

# Enhancing Eighth Grade Students' Active Participation with the Think-Pair-Share Strategy in English Language Learning at SMP Negeri 7 Kupang

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v11i1.2048>

Yohana Logha,\*Elvis Albertus Bin Toni<sup>ab</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Widya Mandira Catholic University, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: [elvisbintoni@unwira.ac.id](mailto:elvisbintoni@unwira.ac.id)

## A B S T R A C T

This study addresses the issue of low student participation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, which remains a persistent challenge in Indonesian secondary education. Although cooperative learning strategies have been widely promoted, there is limited research focusing on students' active participation in junior high school EFL contexts, particularly in eastern Indonesia. This study aims to explore how the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) strategy enhances eighth-grade students' active participation in English learning at SMP Negeri 7 Kupang and to examine students' responses toward its implementation. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through classroom observations, interviews, and documentation. The findings indicate that TPS significantly improves students' behavioural, cognitive, and emotional participation by fostering collaboration, confidence, and engagement. Students also demonstrated a positive perception of the strategy. Overall, Think-Pair-Share is an effective approach for promoting active participation in EFL classrooms.

**Keywords:** *Think-Pair-Share, Active Participation, EFL Classroom, Cooperative Learning, Junior High School*

### Article History:

Received 17<sup>th</sup> January 2026

Accepted 12<sup>th</sup> February 2026

Published 14<sup>th</sup> February 2026



## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the issue of students' low participation in English classrooms has drawn considerable attention among educators and researchers in Indonesia. Many students tend to remain passive during class activities, showing reluctance to answer questions, express opinions, or engage in collaborative discussions. This lack of active participation hinders the learning process and affects students' communicative competence, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context where exposure to authentic communication opportunities is limited (Meyer, 2012; Hosni, 2014). In such conditions, teachers play a crucial role in creating an engaging classroom atmosphere that encourages students to actively take part in learning and develop confidence in using English communicatively.

Active participation is widely recognised as one of the essential indicators of effective learning. Students who are actively involved in classroom interaction tend to understand learning materials more deeply and retain knowledge longer because they do not merely receive information but process it through communication, questioning, and collaboration. Weaver and Qi (2005) explain that participation contributes to higher academic achievement and helps learners develop important cognitive and social skills. Similarly, Cohen (1991) and Vandrick (2000) argue that active participation facilitates language development through interaction and negotiation of meaning among learners.

However, despite its importance, achieving active participation remains a challenge in many Indonesian EFL classrooms. The learning process still tends to be dominated by teachers, and students often act as passive listeners rather than active communicators (Faridi, 2010). This teacher-centred approach, which relies heavily on grammar explanation and textbook exercises, provides limited opportunities for students to use English meaningfully. As a result,

many students experience anxiety, low motivation, and fear of making mistakes when speaking English (Widiati & Cahyono, 2006). Such conditions indicate a gap between the ideal of communicative and interactive learning and the actual practice found in many classrooms.

To address these challenges, educators have sought ways to apply strategies that engage students more actively and encourage them to communicate confidently. One of the most effective approaches is the implementation of cooperative learning, which emphasises peer collaboration and equal participation among learners (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Slavin, 1995). Cooperative learning is rooted in Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivism Theory, which views learning as a social process that occurs through interaction within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Through this theoretical lens, students learn best when they collaborate and exchange ideas, rather than when they learn in isolation.

Among the various cooperative learning models, the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) strategy, introduced by Frank Lyman in 1981, has gained significant attention because of its simplicity and proven impact on promoting student engagement and communication. The Think-Pair-Share strategy consists of three main stages: students are given time to think individually about a question or problem, discuss their ideas with a partner, and share the results of their discussion with the whole class (McTighe & Lyman, 1988; Ledlow, 2001). This structured process provides learners with opportunities to think critically, collaborate meaningfully, and communicate their ideas with greater confidence.

Trianto (2007) asserts that TPS enhances students' independence in learning and encourages equal participation because each student is actively involved in every phase of the learning process. Unlike conventional classroom discussions, where only outspoken students tend to dominate, TPS gives quieter learners the confidence to contribute after they have discussed and refined their ideas with peers. As a result, this strategy fosters an inclusive and supportive learning environment where all students have opportunities to participate.

A growing body of research provides empirical support for the effectiveness of the Think-Pair-Share strategy in enhancing classroom participation and motivation. Previous studies have shown that the application of TPS encourages students to become more actively involved in speaking activities and helps reduce anxiety by providing sufficient time for preparation and peer support. Other research conducted in secondary school settings has reported that TPS promotes balanced interaction, mutual respect, and active classroom discussions, leading students to take greater responsibility for their own learning and transforming classroom dynamics from teacher-centred to student-centred.

Further studies have demonstrated that TPS can be effectively implemented not only in language learning but also in other subject areas. Research in civic education and EFL classrooms has confirmed that TPS encourages students to express opinions, collaborate with peers, and respond more actively to teachers' questions. These findings collectively support the claim that TPS promotes an interactive and inclusive classroom atmosphere that motivates students to be more involved in the learning process.

Although these studies consistently highlight the benefits of TPS, most were conducted in Java and urban areas, where students have relatively higher English proficiency and access to better learning resources. There is still limited research focusing on how TPS can be implemented effectively in eastern Indonesia, particularly in Kupang, where English exposure is more restricted and learning motivation tends to be lower. Sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds in this region may influence how students respond to cooperative learning strategies.

Preliminary classroom observations at SMP Negeri 7 Kupang reveal that many eighth-grade students remain passive during English lessons. Only a small number of students actively participate in classroom discussions, while the majority prefer to remain silent due to low self-confidence, limited vocabulary, and fear of grammatical mistakes. Teachers also tend to dominate classroom talk, which restricts students' opportunities to engage. Consequently, the learning process often becomes one-directional, with minimal interaction or collaboration among students.

This situation underscores a significant research gap between existing evidence on the effectiveness of the Think-Pair-Share strategy and its limited application in junior high school EFL contexts in eastern Indonesia. Most previous studies have emphasized improvements in speaking ability or academic achievement, while fewer have focused specifically on active participation as a multidimensional construct encompassing behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement. Moreover, little research has examined how TPS functions within the specific sociocultural and linguistic context of Kupang.

Therefore, this study aims to explore how the Think-Pair-Share strategy can be implemented to increase eighth-grade students' active participation in English language learning at SMP Negeri 7 Kupang. This research also seeks to describe students' responses and experiences during the application of the strategy to provide a comprehensive understanding of its pedagogical implications.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute both theoretically and practically to the field of English language teaching. Theoretically, the study enriches the literature on cooperative learning by providing empirical evidence on how Think-Pair-Share promotes participation and engagement among EFL learners in secondary school contexts. Practically, the findings offer insights for teachers, curriculum developers, and educational policymakers in designing student-centred learning activities that encourage communication, collaboration, and active participation.

By exploring the implementation of the Think-Pair-Share strategy at SMP Negeri 7 Kupang, this study seeks to contribute to the improvement of English teaching practices in Indonesian junior high schools. It is expected that TPS will not only enhance students' participation but also foster confidence, motivation, and a sense of ownership in learning. In the long term, strategies such as TPS may help transform traditional English classrooms into more dynamic and communicative learning environments where students are actively engaged in constructing knowledge together.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to investigate the implementation of the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) strategy in enhancing students' active participation in English language learning. A qualitative method was chosen because it allows an in-depth exploration of students' classroom interactions, responses, and experiences during the learning process. Through this approach, the researcher sought to gain a comprehensive understanding of how TPS influences students' behavioural, cognitive, and emotional engagement in an EFL classroom context.

### Respondents

The respondents of this study were eighth-grade students of SMP Negeri 7 Kupang. One English class consisting of approximately 30 students was selected as the research subject. The class was chosen based on preliminary observations indicating low levels of student participation during English lessons.

### Instruments

The instruments used in this study included classroom observation sheets, interview guidelines, and documentation. Observation sheets were used to record students' participation and interaction during the implementation of the Think-Pair-Share strategy. Interview guidelines were designed to explore students' perceptions, feelings, and experiences related to the use of TPS. Documentation consisted of field notes and students' discussion results collected during the learning process.

### Procedures

The research was conducted in several stages. First, preliminary classroom observations were carried out to identify students' participation before the implementation of the TPS strategy. Next, the Think-Pair-Share strategy was implemented during English learning activities through three main stages: think, pair, and share. During the think stage, students were given time to think individually about the given questions. In the pair stage,

students discussed their ideas with a partner. In the share stage, students presented the results of their discussions to the class. Throughout the implementation, the researcher observed and recorded students' participation.

### **Data analysis**

The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis. Data from observations, interviews, and documentation were systematically coded and categorised to identify recurring patterns related to students' active participation. The results of the analysis were then interpreted to answer the research questions of the study.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Classroom Observation Results Before and After the Implementation of Think-Pair-Share**

Based on initial classroom observations conducted before implementing the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) strategy, English instruction in the eighth-grade classroom tended to be teacher-centred. The teacher dominated classroom activities through explanations of the material and direct question-and-answer sessions, while student participation remained limited. Only a few students consistently responded to questions, whereas the majority tended to remain silent, wait for teacher instructions, or avoid eye contact when asked to participate. Student-to-student interaction was relatively minimal, and discussion activities were almost absent.

After the Think-Pair-Share strategy was implemented, a noticeable change occurred in classroom dynamics. Students began to actively engage from the think stage, during which they were given time to understand the questions and prepare their answers individually. During the pair stage, nearly all students participated in paired discussions. Students were observed exchanging ideas, assisting peers who experienced difficulties, and attempting to formulate responses in English, although their language use remained relatively simple. The classroom atmosphere became more dynamic, with more evenly distributed interaction among students.

In the share stage, a greater number of students were willing to present the results of their discussions in front of the class compared to the pre-TPS condition. Although errors in pronunciation and sentence structure were still evident, students demonstrated increased confidence and willingness to express their ideas orally. Overall, the observations indicate that the implementation of TPS contributed to improvements in students' behavioural participation, cognitive engagement, and confidence in communication. Supporting documentation, including students' discussion notes and classroom activity recordings, further reinforced these findings by illustrating more active and consistent student involvement.

### **Student Interview Results**

#### *Students' Perceptions and Emotional Responses toward Think-Pair-Share*

The interview results revealed that the majority of students held positive perceptions of the implementation of the Think-Pair-Share strategy in English learning. Most students reported feeling happy and enjoying the learning process because they were able to learn collaboratively with peers while still having opportunities to think independently.

Several students stated that TPS made the learning process more enjoyable and less monotonous, as illustrated in the following responses:

*"I feel very happy because I can learn with my friends and also think individually."* (S1)

*"I feel happy because working in groups makes the lesson more interesting."* (S4)

In addition, students perceived that the combination of individual and group work helped them understand the material more effectively:

*"I feel happy because I can work in groups and think. Individually, I can understand the material."* (S11)

However, one student expressed a different perception, stating discomfort with group-based learning and a preference for studying individually. This finding indicates the existence of varied learning preferences among students, although overall responses toward TPS were predominantly positive.

### Factors Enhancing Students' Speaking Confidence

The interview findings indicated that paired discussions were the primary factor contributing to increased student confidence in speaking English. Students reported feeling more confident because they did not have to speak alone and could rely on peer support. Several students stated that they did not feel embarrassed when discussing ideas with their peers:

*"I am confident because I do not feel embarrassed when discussing with my friends." (S1)*

Furthermore, peer support in the form of attention and assistance also enhanced students' self-confidence:

*"Because my friends always listen to what I know, it makes me brave enough to speak." (S2)*

Some students also mentioned that discussion activities helped them overcome difficulties related to pronunciation and vocabulary use:

*"If we have difficulties with pronunciation, we can help each other." (S4)*

These findings suggest that TPS creates a safer and more supportive learning environment, encouraging students to participate more confidently in oral communication.

### Think-Pair-Share Stages that Most Support Active Participation

Most students identified the *pair* stage as the most helpful in encouraging active participation. This stage allowed students to collaborate, support one another, and exchange ideas before speaking in front of the class.

*"The pair stage, because we can work together and discuss." (S1)*

*"The pair stage, because I can understand the material better with my friends." (S11)*

Several students also considered the *share* stage to be important, as it provided opportunities to speak in front of the class and enhanced their confidence:

*"The share stage, because it makes me more confident to speak in front of many people." (S4)*

Meanwhile, a small number of students preferred the *think* stage because it allowed them to reflect independently, particularly those who felt more comfortable with individual learning. This finding indicates that each stage of the Think-Pair-Share strategy contributes differently to supporting student participation.

### Discussions

The findings of this study indicate that the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) strategy is effective in enhancing the active participation of eighth-grade students in English language learning through a structured and collaborative mechanism. The increase in participation is reflected in changes in students' classroom behaviour, greater speaking confidence, and more positive emotional responses toward the learning process.

Classroom observations conducted before and after the implementation of TPS reveal a shift from teacher-centred instruction toward a more student-centred learning approach. This finding is consistent with the view that cooperative learning strategies can enhance student engagement by providing broader opportunities for interaction (Gillies, 2016; Slavin, 2018). The *think* stage allows students to process information independently, while the *pair* and *share* stages facilitate social interaction that supports knowledge construction.

From the perspective of social constructivist theory, these findings support the notion that learning occurs most effectively through social interaction and collaboration (Vygotsky, as applied in contemporary studies by Lantolf & Thorne, 2015). Paired discussions function as scaffolding that assists students in learning within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD),

particularly when students with higher proficiency support peers who experience learning difficulties.

Students' positive responses toward the TPS strategy are also in line with recent studies demonstrating that Think-Pair-Share can enhance self-confidence, reduce speaking anxiety, and promote more equitable participation in EFL classrooms (Haryadi & Eryandi, 2023; Syafii, 2021). Nevertheless, the presence of one student who preferred individual learning suggests that TPS may not be equally suitable for all learners. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to implement this strategy flexibly while taking students' diverse learning styles into account.

Overall, this study not only confirms the effectiveness of Think-Pair-Share in increasing students' active participation but also contributes to a deeper understanding of its implementation in junior high school contexts, particularly in regions with limited exposure to the English language

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) strategy is effective in enhancing the active participation of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 7 Kupang in English language learning, as it significantly improves students' behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement through structured stages of individual thinking, pair discussion, and whole-class sharing. TPS provides students with adequate time to process ideas independently, reduces anxiety related to immediate oral responses, and builds confidence through peer interaction, which in turn increases their willingness to speak, peer collaboration, and positive attitudes toward English. The strategy also creates a supportive and inclusive learning environment, particularly benefiting students who were previously passive, while students' predominantly positive perceptions indicate its potential to address common EFL classroom challenges such as low confidence, limited speaking opportunities, and uneven participation. Although a small number of students preferred individual learning, this highlights the need for flexible instructional practices to accommodate diverse learning styles. Overall, the study affirms that Think-Pair-Share is a pedagogically sound and contextually appropriate strategy for improving active participation in junior high school EFL classrooms, especially in contexts with limited English exposure, as it integrates cognitive processing, social interaction, and emotional support in line with student-centred and communicative language teaching principles.

## REFERENCES

- Alfino, D., Rochsantiningih, D., & Sulistyawati, H. (2019). Improving students' classroom participation through Think-Pair-Share technique. *English Education Journal*, 7(3), 321–330.
- Cohen, A. D. (1991). Second language learner strategies. *English Teaching Forum*, 29(3), 2–7.
- Faridi, A. (2010). *Teaching English as a foreign language: Theory and practice*. Widya Karya.
- Gillies, R. M. (2004). The effects of cooperative learning on junior high school students during small group learning. *Learning and Instruction*, 14(2), 197–213.
- Gillies, R. M. (2016). Cooperative learning: Review of research and practice. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 41(3), 39–54.
- Handayani, D., Anderson, R., & Sariyani, N. L. (2021). The implementation of Think-Pair-Share to improve students' participation in civic education. *Journal of Education Research and Evaluation*, 5(2), 210–218.
- Haryadi, R., & Eryandi, A. (2023). Think-Pair-Share strategy and its impact on students' participation and critical thinking in EFL classrooms. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics*, 8(1), 45–58.
- Hosni, S. A. (2014). Speaking difficulties encountered by young EFL learners. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature*, 2(6), 22–30.
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1999). *Learning together and alone: Cooperative, competitive, and individualistic learning* (5th ed.). Allyn & Bacon.

- Lantolf, J. P., & Thorne, S. L. (2015). *Sociocultural theory and the genesis of second language development*. Oxford University Press.
- Ledlow, S. (2001). Using Think-Pair-Share in the college classroom. Center for Learning and Teaching Excellence, Arizona State University.
- Lyman, F. (1981). The responsive classroom discussion: The inclusion of all students. In A. S. Anderson (Ed.), *Mainstreaming digest* (pp. 109–113). University of Maryland Press.
- McTighe, J., & Lyman, F. (1988). Cueing thinking in the classroom: The promise of theory-embedded tools. *Educational Leadership*, 45(7), 18–24.
- Meyer, K. R. (2012). Student engagement in the classroom. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 104(3), 601–610.
- Slavin, R. E. (1995). *Cooperative learning: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed.). Allyn & Bacon.
- Slavin, R. E. (2018). *Educational psychology: Theory and practice* (12th ed.). Pearson.
- Syafii, A. (2021). Enhancing students' speaking participation through Think-Pair-Share strategy. *Journal of English Education*, 6(2), 134–145.
- Trianto. (2007). *Model-model pembelajaran inovatif berorientasi konstruktivistik*. Prestasi Pustaka.
- Vandrick, S. (2000). Language, culture, class, gender, and race in EFL classrooms. *TESOL Quarterly*, 34(4), 653–658.
- Weaver, R. R., & Qi, J. (2005). Classroom organization and participation: College students' perceptions. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 76(5), 570–601.
- Widiati, U., & Cahyono, B. Y. (2006). The teaching of EFL speaking in the Indonesian context. *TEFLIN Journal*, 17(2), 269–292.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.