

The Development of English Speaking Skills of Secondary School Students Through Think- Pair-Share Technique

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to: (1) examine the effectiveness of the Think–Pair–Share (TPS) instructional technique in enhancing English speaking skills and (2) investigate students’ perceptions toward its implementation in the classroom. The participants were 38 lower secondary school students enrolled in an English course. A pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design was employed. The research instruments included an English speaking test assessing five components—fluency, vocabulary use, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and content relevance—TPS-based lesson plans, and a student perception questionnaire. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and a paired-samples t-test. The findings revealed that students’ English speaking performance after the TPS intervention was significantly higher than before the intervention ($t = 18.92, p < .05$). The results also indicated improvement across multiple dimensions of speaking ability, suggesting that the structured stages of TPS supported both linguistic development and communicative performance. In addition, students reported very high levels of positive perceptions toward the TPS technique, particularly in terms of classroom participation, confidence in speaking English, and attitudes toward learning. Overall, the findings suggest that TPS provides learners with structured opportunities for idea organization, peer interaction, and gradual participation, which contribute to a supportive learning environment for speaking practice. The study highlights the effectiveness of TPS as a pedagogical approach for enhancing English speaking skills and fostering positive learner perceptions in the EFL classroom. Pedagogical implications and recommendations for future research are also discussed.

Keywords: Think–Pair–Share, English Speaking Skills, Cooperative Learning, Student Perceptions, Lower Secondary School Students

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Introduction

In Thailand, English is taught as a foreign language and is regarded as an essential language skill for students’ academic advancement and future career opportunities. The Basic Education Core Curriculum emphasizes the development of communicative competence, particularly the ability to use English for real-life communication (Ministry of Education, 2008). However, despite continuous exposure to English

instruction throughout basic education, many Thai secondary school students still demonstrate limited speaking proficiency.

In Thai secondary school classrooms, English instruction has traditionally focused on grammatical accuracy, vocabulary memorization, and examination-oriented learning. As a result, students are often given limited opportunities to practice speaking English in meaningful and interactive contexts. Previous studies have reported that Thai EFL learners frequently experience difficulties in expressing ideas orally, maintaining fluency, and speaking with confidence, especially in front of peers or the whole class (Noom-Ura, S., 2013; Tatsanajamsuk, P., & Saengboon, S., 2021). These challenges are more evident at the lower secondary level, where students are in the early stage of developing communicative competence.

The situation is further compounded by affective factors such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low self-confidence, which discourage students from actively participating in speaking activities (Woodrow, 2006). In many classrooms, teacher-centered instruction continues to dominate, resulting in passive learning behaviors and minimal student interaction. Consequently, students may have insufficient opportunities to practice spoken English and develop positive attitudes toward language learning.

A number of studies in the Thai EFL context have explored instructional strategies to enhance English learning; however, most have primarily focused on reading comprehension, writing skills, or general classroom engagement rather than speaking development (Wiryachitra, 2002; Khamkhien, 2010). While cooperative learning approaches have been widely examined and shown to improve student participation and interaction (Slavin, 1995; Johnson & Johnson, 1999), relatively few studies have specifically investigated structured techniques that directly support the development of speaking skills, particularly at the lower secondary level (Kayi, 2006). Furthermore, existing research on cooperative learning in Thailand often addresses overall language achievement without isolating speaking performance as a primary outcome (Panthumasen, 2007; Noom-Ura, S., 2013).

Think–Pair–Share (TPS), a cooperative learning technique, provides a structured approach that allows students to think individually, discuss ideas with peers, and share responses with the class (Lyman, 1981). This technique is grounded in cooperative learning principles that emphasize active participation, peer interaction, and accountability (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Robert E. Slavin, 1995). Additionally, TPS has been recognized as an effective strategy for promoting student engagement and increasing opportunities for verbal interaction in language classrooms (Kagan, 1994; Zwiers & Crawford, 2023). By structuring classroom discourse into sequential stages, TPS supports learners in organizing their thoughts, reducing anxiety, and enhancing confidence in speaking (Gillies, 2006). This technique offers learners adequate preparation time and peer support, which may help reduce speaking anxiety and increase confidence. Previous research has suggested that cooperative learning approaches can enhance learner engagement and promote communicative competence in EFL classrooms (Gillies, 2016; Johnson & Johnson, 2020). Nevertheless, empirical studies specifically examining the effectiveness of TPS in improving English speaking skills among Thai lower secondary school students remain scarce. In particular, there is limited evidence on how TPS influences students' speaking performance, confidence, and perceptions in this educational context.

As an English teacher in a Thai secondary school, the researcher observed that Mattayomsuksa 3 students were generally reluctant to speak English during classroom activities. Many students tended to

remain silent, avoided responding to questions, or relied heavily on short and rehearsed answers. When speaking tasks were assigned, students often showed signs of anxiety and lacked confidence, particularly when required to speak in front of the whole class. These classroom observations motivated the researcher to seek instructional strategies that could encourage active participation and create a supportive learning environment for speaking practice.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the Think–Pair–Share technique in developing English speaking skills of Thai lower secondary school students and to examine students' perceptions toward learning English through TPS-based instruction. By focusing specifically on speaking performance and learner perceptions at the lower secondary level, this study seeks to extend existing research and provide more targeted empirical evidence on the use of TPS in the Thai EFL context. The findings are expected to contribute to pedagogical practices and offer practical insights for English teachers seeking effective strategies to enhance students' speaking skills.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the effectiveness of the Think–Pair–Share technique in enhancing English speaking skills among students.
2. To investigate students' perceptions with the implementation of the Think–Pair–Share technique in English speaking instruction.

Research Methodology

This study employed a pre-experimental research design, specifically a one-group pretest-posttest design, to examine the effectiveness of an instructional intervention in an EFL classroom. Specifically, a one-group pretest–posttest design was adopted, in which participants were assessed before and after the implementation of the instructional treatment. This design was considered appropriate for exploring changes in learners' performance attributable to the intervention within an authentic classroom context (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). The research procedures were organized and implemented as follows.

1. Population and Sample

The study was conducted in a public secondary school in Thailand. At the Grade 9 (Mattayomsuksa 3) level, there were nine classrooms in total. One classroom, consisting of 38 students, was selected as the sample group through purposive sampling. This class was chosen because it was officially assigned to and taught by the researcher during the academic term in which the study was conducted. Furthermore, the selected classroom represented a heterogeneous group of English proficiency levels, as the students were not streamed by ability. This characteristic allowed for more consistent implementation of the instructional intervention and clearer observation of its effects. In addition, the class was identified as requiring further development in speaking skills, making it particularly appropriate for the objectives of the study.

2. Research Instruments

Three research instruments were employed in this study: (1) an English speaking ability test, (2) lesson plans based on the Think–Pair–Share (TPS) technique, and (3) a student perception questionnaire.

All research instruments were developed by the researcher and examined for content validity by three experts in English language teaching using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC).

2.1 English Speaking Ability Test

The English speaking ability test was developed to assess students' English speaking performance before and after the implementation of the Think-Pair-Share instructional technique. The test focused on five components of speaking skills: fluency, vocabulary use, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and content relevance. The speaking tasks were designed in accordance with the instructional content and learning objectives of the course.

To ensure content validity, the speaking test was evaluated by three experts in English language teaching. The mean Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) value of the test items was 0.82, indicating that all items were consistent with the research objectives. Therefore, the English speaking ability test was considered valid and appropriate for measuring students' English speaking skills.

2.2 Lesson Plans Based on the Think-Pair-Share Technique

Nine lesson plans were designed based on the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) cooperative learning technique to support English speaking instruction. Each lesson plan included learning objectives, instructional procedures, learning activities, and assessment methods aligned with the Basic Education Core Curriculum. The instructional activities emphasized three stages: individual thinking (Think), paired discussion (Pair), and whole-class sharing (Share), in order to promote communicative language use and active student participation.

The TPS-based speaking activities included a variety of tasks designed to encourage meaningful communication. For example, in the Think stage, students were asked to generate individual responses to prompts such as describing personal experiences or expressing opinions on familiar topics. In the Pair stage, students discussed their ideas with a partner, practiced forming extended responses, and provided peer support. In the Share stage, students presented their ideas to the class or participated in group discussions, allowing for authentic speaking practice. Additional tasks included role-plays, short dialogues, picture descriptions, and opinion-sharing activities, all structured within the TPS framework to enhance students' fluency, confidence, and interaction skills.

Each lesson was implemented over a 50-minute class period, resulting in a total instructional time of 450 minutes across the nine lessons. The lesson plans were organized progressively to develop students' speaking skills from controlled to more communicative tasks. To ensure content validity, the lesson plans were reviewed by three experts in English language teaching. The mean Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) value of the lesson plans was 0.70, indicating an acceptable level of content validity.

2.3 Student Perception Questionnaire

A student perception questionnaire was constructed to investigate students' perceptions toward learning English speaking skills through the Think-Pair-Share technique. The questionnaire consisted of Likert-scale items covering three aspects: learning activities, classroom atmosphere, and perceived improvement in English speaking skills.

The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), allowing students to indicate their level of agreement with each statement.

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was evaluated by three experts in English language teaching using the Index of Item–Objective Congruence (IOC) technique. The mean IOC value of the questionnaire items was 0.92, indicating a high level of content validity and strong alignment with the research objectives.

To establish reliability, the internal consistency of the questionnaire was examined using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. The obtained reliability value was 0.88, indicating a high level of internal consistency among the items. This suggests that the questionnaire was reliable for measuring students’ perceptions.

The questionnaire was administered to students after the completion of the instructional intervention to collect data on their perceptions toward learning English through the Think–Pair–Share technique.

2.4 Speaking Evaluation Form

The speaking evaluation form was used as a research instrument to assess students’ English speaking performance in both the pretest and posttest. The evaluation rubric was adapted from established analytic speaking assessment frameworks proposed by Brown (2001, 2007) and Bygate (2018), which emphasize the assessment of multiple components of oral communication. The rubric covered five key aspects of speaking ability: fluency, vocabulary usage, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and content relevance. These criteria were selected to ensure alignment with the components assessed in the speaking tasks and to provide a comprehensive evaluation of students’ oral performance. Each component was rated using an analytic scoring rubric to allow detailed and systematic evaluation of students’ speaking ability and to enhance scoring objectivity. To ensure scoring reliability, three independent raters with experience in English language teaching were invited to assess students’ speaking performances. Prior to the scoring process, the raters participated in a calibration session to ensure a shared understanding of the scoring criteria. All raters used the same rubric to evaluate both the pretest and posttest performances. The final score for each student was calculated by averaging the scores from the three raters. To examine the consistency of the scoring process, inter-rater reliability was calculated using Pearson’s correlation coefficient. The results indicated a high level of agreement among the raters ($r = 0.87$), suggesting that the evaluation process was reliable and consistent.

3. Research Hypothesis

Learners’ English speaking performance after participating in Think–Pair–Share (TPS)-based instruction would be significantly higher than their performance prior to the intervention.

4. Research Question

What is the level of students’ perception toward learning English speaking through the Think–Pair–Share technique?

5. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted in accordance with the pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest research design and was implemented in a systematic sequence to examine changes in students’ English speaking performance and learning perceptions resulting from the Think–Pair–Share (TPS) instructional intervention. The procedures were carried out as follows:

5.1 Formal permission to conduct the study was obtained from the school administration prior to the commencement of data collection. Participants were informed of the purpose and procedures of the study, and instructional activities were conducted within regular classroom settings.

5.2 A speaking pretest was administered to all participants to assess their baseline English speaking ability before the implementation of the TPS-based instruction. The results served as initial data for subsequent comparison.

5.3 The instructional intervention was implemented over a period of 3 weeks, with three 50-minute periods per week, totaling 450 minutes of instruction. The intervention consisted of nine lesson plans integrating the Think–Pair–Share technique into English speaking activities. Students participated in structured stages of individual thinking (Think), paired discussion (Pair), and whole-class sharing (Share) to practice oral communication in English.

5.4 Upon completion of the instructional period, a speaking posttest was administered to measure students' English speaking performance after the TPS intervention. In addition, a perception questionnaire was distributed to collect data on students' perceptions of the TPS-based learning activities.

5.5 The data obtained from the pretest and posttest were analyzed using a paired-samples t-test to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in students' English speaking performance before and after the intervention. The questionnaire responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, to examine overall student perceptions toward the instructional intervention.

The Conceptual Framework

Literature review

1. English Speaking Skills in EFL Contexts

Speaking is a fundamental productive skill that plays a central role in second language communication. Effective speaking requires the integration of linguistic knowledge, including vocabulary and grammatical accuracy, with fluency and the ability to convey meaning appropriately in social interaction (Canale & Swain, 1980; Bygate, 2018). In EFL contexts, speaking is often regarded as one of the most challenging skills for learners due to limited exposure to authentic language use and restricted opportunities for oral practice in the classroom (Nation & Newton, 2020).

Previous research has indicated that EFL learners frequently experience difficulties in organizing ideas, maintaining fluency, and speaking with confidence, particularly in teacher-centered instructional environments (Burns, 2019; Richards, 2017).

According to speaking proficiency, the essential components of speaking proficiency include fluency, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and content relevance are included. Fluency reflects the ability to produce speech smoothly and continuously (Michael Bygate, 2018), while vocabulary and grammatical accuracy represent learners' control of linguistic resources (Canale & Swain, 1980). Pronunciation is associated with intelligibility and comprehensibility in oral communication (Anne Burns, 2019). Content relevance, which involves the ability to organize and express meaningful ideas appropriately, is related to discourse competence and the effective use of language in context (Jack C.

Richards, 2017). Together, these components provide a comprehensive framework for assessing learners' speaking ability in EFL contexts.

2. Communicative Competence and Speaking Development

The concept of communicative competence extends beyond grammatical knowledge to include sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). From this perspective, speaking development involves not only producing accurate language forms but also using language meaningfully and appropriately in interaction.

Sociocultural theory further emphasizes that language learning is mediated through social interaction and collaborative activity (Vygotsky, 1978; James P. Lantolf et al., 2015). Learners develop higher levels of communicative ability when they engage in meaningful dialogue with others, receive feedback, and co-construct understanding. Central to this perspective is the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), defined as the distance between what learners can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance or collaboration (Vygotsky, 1978). Within the ZPD, learning occurs most effectively through scaffolding and mediation provided by more capable peers or teachers.

The Think–Pair–Share (TPS) technique can be effectively explained through the lens of sociocultural theory. In the Think stage, learners engage in individual cognitive processing, activating prior knowledge and preparing initial responses. This stage allows learners to organize their thoughts independently before entering social interaction. In the Pair stage, learners interact with a peer, which provides opportunities for scaffolding and mediation, as they exchange ideas, clarify meanings, and support each other's language production. This collaborative interaction enables learners to operate within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where they can perform at a higher level with peer assistance than they could individually (Vygotsky, 1978). In the Share stage, learners present their ideas to the whole class, which extends interaction to a broader social context and allows for additional feedback from both peers and the teacher. This stage reinforces learning through further mediation and helps consolidate communicative competence.

Thus, TPS aligns closely with sociocultural principles by structuring learning as a progression from individual cognition to collaborative interaction and social communication. Through these stages, learners are provided with opportunities to develop speaking skills in a supportive environment that promotes interaction, scaffolding, and meaningful language use.

3. Cooperative Learning in Language Education

Cooperative learning has been widely recognized as an effective instructional approach that encourages active participation, peer interaction, and shared responsibility for learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2020; Gillies, 2016). In language classrooms, cooperative learning provides learners with increased opportunities to use the target language, negotiate meaning, and receive support from peers.

While cooperative learning serves as a broad pedagogical framework, it encompasses a variety of instructional techniques that differ in structure and implementation. General cooperative learning approaches often emphasize group work and peer collaboration but may vary in the level of structure and teacher guidance provided. In contrast, Think–Pair–Share (TPS) is a highly structured cooperative learning technique that organizes interaction into three clearly defined stages: individual thinking (Think), paired discussion (Pair), and whole-class sharing (Share) (Lyman, 1981).

This structured sequence distinguishes TPS from more general forms of cooperative learning by ensuring that all learners actively participate at each stage of the learning process. The Think stage promotes individual accountability and cognitive preparation, the Pair stage facilitates focused peer interaction and language practice, and the Share stage provides opportunities for public communication and feedback. Due to this systematic design, TPS is particularly effective in supporting speaking development, as it scaffolds learners' participation and gradually builds confidence in oral communication.

Therefore, while cooperative learning provides the theoretical and pedagogical foundation for interactive language learning, TPS represents a specific and structured technique that operationalizes these principles in a way that directly supports the development of English speaking skills in EFL classrooms.

4. Think–Pair–Share Technique

Think–Pair–Share (TPS) is a cooperative learning technique originally introduced by Lyman (1981) that structures classroom interaction into three stages: individual thinking, paired discussion, and whole-class sharing. This sequence allows learners time to organize ideas before speaking, rehearse language with peers, and gradually participate in public communication.

Previous studies have indicated that TPS can enhance learners' speaking performance by providing structured opportunities for interaction and reducing cognitive and affective pressure during oral tasks (Johnson & Johnson, 2020; Richards, 2017). The “think” stage supports idea generation and planning, while the “pair” stage facilitates peer feedback and negotiation of meaning. The “share” stage encourages learners to articulate ideas more confidently in front of others. Empirical research in EFL contexts has reported improvements in learners' fluency, participation, and confidence following TPS-based instruction, with some studies indicating moderate gains in speaking performance.

In EFL classrooms, TPS has been found to promote learner engagement, increase participation, and foster positive attitudes toward speaking activities (Gillies, 2016; Nation & Newton, 2009). Additionally, McDonough, J., & McDonough, S. (2014) emphasizes that structured peer interaction such as TPS provides learners with increased opportunities for comprehensible output and interactional feedback, which are crucial for second language development. Empirical studies in Asian EFL contexts have also shown that TPS can help reduce speaking anxiety and enhance learners' willingness to communicate by creating a supportive and low-risk learning environment (Zheng, S., & Zhou, X. (2022).

However, despite these positive findings, some limitations and inconsistencies have been reported in TPS research. For instance, the effectiveness of TPS may vary depending on factors such as task design, student proficiency levels, and the quality of peer interaction. In some cases, students may rely on more proficient peers during the Pair stage, which can limit equal participation and reduce individual language production. Additionally, without careful teacher facilitation, the Share stage may be dominated by more confident learners, while less proficient students remain passive. Furthermore, some studies have reported only modest improvements in speaking accuracy, suggesting that TPS may be more effective in promoting fluency and confidence than grammatical development.

Although TPS has been widely examined in various EFL contexts, there remains a lack of research focusing specifically on Thai lower secondary school students. Existing studies in Thailand have often emphasized general language achievement, reading, or classroom engagement rather than providing

in-depth analysis of speaking performance (Wiriyachitra, 2002; Noom-Ura, S., 2013; Foley, 2005). Moreover, few studies have systematically investigated how TPS influences multiple dimensions of speaking ability, such as fluency, vocabulary use, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and content relevance, within this specific educational context.

Therefore, further empirical investigation is needed to examine the effectiveness of TPS in developing English speaking skills among Thai lower secondary learners. In particular, research focusing on Grade 9 students can provide valuable insights into how structured cooperative techniques support speaking development at a critical stage of communicative competence formation.

5. Think–Pair–Share in the Thai Educational Context

In Thailand, English is taught as a foreign language, yet many learners continue to face persistent challenges in developing oral proficiency despite prolonged exposure to English instruction. Earlier studies have highlighted that English teaching practices often emphasize grammar and examination-oriented learning, which limits opportunities for meaningful speaking practice (Noom-Ura, S., 2013; Tatsanajamsuk, P., & Saengboon, S., 2021). More recent empirical research in the Thai context continues to report similar issues, including learners' low confidence, limited vocabulary, and insufficient opportunities for authentic oral communication in classroom settings.

Educational reforms and policy initiatives have increasingly emphasized communicative competence and learner-centered instruction (Ministry of Education, 2008). However, these policy directions have not been consistently translated into classroom practice. Empirical evidence suggests that, despite policy advocacy, many classrooms still rely on teacher-centered approaches, and opportunities for interactive speaking activities remain limited. This indicates a clear gap between policy expectations and instructional realities in Thai EFL classrooms.

Recent studies conducted in Thailand have explored the use of interactive and collaborative approaches to improve English learning outcomes. For example, collaborative and peer-assisted learning approaches have been shown to enhance students' speaking performance, confidence, and engagement in both primary and secondary contexts. Similarly, project-based and activity-based instruction has demonstrated positive effects on students' speaking skills through increased opportunities for meaningful communication. However, much of this research has focused on general collaborative learning, vocabulary development, or overall language achievement rather than providing a detailed analysis of speaking performance across multiple dimensions.

Despite the growing body of research on interactive learning in Thailand, there remains a lack of empirical studies specifically examining the effectiveness of structured cooperative techniques such as Think–Pair–Share (TPS) in developing English speaking skills among Thai lower secondary students, particularly at the Mattayomsuksa 3 (Grade 9) level. Moreover, few studies (Noom-Ura, S., 2013; Apaporn Wiriyachitra, 2002; Jack C. Richards, 2006) have simultaneously investigated both speaking performance and students' perceptions within a single research design. This gap highlights the need for focused research that examines how TPS can be systematically implemented to enhance multiple components of speaking ability in the Thai EFL classroom context.

The conceptual framework guiding this study positions the Think–Pair–Share technique as the independent variable influencing learners' English speaking skills, specifically fluency, vocabulary use,

grammatical accuracy, and confidence. Learner interaction and engagement function as mediating variables that facilitate the development of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972). The conceptual framework underlying this study is illustrated in Figure 1.

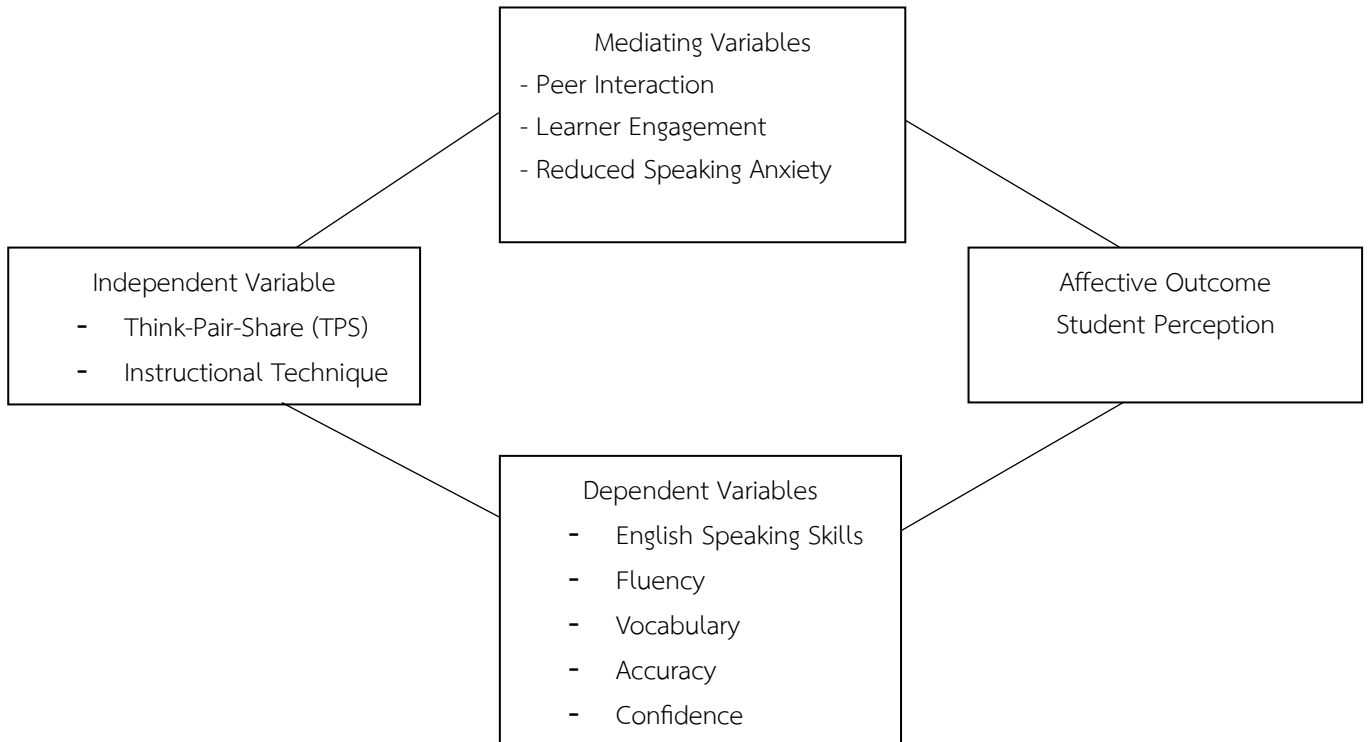


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Results

The findings indicated that

1. To examine the effectiveness of the Think–Pair–Share technique in enhancing English speaking skills among students.

The findings indicated that learners demonstrated a significant improvement in overall speaking performance following the TPS intervention. Posttest scores were notably higher than pretest scores, suggesting that structured peer interaction contributed positively to the development of oral proficiency.

Table 1 Comparison of Students’ English Speaking Performance Before and After the TPS Intervention

Test	N	\bar{x}	S.D.	t	Sig.
Pre-test	38	14.45	1.13		
Post-test	38	20.74	1.45	18.92	.05

Note: Statistically significant at the .05 level

Table 1 presents a comparison of students’ English speaking performance before and after the implementation of the Think–Pair–Share (TPS) instructional technique. The results show that the mean post-test score (\bar{x} = 20.74, S.D. = 1.45) was substantially higher than the mean pre-test score (\bar{x} = 14.45, S.D. = 1.13). The paired-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the two sets

of scores, $t(37) = 18.92, p < .001$, indicating that the TPS intervention had a positive effect on students' English speaking performance.

2. To investigate students' perception with the implementation of the Think–Pair–Share technique in English speaking instruction.

Students' perception with the Think–Pair–Share (TPS) instructional technique was examined using a questionnaire administered after the completion of the intervention. The questionnaire aimed to investigate learners' perceptions of TPS in terms of engagement, confidence in speaking English, opportunities for interaction, and overall learning experience.

The interpretation of the mean scores was based on the following criteria:

Mean Score	Interpretation Level
4.21 – 5.00	Very High
3.41 – 4.20	High
2.61 – 3.40	Moderate
1.81 – 2.60	Low
1.00 – 1.80	Very Low

Table 2 Learner Perception with the Think–Pair–Share (TPS) Instructional Technique

Aspect of Perception	N	Mean (\bar{x})	S.D.	Level
Development of English speaking skills	38	4.35	0.52	Very High
Confidence in speaking English	38	4.28	0.56	Very High
Participation in learning activities	38	4.47	0.49	Very High
Attitudes toward learning English	38	4.41	0.51	Very High
Overall perception	38	4.38	0.52	Very High

Table 2 presents learners' perceptions of the Think–Pair–Share (TPS) instructional technique across four dimensions. Based on the interpretation criteria, the findings indicate that students reported a very high level of perception in all aspects measured, suggesting that the TPS technique was highly effective in promoting positive learning experiences.

Among the four aspects, participation in learning activities received the highest mean score ($\bar{x} = 4.47, S.D. = 0.49$), followed by attitudes toward learning English ($\bar{x} = 4.41, S.D. = 0.51$). This indicates that TPS effectively encouraged active engagement and fostered positive attitudes toward English learning. The aspects of development of English speaking skills ($\bar{x} = 4.35, S.D. = 0.52$) and confidence in speaking English ($\bar{x} = 4.28, S.D. = 0.56$) were also rated at a very high level, reflecting learners' perceived improvement in their speaking ability and self-confidence.

In relation to students' speaking performance, the results from Table 1 showed a substantial improvement, with a mean gain score of 6.29 points (from 14.45 to 20.74). This represents an approximate 43.53% increase in speaking performance.

This considerable improvement is consistent with students' positive perceptions, particularly in terms of increased participation and confidence, suggesting that the TPS technique not only enhanced speaking performance but also contributed to a supportive and engaging learning environment.

If analyzed by speaking components (if applicable), improvements were observed across key dimensions such as fluency, vocabulary use, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and content relevance, indicating that the TPS technique supported multiple aspects of speaking development rather than a single skill area.

Overall, the findings suggest that the Think–Pair–Share instructional technique had a significant and meaningful impact on both students’ English speaking performance and their perceptions toward learning, reinforcing its effectiveness as a pedagogical strategy in the EFL classroom.

Discussions

The findings of this study indicate that the Think–Pair–Share (TPS) instructional technique had a positive impact on students’ English speaking performance. The significant improvement in posttest scores, with a mean gain of 6.29 points and a substantial effect size, suggests that structured cooperative learning can effectively support the development of oral communication skills in an EFL context. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that cooperative learning approaches enhance speaking proficiency by increasing opportunities for interaction and meaningful language use (Johnson & Johnson, 2020; Gillies, 2016). It also aligns with studies emphasizing that EFL learners benefit from instructional techniques that provide adequate planning time and gradual participation in speaking activities (Richards, 2017; Nation & Newton, 2020).

One plausible explanation for the observed improvement lies in the sequential structure of TPS. The Think stage allows learners to organize ideas individually, which may reduce cognitive load during speech production and support more fluent oral performance (Bygate, 2018). The Pair stage facilitates language development by enabling learners to negotiate meaning, clarify ideas, and receive immediate peer feedback in a low-pressure environment. This interactional support is consistent with sociocultural theory, which posits that language development is mediated through social interaction and collaborative activity (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf et al., 2015). From this perspective, TPS functions as an instructional scaffold that supports learners’ progression toward higher levels of communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980).

However, while the findings suggest a strong positive effect, alternative explanations should also be considered. First, the observed improvement may be partially influenced by the pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design, which does not include a control group. As a result, factors such as test familiarity, practice effects, or increased exposure to speaking tasks over time may have contributed to the improvement in posttest scores. Second, the relatively short duration of the intervention, although intensive, may have led to rapid gains in performance that reflect short-term improvement rather than long-term retention of speaking skills.

In addition, the very large effect size observed in this study should be interpreted with caution. Such a large magnitude may be partly attributable to the within-subject design, which tends to produce higher effect sizes compared to between-group designs. It is also possible that the scoring rubric, while reliable, may have been sensitive to observable improvements in fluency and participation, potentially inflating the overall performance gains. Furthermore, variation in rater judgment, despite efforts to ensure inter-rater reliability, may still have influenced the scoring outcomes to some extent.

Regarding learner perceptions, the findings revealed very high levels across all measured dimensions, particularly in participation and classroom atmosphere. While these results support previous studies suggesting that cooperative learning fosters supportive and inclusive learning environments (Gillies, 2016; Johnson & Johnson, 2020), alternative interpretations should also be considered. For instance, students' positive responses may have been influenced by novelty effects, as the TPS technique may have differed from their usual classroom experience. Additionally, social desirability bias may have led students to report favorable perceptions, especially when the questionnaire was administered within the classroom context.

The reported increase in speaking confidence is also consistent with prior research on affective factors in EFL learning (Woodrow, 2006; Burns, 2019). However, it is important to note that self-reported confidence does not always correspond directly to actual speaking proficiency. While students perceived improvement in their speaking ability, further investigation using longitudinal data or external assessment measures would be necessary to confirm sustained development.

Overall, the results of this study support the effectiveness of the Think–Pair–Share technique in improving English speaking performance and promoting positive learner perceptions. At the same time, the inclusion of alternative explanations highlights the need for cautious interpretation of the findings. Future research employing more rigorous experimental designs, longer intervention periods, and multiple data sources is recommended to further validate the effectiveness of TPS in diverse EFL contexts.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

This study contributes to the field of English language teaching by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of the Think–Pair–Share (TPS) instructional technique in enhancing English speaking skills among lower secondary EFL learners in the Thai educational context. While previous research has established the general benefits of cooperative learning, this study refines existing theoretical understandings by demonstrating how a highly structured cooperative technique such as TPS can systematically support both individual cognitive processing and collaborative interaction in speaking development. Unlike broader cooperative learning approaches, TPS operationalizes key principles - such as individual accountability and peer interaction - through clearly defined stages, thereby offering a more precise model for classroom implementation.

In relation to sociocultural theory, this study extends current interpretations of structured peer interaction by providing empirical support for the role of staged interaction in facilitating language development. The findings suggest that the sequential design of TPS (Think–Pair–Share) functions as a form of pedagogical scaffolding that enables learners to progress from individual idea construction to socially mediated language use. In particular, the Pair and Share stages create opportunities for mediation, feedback, and co-construction of meaning, which align with the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This study therefore contributes to the theoretical understanding of how structured interaction, rather than unstructured group work, can more effectively support language learning within a sociocultural framework.

Furthermore, this study provides new empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of TPS for early adolescent learners, particularly students at the Mattayomsuksa 3 (Grade 9) level. This

developmental stage is characterized by emerging communicative competence alongside heightened affective sensitivity, such as anxiety and lack of confidence in speaking. The findings demonstrate that TPS not only improves measurable speaking performance but also positively influences affective dimensions, including confidence, participation, and classroom climate. This highlights the importance of integrating cognitive and affective considerations in instructional design and suggests that structured cooperative techniques are particularly well-suited for learners at this stage of development.

In addition, the study offers an integrative perspective by demonstrating that improvements in speaking performance are closely associated with positive learner perceptions. This finding supports the view that cognitive and affective dimensions of language learning are interdependent rather than separate constructs. By showing that TPS simultaneously enhances linguistic performance and learner engagement, the study contributes to a more holistic understanding of effective speaking instruction in EFL contexts.

Overall, this study advances theoretical understanding in three key ways: (1) by refining cooperative learning theory through the application of a structured interactional model, (2) by extending sociocultural theory to emphasize the role of staged peer interaction in language development, and (3) by providing context-specific evidence of TPS effectiveness among lower secondary learners. These contributions offer both theoretical insight and pedagogical implications for the design of interactive speaking instruction in EFL classrooms.

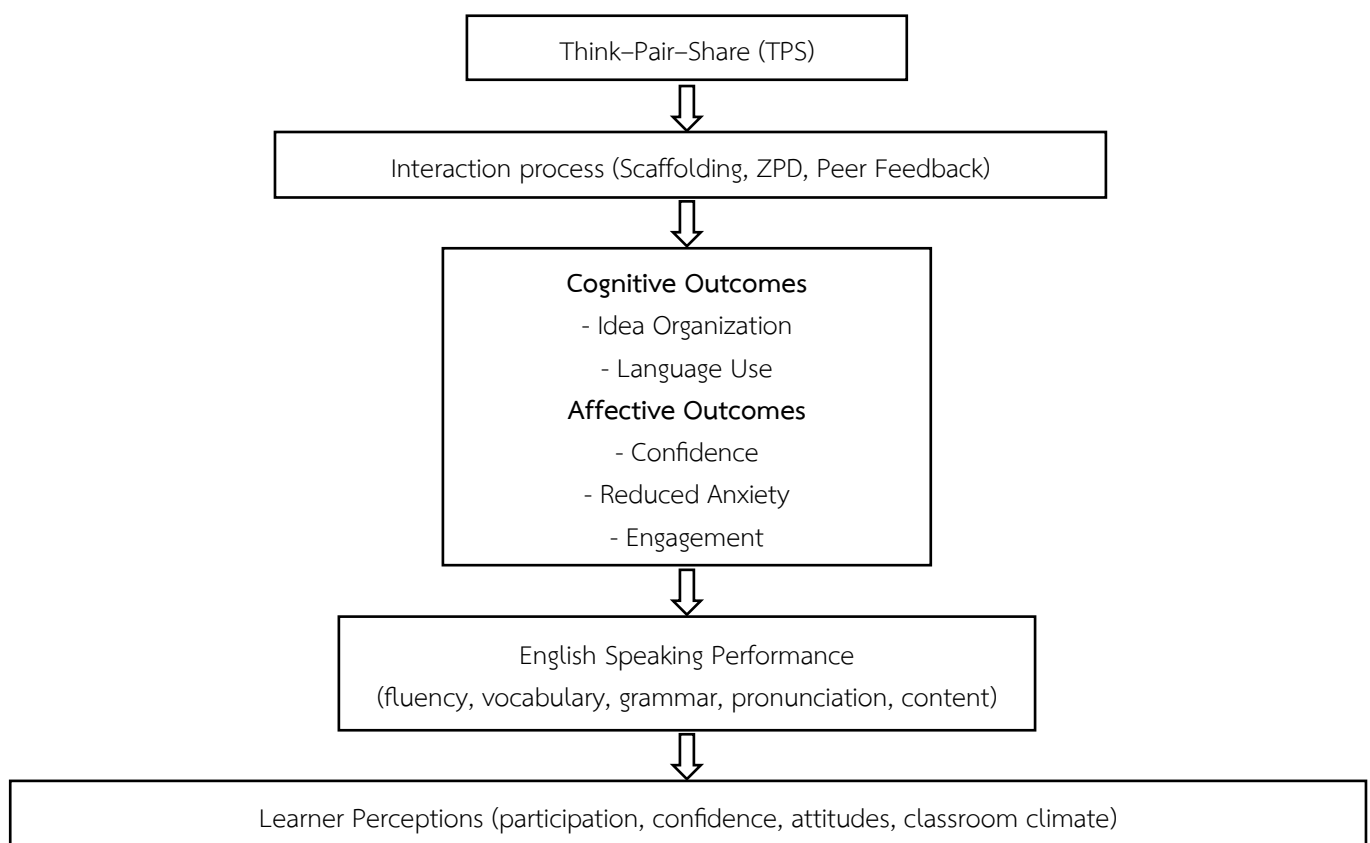


Figure 2 Conceptual framework illustrating the cognitive and affective impact of Think-Pair-Share on speaking development

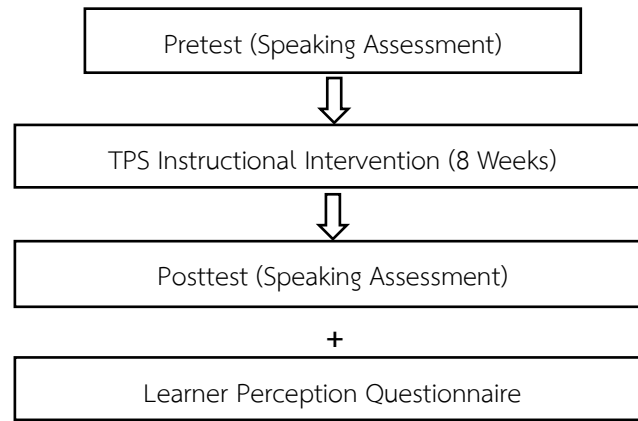


Figure 3 Pre - experimental one-group pretest–posttest design used in the study

Conclusion

This study investigated the effectiveness of the Think–Pair–Share (TPS) instructional technique in enhancing English speaking skills among lower secondary EFL learners and examined students’ perception with its implementation. The findings demonstrate that TPS had a significant positive effect on learners’ speaking performance, as evidenced by the substantial improvement in posttest scores compared with pretest scores. These results indicate that structured cooperative learning can effectively support the development of oral communication skills in EFL classrooms.

In addition to linguistic gains, the study highlights the importance of affective factors in speaking instruction. Learners reported high levels of perception with TPS-based activities, particularly in relation to participation, confidence in speaking, and classroom atmosphere. These findings suggest that TPS not only facilitates language development but also fosters a supportive learning environment that encourages active engagement and willingness to communicate.

Overall, the results underscore the pedagogical value of integrating Think–Pair–Share into English speaking instruction at the lower secondary level. By combining individual reflection with collaborative interaction, TPS provides learners with meaningful opportunities to practice speaking in a low-anxiety context. The study therefore supports the systematic use of cooperative learning techniques as an effective approach to enhancing both speaking proficiency and learner engagement in EFL settings.

Recommendations

1. Policy Recommendations

1.1 Instructional Integration of TPS

English language programs at the lower secondary level should integrate cooperative learning techniques, particularly Think–Pair–Share (TPS), as a core instructional strategy to enhance learners’ speaking proficiency and classroom interaction. However, effective implementation requires well-structured speaking tasks, clear learning objectives, and alignment with curriculum standards. TPS is most effective when instructional activities are designed to promote meaningful communication rather than rote responses, and when sufficient classroom time is allocated for each stage (Think, Pair, Share).

1.2 Teacher professional development

Initiatives should emphasize practical training in implementing TPS and other interaction-based pedagogies to support communicative language teaching in EFL classrooms. Training programs should focus not only on the procedural steps of TPS but also on classroom management strategies, such as facilitating balanced peer interaction, providing appropriate scaffolding for mixed-ability learners, and using effective questioning techniques. TPS is more likely to be successful when teachers are able to monitor interaction, provide feedback, and create a supportive learning environment that reduces students' anxiety in speaking.

1.3 Supportive Classroom and Institutional Conditions

School administrators and curriculum planners are encouraged to promote learner-centered classroom environments that provide sufficient time and opportunities for peer interaction and oral language practice. The effectiveness of TPS depends on contextual factors such as class size, time allocation, and classroom climate. Smaller or well-managed classes, flexible lesson structures, and reduced emphasis on examination-oriented instruction can facilitate more effective implementation. Additionally, institutional support for communicative activities - such as incorporating speaking-focused assessment - can further reinforce the use of TPS in classroom practice.

2. Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should employ true-experimental or quasi-experimental designs with control groups to strengthen causal claims regarding the effectiveness of TPS on English speaking development. Comparative studies between TPS and other instructional approaches would further clarify its relative effectiveness.

In addition, studies involving larger and more diverse samples across different educational levels and institutional contexts are recommended to enhance the generalizability of the findings. This would provide a broader understanding of how TPS functions in varied EFL settings.

Furthermore, the use of qualitative research methods, such as classroom observations, discourse analysis, and learner interviews, is encouraged to provide deeper insights into interactional patterns, learner engagement, and affective responses during TPS-based instruction. Such approaches would complement quantitative findings and offer a more comprehensive understanding of the learning process.

Finally, longitudinal research designs are recommended to examine the long-term effects of TPS on learners' speaking proficiency, confidence, and willingness to communicate in English. This would help determine whether the observed improvements are sustained over time.

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