IMPROVING THE STUDENTS’ PARTICIPATION
IN EFL CLASSROOM THROUGH TALKING CHIPS TECHNIQUE

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Abstract

Students’ participation plays an important role to ensure the success of learning process. The objective of this article is to report a study on how Talking Chips Technique is implemented effectively so that it can improve the students’ participation in EFL classroom. This study was a classroom action research. The subject of the research was twelfth grade students of SMK Batik 2 Surakarta in the academic year of 2014/2015. The data were collected through observation, questionnaire, interview, diary, and photograph. In implementing Talking Chips Technique effectively, there are some points to consider. Those are (1) the students’ grouping, (2) the management of EFL classroom, and (3) the adaptation of Talking Chips Technique. The findings of the research show that when Talking Chips Technique is used effectively, the students’ participation is described as follows. The students focus on the teaching and learning process. They can offer ideas and thought spontaneously. They also answer questions voluntary. They work cooperatively with their group and complete the task appropriately.

Keywords: Talking Chips Technique, students’ participation, action research.


Kata Kunci: Teknik Talking Chips, partisipasi siswa, penelitian tindakan.
Students’ participation plays an important role to ensure the success of learning process. Cohen cited in Kelly A. Rocca (2010) states that participation is a way to bring the students to be active into learning process and help them to gain the joy during learning activities. Wade (1994) in Rocca (2010) proposes the ideal class as one in which almost all students actively participate and are interested, take a chance in learning, and good attitude in listening the others’ comments and suggestions. Moreover, Mustapha (2010) states that an active classroom activity will help the students not only listen to the teacher but also talk about what they are learning, writing about it, relating to the past experience and applying to their daily life.

Mustapha and Rahman (2011) argue that there are five aspects of students’ active participation: natural desire to participate, showing confidence, enjoying participation in the classroom discussion, spontaneity, and exhibiting focus and consistency (Fitria, 2014). According to NUS (2009) cited in Abuid (2014), the aspects of the students’ participation are the frequency of participation, quality of participation, attitude to work, interest in the subject, oral skills and interpersonal skills. The NUS Handbook explains that the good quality participation includes: seeking and giving information, offering opinions, arguing, clarifying, etc. It also clarifies that the kind of the question asked by the students and the quality of the answer show the broad area of effective and good quality participation. It means that active participation does not only measure the quantity but also the quality of the students’ participation.

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Based on the researcher’s internship in SMK Batik 2 Surakarta, it was found that the students faced problems regarding participation in EFL classroom. Those problems are: (1) the students did not focus in the teaching and learning process; (2) the students did not answer questions voluntarily; (3) the students did not offer idea and thought spontaneously; (4) only a few of the students dominated the learning process; (5) the students did not complete task on time. Most of the students were not serious in completing the task using the time allotment. They rarely got work done by deadlines and always asked for extensions in submitting the work.

The goal of writing this article is to report a study on how Talking Chips Technique is implemented effectively so that it can improve the students’ participation.

Research Method

The research method used in this investigation is action research. Ebbutt (1985) in Hopkins (1993: 45) states that action research is about systematic study of attempts to improve educational practice by groups of participants and by means of own reflection upon the effects of those actions. Kemmis and McTaggart in Nunan (1992: 17) state that there are three characteristics of the action research. Firstly, the action research is carried out by practitioners rather than outside researchers. Secondly, the kind of the research is collaborative, and thirdly the research is aimed at changing things.

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The procedure for carrying out action research consists of four developmental stages (Kemmis and McTaggart in Nunan, 1989: 12). The stages are as follows: (1) Planning: the researcher develop action plan, (2) Acting: the researcher implement the action plan, (3) Observing: the researcher and observer observe the teaching and learning process and the implementation of Round Table technique, (4) Reflecting: the researcher analyze the effects of the action and use the findings for making decision on the next cycle.

The action research was carried out at SMK Batik 2 Surakarta in Surakarta regency. The subject of the research is the twelfth grade students of Accounting 2nd class SMK Batik 2 Surakarta, at the odd semester of 2014-2015 academic years. It consists of 32 students, 31 females and 1 male. The research is conducted through teaching and learning process in the twelfth grade students of SMK Batik 2 Surakarta in the academic year of 2014/2015 from June to November 2014.

In this study, the data are collected through five techniques, namely observation, questionnaire, interview, diary, and photograph. The data were written on observation results form by recording the students’ participation every 5 minutes in the pre – research, post – observation 1, and post – observation 2. The field note was written to report the teaching and learning activities which were done by the researcher. The researcher interviewed the students at the end of each cycle related their experiences in following Talking Chips procedures. The researcher also interviewed the English teacher related to the teaching and learning process using Talking Chips technique. Diary was used by the researcher.
to record the data related to the students’ feeling and interpreted class condition during the teaching and learning process. Meanwhile, photograph is used for documentation of the teaching and learning process.

**Research Findings and Discussion**

The implementation of Talking Chips Technique in EFL classroom influenced the students’ active learning. The students became actively involved in the teaching and learning process and gave contribution to the group and classroom discussion. This situation was different compared with pre-research. The use of Talking Chips Techniques successfully encouraged the students’ focus and responsibility in learning. Based on the observation, this technique supported the effectiveness of teaching and learning activity. Smith (2012) argues that the effectiveness of the teaching can be shown by the students’ activity in the classroom. It means that teacher is not the only element of teaching effectiveness. In the effectiveness of learning process, students are prompted to actively participate in asking question, giving opinion and giving suggestion to create a good interaction to the other students and teacher.

Before the action, the atmosphere of the teaching and learning process was not conducive. Most of the students were not actively participate in the teaching and learning process. They were busy with their own activity. Only a few students dominated the teaching and learning process. However, the other students did not give contribution and were silent when the teacher asked them questions.
In the cycle 1, the researcher found that the classroom domination did not occur strongly. The students tried to be active in expressing their opinion in learning. They used their chips to participate in classroom discussion. However, there were not all students that used the chips optimally. The problems of group arrangement, the students’ vocabularies mastery, and the teacher’s guiding caused the teaching and learning process was not effective yet. This problems was solved in cycle 2 by making a new group arrangement consisted heterogeneous level of students, conducting vocabulary quiz, and giving reward and motivation to the students. In cycle 2, the students focused in learning, expressed their opinion, and did the task optimally.

The Talking Chips Technique which is seen as collaborative learning technique was able to change the teaching and learning activity into learner-centered. All of the students were actively involved during the teaching and learning activity. This result is supported by the theory proposed by Nunan and Lamb (1996: 9), “learner-centered classroom are those in which learners are actively involved in their own learning processes”.

This result also reinforced that the use of Talking Chips Technique can improve the students’ participation in EFL classroom. Talking Chips Technique encouraged not only the students’ quantity but also the quality of participation. The students who were active in expressing their opinion had better improvement in their communicative competence. It was supported by a study by Liu (2005)
that found the students who actively participated in the EFL classroom tend to have better achievement compared with those who did not participate.

Practically, Talking Chips Technique is an appropriate technique to improve the students’ participation in EFL classroom. The researcher noted that there were some points to consider in implementing Talking Chips Technique effectively. The points were as follows:

a. Determining the students’ group

The group membership was heterogeneous. It aimed to encourage the students to help each other during the teaching and learning process. Each group consisted of 4 students in every cycle. The first cycle, the teacher determined the students’ group randomly. As a result, the group that consisted low level students did not work seriously. They even talked about non academic topic. Meanwhile, in the second cycle, the teacher made a new form of students’ grouping. They worked seriously because the quality of the students’ group was equal. The composition of each group was students with high, average, and low achievement on English which based on the students’ score on the previous semester. In addition, research support heterogeneous grouping because working with diverse students exposes individuals to people with different ideas, background, and experiences and the fact that diverse groups are more productive (Barkley, Cross, and Major, 2005: 45).

In selecting the group members, the researcher used the combination of student selection and instructor determined. The use of student selection aimed to
find out with whom students felt comfortable to work in groups. Brookfield and Preskill (in Barkley, Cross, and Major, 2005: 47) view that students may feel more comfortable and be more motivated to work together if they are permitted to choose their own group members. Meanwhile, the use of instructor determined aimed to guarantee that all groups was heterogeneous. Instructor determined is an approach in which the selection of membership is organized by the instructor based on the students’ level of academic achievement to create heterogeneous group (Barkley, Cross, and Major, 2005: 48).

b. Classroom management

During the research, the researcher found that classroom management was important in order to make the teaching and learning process ran well. In cycle 1, the researcher found difficulty in keeping the students focussed on their task. Many of the students did non academic activity, such as chatting with other students. This caused by the teacher’s facilitating in learning. The teacher did not observe the students’ work effectively and encourage the students to be active involved in the teaching and learning activity.

Barkley, Cross, and Major (2005: 70) state that observing the students’ groups can help teacher acquire information about group interaction, identify problems, and determine if students are achieved the learning goals. The teacher’s observation and guiding created the group discussion worked effectively. They worked seriously and did not do non academic activity.
However, in the cycle 2, the teacher also gave reward to the group that participation actively in the teaching and learning process. Willingham (2005) states that concrete rewards can motivate the students to attend class, to behave well, or to produce better work. In the cycle 2, the teacher gave book for the best group. The students were motivated to be the best group. They worked seriously in group.

c. The adaptation to Talking Chips Technique

In this study, Talking Chips Technique was used to encourage the students to ensure equitable participation by regulating how often each group member is allowed to speak. The text used in this study was manuals text. Basically, Talking Chips Technique is particularly useful for improve the students participation in learning process. Therefore, the researcher made some adaptation in implementing Talking Chips Technique to suit the students’ condition and the purpose of this study.

There are some adaptations which are well suited for implementing Talking Chips Technique. David (in Barkley, Cross and Major, 2005: 244) offers several ideas for adaptation to Talking Chips Technique: give each students several chips of the same color, to regulate the length of time student speaks more than the number of times they speak, give each student 1-3 chips, assign a group member the task of recording individual contributions to a conversation.

Barkley, Cross and Major (2005: 120) state that helping students to see how they participate during group work develops teamwork skill and self-
awareness. This technique used to give the students insight into effective teamwork and to solve problems of inequitable participation. Consider asking students to engage in a closing activity in which they share their participation activity in the end of the learning process.

The research findings showed that there were improvements toward the students’ participation in EFL classroom. Before the research was conducted, the students’ participation in teaching and learning activity was limited. Based on the observation reports in pre–research, the researcher found that the students faced some difficulties in participation during the teaching and learning process. They had difficulties in expressing opinion using English. The limited vocabulary mastery caused the students’ was unconfident during speaking English. Most of them did non academic activity and did not focus with the teacher’s instruction. Moreover, they were rarely given opportunity to practice speaking by the teacher. During teaching and learning process, the teacher also rarely gave feedback toward the students’ responses in learning process.

However, during the implementation of Talking Chips Technique the problems could be solved. Based on the result in pre–research, post–observation 1, to post–observation 2, there were significant improvements in every indicator of the students’ participation. Those are:

a) Giving focus in learning

In the pre–research, the researcher found that most of students did not focus on the teacher’s explanation and instruction about learning process. They
did non academic activity and spoke about non academic topic. Based on the observation reports in pre – research, the mean of this indicator was in 3.6 points. During the implementation of Talking Chips Technique, the students’ focus in learning was improved. They paid attention to the teacher explanation and worked seriously as the teacher’s instruction. In the observation reports, this indicator was improved to 5 points in post – observation 1 and became 6.4 points in post – observation 2.

b) Offering ideas and thought spontaneously

Based on the researcher in pre – research, the students did not express their opinion or ideas spontaneously. They were mumble in their chairs and shared their opinion to the students’ beside. The students did not have enough confident to express their opinion in the class. Based on the observation reports in pre – research, the researcher reported this indicator was in 2.6 points. The problem was decreased during the implementation of Talking Chips Technique. The students became confident in speaking in the class. The vocabulary quiz and the teacher’s drilled improved the students’ vocabulary mastery. Beside, the teacher’s motivation also influenced the students’ willingness in expressing opinion during the learning. In the post – observation 1, the researcher reported this indicator was in 4 points and improved to 6.4 points in post – observation 2.

c) Volunteering in answering question

In the pre – research, the students did not give appropriate response to the teacher. The students chatted actively with others students about non academic topic, but they suddenly stopped when the teacher asked questions. The students
were not interesting with the teaching and learning process. In the pre – research, the researcher reported on the observation reports that this indicator was in 2.2 points. The implementation of Talking Chips Technique influenced the active learning. The students were encouraged to use their chips and expressed their opinion about the learning topic optimally. They were motivated to use all of their chips during the learning process. The improvements of the students’ willingness in answering questions voluntarily was 5.4 points in post – observation 1 and in post – observation 2 improved to 6.2 points.

d) Giving contribution in classroom and group discussion

In the pre – research, the mean of this indicator was in 2 points and it was improved to 4.6 in post – observation 1 and 5.6 in post – observation 2. Before the action, the researcher found that the teaching and learning activity was monotonous. The teaching and learning activity was teacher-centered. The students did not enough opportunity in giving contribution. Only a view of students actively gave contribution. They even dominated the learning process. However, the teaching and learning process changed during implementing the Talking Chips Technique. The situation was getting better in every meeting. The students grouping made the students enjoyed working and expressing their idea using simple language. Talking Chips Technique enabled the students to interact with other students of the group. This interaction allowed them to get support or even challenges from their classmates. Hence, the students tended to make effort to be better. Silberman (1996) state that the best ways to create active learning is to give learning assignment that are carried out in small group of students. The
peer support and diversity of viewpoints, knowledge, and skill help to make collaborative learning become a good part of classroom learning climate.

e) Completing task appropriately

In pre–research, the researcher found that the students did not work seriously in completing the task. They even adjusted the deadline to the teacher. Only a few of students did the task on time. However, during the implementation of Talking Chips Technique, the students were motivated to finish their task seriously. The students discussed the problem in group. The well-arranged group improved the students’ interest in completing the task. Based on the observation reports, the researcher found that there were improvements in this indicator from 1.8 point in pre–research to 3.4 points in post–observation 1 and 5.8 points in post–observation 2.

Generally, the improvements of each indicator of the students’ participation during the implementation of Talking Chips Technique could be seen in the graph 1.1 as follows:

**Graph 1.1 The Result of the Students' Participation Mean Score**

![Graph 1.1](image-url)
Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the result of the research, the researcher found the importance of findings which can be drawn into two conclusions. The first conclusion is when the Talking Chips Technique is used effectively the students’ participation is described as follows. The students focus on the teaching and learning process. They can offer ideas and thought spontaneously. They also answer questions voluntary. During the group discussion, the students work cooperatively with their group. They can complete the task appropriately.

The second conclusion is the implementation of Talking Chips Technique to improve the students’ participation should consider the. In implementing Talking Chips Technique effectively, there are some points to consider. They are the students’ grouping that should determine heterogeneously, the management of EFL classroom, and the adaptation of Talking Chips Technique.

Having conducted the classroom action research to improve the students’ participation in EFL classroom at the twelfth grades in SMK Batik 2 Surakarta, the researcher would like to give suggestions that teacher needs adjust Talking Chips Technique to meet the students’ condition in EFL classroom. In improving the students’ participation, the students should be aware that learning English is not difficult if they have motivation to learn it and involved in teaching learning process well.

Meanwhile, the principal should give chance to the teacher and students to apply various strategies in teaching learning process. For instance, Talking Chips
Technique in teaching EFL. In addition, for the other researchers, it is expected that the finding of this research will be used as the starting point to the future research to improve the outcome of the use of Talking Chips Technique to teach in EFL classroom.

Bibliography


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