

IMPROVING STUDENT'S SPEAKING SKILL THROUGH TALKING CHIPS STRATEGY: A PILOT STUDY

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In English, there are five essential speaking's aspects that need to be mastered by English learners such as content, fluency, coherence, grammar, and pronunciation. Unfortunately, it is difficult to be reached by EFL students. Due to this, the English teachers are required to find appropriate teaching strategies to help EFL students improve their speaking skills. The aims of this study were 1) to develop the implementation of the talking chips strategy in teaching speaking skills, 2) to improve student's speaking skills through the talking chips strategy. The results showed that there was an improvement in students' speaking skills after implementing the talking chips strategy. It was proven by the significant different scores of students' speaking skills between cycle 1 and cycle 2.

Keywords: EFL, Talking Chips Strategy, Speaking Skill

INTRODUCTION

The role of English as a lingua franca makes English widely used by many people (Harmer, 2007). As one of the international languages, English has a crucial role in global information exchange. Therefore, English learning has been implementing since view past decades and it is widely applied in almost all countries in the world. By learning this language, people are expected can receive and understand the meaning of the information they receive well. Furthermore, learning English takes a lot of practice as a foreign language because English can only be acquired when learners use it as often as possible. It is stated that people will not be able to master any language if they never use the language in their daily practice (Rahayu & Putri, 2019). Therefore, learning English must become a habit that needs to be conducted by English language learners to achieve maximum results. Besides, several aspects like learning sources, teaching media, and self-awareness of foreign language learners become crucial to support English learning success.

In Indonesia, English is taught as a compulsory subject from secondary level up to the university level. Standing as a foreign language makes English becomes a new language as well as a difficult language to be learned. Thus, not all processes of learning the language are always working well because there are some challenges or obstacles that occur during the process. Most English learning obstacles are found in non-English speaking countries. In those countries, the potential challenge of English learning might be bigger than in English-speaking countries. According to Thompson (2014), learners' ability, learning environment, the frequency of practising English and previous knowledge of learning a foreign language are the factors that can affect the English learning process. Moreover, Tappendorf as cited in Hibatullah (2019) stated that linguistic differences like the difference of phonology, word order, phrases, and the verbal system can also affect the process of language learning. Considering these factors, educators especially EFL teachers are expected to figure out the best method and strategy

that can be implemented in their classroom. The term best here is not merely about the superior or the newest method or strategy, but it tends as a method or strategy which is appropriate to students' learning environment and condition, students' language skill and their ability. Therefore, EFL teachers behave to recognize who their students are, how this student learning environment and also what these students need to find appropriate strategies. By implementing appropriate learning methods or strategies, the English teacher has directly contributed to helping English language learners in improving their language skills.

Among the four language skills, English speaking seems intuitive to be the most important skill compared to the others (Ur, 1996). As noted by Graddol (2006), the use of English as a tool for international communication has been continuing for several decades. Luoma (2004) in his research viewed that speaking skills become the most crucial skill because the ability to speak a language reflects a person's personality, self-image, knowledge of the world, ability to reason, skill to express thoughts in real-time. Due to its important role, learning English in Indonesia is generally focused on improving students' speaking skills rather than listening, reading and writing skills. This is proven by the oral presentation activities (carried out by individuals or groups) that have emerged and have dominated almost the class activity. Unfortunately, although this activity dominates most of the classes, most EFL students still have some obstacles in improving their speaking skills.

The importance of speaking competence for foreign language communication has been underlined for decades, however, many studies have shown that EFL learners find it challenging to speak a foreign language. Zhang (2009) indicated some obstacles of

EFL students when giving a speech in speaking class such as worries about making mistakes, fears for criticism, or shyness. In addition, he also suggested that low or uneven participation was a problem in a speaking course. In another study, Haidara (2014) showed that most EFL students who had learned English for many years had some psychological barriers like being anxious, being nervous, being worried about making mistakes, feeling shy, and feeling frustrated while presenting their monologue or dialogue in front of the class. In Indonesia, Lukitasari (2008) found that the learners revealed speaking difficulties such as inhibition or nothing to say, due to not being able to master three elements of speaking namely vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. Based on previous studies, it can be concluded that EFL students from various countries have encountered a similar problem. If so, how could we overcome these obstacles? One of the answers is by finding effective speaking strategies to motivate EFL students to become more active and creative in speaking.

Numerous studies have discussed the types of strategies used in English language teaching. One of them is the Talking Chips strategy. This strategy is a kind of cooperative strategy that can improve students' cooperativeness to work among the group members and also improve their speaking skills. Besides, this technique is considered as a student-centred learning model that is suitable to occupy a central position as learning subjects through the activity of searching for and finding their subject matter. Due to these advantages, this study is intended to figure out the effect of the Talking Chips strategy on improving students' speaking skills.

Talking chips is a kind of cooperative learning strategy. According to Kagan and Kagan (2010), Talking Chips is one of the strategies in teaching speaking that can provide language

students work in a group. This kind of strategy can be used to get more balanced participation among team members and ensure that all members have equal opportunities to participate. In its application, the English teacher distributes all chips equally among the team members (each pupil get 2 chips). When a team member contributes an idea, the member has put the chip in the centre of the table. When all of the chips are used up, the member may not offer any more ideas until others have used their chips. Then the chips are redistributed and a new round begins. Through this strategy, it is expected that students can work and support each other as well as practice their problem-solving strategies.

In implementing the Talking Chips strategy, some steps need to be conducted by the teacher. Kagan (1992) mentioned five steps in Talking Chips those are: 1) each member in the group was given 4-5 cards. 2) all the group members discussed the topic that given by the teacher as well find out the problem solving based on the case given 3) students who liked to deliver their idea needed to raise their card and then placed the card on the table of their group. However, they need to wait until the previous speaker finished his speaking 4) when none of the cards left or all cards were used, the teammates collected all their cards and continued the discussion using their Talking Chips 5) the teacher gave score based on the time and the speaking skill aspects, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency. Based on these step, it can be seen that this strategy provide similar chance or opportunity to each student to present their point of view. This kind of thing might be difficult to find in regular and huge classes where there are a lot of students involved in the teaching and learning process. A classroom that consists of a huge number of students will make teachers difficult in controlling their students' language skills progression, especially in speaking skills.

Thus, the Talking Chips strategy is considered as one of the appropriate strategies to improve students speaking skills.

Despite its advantages, the Talking Chip strategy also has several disadvantages in its application. Gray (2010) pointed out several disadvantages of this strategy. They stated that since the procedure controls participation, this strategy can affect the natural flow of conversation. Moreover, this situation makes the discussion feel stilted and artificial. Besides, time management during preparation and implementation needs to be considered to increase the learning quality, especially in the process of forming students' knowledge. The last is the talking chips model requires quite difficult preparation. Considering these disadvantages, the teacher must be creative and be aware in planning and applying this strategy so that the primary goal of the learning can be achieved.

METHOD

A Classroom Action Research (CAR) was conducted in this study. Two cycles consisted of four steps (in each cycle) of the typical action research model such as planning, acting, observing and reflecting that have been implemented in this study. This research was conducted at SMP Negeri Alok Maumere for three weeks. The participants in this research were 20 students of seven grades of SMP Negeri Alok Maumere. Furthermore, the instruments which were used in this research such as observation sheets, field notes, and speaking tests. The use of observation sheets and field notes in this research was to observe and list all the activities conducted by students along with the research. In this research, two types of tests implemented to gain data from students speaking skills; the pre-test and the post-test. The pre-test was conducted to know students' speaking proficiency or

abilities before implementing the Talking Chips strategy, while the post-test was given at the end of implementing the strategy.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Pre-test

The pre-test was conducted as an initial stage. As mentioned previously, this test was given before implementing the talking chips strategy to know students current speaking ability. The form of this test was an impromptu speech. To avoid losing some crucial data, a camera was placed in the classroom to record all the students' presentations. Based on data collected, the researcher found that there was some students not able to speak English well.

Table 1. The Result of Pre-Test

Students	Criterion					Total	Score
	Pronoun	Grammar	Vocab.	Fluency	Compre-hension		
1	4	4	4	4	3	19	76
2	2	3	1	2	2	10	40
3	3	2	2	2	1	10	40
4	1	1	2	2	4	10	40
5	1	2	2	1	1	7	28
6	4	3	4	4	4	19	76
7	4	3	4	4	4	19	76
8	2	2	3	2	2	11	44
9	1	1	1	3	2	8	32
10	2	3	2	2	2	11	44
11	3	3	3	3	1	13	52
12	2	1	3	4	1	11	44
13	4	3	2	3	3	15	60
14	3	3	4	2	1	13	52
15	4	4	4	4	4	20	80
16	3	2	2	3	4	14	56
17	4	3	4	4	4	19	76
18	1	1	3	1	2	8	32
19	2	3	4	2	3	14	56
20	3	3	4	4	4	18	72
Total						1076	
Mean						53,8	
Class Percentage						25	

Based on the data obtained, it was found that, from 20 participants, there were only 5 students who passed the minimum mastery criteria (KKM). This result automatically affected the score of the class percentage that was only 0, 25 %. It might be concluded that those students had low speaking skill before the

implementation of the Talking Chips strategy.

Cycle One

This cycle was conducted followed the four steps based on the action research model namely planning, acting, observing and reflecting. The planning section began with preparing some lesson plans, materials and instruments used during the class. Come to the next step was acting. In this step, the researcher conducted three times meetings. At the first meeting, the students were given a topic to be discussed. The strategy of Talking Chips was applied in this meeting. The teacher observed the students' activity as well their speaking performance and their cooperativeness to work in a group. In this meeting, the research did not apply the speaking test. The second meeting began with reviewing the previous material given at the last meeting. Then, the students were given the post-test The talking chip was applied in this situation to measure students understanding of how to use Talking Chips and their rules step by step. They learned and helped each other, and some students show their interest to speak English and be brave to answer the questions. The result of the posttest on this cycle can be seen in the following table.

Table 2. The Result of Post-test in Cycle One

Students	Criterion					Total	Score
	Pronoun	Grammar	Vocab.	Fluency	Compre-hension		
1	4	3	4	4	4	19	76
2	2	3	1	2	2	10	40
3	3	2	2	2	1	10	40
4	1	1	1	1	2	6	24
5	1	1	1	1	1	5	20
6	4	3	4	4	4	19	76
7	2	2	2	3	3	12	48
8	2	2	2	1	2	9	36
9	1	1	1	1	1	5	20
10	1	1	1	1	1	5	20
11	2	1	1	1	2	7	28
12	2	1	3	2	1	9	36
13	1	1	2	2	1	7	28

14	1	2	2	2	1	8	32
15	2	3	2	2	2	11	44
16	2	2	2	3	4	13	52
17	2	3	3	3	3	14	56
18	1	1	2	1	3	8	32
19	2	2	2	2	3	11	44
20	2	2	2	2	2	10	40
Total							792
Mean							39,6
Class Percentage							10

Based on the data obtained it can be seen that there were only 2 students who passed the KKM. The class percentage was only 39.6 %. Compared to the previous test, the score of the post-test was lower than the pre-test. It could be concluded that the Talking Chip strategy failed to improve students' speaking skills on cycle one.

To observe the students' responses during the teaching and learning process, the researcher used the observation sheets. The aspects to be observed were students readiness faced the lesson, students' response to the implementation of talking chips, students' attention during the class activity, students' understanding of the rules of talking chips, students' participation in conducting the exercise, asking and answer the question, and students' feedback on what they got in talking chips strategy. On this cycle, the researcher found that the students were ready to follow the lesson. They showed their interest to learn the material given. Unfortunately, other aspects did not show a similar result. Students were confused to follow the instruction or steps given by the research thus the process could not be going well. They also find it difficult to speak and felt intimidated during the implementation of the talking chip strategy. The intimidation occurred when other group members forced them to speak fluently when they were not ready enough to speak or out of vocabulary. To conclude, the talking chip strategy was not going well in this cycle.

The reflection section followed the observation section. In this section, the researcher pointed out several weaknesses that were founded during talking chips implementation. The weaknesses were unclear instruction, unbalance group distribution, and lack of time management. The reflecting phase indicated that the result of the observation and the post-test on cycle one was not successful yet in achieving the target of minimum mastery criteria, thus the researcher decided to continue to the next cycle.

Cycle Two

There were three meetings in this cycle as like as the previous cycle. In this cycle, the researcher tried to eliminate the weaknesses found in the previous cycle to get the better result of students speaking skills. Thus, all the research activities and material were planned perfectly in the planning section. After the planning section, the researcher conducted the acting section (three meetings were conducted in this section). Unlike the previous cycle, the test was only given at the third meeting. The result of the post-test can be seen in the following table.

Table 3. The Result of Post-test in cycle two.

Students	Criterion					Total	Score
	Pronoun	Grammar	Vocab.	Fluency	Compre hension		
1	4	5	4	4	5	22	88
2	4	4	3	4	4	19	76
3	4	3	4	3	2	16	64
4	3	4	4	4	3	18	72
5	3	4	3	4	4	18	72
6	4	4	4	4	5	21	84
7	4	4	3	4	5	20	80
8	3	4	3	4	4	18	72
9	4	4	4	4	5	21	84
10	4	4	3	4	3	18	72
11	3	4	3	3	3	16	64
12	4	4	4	3	4	19	76
13	4	4	4	4	4	20	80
14	4	3	4	4	4	19	76
15	5	4	4	4	4	21	84
16	3	4	2	3	4	16	64
17	4	4	4	4	5	21	84

18	4	4	3	4	4	19	76
19	4	4	3	5	3	19	76
20	4	5	4	5	4	22	88
Total							1532
Mean							76,6
Class Percentage							60

The post-test showed that 12 students passed the KKM with a mean of 76.6%. The class percentage increased from 0.1 to 0.6. Based on the data, it can be concluded that the implementation of the talking chip contributed to students' speaking skill improvement. The data of observation also showed the similar improvement occurs in students' readiness and their participation to follow classroom activities. The students could work collaborative and cooperatively in the group. Contrary to the previous cycle, in this cycle, the students were able to speak fluently with no hesitation in making mistakes. They also showed their support to another group member in the form of giving some appropriate diction to those students who lack vocabulary. After conducting the observation, the researcher came to the reflecting section. In this stage, the researcher evaluated the implementation of Talking Chips in the classroom. In this section, the researcher concluded that the talking chip strategy was successfully implemented and it contributed to improving students' speaking skills.

Discussion

This research aimed to examine the effect of the Talking Chips strategy on improving student's speaking skills. Through two cycles and three tests, the process of teaching and learning was carried out and run so well even though it failed in the first cycle. The improvement that occurred on cycle two indicated that these students were familiar with this technique and this technique was appropriate to their environment and their

cognitive level. It was proven by the significant difference achievement from pre-test (53.8 %), post-test of cycle one (39.6%) and post-test of cycle two (76.6%). Based on the observation and the reflection in cycle one, the unfamiliar strategy, unclear instruction and students' unreadiness became the causal factor to the failure of talking chips implementation. Therefore, in cycle two, the researcher fixed the obstacles thoroughly and planned the activity accurately. Consequently, the students could involve in the learning process thoroughly and actively from the first meeting until the last meeting; they gave attention to the lesson and instruction thoroughly, they took some substantial information on their notes, they accomplished the exercises given by the researcher, and took part actively in discussion among group members and teacher. In this cycle, the highest score on the speaking test was 88 and it was achieved by two students. Meanwhile, the lowest score was 64 and it was achieved only by two students. Moreover, the students have self-motivation to finish their job consciously for their benefit to have the same chance to practice their oral skills. To sum up, the implementation of the Talking Chips strategy was able to improve students' speaking skills as well as escalate their cooperativeness in the learning process.

CONCLUSION

The cooperative model in the Talking Chip strategy was expected able to improve the speaking skill of EFL students of SMP Negeri Alok Maumere. The research which conducted during three weeks showed that this strategy was able to improve students' cooperativeness and their speaking skill. The result of the pre-test (53.8%) that was higher than the speaking test (39.6) in cycle one raised some questions to the researcher about the

factors causing the decline or decrease in the test result. Based on the observation and reflection in cycle one, the researcher found that there was some factor that affecting the failure of Talking Chip implementation; unfamiliar strategy, unclear instruction and students' unreadiness. In cycle two, the score of the speaking test (post-test) was 76.6 % with a class average was 60%. Based on the data, it can be assumed that students' speaking ability improved through this cooperative strategy. Furthermore, data from cycle two showed that student's motivation and attitude towards the Talking Chip strategy progressed significantly.

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