The Effect of Using Three-Step Interview and Talking Chips Techniques on Iraqi EFL Learners' Speaking Ability

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Abstract

In countries such as Iraq where English is taught as a foreign language, it is common to notice that in spite of teaching English for twelve years, most students are unable to speak in a proper way. This fact has been documented by several studies on speaking ability in Iraq. Therefore, the researcher highlighted this issue as an attempt to recover it through using new two techniques which are Three-Step Interview and Talking Chips.

The population of the present study is made up of fourth preparatory male students in Baghdad Governorate, the third Directorate General of Education in Al-Rusafa Third. The sample of the study, which is chosen randomly, consists of two sections of the fourth preparatory male students, scientific branch, at Al-Shaheed Qassim Al-Mubarqa' Preparatory School. The total number of the sample was 82. Three-Step Interview was applied on the first section, while Talking Chips was applied on the second one.

The experimental design of this study is the pre-test post-test non - equivalent groups. The experiment lasted two months and a half during the academic year 2016-2017. It started on the sixth of March and ended on the eleventh of May. The researcher himself taught all the two groups. Both of the pretest and the posttest are constructed by the researcher and exposed to a jury of experts to verify its validity.

The first version of the pretest was applied on the pilot sample of (67) male students to estimate its discrimination power and difficulty level.

Reliability was calculated by using 'Inter-rater reliability'. The researcher applied the test on the pilot sample and then gave the test to another scorer who is the regular teacher of English. The correlation between the two scores was calculated by Pearson correlation. The result was (0.73). This indicates that the test has a high reliability.

T – test formula for two independent samples was used to analyze the results of the comparison between the TSI means scores and TCs ones in the posttest. It showed that there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the (TSI) group and (TCs) group in favor of the (TSI).

As a result, the TSI technique is a more appropriate technique in teaching speaking.

In the light of the study findings, a number of recommendations are stated and suggestions for further studies are put forward.

Chapter One
Introduction

1. The Problem and its Significance

Language is the most significant way to communicate. It consists of four major skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four basic skills are associated with each other by two limits: the manner of communication -to communicate orally or in a written way- and the orientation of communication -to receive or produce speech. Speaking is a productive skill which requires combining a message, interacting the message, and communicating with other individuals (Lindsay and Knight, 2006: 57).

Speaking is the process of structuring and participating meaning via using oral and non-verbal symbols, in various contexts. For this reason, the control of speaking has the main consideration for the students of foreign language. Hence, the students from time to time reproduce their achievement in language learning built on how much they have developed in their speaking ability (Richards, 2008: 19).

In countries such as Iraq where English is taught as a foreign language, it is common to notice that in spite of the long years of language education, most students are unable to speak in a proper way. The researcher, as a teacher in one of the secondary schools, has noticed that, in Iraqi preparatory classrooms, students are not efficient in the speaking skill.

This issue is evidenced through several studies that have been conducted in Iraq such as Kadhum (1987), Salih (1998) and Nasrallah's (2012) studies.

Hence, the situation is problematic and requires some sort of remedy for the sake of development and improvement since speaking ability is crucial for learning and teaching English as a foreign Language. As a result, it is necessary to adopt and apply new methods and techniques in teaching speaking.

This study tries to implement the Three – Step Interview (TSI) which is one of the CL techniques where the students in pairs take turns interviewing each other and then report what they learn to another pair. The three steps are as follows: (1) Student A interviews Student B, (2) Student B interviews Student A, (3) Students A and B summarize their partner's responses for Students C and D and vice versa (Barkley, 2010: 307).

Talking Chips (TCs) which is also a technique of cooperative learning method that Rani (2009:100) defines it as a cooperative technique in which each student who participates in a group discussion, is given a chip each time they speak. This technique ensures equitable participation by regulating how often each group member is allowed to participate.

These techniques encourage reticent students to participate and solve communication or process problems, such as dominating or clashing group members, hoping to improve, develop or fill a gap in the process of teaching English to Iraqi EFL students.

1.2 The Aim:

The present study aims at identifying which technique has the greatest effect on the speaking skill of Iraqi EFL students of fourth preparatory graders: Three – Step Interview or Talking Chips.

1.3 The Hypothsis

There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the students who are taught by using Three – Step Interview technique and those who are taught speaking using Talking Chips technique.

1.4 The Limits

The present study is limited to the following
1. The academic year 2016-2017.
2. Fourth preparatory school students.
3. The last four units of the "English for Iraq" textbook.

1.5 The Value

This study can be useful in
1. relieving the fourth preparatory students' struggle in speaking,
2. helping EFL curricula designers to include TSI and TCs techniques in teaching speaking, and
3. making use of the results reached in this study through teaching speaking in Iraqi schools.

1.6 The Procedures

To conduct the present study, the following procedures will be adopted:
1. selecting an appropriate experimental design;
2. selecting a representative sample from the fourth preparatory schools;

3. dividing the sample into two groups;
4. equalizing the two groups on a number of factors such as age, parent's education, previous knowledge, etc.;
5. conducting an experiment using the TSI and TCs techniques;
6. preparing and validating oral tests to be used as a pretest and a posttest;
7. administering the tests to the study groups;
8. analyzing the test data to obtain the findings; and
9. drawing conclusions and presenting recommendations and suggestions.

1.7 Definitions of Basic Terms:

For the purpose of clarity, the basic terms of present study are defined as follows:

1.7.1 Effect:

Richards and Schmidt (2010:190) define effect as a tool of measurement that can be used to measure the effect of a variable on another or a relation between two or more variables. If the calculated size of the effect is strong, that is to say; the independent variable has a strong effect on the dependent variable, the researcher must reject the null hypotheses and attribute the effect to the independent variable.

1.7.2 Three – Step Interview (TSI):

According to Kagan and Kagan (2009:159), TSI is a technique in which students interview their partners and then each share with teammates what they learned. In pairs, student A interviews student B. Pairs switch roles: student B interviews student A. Pairs pair up to form groups of four. Each student, in turn, shares with the team what he/she learned in the interview.

In the TSI, students interview each other in pairs to learn the opinions and ideas of the other on topics introduced by the teacher. Then, they report their findings back to the group (Falchikov, 2001: 11).

Operationally, TSI is a cooperative learning technique which encourages and reinforces the students to speak all the time of the lesson.

1.7.3 Talking Chips (TCs):

Kagan (2009: 17) points out that TCs is a technique in teaching speaking which enables the students to speak English, enhances them to be more active in the class and cooperates in a group.

Kagan (2016: Online) mentions that TCs technique is one of the techniques in cooperative learning which can be summarized as a technique where students are divided into groups. At that time, they are handed some colorful chips which are used when they want to speak.

Operationally, TCs is a cooperative technique that can be used to develop speaking skill that includes three steps: Dividing the students into equal groups, handing each one of them a number of ships to use one of them every time he wants to speak and evaluate the student.

1.2.4 Technique:

According to Richards and Rodgers (2014:21), a technique is an implementation which actually takes place in a classroom. It is a particular trick, strategy, or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective. The technique must be consistent with a method and therefore in harmony with an approach as well.

1.7.5 Speaking:

Speaking is making use of words in an ordinary voice, uttering words, knowing and being able to use a language, expressing oneself in words, making a speech (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2010: 1479).

Speaking is a complicated skill that needs more than a few mental operations. (Ellis, 2003: 108).

Operationally, speaking is done when the students are able to speak and accomplish the tasks that are asked by the teacher.

Chapter Two
Theoretical Background and Previous Studies

2.0 An Introductory Note:

This chapter aims at presenting a presentation of cooperative learning, the applied two techniques of this study – TSI and TCs and speaking ability.

2.1 Cooperative Learning:

Cooperation is a life competence and almost every task, job or gregarious relationship necessitates cooperation with nearby individuals in order to achieve the participated targets (Al-Khafaf, 2013: 19).

According to Richards and Rodgers (2014: 244), CL is a method to teaching that attempts to make the maximum use of cooperative activities which aim at engaging the students into pairs and small groups of learning.

Dyson (2001: 246) defines CL as an academic model that can be used to teach varied subjects to students at different levels. Students are put into small, arranged, heterogeneous groups in order to achieve the subject matter content.

2.2 Three-Step Interview (TSI)
2.2.1 Definitions of TSI

TSI is one of the CL techniques which Kagan has developed in 1992 (Solomon and Solomon, 2009: 90). Moss and Loh-Hagan (2016: 216)

define it as a strategy that can promote students' thinking and speaking ability cooperatively. Students, in TSI, work together in groups which include not more than four members. Each one plays a part in three separate sessions. They have two opportunities to learn. The first is to interact with content while the other with colleagues.

Lenning et al. (2013: 288) state TSI is a processing interview that is intended to replace the conventional group discussion. Students have the right to assign pairs by themselves so as to interview one another about a limited topic or issue. At this time, they inverse their roles. Next, they participate with the whole class or in a group.

Kielven (2001:19) mention that TSI is an operative technique to enhance students to share their ideas, ask questions and take notes. In each group, it is better to be there three members, but it can be reformed to be four in each group. It is a useful strategy that can be used, particularly, for the sake of knowing the students to each other. As a result, a sort of confidence will be built among them and then they will learn actively and effectively (Bender and Waller, 2011: 126).

2.2.2 Steps to Apply TSI:

Kagan and Kagan (2009: 160) list three steps to implement TSI. They are as follows:

Step 1 A Teacher conveys the main notion of the interview to the students, limits the period of time of the interview, and provides a duration for thinking.

Step 2 In couples, students A interviews students B.

Step 3 Couples shift their roles; i.e., students B interviews students A.

Eller (2004: 108) does not agree with Kagan and Kagan and considers all the above steps as one step. He states that after the interviews and reversing roles step, every pair joins another one so as to form four numbered groups. They introduce their partners and retell what their partners said about the given topic. Next, the groups totally engaged together to discuss the main points and then conclude with findings.

A team, in TSI, can make any difficult topic easy through dividing it into parts and distribute it among its members .Besides, they can solve problems in three or four numbered groups. After that, they are put in larger ones (ibid).

2.2.3 Characteristics of TSI

The major characteristics of TSI are as follows:

a) The teacher donates a role for each student or the students can donate the roles by themselves. He provides certain questions for the interviews in order to gain specified goals (Fitrianingrum, 2013: 39).

b) Students highlight the most interesting points (ibid).

c) The teacher can employ this technique for sake of developing speaking, paraphrasing and listening (Agarwal, 2011: 110).

d) It is suitable for teaching both of childhood and elementary academic levels (Falchikov, 2001: 13).

2.2.4 Advantages of TSI

TSI technique has fundamental advantages in teaching and learning a language. They are as follows:

a) It provides the students with various oral communication tasks and makes sure that each student has a chance to speak and listen (Kagan, 2009: 66).

b) It promotes the students' personal and social skills through engaging them in tasks including listening, understanding, and accountability (ibid: 131).

c) It makes the students more familiar with each other at the very beginning. (Falchikov, 2001: 11).

d) It aims at enabling the students to participate and use various strategies of questioning (Permanasari, 2014: 23).

2.2.5 Disadvantages of TSI

In spite of all the advantages above, there are some disadvantages. They are:

a) Students may miss attention during the interview (Ur, 2012: 180).

b) It is sometimes hard to keep the current discussion (Thornbury, 2005: 125).

2.2.6 Why Using TSI for Teaching Speaking?

The researcher intends to use TSI in teaching speaking for the following considerable reasons:

a) Interview involves an exchanging talking between two individuals which is the best setting for making conversation in everyday life (Ur, 2012: 180).

b) It creates simultaneous accountability as well as it motivates the students to share and apply different thinking and questioning tasks to extend theirs speaking ability (Kielven et al., 2001:167-168).

c) It includes interactive activities which act as an applicable support in teaching speaking. By applying this technique (TSI), the students, spontaneously, will learn when and how to say and how to speak in

English (Kagan, 2009: 6.9). As a result, the researcher affirms to apply this technique to develop the speaking ability.

2.3 Talking Chips (TC)
2.3.1 Definitions of TC

TC is also one of the CL techniques which has been developed in 1994 by Kagan (Jacobs et al., 2002: 73). Safont and Campoy (2002: 95) reveal that it is a technique that can be used to develop speaking ability through engaging students into a real interaction to solve common communicative problems.

Harris and Goldberg (2012: 66) look at the matter from a different angle. They state that in TC, the teacher sets the discussion groups, distributes the students into small groups (each three or four of them sit around a table) and hands each individual a number of colored chips. Whenever a student wants to start speaking, s/he has to place a chip in the center of the table.

Gray et al. (2010:127) highlight the most important aim of TC by saying that TC is a technique which gives a true appreciation to the students' contributions and offers equal opportunities for all of them to participate.

2.3.2 Procedure of TC

TC has 4 steps. They are as follows:

Step 1 The teacher gives a topic so as to elaborate and articulate (Alcantara et al. 2003: 152).

Bowers and Keisler (2011: 138) do not agree with Alcantara et al., they think that the first step of TC is that the instructor, at the beginning of a lesson, divides the leaners into groups of three or four members then hands each student a specified number of chips so that s/he uses through the talk. After a while, he gives a new topic that the students have to discuss.

Step 2 The students start the discourse and when they want to participate, each one should place a chip in the middle of discussion group (Nilson 2010: 164). Jacobs et al. (2002: 73) note that a student can be a banker for the sake of collecting the chips of his partners.

Step 3 The students count the chips after the time of discussion is up, and then they are assessed whether all of them have participated equally or not. If they find out that sharing was unfair, they try to recover it in the next discussions (Cooper, 2010: 281).

2.3.3 Skills of TC

Kagan and Kagan (2009: xii, 6.13, 6.15) find out that there are some skills that can be developed by using TC as follows:

a) **Social skill:**

TC helps students to acquire a variety of social skills through their interaction with other students.

b) **Communication skill:**

Communication skill is the most important skill in learning a language. TC develops it through involving the students into different structured discussion communities.

c) **Team building:**

Through team building, teammates get acquainted, create a team identity, promote mutual support, value individual differences, and develop a synergistic relationship.

d) **Thinking skill:**

Thinking Skills are intellectual procedures which are used to do things, such as problem solving, decision making, asking questions, etc.

e) **Knowledge building:**

TC is one of the most important techniques that seeks to increase the students' knowledge.

2.3.4 Advantages of TC:

1. In TC, each student is held responsible for sharing.
2. It promotes both of speaking and listening abilities.
   (Kaganonline, 2016: 1).

Gray (2010: 217) and Millis and Cottell (1998: 98) added the following advantages:

3. It supplies students with an opportunity to share and enables them to challenge one another.
4. It gives help to the students so as to see how they share throughout group work.
5. It improves "teamwork skills and self-awareness".

2.3.5 Disadvantages of TC

Unfortunately, TC has some disadvantages. They are as follows:

1. It can impede the flow of the normal exchange because of the process of this technique depends on participations. But, this state could give an opportunity for all the students to participate.
2. This technique makes conversation seem like an artificial one. But, this would not bother the students' learning progression because the exchange is going well (ibid).
3. The level of noise is so high.

In spite of all these disadvantages, the researcher believes that this technique has significant aspects that can promote the students' speaking ability.

2.4 Speaking

2.4.1 Definitions of Speaking

According to Oxford Advanced Students' Dictionary (2010: 1479), speaking is an ability to use a specific language; to make a speech; to express oneself through using his/her voice whereas, Miller (2003: vi) defines it as a usual, daily habit which mostly all of human beings use. It necessitates not much amount of thinking, energy or adequate preparation.

Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2017: 137) state that it is a process that involves people producing and exchanging certain oral structures together. Spratt et al. (2005: 34) consider it as a "productive skill" which requires employing speech to convey ideas to other persons.

Comings et al. (2006: 124) have a similar view with Spratt et al. They note that it is a productive ability that requires people to produce arranged oral utterances for the sake of communication with others. It is differentiated from the other abilities in which it is received auditorially. They add that it is an essential part of language acquisition.

2.4.2 The Functions of Speaking Ability

It is a priority for the foreign language students to master the speaking skill in English. Several language specialists have attempted to set a specified classification of the functions of speaking in the interaction of human beings. They are as follows:

a) **Talk as interaction (conversation):**
   The major function of the speaking is, sometimes, to make a social interaction which does not always start with saying hello, ends with goodbye and includes a little amount of discussion. Human beings inform each other what they have been doing recently not for the sake of who cares needs some information but a method to generate a friendly relationship (Lewis and Bleistein, 2014: n. p.).

b) **Talk as transaction:**
   The human beings speak so that they can get what they need to be done, explained, and described or to ask and check the meaning. They use transaction talk when they go shopping or to employ tradespeople (ibid).

c) **Talk as performance:**
   People use speaking when they want to perform a speech, public talks, telling or retelling a story and so on. They speak formally at special events   (ibid, n. p.; Richards, 2008: 21).

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2.4. 3 Features of Speaking Ability:

In the speaking process, some features are presented, while people are involved in an interaction. These are:

a) **Fluency**

Richards (2006: 14) states that fluency is the normal use of language, which in spite of its limits in the oral ability, the students can understand and progress speaking.

b) **Accuracy**

Accuracy is the ability to speak or write a grammatical sentence (Richards and Schmidt, 2010: 223).

c) **Pronunciation**

Pronunciation is the way which human beings use to create sounds of language, in what way and in which part of a sentence or a word they have to put stress, and how they use pitch and intonation so as to demonstrate to their feelings and to convey the proposed meaning (Harmer, 2007: 281).

d) **Grammar:**

According to Harmer (2007: 274), grammar is a process of putting the parts of speech together orderly.

e) **Vocabulary:**

Vocabulary is a group of lexical units, "including single words, compound words and idioms" (Richards and Schmidt, 2010: 629).

Chapter Three
Methodology and Procedures

3.0 Introductory Notes

The purpose of this chapter is to:

1. select an appropriate experimental design,
2. select the population, sample and equalizing the sample,
3. control the extraneous factors ,and apply the experiment,
4. design and administering tests, and analyze the data statistically.

3.1 Experimental Design

Richard and Schmidt (2010: 210) notice that the experimental design is one of the approaches to the academic research wherein a notion or hypothesis is examined or checked so as to find out what kind of relationship that occurs between independent and dependent variables. They add that it is a "plan for conducting an experimental study".

After an investigation which the researcher made, he found out that the pre-test post-test non - equivalent groups is the fittest one for the present study (Chandra and Sharma, 2007: 382).

The experimental design of the study is illustrated in table (1).

Table 1
The Experimental Design of the Study

Pre-test	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Post-test
T1	Three -Step Interview		T2
T1	Talking Chips	Speaking Ability	T2

Chapter Four
Results, Conclusions, Recommendations and Suggestions

4.0 An Introductory Note

In this chapter, there is an exhibition and discussion of the results, conclusions, recommendation, and suggestions that have gotten during the analyzing of the experiment.

4.1 Presentation of Results

The final results are clearly presented in connection with the dependent variable, which is the speaking ability of Iraqi preparatory school students.

Because the present study is intended to find out the effect of using two types of techniques, TSI and TC, on the development of speaking ability by the 4th preparatory school students, scientific field, the obtaining data of the posttest have been treated by inserting the students' scores of the two groups into computer in order to analyze them by using the SPSS using t – test formula for two independent samples.

This shows that the mean score of the TSI group is 11.05 and that of the TCs group is 8.89. It is found out that the computed t-value is 4.123 which is greater than the tabulated value 2.056. This means that the difference between the two mean score is statistically significant in favor of the TSI group; i.e. the TSI group is better than the TCs group in teaching speaking ability. So, the null hypothesis is rejected. See table (2).

Table 2
The Results of T - test for the Two Groups in the in the Post-test

Groups	No.	M.	SD	DF	T – Value Calculated	T – Value Tabulated
TSI	39	11.05	2.790			
TCs	37	8.89	1.577	74	4.123	2.056

4.2 Interpretation of Results

According to the obtained data, the TSI technique is better than TCs technique in developing speaking ability of the students since the results of comparing between the students' scores in the two groups in posttest, it reveals TSI scores are higher than TCs ones.

4.3 Conclusions

Results prove that TSI is more effective technique than TCs in teaching speaking rather. The following conclusions are what the present study has arrived at:

1. TSI has been met more eagerly than TCs by the students because it has given them a full freedom from the teacher's control as well as an opportunity to learn from each other.
2. Through TSI the students can get a lot of chances so as to use the spoken English language in discussions or debates which increase their knowledge in speaking areas (grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, etc.).
3. Using CL pedagogies to teach English can be helpful not only to develop English language, but to build a sense of cooperation among the learners into the classroom.
4. In CL, there is a low level of competence among the students in doing classroom activities.
5. The students will reach to the most comprehensive potential in all aspects of language development if they are engaged in the learning process.

4.4 Recommendations

On the basis of the results of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Teachers should donate the suitable tools to the students in order to learn the subjects in an effective way as well as to understand the complicated tasks that they may face.
2. The teacher should give an enough period of time to each student for the sake of expressing himself and pay attention to the students who are shy to motivate them.
3. Speaking skill lessons should be presented by enjoyable and authentic material to be more effective and more learnable.
4. The English syllabuses should have a lot of speaking exercises so that the students can develop their proficiency in speaking.
5. The CL learning activities should be given a special emphasis in English classes because they can lead to a better learning.
6. It would be better to have twenty students per class.
7. The classroom should have some information technology, such as data show, projector, smart board, etc. all of them has an important role to develop English language in general.
8. The Iraqi English teachers need to improve their ways in teaching as well as the skills of language (speaking, writing, reading and writing) by enrolling in training courses.

4.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

The researcher suggests the following suggestions as projects for further studies:

1. The effect of the TSI and TC on other language skills, such as listening or writing.
2. A study with the same procedures can be managed on the students of English department at college level.
3. The use of the TSI and TC on the language areas, such as: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, etc.
4. The impact of the TSI and TC on the developing of the students' autonomy in learning the English language.

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