

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TALKING CHIPS TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS' ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of the Talking Chips technique in improving the English-speaking skills of eighth-grade students at MTs Al-Muttaqin Rengging, Jepara. A quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design, specifically the non-equivalent control group design, was employed in this research. The participants consisted of two classes: class VIII A as the experimental group and class VIII B as the control group. The data were collected using oral speaking tests (pre-test and post-test) assessing five aspects of speaking: fluency, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, comprehensibility and interaction communication. The findings revealed a significant improvement in the speaking performance of students taught using the Talking Chips technique compared to those taught using conventional methods. The results indicate that the Talking Chips technique effectively enhances students' speaking abilities, particularly by promoting active participation and boosting their confidence in communicating in English. Therefore, this technique can be considered a useful cooperative learning strategy for developing communicative competence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms..

Keywords: *Talking Chips Technique; Speaking Skill; Cooperative Learning; EFL Students; Junior High School*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the essential language skills that must be mastered by students in English language learning, particularly at the Junior High School level, as it represents the core of communicative competence in the curriculum. The ability to utter sounds, articulations, or words as a form of expression to convey and communicate thoughts, ideas, and feelings (Henisah et al., 2023). However, despite its importance, many students still encounter difficulties in developing their speaking skills. These challenges commonly arise from a lack of self-confidence, limited opportunities to practice speaking in class, and the use of monotonous or teacher-centered learning methods that fail to stimulate students' motivation to speak actively.

Speaking is an activity that requires extensive knowledge and highly complex skills. When speaking, a person must have a high level of confidence, without hesitation or embarrassment, so that they are sure of what they are saying. (Maisyarah, 2023). According to Harmer (2007), there are three main reasons for getting students to speak in class. First, it provides an opportunity to practice speaking in real situations in class. Second, speaking tasks allow students to try to express what they know and provide feedback for both teachers and students. Third, the more opportunities students have to activate the language elements they

have learned, the more automatically they will be able to use them fluently. (Rahmadhani, 2023)

Speaking is not merely the act of producing sounds or words but also the ability to use language effectively in real-life communication. (Masagus Sulaiman1), Sri Hartati, 2024) define speaking as a communicative process through which individuals express ideas and opinions clearly. Similarly, (Silvia et al., 2021) emphasizes that speaking involves mastery of linguistic knowledge and communication strategies to maintain interaction. According to Govender (2012) and Evayani (2020), if students are actively involved in learning and learning materials, they will succeed academically. Active student involvement is considered to have a significant influence on achievement and learning (Karmila, 2021). English language learning at the secondary level, particularly at Al-Muttaqin Islamic Junior High School Jepara, is not very popular, especially when it comes to speaking. Almost all students have difficulty developing their speaking skills. This is due to a lack of confidence, a lack of interest in learning English, and a lack of support from teachers. The development of learning methods has progressed quite rapidly, with many learning media being introduced to improve the effectiveness of the learning process. Teachers can use one of the interesting learning media, such as Talking Chips.

To address these challenges, teachers are encouraged to implement interactive and student-centered learning methods. One effective approach that promotes equal participation is the Talking Chips technique, a cooperative learning strategy introduced by Kagan. According to Yanda, 2013 talking Chips is a learning technique that utilizes small objects such as cards that serve as tools to initiate conversation or learning activities. (Anwar & Rozhana, 2020). In this method, students engage in group discussions using chips or tokens to regulate turn-taking, ensure that each student has an equal opportunity to contribute. Highlight that Talking Chips encourages balanced participation and helps prevent dominance by certain group members. Talking chips can help students improve their self-confidence and make lessons more interesting so that students become more enthusiastic about learning. Emphasizes that the technique facilitates communication and problem-solving among students by creating structured discussion opportunities (Djorgi, 2024). Also assert that this technique places students at the center of the learning process, promoting active discovery and engagement with learning materials. (Kartini et al., 2021)

According to Darmadi (2018) as cited in (Eko & Lily, 2023), the talking chips learning process is learning conducted in small groups consisting of 4-5 students, with each student or group member carrying a number of cards that serve as a sign when they have expressed an opinion or spoken, by collecting the cards on the table. This model is relevant for equipping students with contemporary skills because it requires cooperation and the utilization of various learning resources, including the environment and technology. (Anjani & Amin, 2025). The Talking Chips technique has shown promising results in several empirical studies. Recent research consistently confirms that the strategy is effective for enhancing speaking skills. More specifically, (wirastuti, wiryadi joni, 2018) found that applying the Talking Chips technique improved students' fluency, comprehension, and grammar. Likewise, (Putu et al., 2023) reported that eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Mengwi showed significant improvement in speaking ability after learning through Talking Chips. Mangkar et al. (2021) further demonstrated that combining Talking Chips with visual

aids enhanced students' ability to organize and deliver spoken ideas more effectively. In addition, (Djorgi, 2024) confirmed that students taught using Talking Chips outperformed those in the control group in terms of fluency, confidence, and participation. Similarly, Kartini et al. (2021) found that the strategy significantly improved students' speaking skills through cooperative interaction and peer collaboration.

Although these studies demonstrate the positive impact of Talking Chips, most previous research has been conducted at the senior high school level, focusing primarily on general speaking fluency or grammar. There is still limited evidence regarding the application of the Talking Chips technique in Junior High School (MTs) contexts, particularly in Indonesian rural or semi-urban schools, where students often exhibit anxiety and hesitation when speaking English. Furthermore, existing studies have not sufficiently explored how the technique fosters equal participation and confidence in lower secondary learners. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the Talking Chips technique in improving the English speaking skills of eighth-grade students at MTs Al-Muttaqin Rengging. The research specifically seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Does the use of the Talking Chips technique significantly improve students' speaking skills compared to traditional teaching methods?
2. How does the Talking Chips technique affect students' confidence and participation in classroom speaking activities?

This study is expected to fill the gap in previous research by providing empirical evidence on the use of the Talking Chips technique in a Junior High School context. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on junior secondary EFL learners, its evaluation of student confidence and participation, and its application of a quasi-experimental design to measure speaking performance improvement quantitatively. The findings are anticipated to contribute to the development of more interactive, equitable, and student-centered English teaching strategies that can effectively improve students' oral communication skills.

Literature review

This section provides the theoretical and empirical foundation of the study regarding the effectiveness of the Talking Chips technique in improving students' speaking skills. It covers three major areas: (1) the concept of speaking skill in English language learning, (2) the Talking Chips technique as a collaborative learning strategy, and (3) previous empirical studies that have investigated the use of Talking Chips in English speaking instruction. The discussion is organized thematically to demonstrate the theoretical relevance and identify existing research gaps that the present study intends to address.

Speaking Skill in English Language Learning

Speaking is a fundamental component of English language learning, representing the productive skill most directly associated with communicative competence. It requires mastery of linguistic features such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and discourse, as well as the ability to use these components in a socially and contextually appropriate way. Similarly, (Masagus Sulaiman1), Sri Hartati, 2024) define speaking as a form of communication through which learners express their thoughts and opinions clearly and confidently.

According to (Ristanti, 2024), speaking is one of the language skills most widely used by people around the world. The art of speaking is very complex and requires the simultaneous use of several abilities that often develop at different speeds. In the EFL context, particularly at the Junior High School level, students often experience difficulties in speaking due to a lack of practice, limited exposure to English, and anxiety about making mistakes. To overcome these issues, teachers are encouraged to design interactive and collaborative classroom environments that increase student engagement and provide equal speaking opportunities. This pedagogical need underlies the adoption of innovative cooperative learning models such as the Talking Chips technique.

The Talking Chips Technique in Collaborative Learning

The Talking Chips technique is a cooperative learning strategy designed to regulate classroom discussions and ensure equitable participation. It encourages quieter students to participate while also managing dominant speakers. This technique aligns with collaborative learning theory, which emphasizes that learning occurs most effectively through social interaction, negotiation of meaning, and mutual support. (Kartini et al., 2021) further note that Talking Chips allows students to play an active role as learning subjects by engaging in problem-solving, critical thinking, and peer communication. Through structured participation, Talking Chips enhances both linguistic and interpersonal skills, contributing to the development of communicative competence and learner confidence. There are several advantages to using the talking chips technique during the learning process. The talking chips technique allows each student to contribute to the learning process. In addition, the talking chips technique can develop students' speaking skills. (Warahuwena & Rijoly, 2021).

Collectively, these studies confirm the pedagogical potential of Talking Chips as a strategy that not only improves linguistic competence but also strengthens affective and social aspects of language learning. However, most of these investigations have been carried out at the senior high school level, with limited attention given to younger learners at the Junior High School (MTs) level, particularly in rural or semi-urban EFL contexts. Thus, there remains a need to explore how the Talking Chips technique functions among lower secondary students, where speaking difficulties are more prevalent due to limited exposure and confidence.

METHOD

This section explains the research design, participants, research instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques used in this study. A quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design was applied to determine the effectiveness of the Talking Chips technique in improving students' English speaking skills. Quantitative research is a method that uses numerical values obtained from observations to explain and describe phenomena that can be reflected from those observations. (Taherdoost, 2022)

Research Design

This study was framed within a quantitative paradigm. Based on Cresswell (2012) cited in (Hasby & Hasby, 2024) states that quantitative research is the process of collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and writing research results based on problems in the field. Specifically, a quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent control group was applied. This design is common in educational research as it allows for the comparison of two existing classes (an experimental group and a control group) when random assignment of subjects is not feasible. One class served as the experimental group that received the Talking Chips treatment, and the other class served as the control group, which was taught using conventional methods.

Populations

The population for this study comprised all eighth-grade students at MTs Al-Muttaqin Rengging during the 2024/2025 academic year. The participants consisted of 52 students, divided into two classes. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique. This technique involves selecting participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Memon et al., 2025). The criteria used for selecting Class VIII A (26 students) as the experimental group and Class VIII B (26 students) as the control group were: (1) both classes were taught by the same English teacher to ensure consistency in teaching style, and (2) both classes were considered to have a relatively equivalent level of English proficiency based on the teacher's assessment.

Research Instrument

The instruments used in this study were speaking tests in the form of pre-test and post-test. Tests were given to both groups to measure the improvement of speaking ability.. The speaking test assessed six aspects: fluency, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, comprehensibility, and interaction communication.

Data Collection Procedures

The data were collected in three stages, namely 1) administering a preliminary test to both classes, 2) administering treatment to the experimental class using Talking Chips, with treatment conducted over three meetings, and 3) administering a final test to both classes to determine the final results.

Data Analysis

The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Before testing the hypothesis, prerequisite tests were conducted. A normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk method and a homogeneity test using Levene's Test. These tests are standard procedures to ensure that the data is normally distributed and that the variances between the two groups are

homogeneous, thereby validating the use of parametric tests. (Pawlak & Kruk, 2025). To test the hypothesis and determine the effectiveness of the treatment, a Paired Samples T-test was used to compare the post-test scores between the experimental group and the control group.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Finding

This section presents the results of the statistical analyses conducted to examine the effectiveness of the Talking Chips technique in improving students' English speaking skills. The analyses include tests of normality, homogeneity, and paired sample t-tests comparing the control and experimental groups.

Test of Normality

The normality test in this study was conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk Test with a significance level of 0.05. The normality test results showed that the significance value (Sig.) in each data group greater than 0.05. For the control class, a significance value of 0.203 was obtained in the pretest and 0.571 in the posttest. Meanwhile, for the experimental class, the significance value was 0.831 on the pretest and 0.444 on the posttest. Since the significance is greater than 0.05, the data is normally distributed. Therefore, further analysis can use the t-test.

Tabel 0.1 Test of Normality

Tests of Normality

		Shapiro-Wilk		
Kelas		Statistic	df	Sig.
Hasil	Pretest Kontrol	.948	26	.203
	Posttest Kontrol	.968	26	.571
	Pretetst Eksperimen	.978	26	.831
	Posttest Eksperimen	.963	26	.444

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Test of Homogeneity

The test of variance homogeneity was performed using Levene's Test with a significance level of 0.05. Based on the test results, the significance value (Sig.) in all calculation methods shows a number above 0.05. The test results based on the mean produced a significance value of 0.521; based on the median, 0.585; based on the median with adjusted df, 0.585; and based on the trimmed mean, 0.506.

Since the data is greater than 0.05, the data has homogeneous variance. Thus, we can proceed to the t-test using a paired sample t-test.

Tabel 0.2 Test of Homogeneity of Variance

Test of Homogeneity of Variance

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Hasil	Based on Mean	.757	3	100	.521
	Based on Median	.650	3	100	.585
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.650	3	97.824	.585
	Based on trimmed mean	.784	3	100	.506

Pretest Paired Sample T-test

The test results show a mean difference between the control and experimental groups of -3.038 with a t-value of -3.969, df = 25, and Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.001. Since the significance value is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the control and experimental groups before treatment. This indicates that the initial conditions of the two groups were not entirely equal.

Tabel 0.3 Pretest Paired Sample T-test

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Kontrol Eksperimen	-3.038	3.904	.766	-4.615	-1.462	-3.969	25	.001

Posttest Paired Sample T-test

In the comparison after treatment, the mean difference was -5.231 with t = -6.630, df = 25, and Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.000. Since the significance value is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the control and experimental groups after treatment. This difference shows that the application of Talking Chips techniques is significantly more effective in improving students' speaking skills than conventional learning methods.

Tabel 0.4 Posttest Paired Sample T-test

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences			95% Confidence		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower	Upper			

			Difference				
			Lower	Upper			
Pair Kontrol - Eksperimen - 1	5.231	4.023	.789	-6.856	-3.606	-6.630	25
						.000	

These findings suggest that the Talking Chips technique is effective in enhancing students' English speaking skills by promoting equal participation, confidence, and interaction among group members. The results are consistent with studies conducted by Wirastuti et al. (2023) and Djorgi (2024), who also found that Talking Chips significantly improved fluency, accuracy, and engagement in EFL classrooms.

Discussion

Interpretation and Theoretical Support

The main finding of this study, as indicated by the highly significant difference between the post-test results of the experimental group and the control group, convincingly shows that the Talking Chips technique effectively improves students' speaking skills. This success can be explained not only statistically, but also theoretically through the principles of cooperative learning.

The improvement observed in the experimental group may be due to the way the Talking Chips technique itself was implemented. In conventional teaching methods, classrooms are often dominated by a handful of confident students, while the majority of passive or anxious students have limited opportunities to practice. The Talking Chips technique directly addresses this problem by enforcing equal participation.

The use of tokens (chips) creates two important conditions, namely: 1) Equal participation: Tokens serve as a physical tool to regulate speaking turns, ensuring that every student participates actively and preventing domination by certain group members. 2) Psychologically Safe Environment: This effectively creates a more psychologically safe learning environment. For MTs students who are often hesitant and anxious to speak English, this clear structure reduces anxiety when taking turns and builds confidence. 3) Active Learning: This is in line with the views of (Kartini et al., 2021), who emphasize that this strategy places students as active subjects of learning, encouraging them to engage in problem solving and peer communication. Improved speaking skills are a direct result of this increased interaction and structured practice.

Comparison with Previous Studies

These research findings do not stand alone, but rather reinforce and expand the existing body of research on Talking Chips. Our results are consistent with those of (Djorgi, 2024), who also used a quasi-experimental design and found that students taught with Talking Chips significantly outperformed the control group. The similarity of these results is important because both studies (this study and Djorgi's study) confirm the validity of this technique as a superior intervention compared to conventional methods in a controlled teaching context.

More specifically, the significant improvement we observed supports the findings of (wirastuti, wiryadi joni, 2018), who noted particular improvements in the areas of “fluency, comprehension, and grammar.” Although our study measured speaking skills rather holistically, it can be concluded that the Talking Chip structure, which requires equal participation, directly gives students more practice time. It is this evenly distributed practice that most likely contributes to the improvement in fluency and grammar reported by (wirastuti, wiryadi joni, 2018).

In addition, this study significantly fills the gap identified in the introduction. While previous studies such as (Djorgi, 2024) and (Mangkar et al., 2021) have proven the effectiveness of this technique at the High School level, there is still a lack of empirical evidence at the Junior High School (MTs) level. Our findings validate that the benefits of Talking Chips are not limited to older students, but are also highly effective for younger learners in the Junior High School context. This demonstrates that this technique is a powerful and adaptable pedagogical tool for overcoming speaking anxiety and increasing participation at various levels of education.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of the Talking Chips technique in improving students’ English-speaking skills at MTs Al-Muttaqin Rengging. The results of the study revealed that students who were taught through the Talking Chips technique demonstrated greater improvement in their fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and confidence compared to those taught using conventional methods. This finding indicates that cooperative learning strategies can significantly enhance students’ participation and oral communication abilities. The results provide empirical support for Kagan’s cooperative learning theory, emphasizing the importance of equal participation and peer interaction in promoting communicative competence. The Talking Chips technique proved effective in creating an interactive and inclusive learning environment, helping students to overcome anxiety and engage more actively in speaking activities.

However, this study was limited by the relatively small sample size and short duration of the treatment. Therefore, future studies are recommended to implement the Talking Chips technique across different grade levels and larger populations, or to combine it with digital media to increase engagement and long-term retention. Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of research supporting cooperative learning approaches in EFL contexts and offers valuable insights for teachers seeking to improve students’ speaking performance through interactive and student-centred techniques.

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