructions more clearly and was able to complete their task without too much issue. There was less confusion during the activities and students become more excited in doing group discussion.

The problems of students' difficulty in expressing their ideas and opinion also became less severe during this second implementation. Most of them were confident in sharing their work to the class and were less afraid of making mistakes. Almost all students were participating in the group discussion, they seemed to enjoy in discussing the task with their friends and answering the worksheet together. When asked to share their work to the class many of them were able to voluntarily participate and performing well in presenting the result of their discussion.

In terms of sentence building and grammar, students were made far less error and overall getting better at making good sentences. However, some students were still shy and needed to be "pushed" in order to participate, despite many of them were able to voluntarily participate and excited in performing their task.

Tabel 1. Students' Score of Participation

	Mean	Percentage
Pre-research	4,47	13%
Cycle 1	15,5	48%
Cycle 2	20,1	59%

The findings of this research confirmed the previously mentioned theory that TPS technique is able to improve the participation of the students. The TPS implementation of think phase confirmed Rowe (1986, p. 44) theory of "thinking time". By giving students ample time to

think before making responses, students were able to collect their ideas and construct better quality responses and did it with good confidence. It also provided students with a chance to construct their thought individually before the discussion.

However, the most significant part of this method in improving students' participation was in the pair and share phase, where their group working will be tested. In this stage, the students' involvement in discussion plays a major role in increasing their participation and improving their confidence in speaking. This is in line with McTighe & Lyman (1981, p. 19) theory of the use of TPS to promote verbal interaction, students' positive attitude, and achievement. It also gives students a sense of accountability and interdependency between themselves, which will affect their quality of participation.

In addition, the "compare and contrast" from Barkley et al. (2005, p. 104) encourage students to compare their understanding with their classmates about the materials. The discussion also provides students with the opportunity to practice speaking in low-risk environment, which improved their quality of contributions and increase the willingness and readiness to speak.

The last stage, the share stage, students are challenged to shared their work or discussion result for the others to give their opinion and suggestion. This sharing stage test students of their confidence as well as give them new ideas that they didn't explore before. In summary, TPS technique provides students with stimulating learning activities and simulating authentic atmosphere of learning in class. The implementation of TPS gave benefits toward the class interaction and as the result improved the participation of the students.

The Challenges during the Implementation of TPS.

There were many challenges that researcher faced during the implementation of TPS in the classroom. Some of them are: the familiarity of the technique to the

students, the students' readiness in receiving the lesson, teacher's control of the class, students' difficulty in expressing their opinion and ideas, students' lack of confidence in speaking to the class, students' low grammar mastery and lack of vocabulary.

Despite the occasional use of discussion in the learning process before, this implementation was the first time for the students. As a result, students needed some time to get full understanding of the activity and teacher needed to do extra work to guide students' during the activity. For this reason, it is important for the teacher to plan ahead the teaching activity in order to effectively use this technique. Teacher also needs to provide students with some example first to provide them with a good starting point in doing the activity.

The TPS, as collaborative technique, aimed to create a learning environment in which students interact with each other. As such, it is important for the teacher to establish the interactivity upfront in the classroom, in order to improve their readiness in receiving the lesson (Barkley et al, 2005, p. 30). For this reason, teacher may use ice-breaking activity to provide class members with an opportunity to interact and get to know each other. This activity is also useful for ease the tensions and awkwardness of initial phases, helping students develop feelings of comfort. Care need to be taken however, as this activity may take some time from the main course thus teacher need to be wise in spending time with this kind of activities. During the implementation of TPS activities, teacher should be able to keep the control of the class. As a group discussion learning strategy, the students will need to do the task independent from the teacher. Thus, the teacher's job is to ensure the order of the

class and to provide guidance to working groups.

Another challenge that happened during the research was students' difficulty in expressing their idea and opinion. This problem was affected by two factors: students' confidence and grammar mastery. While students were not really shy, many of them were still afraid in making mistakes. They were afraid of being ridiculed by their friends, especially when they needed to do presentations in front of the class. This is in line with Liu (2001, p. 73), who stated that students' confidence may affect their level of interaction and participation during the learning process. In addition, their low vocabulary and grammar mastery also contributed to their low confidence, which often made them reluctant to share their works to the class.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this research presented the fact that Think Pair Share improved the students' class participation. Thus, this research implied that Think Pair Share is an effective technique in improving students' participation in English language learning. TPS provides students with "thinking time" where will have opportunity to construct the knowledge on their own as well as giving them ample time to structure and reassess their responses.

Moreover, TPS also offers collaborative learning in the form of group discussion, which promotes students involvement and verbal interaction in both among students and with the teacher. As a result, by using TPS, students are encouraged in critical thinking, forming individual ideas, doing group discussion and sharing their thoughts with the others.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results of the research, the researcher drew two conclusions from the findings of the research: the first conclusion is the use of TPS was successful in improving students' participation in on a vocational highschool in Surakarta. There are significant participation improvements observed on students during the class activities, such as: (1) the increase in the number of students asking and answering questions; (2) the increase in number of students' interaction during the class; (3) the increase in number of students paying their attention during the class; (4) the increase in number of students interacting during group discussion; and (5) the increase in number of students speaking in front of the class.

The second conclusion is that there are some challenges related to the implementation of TPS during the research process: (1) the familiarity of the technique to the students; (2) teacher's control of the class; (3) students' readiness in receiving the lesson; (4) difficulty in expressing opinion and ideas; (5) lack of confidence in speaking; (6) low grammar mastery; and (7) lack of vocabulary.

Having finished conducting classroom action research to improve the students participation at the tenth grades of DPIB B class in a vocational highschool in Surakarta, the researcher would like to give some suggestions for the teachers, students, and other researchers: First, while TPS offers an alternative technique for the teacher in teaching English in the classroom, teacher still needs to make some preparation in order for TPS to be effective. For example, teacher should plan interesting English learning activity to increase the students' excitement during classroom learning. Giving suitable topic to be discussed in groups will be effective to foster their social skill and improve their

higher-level of thinking. It also helps to prepare the plan ahead as students would need some time to be familiar with the activity.

The students, on the other hand, need to understand the importance of English, not only as necessary subjects but also as worldwide language. By learning English, students will have global access to information from a wide range of sources and fields of expertise. Students also should not be shy and worried too much in making mistakes during the learning process, as practicing English regularly will improve their proficiency.

Last, to other researchers that may read this article, the researcher hopes that this research will be helpful as references for future research, especially in improving students learning participation.

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