

**IMPROVING THE STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL THROUGH
TALKING CHIPS (TC): A CLASSROOM ACTION RESEARCH ON
SECOND SEMESTER STUDENTS OF ENGLISH STUDY
PROGRAM AT STAIN BENGKALIS**

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***Abstract:** The objective of the research was to describe the learning atmosphere during the implementation of "Talking Chips" (TC) technique in Speaking skill. Besides, the research was also designed to know how the improvement of the students' Speaking skill during the implementation of "Talking Chips" (TC) technique. This research was a classroom action research. The research was carried out in second semester students of English Study Program at STAIN Bengkalis. This research was conducted in two cycles by following the procedure of action research, i.e. planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. In collecting the data, the researcher used observation, interview, questionnaire, and test. The lecturer was the researcher assisted by collaborator as observer. The interview and questionnaire were given to the students before and after the implementation of Talking Chips (TC). The tests were in the form of pre-test, post-test 1 and post-test 2. The data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The qualitative data were analyzed using Interactive Model of Data Analysis as propounded by Matthew M. Miles and A.M. Huberman. The results of the research showed that the learning atmosphere also improved. The class became more confident, fun and enjoyable. Furthermore, Talking Chips (TC) Technique was able to improve the students' Speaking Skill. It was proven by the increase of the students' mean score from 40.84 in pre-test to 45.92 in cycle 1, and 49.61 in cycle 2, although the results of the research were just a little bit improvement. It could be concluded that the use of Talking Chips has proven to be an effective way in teaching-learning of Speaking Skill on Second Semester of English Study Program at STAIN Bengkalis.*

***Keyword:** Speaking Skill, Talking Chips (TC) Technique*

A. Introduction

In Indonesia, English is acknowledged as the foreign language that is acquired and taught as a compulsory subject and local content through educational institution such as in Kindergartens, Primary Schools, Junior High Schools, Senior High Schools, and Universities. Besides, it also becomes the most popular foreign language learned among other languages such as Chinese, Arab and Dutch. In the practice of teaching and learning English at Indonesian educational schools or institutions (from elementary to university), there are four language skills taught to students; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In relation with teaching and learning process, one of those skills which have to be mastered by the students is speaking.

According to Luoma (2004: 20) teaching and testing experts often talk about speaking as a technical term to refer to one of several skills those language learners should develop and have. In this case, they should be able to speak with others such as classmates and teachers. Speaking is very important

for students in learning a language because someone purposes in learning a language is to be able to communicate the language. Brown (1994) in Celce and Murcia (2001: 103) mentions that there are a number of features that make speaking challenging as a language skill. He describes that fluent speech contain reduced forms such as constructions, vowel reduction, and elision by which learner who are not exposed and do not get sufficient practice with them will retain their rather formal-sounding full form. He also states that learners should also recognize and acquire slang and idiom, beside stress, rhythm, intonation in speech. Fail in having those aspects in speaking, he utters, learners will produce sound bookish in their speech.

In teaching speaking, lecturer/teacher should be able to guide students into learning situation in order to enable them to master it because speaking is the key of communication. Therefore, the lecturer's position with his or her ability, readiness, and proficiency are also useful for the students. Students need to recognize that speaking involves some components,

such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, interaction, turn taking, and rate of speech. Every student must learn those components, because both of parts have an important role to the others to have good proficiency. Learning one of the components must be supported by learning the others.

Teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia is popularly based on four skills of English. English subject is better to be taught by using talking chips technique. Most of the students, especially for the second semester of English Study Program in STAIN Bengkalis, face some problems in speaking English. Thus, in this study, researcher conducts a research using talking chips technique. Generally there are several problems faced from learners, lecturers and the teaching and learning process. Firstly, most of the students may feel isolated. In other words, the researcher can say that the students are hopeless to do the task given. They are lazy to enter the class room because they are studying English by textbook and doing the task most of the time. Secondly, most students are shy and unwilling to speak. The

speaking practice is limited to activities in the written form. Thirdly, the students have low interest in speaking English. It does not mean that they do not have ability to express their ideas, but they are not accustomed to speaking English. Consequently, when they are speaking, they cannot speak fluently. The problems might be happened because lecturers do not use the appropriate technique or strategies in dealing with speaking problems faced by them. The lecturer uses conventional technique or traditional teaching. Moreover, the cause of speaking difficulties depends on the students themselves, if they are active to practice their speaking, they can speak English easily. Brown (1994: 256) says that there are some factors causing speaking difficult for the students, they are: clustering, redundancy, reduced form, performance variables, colloquial language, rate of delivery, stress, rhythm, intonation and interaction. To overcome this fact, it is necessary to use technique, which can increase the students' mastery in learning speaking.

There are many techniques which can be applied in teaching

speaking and can solve student's problems in speaking. One of them is Talking Chips (TC). In this technique, the students participate in a group discussion, surrendering a token each time they speak. Talking Chips (TC) is an innovative way of inviting all students to participate in interactive activities that develop oral communication skills (Barkley, et al, 2005). Talking chips is useful for helping students discuss controversial issues and it is also to solve communication or process problems, such as dominating or clashing group members.

B. Literature Review

1. Speaking

Essentially, speaking is very important in learning a language because as a social creature human need to interact one and another to express their ideas and thoughts to arrange and persuade others and it is used because someone purposes in learning a language is to be able to communicate the language. According to Brown (1994: 29), communicative competence is the goal of a language classroom. It can be said that speaking such a

communicative competence as a goal of language learning includes social context.

Language competence that emphasizes on the production of speech which happens in real time is speaking competence. Speech may be in words, phrases and utterances in response to someone in a range of different genres. Thornbury (2005: 2-14) suggests various areas of speaking to describe different speaking events which have transactional and interpersonal functions. Transactional function refers to purpose of conveying information and facilitating the exchange of goods and services, whereas interpersonal function refers to all about maintaining and keeping good relations between people.

Speaking competence plays an important role in learning and understanding the language. Therefore, by identifying it, a language lecturer can construct a certain speaking activity for the students to sharpen their speaking competence. It is particularly important, however, the constructs of the language practice should always be seen in relation to the functional use to which

the students must put his oral fluency so that the students will be able to speak fluently in English as they are able to choose the words suitably, to pronounce phonemes correctly use appropriate stress and intonation patterns, and to speak in related speech.

Brown (2007: 328) elaborates that skills in speaking involve micro-skills and macro-skills. They are micro and macro skill. Micro skill suggests the importance of focusing on both the forms of language and the functions of language. Macro skill is concerning about the individual processes in learning language.

The goal of teaching speaking skills is communicative efficiency. Learners should be able to make themselves understood, using their current proficiency to the fullest. They should try to avoid confusion in the message due to faulty pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary, and to observe the social and cultural rules that apply in each communication situation (<http://www.nclrc.org/essentials/speaking/goalsspeak.htm>). To help students develop communicative efficiency in speaking, instructors can use a balanced

activities approach that combines language input, structured output, and communicative output.

To pursue the goals, there are a number of principles for designing speaking technique proposed by Brown (2000: 275-276). They are:

- a. Use techniques that covers spectrum of learners' needs, from language based focus to accuracy based focus on interaction, meaning, and fluency.
- b. Provide intrinsically motivating techniques
- c. Encourage the use of authentic language in meaningful context
- d. Provide appropriate feedback and correction
- e. Capitalize on the natural link between speaking and listening
- f. Give students opportunities to initiate oral communication
- g. Encourage the development of speaking strategies

Barkley, et al (2005) says that there are some techniques for discussion. They are:

- a. Think-Pair-Share

It is a technique in which students think individually for a few

minutes, and then discuss and compare their responses with a partner before sharing with the entire class.

b. Round Robin

This is a technique for generate ideas and speak in order moving from one student to the next.

c. Buzz Group

In this technique, students discuss course-related questions informally in small groups of peers.

d. Talking Chips

Talking chips is a technique in which students participate in a group discussion and surrender a token each time they speak. It is particularly useful for ensuring equitable participation.

e. Three-Step Interview

In this technique, students will interview each other and report what they learn to another pair. It is useful for helping students network and improve communication skills.

f. Critical Debate

It is a technique in which students assume and argue the side of an issue that is in opposition to their personal views. It is useful for developing critical thinking skills and

encouraging students to challenge their existing assumptions.

To find out the results of the treatment, assessment test will be given. Testing speaking can be done at the beginning and at the end of most language courses, as well as various times during the course itself the activities designed to test speaking are the same as the activities to practice speaking (Thornbury, 2005: 124). The assessment can be done using a scoring rubric.

a. Scoring Rubric of Speaking

A scoring rubric is a set of guidelines for applying performance criteria to evaluate the students' responses and performance which consists of verbal descriptions of the students' responses and performance (Linn and Groniund, 2000; 270).

In assessing speaking using a scoring rubric, they are a holistic scoring and an analytic scoring. The holistic scoring is a quick scoring in which students are scored based on an overall impression. The assessment involves more than one scorer. Then, the differences in scoring should be discussed and negotiated. The analytic

scoring is a longer scoring but is more reliable and fairer. Here, students are scored based on a variety for criteria or categories.

The assessment criteria or categories are: (1) grammar. Students are scored for their accuracy and appropriateness in using grammar; (2) vocabulary. Students are scored for their ability in using vocabularies or English equivalents in utterances or sentences; (3) pronunciation. The focus of assessment is on the accuracy of the students in pronouncing words with good intonation and stress; (4) fluency. Students are scored for their ability to perform speech fluently; (5) comprehension. The focus of assessment is on students' competence to comprehend other persons talking in simple descriptive or transactional text. (Thornbury, 2005: 127).

2. Talking Chips

Talking chips is a technique in which students participate in a group discussion and surrender a token each time they speak. It is particularly useful for ensuring equitable participation (Barkley, et al. 2005: 117). It is one of collaborative learning techniques. The

purpose of this Collaborative Learning Technique (CoLT) is to ensure equitable participation by regulating how often each group member is allowed to speak. Because it emphasizes full and even participation from all members, this technique encourages reticent students to speak out and talkers to reflect.

Swaray (2012) also states that Talking Chips is recognized as effective means of improving the students' speaking skill and promoting cooperative learning. Talking chips is useful for helping students discuss controversial issues, and it is also useful to solve communication or process problems, such as dominating or clashing group members.

Although this Collaborative Learning Technique (CoLT) could be adapted to monitor participation in Threaded Discussion (for example, by telling participants that once a group member has posted comments, the same group member should wait until all, or other members have contributed to the discussion before posting again), it would be counterproductive. Students would become impatient logging on, checking in to the discussion, and

finding repeatedly that it is not yet their turn to contribute additional comments (Barkley, et al. 2005: 119).

Lee (1997) states that as a classroom organization and instructional technique, Talking Chips is one of the cooperative learning techniques that merit serious consideration for use in thinking classrooms. Talking Chips is more than just group discussion. In traditional group learning, students work in groups with no attention paid to group functioning, whereas in Talking Chips, group discussion is carefully prepared, planned, and monitored. Four key thinking strategies in Talking Chips are: problem solving, decision making, critical thinking, and creative thinking. Most research studies have found that Talking Chips is more effective than other modes of instruction for higher level thinking tasks, although this has not been the case in all studies. A number of theoretical perspectives (and associated cooperative learning activities) underlie work in cooperative learning, such as social psychology (Jigsaw technique), developmental psychology (Cooperative Controversy, Pairs Check), cognitive psychology

(MURDER--Mood, Understand, Recall, Detect, Elaborate, and Review), motivation theory (STAD--Student Teams Achievement Divisions), multiple intelligences theory (Talking Chips), humanistic psychology (group investigation), and global education/moral values education. Talking Chips can support an environment in which students feel encouraged to take part in higher order thinking.

a. Classroom Activities in Talking Chips

Talking chips is an innovative way of inviting all students to participate in interactive activities that develop oral communication skill. According to Barkley, et al (2005: 117), there are two activities in this technique.

They are preparation and procedure.

1) Preparation

Lecturer will determine a question or problem for group discussion. Bring poker chips, or simply gather a sufficient number of paper clips, pencils, chalks, or other available items to serve as tokens.

2) Procedure

- a) Form student groups
- b) Give each student three to five tokens that will serve as permission to share, contribute, or debate in the conversation.
- c) Ask students to participate equally in the group discussion, specifying that as they contribute comments, they should surrender a token and place it in view of the other group members.
- d) When all students have contributed to the discussion and all tokens are down, ask students to retrieve and redistribute the chips so that the procedure repeats for the next round of discussion, or end the discussion if the activity is complete.

Talking chips can help to build communication skills because students who tend to 'spout off' consider more carefully what they have to say, since it will require their surrendering a token. Reticent students feel encouraged to speak because the ground rules have created an environment that promotes participation by all (Millis and Cottell, 1998 in Barkley, et al. 2005: 120).

C. Methodology

1. Research Type and Design

Classroom action research is a method of finding out what works best in lecturers' own classroom so that they can improve students' learning. Many lecturers practice personal reflection on teaching, others conduct formal empirical studies on teaching and learning. Classroom action research is more systematic than personal reflection but it is more informal and personal than formal educational research.

Action research is classroom-based research conducted by lecturers in order to reflect upon and evolve their teaching; it is a systematic, documented inquiry into one aspect of teaching and learning in a specific classroom. The purpose of lecturer research is to gain understanding of teaching and learning within one's classroom and to use that knowledge to increase teaching efficacy student learning. Reflective lecturers do this every day, only not as carefully and systematically. By and large, classroom action research is a reflective process which helps lecturers to explore and examine aspects of teaching and learning and to take action to change and improve.

This research applies the principles of action research. The design of this kind of research was based on the spiral model suggested by Kemmis and McTaggart (Koshy, 2005:4). The researcher plan, act, observe and reflect on the students' speaking skill through Talking Chips (TC).

a. Plan

Before using the method, a researcher must prepare the lesson plan, material, media, time, schedule and instrument in order that researcher can design the materials what will be as learning process as possible.

b. Action

Researcher gives explanation about the materials and gives treatment with Talking Chips (TC). The process of teaching using Talking Chips (TC) technique begins.

- 1) Before the implementing time, the researcher will determine a question or problem for group discussion. Bring poker chips, or simply gather a sufficient number of paper clips, pencils, chinks, or other available items to serve as tokens.
- 2) The researcher forms student groups

- 3) The researcher gives each student three to five tokens that will serve as permission to share, contribute, or debate in the conversation.
- 4) Ask students to participate equally in the group discussion, specifying that as they contribute comments, they should surrender a token and place it in view of the other group members.
- 5) When all students have contributed to the discussion and all tokens are down, ask students to retrieve and redistribute the chips so that the procedure repeats for the next round of discussion, or end the discussion if the activity is complete.

c. Observation

In this step, the researcher as the practitioner implemented Talking Chips (TC) Technique in the teaching and learning process, and the English lecturer as the collaborator observed students' understanding, participation and activities in the teaching and learning process. Observation was one of the techniques which was used in collecting the data.

d. Reflection

After carrying out the process using Talking Chips (TC) technique, the researcher and collaborator recited the result of the activities which occurred in classroom as the reflection of the action. They evaluated the process and the result of the implementation of Talking Chips (TC) technique in speaking class. It was a basic consideration to make plan and to conduct the next meeting.

2. Data Collecting Technique

To support this research, researcher completes the data collecting procedure by using questionnaire, interview, test and observation.

a. Distributing Questionnaire

Questionnaire is a set off questions provided to obtain responses indirectly as it is occurred in non-face-to-face situation. It was given in the form of written questions with available answers in ranged-degree. It was aimed to know the students' personal problem faced in speaking. The researcher used questionnaire in the preliminary research and the end of the implementation.

b. Doing Observation

In this research, the researcher would observe and made diary while the

observer would make field notes of all activities done in the process of teaching and learning speaking skill through Talking Chips. In doing the observation, the researcher was helped by his collaborator. The function of collaborator here was to observe, evaluate and give suggestion about the implementation of Talking Chips.

c. Having interview

The researcher was held at the beginning and the end of the research to get information from the students and the collaborator about personal perception, experiences, opinions and ideas related to the teaching learning process, especially in teaching speaking.

d. Giving Test

The researcher conducted oral tests of speaking skill. There were a pre-test and post-test which were used to collect the data. The researcher chooses this test because there are some advantages. To get the instrument validity and reliability in speaking skill

test, the researcher used IBM SPSS version 22 for windows.

3. Data Analyzing Technique

After collecting the data, the researcher classified the data into two groups as follows:

a. Analyzing Quantitative Data

The classroom action research in this study would be successful if there was an improvement or enhancement of students' speaking skill. It could be shown when the students could do the test, felt easy and enjoyed learning in the classroom. After the data were collected, the researcher analyzed the scores from those tests by calculating the mean of pre-test and the post-test by using descriptive statistics. The researcher used it to answer whether there was difference between students speaking skill before and after the action.

The mean or average is computed by adding a list of scores and then dividing by the number of the score. The mean of the pre-test and post-test can be calculated with the formulas as follows:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

$$\bar{Y} = \frac{\sum Y}{N}$$

Where: \bar{X} = means of pre-test scores

\bar{Y} = means of post-test scores

N = the number of sample

b. Analyzing Qualitative Data

To analyze the qualitative data, the researcher applied Interactive Model of Data Analysis as propounded by Matthew B. Miles and A.M. Huberman (1992). This model includes four different interconnected process: data collection, data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification.

C. Discussions

The discussion is focused on using Talking Chips (TC) in the teaching learning of Speaking Skill at STAIN Bengkalis. In this process identified some factors causing the low achievement of students' speaking skill. The factors came from the lecturer and students. First, most of the students may feel isolated. In other words, the researcher can say that the students are

hopeless to do the task given. They are lazy to enter the class room because they are studying English by textbook and doing the task most of the time. Secondly, most students are shy and unwilling to speak. The speaking practice is limited to activities in the written form. Thirdly, the students have low interest in speaking English. It does not mean that they do not have ability to express their ideas, but they are not accustomed to speaking English. Consequently, when they are speaking, they cannot speak fluently.

After implementing the action in the first and second cycle, some points can be taken, there were:

1. The Improvement of Learning Atmosphere.

Teaching speaking through Talking Chips Technique made the students made easier to understand the content of the conversation. They became more active in learning speaking. They showed their contribution in the discussion and participated well in the teaching learning process by giving some opinion and asking some information they did

not know. They enjoyed joining the lesson and confident.

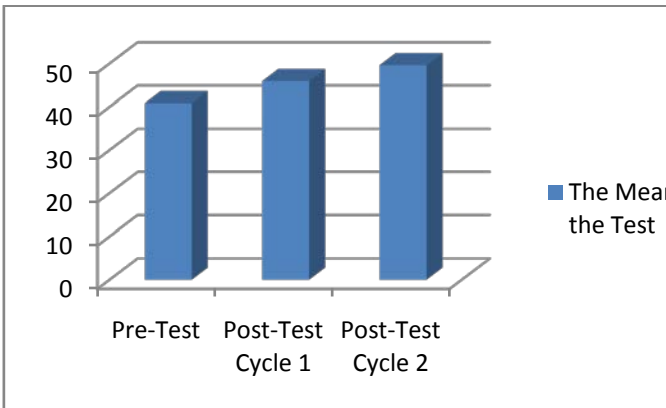
2. The Improvement of Students' Speaking Skill

From the tests, it could be concluded that Talking Chips (TC) Technique could improve the students' speaking skill. Reticent students feel encouraged to speak because the ground rules have created an environment that promotes participation by all. There were some indicators which showed that there was an improvement in their speaking skill. They were:

- 1) Accent (pronunciation)
- 2) Grammar
- 3) Vocabulary
- 4) Fluency
- 5) Comprehension
- 6) The students' speaking scores improve from cycle 1 to cycle 2 which can be seen on the following table, although the improvement just a very little bit improvement.

The Mean Scores of the test

Test	Mean Score
Pre-test	40.84
Post-test cycle 1	45.92
Post-test cycle 2	49.61



From the table above showed that there was an improvement of students' test result before and after the action. Although the improvement just a very little bit improvement. It was proved by increase of the students' mean score from 40.84 in the pre-test to 45.92 in post-test cycle 1, and 49.61 in cycle 2.

D. Conclusion

After the researcher did the action research by using Talking Chips Technique, it can be drawn conclusion as follows:

1. Talking Chips Technique can improve the learning atmosphere. The learning atmosphere becomes more confident, enjoyable and fun. And the advantages of using Talking Chips Technique in teaching speaking are:

- a. Talking chips can help the students build communication skills because the students who tend to "spout off" consider more carefully, what they have to say, since it will require them to surrender a token.
 - b. The reticent students are encouraged to speak because the ground rules have created an environment that promotes participation by all.
 - c. It helps the students see how the participation during group work develops teamwork skills and self-awareness.
2. The Talking Chips Technique can improve students' speaking skill. It was proven by the increase of the students' mean score from 40.84 in pre-test to 45.92 in cycle 1, and 49.61 in cycle 2. Although the results of the research were just a little bit improvement, but the researcher appreciated the students' hard work following the research.

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