EFL Students' Perceptions of Talking Stick in English Speaking Class

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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the English as a foreign language (EFL) students' opinions on the use of Talking Stick in helping to improve their English speaking ability at a high school in Aceh Province, Indonesia. The study employed a quantitative method. The sample of the study was 15 first year students of a public senior high school in Banda Aceh, Aceh, Indonesia. The study selected the sample by using the purposive sampling, as the students have had Talking Stick technique in their English speaking class. To collect the data, the study disseminated questionnaires to the students. The results showed that the students had positive responses towards the use of Talking Stick in learning English speaking. The study recommends that such a technique can be applied more in other English classes in Indonesia.

Keywords: *EFL Students' Perceptions, Talking Stick, English Speaking Class.*

Introduction

Speaking is a necessary English skill for students to learn, and it is expected that they will be able to use it at least in simple communication as a tool for creating positive interactions in English communication. Good speaking skills are the actions to produce words that can be understood by listeners. Moreover, the emergence and significance of English speaking ability in educational settings has drawn attention on the improvement of this competence in recent years (Mridha & Muniruzzaman, 2020).

In Indonesia, English has been taught from elementary education; yet, most Indonesian students are still seen as having limited English language skills (Iksan et al., 2021). Based on the Education First (2021) report, Indonesia had a low English proficiency index, ranking 80 out of 111 countries worldwide. Indonesian students' English ability is still

regarded as low even though they have studied English both formally and informally for at least 9 to 12 years (Sukirmiyadi, 2018). In particular, many Indonesian students are still unable to fluently speak English (Amiruddin, 2019). Various factors influence the students' difficulty in English speaking skills, some of which include lack of English vocabulary and fear of making mistakes when speaking (Fitriyasni, 2020). Such issues may lead English instructors to reflect on their English language instruction. English instructors should try to adjust and adapt their teaching approaches, techniques, strategies, and materials in order to assist the students in advancing their English competence (Iksan & Dirham, 2018).

In light of the above discussions, this study attempted to investigate the use of a certain teaching method applied in a school in Indonesia, called Talking Stick. Talking Stick is one of the teaching activities that has been used to increase the students' interest in speaking a foreign language, in this case is English. Talking Stick is a way to encourage the students to give their opinions, and therefore, it can be useful to develop the students' English speaking habit. This study aimed to figure out the perceptions of English as a foreign language (EFL) students in using Talking Stick during their English lessons in the classroom in a public senior high school in Aceh Province, Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITY

As part of language skills, speaking is central in communication for EFL students (Goh & Burns, 2012). Being able to speak in English well is one of the characteristics of competent users of English (Richards, 2008). In addition, Brown (2001, p. 269) describes that speaking has an "interactive nature" that both the speaker and the listener produce meaningful speech in their communication. Moreover, Harmer (2007) adds that speaking is commonly done face-to-face as it is interactive, and some non-language features may also be used such as by changing tones or talking slower or faster.

There are two key aspects in speaking English, fluency and accuracy. Fluency refers to the way English is delivered naturally by the speaker when trying to convey the information during conversation regardless the speaker's limitation in communication (Nunan, 1991; Richards, 2006). In contrast, accuracy means the speaker's ability in avoiding errors in performance and grammar (Ellis, 2009). In short, a speaker is said to be competent in English when he/she can make correct forms of language use as well as can talk naturally during communication.

TALKING STICK TECHNIQUE

Locust (1998, as cited in Fujioka, 1998) describes that the Talking Stick was originally a method employed by Native Americans to encourage all members openly speak up in a sort of tribal meeting.

> "The talking stick has been used for centuries by many Indian tribes as a means of just and impartial hearing. The talking stick was commonly used in council circles to decide who had the right to speak. When matters of great concern would come before the council, the leading elder would hold the talking stick, and begin the discussion. When he would finish what he had to say, he would hold out the talking stick, and whoever would speak after him would take it. In this manner, the stick would be passed from one individual to another until all who wanted to speak had done so. The stick was then passed back to the elder for safe keeping." (Locust, 1998, as cited in Fujioka, 1998)

In the EFL classroom, the procedures for using the Talking Stick technique can be provided as follows: 1) explaining to all students that the student holding the stick has the right to speak, and everyone else should listen politely, and when the student finishes speaking, he or she gives the stick to the next student, 2) dividing the students into groups, 3) asking the groups to sit in a circle, 4) giving the stick to each group, 5) asking the stick holder to speak according to the chosen topics, 6) informing that the students may pass the stick to another if they are shy or not ready to speak, 7) continuing to pass the stick until all students have a chance to speak (Starr, n.d.).

Talking Stick, according to Fujioka (1998), should be applied as part of a learner-centered curriculum when a teacher want students to listen to others. This strategy shifts the emphasis away from the teacher as the sole source of knowledge. Furthermore, by using it, students are encouraged to learn from one another. Additionally, the teacher can provide language materials with easy, common dialog and scenarios for students to role-play while holding the talking stick (Fujioka, 1998).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research method. According to Kasiram (2008), quantitative research is a type of study that uses numerical data as a tool for analysis and study, particularly in relation to the subject being studied. In this study, the authors decided to investigate the students' perceptions on the use of Talking Stick in the English classroom. The study used purposive sampling since the students had been exposed to Talking Stick method in their class previously. The total respondents included in this study were 15 students from one class in a public senior high school in Banda Aceh, Aceh Province, Indonesia. The study collected the data by means of questionnaire, whereby the respondents responded to 10 statements, ranging from

Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), to Strongly Disagree (SD). The data were then analyzed by calculating the frequency of the responses in the questionnaire.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In order to find out whether the Talking Stick technique has had an impact on the students' speaking abilities and what challenges students encountered when learning speaking with the Talking Stick technique, the researchers disseminated questionnaires to gain the data required. The results are in the following:

TABLE 1. Students' responses on the questionnaire

No	Statement	Percentage (%)			
		SA	A	D	SD
1	Talking Stick technique is highly beneficial	-	93.3%	6.7%	-
2	Talking Stick technique can encourage students' motivation to practice speaking English	20%	86.7%	-	-
3	Talking Stick technique for learning is very interesting	46.7%	53.3%	-	-
4	Students are not confused by the way learning groups are divided when utilizing Talking Stick	20%	80%	-	-
5	Students gain confidence speaking English after learning the Talking Stick technique	26.7%	46.7%	26.7%	-
6	When Talking Stick is used in class, the students respond favorably	6.7%	73.3%	20%	-
7	Talking Stick allows students to express their thoughts in English	6.7%	66.7%	26.7%	-
8	The teacher's instructions for learning to speak by using the talking stick technique are quite clear	40%	60%	-	-
9	Students are motivated by activities in class that use the talking stick technique and are eager to practice speaking English with their friends	20%	73.3%	6.7%	-
10	It is important to keep learning English by utilizing the Talking Stick technique	26.7%	60%	6.7%	6.7%

Table 1 shows that in terms of the use of Talking Stick in speaking class, almost all students (93.3%) agreed stated that they believed the Talking Stick was very useful for learning to talk (statement 1). The students also mostly agreed (86.7%), with 20% of them highly agreed, that they were more motivated to learn English by using the

Talking Stick technique (statement 2). Moreover, the majority of the students (20% strongly agreed and 73.3% agreed) also considered that the Talking Stick approach could be used in classroom activities to motivate students, and that they were enthusiastic to practice speaking English with their peers (statement 9).

Further, the students also felt that using the Talking Stick technique made talking in English enjoyable (46.7% strongly agreed and 53.3% agreed; statement 3). Then, in terms of building confidence, the majority of the students (26.7% strongly agreed and 46.7% agreed) were positive that Talking Stick could help enhance them to be confident when speaking English in class (statement 5). This positive attitude was also shown by the students when asked about their perceptions of using Talking Stick in the speaking class (6.7% strongly agreed and 73.3% agreed; statement 6). Nevertheless, there were 20% of them with less favorable opinions on the use of Talking Stick in class. Later, on the statement 7 "Talking Stick allows students to express their thoughts in English", the students mostly believed that to be the case as there were 6.7% of them who strongly agreed and 66.7% agreed. Still, about 26.7% of the students felt differently.

When asked whether or not they felt any confusion on the way learning groups were divided when employing Talking Stick in the English class (statement 4), the students all shared similar responses with 20% of them strongly agreed and 80% of them agreed that they did not feel confuse with the group's arrangement. In addition, when asked if "the teacher's instructions for learning to speak by using the talking stick technique are quite clear" (statement 8), the students also had similar views as there were 40% strongly agreed and 60% agreed on the statement.

Finally, in terms of repeated use of Talking Stick in the English class, there were a mix of responses among the students. Most students were in favor of continuing the Talking Stick technique in teaching speaking, with 26.7% strongly agreed and 60% agreed; however, some students were opposed to the Talking Stick technique being employed once more, as there were 6.7% who strongly disagreed and another 6.7% disagreed.

Based on these results, the study has found that Talking Stick has become one method that encourages participation from the students in English speaking class. The findings have also revealed that the students were enthusiastic and more engaged in speaking English during the use of the Talking Stick. Those who responded here mostly agreed that using Talking Stick would make learning to speak English more exciting in class. These findings correspond to those in the study by Susilowati et al. (2017) in which they

found that most of the students who had Talking Stick felt positive to the effects of Talking Stick toward their motivation and learning process of English speaking.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that the Talking Stick technique has provided a beneficial impact on the students' enthusiasm in learning to talk in English. Based on the questionnaires, the study found that the students' responses were mostly in favor towards the use of Talking Stick in English classes. Therefore, this study recommends that EFL classroom settings apply the Talking Stick strategy to help boost the students' motivation in speaking English.

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