



Students “Perceptions of Think-Pair-Share Technique in Promoting Students” Communication Skills in an EFL Context

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Abstract

Many students experience reluctance to speak in a foreign language due to anxiety and nervousness, which adversely affect their communication abilities. This study explores students' perspectives on the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) technique as a method to enhance oral communication skills in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select five participants based on their experiences with the TPS strategy. Data were collected through narrative frames and semi-structured in-depth interviews. The findings reveal that the TPS technique significantly enhances students' self-confidence and oral communication skills when English is used as the medium of discussion. Additionally, students found the TPS strategy beneficial for encouraging active participation, fostering collaborative learning, and providing opportunities for practice and feedback. Moreover, TPS was found to aid in developing critical thinking skills by encouraging students to engage in discussions and share knowledge through peer interactions. The study concludes that, for the TPS technique to be fully effective, careful implementation is required, taking into account its advantages and potential impacts on students. These findings suggest that TPS is a valuable instructional strategy that can create a supportive learning environment, enhancing both communication skills and overall classroom engagement in EFL settings.

Keywords: *Communication Skills; Students' Perspectives; Think-Pair-Share Technique*

Introduction

Communication skills are crucial for successfully learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). These skills not only enable students to express their ideas clearly but also facilitate interaction with others, which is fundamental to language acquisition. However, fostering these skills can be challenging in an EFL classroom due to issues such as lack of confidence, limited fluency, and low levels of active participation. In response to these challenges, educators have increasingly turned to active learning strategies designed to promote engagement and interaction among students.

The Think-Pair-Share technique, developed by Lyman (1981), is a collaborative learning strategy designed to encourage students to think critically, discuss ideas with peers, and articulate their thoughts in a group setting. The technique involves three key steps: first, students think individually about a given

question or topic; second, they pair up with a partner to discuss their thoughts; and finally, they share their ideas with the larger class. This structured approach to discussion allows students to reflect on their ideas and practice and enhance their communication skills in a supportive environment.

The TPS technique aims to provide students with multiple opportunities to practice and enhance their communication skills in a supportive environment. By structuring discussions in this way, TPS helps students build confidence and fluency while engaging in meaningful dialogues. However, the TPS technique has been widely researched and recognized for its benefits in enhancing students' communication skills. According to Slavin (1982) and Prasetya (2019), TPS promotes critical thinking and effective communication by involving students in both individual and collaborative tasks. Research indicates that TPS can significantly improve students' ability to articulate their thoughts, engage in discussions, and listen actively to others (Huh & Park (2012); Johnson & Smith (2014)). These improvements are crucial in an EFL context, where the ability to communicate clearly and confidently is essential for language development. Despite TPS being effective, it has challenges. Students may experience difficulties with confidence and fluency, which can impact their participation in the Think and Share stages of TPS (Nurani, 2021). Additionally, some students may need help with the collaborative aspect of TPS if they have varying levels of proficiency or differing communication styles (Sipayung, 2018). Addressing these challenges requires careful implementation of TPS and consideration of students' individual needs and backgrounds.

However, research on students' perceptions of TPS, particularly in EFL contexts, is limited. Understanding how students perceive the effectiveness of TPS can provide valuable insights into its impact on communication skills and overall language learning. Studies by Gillies (2016) and other researchers have shown that students often appreciate TPS for its structured approach to discussion and its role in fostering collaborative learning (Sharma & Priyamvada, 2018). However, there is a need for further investigation into how students' attitudes and experiences with TPS influence their motivation and engagement in learning English.

This study explores students' perceptions of the Think-Pair-Share technique in enhancing their communication skills in an EFL classroom. By examining how students view the use of TPS, this research seeks to provide a deeper understanding of its impact on their ability to communicate effectively in English. The findings of this study will offer practical implications for educators seeking to implement active learning strategies in their teaching practices and contribute to the ongoing discourse on the role of collaborative learning in language education.

Method

This study employed qualitative research methods to explore students' perceptions of the Think-Pair-Share Technique in Promoting Students' Communication Skills. The research targeted five eleventh-grade students from SMA Negeri Unggul Subulussalam in Aceh, Indonesia, during the 2023/2024 academic year. A purposive sampling method was employed to select participants who had prior experience with the TPS strategy in their language learning classes. The researcher gathered students to ask about their familiarity and experiences with the TPS teaching strategy. This approach ensured that the study focused on participants who could provide relevant and informed perspectives on the use of TPS in their education.

An interview checklist was used as the research instrument to gather insights into the students' perspectives and experiences (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The benefit of using an interview checklist was that it ensured all prepared questions were addressed and helped maintain the interview flow. The questions focused on the students' opinions regarding using TPS teaching strategies. The interviews, which lasted 10 to 15 minutes, were conducted in Indonesian to accommodate the students' native language and prevent misunderstandings that could arise from using English. Through these interviews,

the researcher aimed to answer two primary research questions: (1) What is the possible impact of the Think-Pair-Share technique in promoting students' communication skills in an EFL context? (2) What are the students' perspectives on using the Think-Pair-Share technique in the classroom?

Data Analysis

The researcher utilized the interactive data analysis model proposed by Miles et al. (2019) and Creswell (2014), to examine the acquired data, which comprises four crucial stages. The first stage involved gathering data through interviews and categorizing it according to the research questions. During the data reduction stage, the researchers refined, categorized, filtered, and eliminated extraneous data to facilitate reaching and confirming conclusions. Relevant data were retained for further analysis in line with the research objectives, while irrelevant data were discarded. The outcome of this data reduction process was a summarized compilation of collected data, including initial notes, extensions, or additions.

Following data reduction, the next stage involved presenting and organizing the data to facilitate the drawing of research conclusions. In this study, descriptive formats were predominantly employed for data presentation, consistent with the approach outlined by Miles et al. (2019). The final stage of the data analysis process was drawing conclusions, where the researchers synthesized the organized data to provide meaningful insights and answers to the research questions.

Result and Discussion

Result

Research question 1: What is the possible impact of the Think-Pair-Share technique on students' oral communication skills?

Related to the research questions, the interview results identified several possible impacts of using the Think-Pair-Share teaching strategy on students' communication skills. Table 1 illustrates the themes related to the potential impact of the Think-Pair-Share teaching strategy on students' communication skills.

Table 1. The Themes on the Possible Impact of the Think-Pair-Share Technique on the Students' Communication Skills

Theme	Descriptions
1.	The Think-Pair-Share technique can enhance students' self-confidence.
2.	Students' communication will improve if they actively use English during discussions with their partners in the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) technique.

Theme 1 in Table 1 indicates that the Think-Pair-Share technique can help students' communication skills to express their thoughts more clearly and confidently, thereby gradually improving their overall oral communication abilities. However, some students may feel it does not directly improve their communication skills. For example, the interviewee said that.

"I believe the Think-Pair-Share technique helps to enhance my self-confidence. When I get to discuss my thoughts with a partner first, it makes me feel more prepared to share with the whole class."
(Student 2)

Other students supported agree that the Think-Pair-Share teaching technique helped students' increase their confidence. They mentioned that the technique could reduce their hesitation when speaking in front of the class. For instance, two students mentioned,

"Before using the Think-Pair-Share technique, I often felt nervous and unsure about speaking in front of my classmates. However, after participating in this activity, I feel more comfortable and confident sharing my thoughts aloud." (Students 1)

"When we are given time to think individually and then discuss our ideas with a partner, I feel less pressure and more comfortable speaking up. It makes me more confident in sharing my thoughts with the whole class." (Students 5)

Theme 2 of this study explored students' engagement with the Think-Pair-Share strategy in enhancing their oral communication skills, particularly when English is actively used as the medium for pair discussions. The findings indicated that implementing this strategy generally positively improved students' activeness in participating in discussions and enhancing their oral communication skills. However, during an interview with some students, it was noted that they were not very active in discussions or collaborative activities with their peers and groups. This lack of participation was attributed to the information's difficulty conveying ideas, as highlighted in the following excerpt:

"I find it challenging to express my thoughts clearly in English, so I tend to stay quiet during discussions and prefer listening to others." (Student 4)

"I find it difficult to express my ideas during the pair discussion because I seldom use English during these opportunities and prefer to use Indonesian." (Students 3)

Furthermore, Think-Pair-Share technique did not impact students' communication skills for certain reasons. One reason was that students often switched to Bahasa Indonesia during pair discussions. Another reason was that the members of the pairs needed to be more actively engaged in the discussion process. These factors might contribute to the Think-Pair-Share strategy needing to be more effective. Students believed that if English were used exclusively as the medium of discussion, the strategy could be more effective, as reflected in the following excerpts:

"Sometimes, during pair discussions, I end up speaking in Bahasa Indonesia instead of English. This switch makes it hard to practice and improve my English communication skills. If I used English exclusively during these discussions, I think it would help me get better." (Student 4)

"I am more comfortable using Indonesian because it's my mother tongue. Additionally, I have issues with vocabulary and lack confidence in using English, so I end up using Indonesian rather than English." (Students 3)

Despite these challenges, some students recognized the benefits of the Think-Pair-Share technique in communication skills. They noted that the strategy improved their confidence and communication skills by providing opportunities to discuss and refine ideas with peers before presenting them to the class. This process helped them feel more prepared and articulate when speaking to others. Below is an excerpt from the interview script:

"Using the Think-Pair-Share technique has really helped me with my communication skills. When we discuss topics in pairs before sharing with the class, I feel more prepared and confident." (Students 1)

"Using the Think-Pair-Share technique has been really beneficial for my communication skills. I feel more confident speaking in front of the class after discussing my ideas with a partner first. It helps me clarify my thoughts and improve how I express myself. The process of talking things through with someone else makes me more comfortable sharing with the entire class." (Student2)

Therefore, the TPS strategy shows promise in fostering better communication skills; its

effectiveness can be enhanced by ensuring that English is consistently used during discussions and promoting more active engagement among all participants.

Research question 2: What are the students' perspectives on using the Think-Pair-Share technique in the classroom?

The study explores students' perceptions of the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) technique as an enhancement to their communication skills. Through qualitative analysis, three key themes emerged from students' perceptions of the TPS technique, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. The Themes of Students' Perceptions of the Think-Pair-Share Technique

Theme	Descriptions
3.	The Think-Pair-Share technique can encourage students' active participation in the classroom.
4.	The Think-Pair-Share technique can foster students' collaborative learning.
5.	The Think-Pair-Share technique provide students more opportunities for practice and feedback.

In theme 3, the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) technique is an instructional strategy designed to foster active participation in the classroom. This approach involves individual thinking, partner discussions, and sharing with the entire class. By structuring interactions in this way, TPS engages students in a dynamic learning environment where each student can actively participate and express their ideas. This method encourages deeper thinking and allows every student to contribute to class discussions, which is particularly beneficial in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Active participation in EFL classes is crucial as it significantly influences language acquisition and enhances communication skills.

The effectiveness of TPS in promoting active participation can be seen in the experiences shared by students. For example, one student mentioned,

"I get more opportunities to think independently and collaborate with my friends on the topics and ideas being discussed." (Student 3)

This reflects how TPS promotes individual reflection and facilitates collaborative learning, helping students engage more deeply with the material. Another student shared also highlights how TPS can reduce the anxiety associated with speaking in front of a large group, making it easier for students to participate and express their thoughts. This way, TPS helps create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment where all students feel encouraged to engage actively.

As Student 4 mentioned, speaking in front of the entire class can be intimidating, especially for those who are shy or need more confidence. TPS reduces this anxiety by allowing students to discuss their thoughts in pairs. Speaking to just one person or a small group is more manageable than addressing a larger audience. This smaller, more intimate setting provides a safe space for students to express their ideas without fearing being judged by a large group.

"I used to be shy about speaking up in class, but TPS has helped me a lot. When we pair up and discuss with someone, it is less intimidating than speaking in front of everyone. I find it easier to participate and contribute to the class discussion." (Student 4)

Student 1's agreement with Student 4's perception highlights a vital benefit of the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) technique: its ability to foster collaboration among students. By encouraging dialogue and shared thinking, TPS creates a learning environment where collaboration is not only encouraged but is an integral part of the learning process.

"I find it hard to think on my feet when the teacher asks a question in front of the whole class. TPS

gives me a chance to gather my thoughts before I have to say anything. It is really helpful because I do not feel put on the spot, and I can share my ideas more clearly after have talked them over with a partner." (Student 1)

Furthermore, collaborative learning is a critical component of adequate education, and the Think-Pair-Share technique is designed to facilitate this process. By encouraging students to discuss their ideas with peers before sharing them with the entire class, TPS fosters a collaborative environment where students learn from each other. This method enhances understanding through peer interaction and builds teamwork skills and collective problem-solving abilities. In an EFL setting, collaboration is essential for developing communication skills and supporting each other's language learning journey. Student 1 highlights the benefit of TPS in providing immediate feedback and more opportunities to practice language skills. This reflection shows how discussing ideas with peers allows for continuous improvement in communication, which is crucial in an EFL setting.

"It is also great that the Think-Pair-Share technique provides me with more opportunities for practice and feedback. I can get immediate feedback and refine my thinking by talking through my ideas with others, which helps me become a better communicator." (Students 1)

"The TPS technique has really improved how I collaborate with others. When we work in pairs, I get to hear different perspectives and ideas. It is great because it helps me see things from a new angle and also share my own thoughts with someone else." (Student 2)

Student 5's comment emphasizes how the preliminary partner discussions in TPS make group discussions more productive. By ensuring mutual understanding before presenting to the larger group, students feel more prepared and confident, which leads to richer and more meaningful class discussions.

"Working with a partner before sharing with the class makes our group discussions more meaningful. We help each other understand the topic better and make sure we are both on the same page before presenting to the whole class." (Student 5)

These reflections show that TPS helps students engage more deeply with the material and promotes a sense of collaboration and community within the classroom. By requiring students to work together and discuss their thoughts, TPS encourages peer-to-peer interaction and supports the development of strong, collaborative relationships among classmates. This collaborative environment enhances the learning experience and helps students feel more connected and supported.

In theme 5 showed that the Think-Pair-Share technique is that it offers students multiple opportunities to practice and receive feedback on their ideas. By engaging in individual reflection, paired discussions, and class-wide sharing, students can refine their thoughts and improve their communication skills. This iterative process allows for continuous practice and constructive feedback, which are vital for language development and overall learning enhancement.

"I find the feedback part really useful. When I share my thoughts with my partner, they might suggest new ideas or corrections. And when we share with the whole class, I get more feedback which helps me understand the topic better and improve my language skills." (Student 3)

TPS allows students to engage with the material on different levels, starting with individual reflection, where they formulate their initial thoughts. This personal engagement helps students internalize the content and prepare their ideas for discussion. Student 1's reflection underscores the value of having multiple opportunities to practice and refine their answers. The iterative nature of TPS, where students think individually, discuss in pairs, and then share with the class, helps students to develop their ideas progressively. This repeated practice is crucial for improving both content understanding and communication skills. It is shown in the script.

"TPS gives me a chance to practice my answers multiple times. First, I think about the question by myself, then I discuss it with my partner, and finally, I get feedback from the class. This helps me see where I might improve and refine my ideas." (Student 1)

These reflections illustrate that TPS not only facilitates active engagement with the material but also provides a structured environment for continuous practice and constructive feedback. This approach helps students develop a deeper understanding of the content, enhances their language skills, and builds their confidence in expressing their ideas. By offering multiple opportunities for practice and feedback, TPS supports a more dynamic and effective learning experience, particularly in language learning settings where these elements are vital for success.

Discussion

The findings of the interviews revealed five themes: 1) The Think-Pair-Share technique can enhance students' self-confidence; 2) Students' communication will improve if they actively use English during discussions with their partners in the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) technique; 3) The Think-Pair-Share technique can encourage students' active participation in the classroom; 4) The Think-Pair-Share technique can foster students' collaborative learning, and; 5) The Think-Pair-Share technique provide students more opportunities for practice and feedback.

One of the most significant outcomes of the study is that the TPS technique can significantly boost students' self-confidence. It aligns with previous research by Bunaya & Baskin (2019), Afifah (2017), and Namaziandost, Homayouni, & Rahmani (2020), which also indicated that TPS effectively increases students' motivation and self-confidence. Additionally, Sharma and Priyamvada (2018) found that increased self-confidence is crucial for students' active participation and engagement in the classroom. When students feel more confident, they are more likely to participate actively, contributing to a more dynamic and engaging learning environment.

The study also found that students' communication skills improve when they actively use English during discussions with their partners in the TPS technique. This improvement is attributed to the structured nature of TPS, which involves individual reflection, partner discussions, and class-wide sharing. Al-Tamimi and Attamimi (2014) and HiUsma (2015) highlight that this technique encourages active participation, allowing students to think independently, articulate their thoughts in a low-pressure setting, and share their ideas with the class. This structure fosters a dynamic learning environment where students feel more comfortable expressing their ideas, which is particularly beneficial in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context (Permana & Al-Manar, 2021). The TPS technique encourages active participation by engaging students through its three-step process. The research confirms that students feel more motivated to engage in discussions, contributing to a more collaborative and interactive classroom environment. This finding supports the notion that active participation is crucial for language learning, as it allows students to practice and refine their language skills in real time.

The technique also enhances collaborative learning by promoting peer-to-peer interactions and discussions. Rathakrishnan et al. (2020) emphasize that the collaborative nature of TPS helps build teamwork skills and fosters a sense of community and mutual support within the classroom, which is vital for effective language learning. Students benefit from their peers' diverse perspectives, helping them see topics from different angles and develop a deeper understanding. This peer interaction not only enhances knowledge but also contributes to the development of communication skills.

Moreover, TPS provides multiple opportunities for students to practice their language skills and receive feedback. According to Nasir (2018), the iterative process of thinking, discussing, and sharing allows students to refine their ideas and continuously improve their communication skills. This structured feedback loop is essential for language development, helping students build confidence and competence

in expressing themselves. Aeni (2020) also found that TPS motivates students to speak up and engage in discussions, which further reinforces the importance of practice and feedback in language learning. Additionally, according to Raman et al. (2019), the TPS technique aids in developing students' critical thinking skills in speaking classes. The findings suggest that students feel encouraged to speak up and engage in discussions, even if their answers are brief. This technique has given students increased confidence in facilitating their knowledge sharing and improving their speaking skills through peer interactions. Phan (2021) noted that the 'pairing' step allows students to exchange ideas, relax, and speak English without hesitation, further enhancing their oral production and self-confidence.

Therefore, the Think-Pair-Share technique is a valuable instructional strategy in EFL classrooms, as it actively engages students, fosters collaboration, and supports continuous practice and feedback. This combination enhances the learning experience and contributes to the development of solid communication skills and a supportive learning environment. This study's findings highlight the potential of TPS to not only improve language skills but also build a more confident and motivated group of learners.

Conclusion

The Think-Pair-Share technique is a valuable instructional strategy in the EFL classroom, as it improves students' self-confidence, encourages active participation, fosters collaborative learning, and provides opportunities for practice and feedback. By structuring classroom interactions in a way that supports individual reflection, paired discussions, and class-wide sharing, TPS creates a dynamic and inclusive learning environment that enhances students' communication skills and overall learning experience. The positive perceptions shared by the students in this study indicate that TPS is an effective method for promoting engagement, collaboration, and language development in the classroom. These indicate that students were highly engaged with the teaching and learning process in the classroom. The Think-Pair-Share technique effectively promoted students' communication skills in an EFL context.

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