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**IMPLEMENTING THINK-PAIR-SHARE TO PROMOTE ACTIVE
PARTICIPATION IN UNIVERSITY ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING**

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ABSTRACT

English language learning in higher education requires instructional approaches that can move students beyond passive reception toward active participation, collaborative interaction, and meaningful communication. One strategy that supports this shift is Think-Pair-Share (TPS). This cooperative learning technique gives students structured opportunities to think individually, discuss ideas with a partner, and share their conclusions with the wider class. This article describes the implementation and pedagogical potential of the Think-Pair-Share technique in university-level English language learning. The article adopts a descriptive qualitative orientation based on the documented classroom implementation of English language learning at the Faculty of Psychology, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, during the 2025/2026 academic year, supported by recent empirical literature on cooperative and collaborative learning. The findings indicate that TPS provides a structured learning sequence consisting of three interconnected stages: individual thinking, paired discussion, and classroom sharing. These stages give students opportunities to formulate ideas independently, negotiate meaning with peers, express opinions, listen actively, and participate in collaborative problem solving. Recent studies likewise indicate that TPS and related cooperative learning approaches can support students' speaking performance, reading comprehension, classroom participation, engagement, confidence, and learning outcomes. However, successful implementation requires adequate instructional time, carefully designed tasks, effective classroom management, and active teacher facilitation. TPS should therefore be understood not merely as a grouping technique but as a structured pedagogical strategy for promoting student-centered English language learning in higher education.

Keywords: Think-Pair-Share, Cooperative Learning, English Language Learning, Student Participation, Higher Education, EFL

Introduction

English has become an important part of higher education because it gives students access to international communication, academic resources, scientific publications, and professional opportunities. For university students, English proficiency is not limited to understanding grammatical structures; it also involves communicating ideas, participating in discussions, interpreting academic information, and collaborating with others. Consequently, English language instruction in higher education requires learning environments that provide students with meaningful opportunities to use the language actively rather than merely receive information from the lecturer (Panhwar & Bell, 2023; Sulaiman & Thakur, 2022). In this context, active and collaborative learning has increasingly been emphasized as an alternative to predominantly teacher-centered instruction.

Student-centered learning is particularly relevant to language education because language competence develops through interaction and meaningful use. Research in EFL

contexts shows that active learning and collaborative activities give students more opportunities to participate, exchange ideas, and construct knowledge with their peers (Sajidin & Ashadi, 2021; Wijaya, 2022). In university English classrooms, cooperative learning can also boost students' cognitive engagement and task achievement by requiring them to negotiate ideas and take responsibility for learning activities (Sulaiman & Thakur, 2022). Nevertheless, implementing cooperative learning is not always straightforward. Teachers may face challenges related to classroom management, unequal student participation, limited instructional time, and limited familiarity with collaborative learning procedures (Tamimy et al., 2023).

One cooperative learning technique that addresses some of these challenges is Think-Pair-Share (TPS). TPS provides a simple but structured sequence in which students first think individually about a question or problem, subsequently discuss their ideas with a partner, and finally share the results of their discussion with the wider class. The structure gives students enough time to formulate responses before being required to speak publicly. Recent research suggests this sequence can increase classroom participation because students can test and refine their ideas with a peer before sharing them publicly (Mundelsee & Jurkowski, 2021). The collaborative element is particularly important for students who may be reluctant to participate directly in whole-class discussions.

Several recent studies have demonstrated the relevance of TPS to English language learning. Benjelloun (2021), for example, reported that TPS supported Moroccan university students' speaking performance by providing opportunities to exchange ideas and communicate with greater confidence and fluency. A meta-analysis conducted in the Indonesian context also reported positive effects of TPS on English language teaching and learning (Elismawati et al., 2021). More recent studies have examined its use in speaking, reading, writing, and classroom participation, showing that the technique can be adapted to different language skills and instructional contexts (Maharani et al., 2023; Nisa & Mahsunah, 2024; Putri et al., 2025).

The pedagogical value of TPS extends beyond language proficiency. The technique also gives students opportunities to develop interpersonal and social learning skills. During paired discussion, students must listen to their partners, clarify ideas, respond to different opinions, and reach a shared understanding. During the sharing stage, students communicate their conclusions to a larger audience while others listen and respond. These processes align with broader findings on collaborative learning, which emphasize the importance of peer interaction, learner engagement, and shared responsibility in language education (Chu, 2021; Zheng & Zhou, 2022). Collaborative learning may therefore contribute simultaneously to linguistic development and students' social participation.

Recent evidence further indicates that TPS can be particularly useful in university settings. Munir and Sahril (2024) found that TPS supported English communication skills among students in an Islamic higher education context, while Baan (2023) examined its application among students in an English education program. Similarly, Panhwar and Bell (2023) reported that cooperative learning strategies, including TPS, contributed to behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement among university students in large ESL classes. These findings reinforce the relevance of TPS for higher education classrooms, where lecturers need strategies that increase participation without abandoning structured academic instruction.

This article therefore focuses on implementing TPS in university English language learning. The manuscript is based on the documented implementation of English language learning at the Faculty of Psychology, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, during the 2025/2026 academic year. The original manuscript identifies TPS as an instructional technique intended to address passive learning and increase students' participation through the stages of thinking, pairing, and sharing. The article explains how these stages function pedagogically, how they support language learning and student participation, and what factors to consider when implementing TPS in higher education.

Method

This article uses a descriptive, qualitative, classroom-based approach to examine the implementation of Think-Pair-Share in university English language learning. This approach is appropriate because the manuscript primarily describes the instructional process, the interaction patterns generated through TPS, and its pedagogical implications rather than testing a statistical hypothesis. The source manuscript identifies the implementation context as English language learning at the Faculty of Psychology, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, during the 2025/2026 academic year.

The analysis focuses on three central components of TPS: Think, Pair, and Share. In the first stage, students consider a question, problem, or learning task individually. In the second stage, students work with a partner to compare and refine their ideas. In the third stage, students communicate the results of their discussion to the wider class. Recent research has identified this structure as a mechanism for increasing opportunities for classroom participation and reducing the pressure associated with immediate whole-class responses (Mundelsee & Jurkowski, 2021; Guenther & Abbott, 2024).

The analytical focus includes student participation, communication, collaboration, listening, expression of ideas, and engagement during the learning process. The original manuscript identifies several forms of social participation, including asking questions, expressing opinions, cooperating with peers, and active listening. These dimensions were therefore used as the main analytical categories in interpreting the pedagogical contribution of TPS.

The interpretation of the classroom implementation was complemented by a review of recent scholarly literature published between 2021 and 2026. The literature was selected based on its relevance to TPS, cooperative learning, collaborative learning, active learning, EFL instruction, student participation, and higher education. The resulting literature base includes empirical, qualitative, quasi-experimental, and meta-analytic studies that provide contemporary support for the pedagogical interpretation of TPS.

Importantly, the available source manuscript does not report a participant number, pre-test and post-test scores, inferential statistical analysis, or a control group. Therefore, this revised article does not introduce numerical claims concerning learning gains. Instead, the results are presented as descriptive findings concerning the instructional processes and pedagogical functions of TPS.

Results and Discussion

Think-Pair-Share as a Structured Student-Centered Strategy

Implementing TPS transforms the classroom from a predominantly lecturer-centered environment into a more interactive learning space. Instead of asking students to respond immediately to questions posed by the lecturer, TPS gives them time to formulate their own ideas before interacting with peers. This sequence matters because students differ in confidence, language proficiency, processing speed, and willingness to speak publicly. Thinking individually and then discussing ideas with a partner can reduce the psychological pressure of whole-class participation (Benjelloun, 2021; Mundelsee & Jurkowski, 2021).

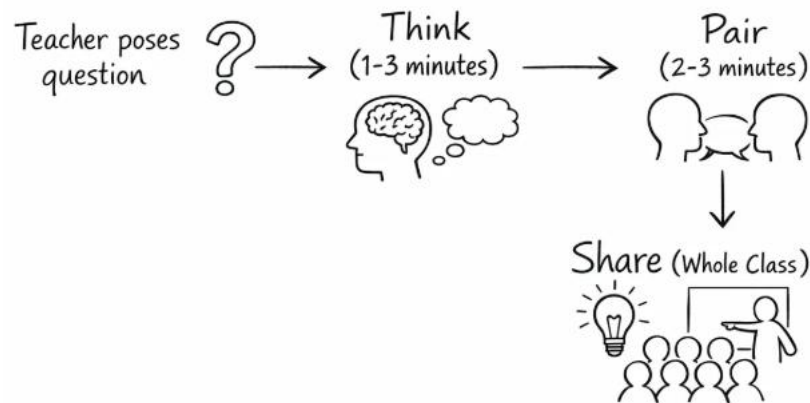


Figure 1. The Think-Pair-Share (TPS) Instructional Sequence

The first stage, Think, requires students to process a question or learning problem individually. At this stage, students are encouraged to activate prior knowledge, identify relevant information, and formulate an initial response. The original manuscript emphasizes that the teacher first presents the core material or problem before students consider the issue independently. This stage is pedagogically important because students are not immediately dependent on their peers. Instead, each learner has an opportunity to form an initial understanding before entering collaborative interaction.

The second stage, Pair, provides students with an opportunity to compare their individual responses. Students discuss their ideas with a partner, identify similarities and differences, and develop a more convincing response. The original manuscript describes this stage as an opportunity for students to compare their answers and determine the most appropriate or convincing response. This process corresponds with research on cooperative learning, which emphasizes peer interaction as a mechanism for cognitive engagement and knowledge construction (Sulaiman & Thakur, 2022; Pérez et al., 2024).

The third stage, Share, extends the interaction from the pair to the entire classroom. Students share the outcome of their discussion while others listen, respond, or offer alternative perspectives. This stage gives students a structured opportunity to practice oral communication and academic discussion. Recent research shows that TPS can increase students' speaking participation because students rehearse their ideas with a partner before presenting them publicly (Agustina et al., 2024; Munir & Sahril, 2024; Yokomine & Purnamasari, 2024).

Thus, the three stages are not independent activities but constitute a pedagogical sequence. The individual thinking stage establishes personal accountability, the pairing stage develops collaborative meaning-making, and the sharing stage extends communication to the classroom community. Such a sequence explains why TPS can be applied not only to language practice but also to reading comprehension, problem solving, critical thinking, and academic discussion (Elismawati et al., 2021; Maharani et al., 2023; Sriyanda & Priyana, 2024).

TPS and Student Participation

One of TPS's most important contributions is its potential to increase student participation. Conventional whole-class questioning may result in only a small number of students responding, while others remain passive. TPS distributes participation opportunities more broadly because every student is initially required to think, subsequently interact with a partner, and finally participate in the sharing process. Research has demonstrated that collaborative preparation before public participation can increase students' willingness to contribute to classroom discussions (Mundelsee & Jurkowski, 2021).

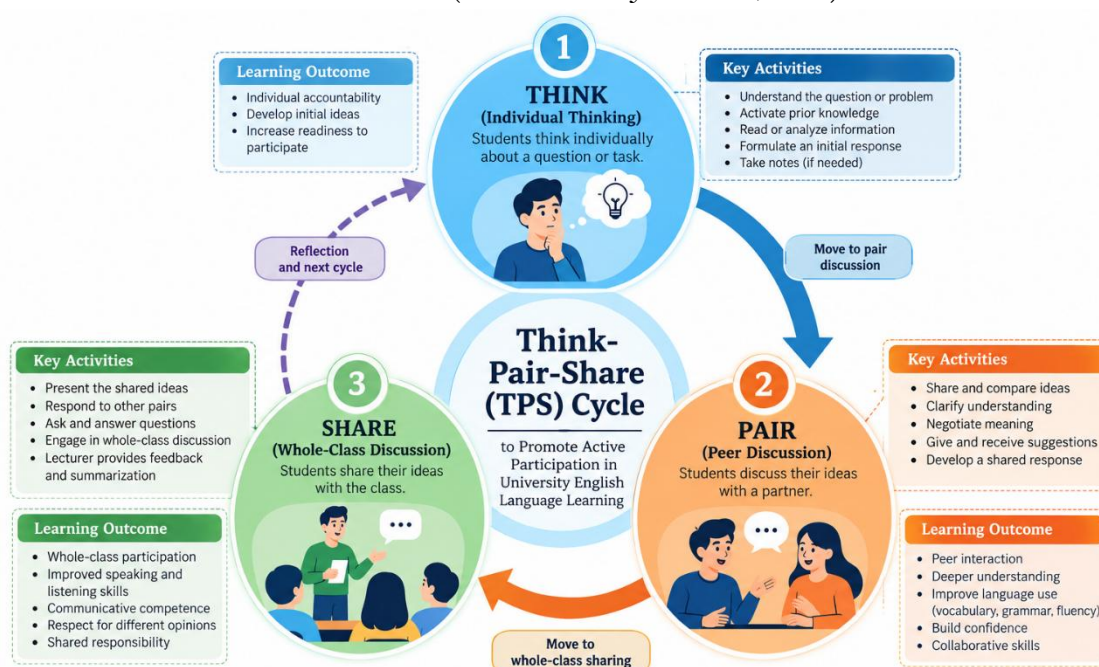


Figure 2. Think-Pair-Share (TPS) Cycle for Promoting Active Participation in University English Language Learning

The original manuscript identifies several forms of participation, including asking questions, expressing opinions, responding to other students' ideas, cooperating with peers, and listening to presentations. These forms of participation are particularly relevant to English language learning because students require opportunities to use English for authentic communicative purposes. Participation therefore becomes not merely a behavioral indicator but also an important component of language practice.

Recent empirical studies support this interpretation. Haryadi and Eryandi (2024) examined TPS as a strategy for increasing participation in English classroom discussions, while Nafisah et al. (2024) reported that TPS could encourage more active participation in English language classes. In higher education, Panhwar and Bell (2023) similarly found that

cooperative learning could enhance behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement among university students in ESL classes.

TPS may also be particularly useful for students who are reluctant to speak. Mundelsee and Jurkowski (2021) found that peer collaboration before whole-class participation could reduce anxiety associated with public responses. Similarly, Benjelloun (2021) reported improvements in students' confidence, fluency, and interaction when TPS was implemented in university speaking classes. These findings suggest that the pair stage may function as a form of communicative preparation before students engage in larger classroom interaction.

TPS for English Speaking and Communication

Speaking is one language skill that can benefit directly from TPS because its three stages create repeated opportunities for oral interaction. During the Think stage, students organize their ideas; during Pair, they articulate and negotiate those ideas with a partner; and during Share, they communicate their conclusions to the class. This sequence provides more opportunities for meaningful language use than approaches in which students listen to the lecturer for most of the lesson.

Benjelloun (2021) found that TPS helped Moroccan university students communicate their views with greater confidence, fluency, and organization. Similarly, Munir and Sahril (2024) reported positive outcomes from TPS implementation in an Islamic higher education context, particularly in students' English communication, vocabulary use, fluency, confidence, and classroom participation. More recent research has also examined TPS as a strategy for improving English-speaking performance (Yokomine & Purnamasari, 2024; Dewi, 2025).

TPS contributes to speaking development by increasing opportunities for rehearsal and interaction. Students do not have to produce an answer directly in front of the entire class. Instead, the student first develops an idea individually and then tests that idea with a partner. The pair discussion provides an informal space for students to clarify vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and meaning before sharing the final response. This process may be particularly valuable for EFL students who have limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom (Benjelloun, 2021; Hong et al., 2022).

TPS and Reading Comprehension

Although TPS is frequently associated with speaking activities, its structure can also be adapted to reading comprehension. After reading a text, the lecturer can pose analytical questions that require students to identify main ideas, make inferences, interpret vocabulary in context, or evaluate the author's argument. Students first formulate their answers independently, compare interpretations with a partner, and subsequently share their conclusions.

A meta-analysis by Maharani et al. (2023) reported a strong overall effect of TPS on students' reading comprehension across Indonesian contexts. More recent research has continued to investigate TPS in relation to reading comprehension, including university and school contexts (Putri et al., 2025). Collaborative learning research likewise suggests that peer discussion can help learners interpret texts, synthesize information, and develop critical responses to reading materials (Wahyurianto & Sylvia, 2024; Wafiroh et al., 2025).

The use of TPS in reading instruction therefore shifts reading from an individual decoding activity toward a more interactive meaning-making process. Students are encouraged not only to identify what a text says but also to explain how they interpret it and defend their interpretation through discussion. This makes TPS particularly suitable for higher-order reading activities that involve analysis, inference, evaluation, and interpretation.

TPS and Writing Development

TPS can also be incorporated into writing instruction. Before students write a paragraph or short essay, they can generate ideas individually during the Think stage, discuss and organize those ideas with a partner during the Pair stage, and then share or receive feedback during the Share stage. This process may help students organize content before beginning to write.

Nisa and Mahsunah (2024) found that TPS could support students' descriptive writing activities. Earlier recent research also examined TPS as a strategy for improving writing performance among English learners (Nazilah et al., 2021). The collaborative discussion process can help students generate ideas, identify appropriate vocabulary, and recognize organizational problems before submitting a final product.

In higher education, this approach can be expanded by requiring students to provide peer feedback. For example, students can first formulate a thesis statement independently, compare it with a partner, and then discuss whether the argument is sufficiently clear and logically organized. Such activities can transform TPS from a simple discussion technique into a scaffold for academic writing development.

Development of Social and Collaborative Skills

Another important finding concerns the development of social skills. The original manuscript identifies communication, cooperation, and active listening as important social skills developed through TPS. Students must communicate their ideas, listen to their partners, respond to alternative opinions, and work collaboratively to complete assigned tasks.

These characteristics are consistent with broader research on cooperative learning. Cooperative learning can promote cognitive engagement while simultaneously developing students' ability to work with others (Sulaiman & Thakur, 2022). In EFL contexts, collaborative learning has also been associated with classroom engagement and positive learning experiences (Vega-Abarzua et al., 2022; Zheng & Zhou, 2022). Consequently, TPS should not be assessed exclusively through test scores; its contribution to interaction and participation is also pedagogically meaningful.

The Pair stage is particularly important because it creates a small interactional space in which students can negotiate meaning. Students must listen to another person's perspective and decide how their ideas relate to their partner's. Such interaction may encourage tolerance, respect for different opinions, and collaborative problem solving. These skills are increasingly important in higher education because students are expected to work collaboratively in academic and professional environments (Pérez et al., 2024).

The Role of the Lecturer

Although TPS is student-centered, the lecturer remains essential to the learning process. The lecturer must formulate appropriate questions, explain the task clearly, establish time limits, organize pairs, monitor interaction, and guide the final classroom discussion. Cooperative learning does not automatically become effective simply because students are placed into pairs or groups. Research has shown that teachers' understanding, beliefs, and implementation practices influence the quality and fidelity of cooperative learning (Tamimy et al., 2023).

The lecturer therefore functions primarily as a facilitator rather than the sole source of information. During the Think stage, the lecturer provides an intellectually meaningful prompt. During Pair, the lecturer monitors interaction and assists students who experience difficulties. During Share, the lecturer synthesizes students' responses and connects them to the learning objectives.

This role aligns with contemporary research emphasizing active, student-centered learning in EFL contexts. Teachers need to balance student autonomy with appropriate instructional guidance rather than eliminating teacher involvement (Abbasian, 2022). Effective TPS implementation therefore depends on a carefully designed combination of student participation and teacher facilitation.

Advantages of Think-Pair-Share

Implementing TPS offers several pedagogical advantages. First, it increases opportunities for student participation because every learner has a role in the learning process. Second, it gives students more time to formulate responses before speaking publicly. Third, it promotes peer interaction and collaborative knowledge construction. Fourth, it provides opportunities to develop communication, listening, cooperation, and presentation skills.

The original manuscript also emphasizes that TPS can increase students' time on task, reduce apathy, broaden individual participation, deepen learning, and promote tolerance through collaborative work. These pedagogical advantages are consistent with recent empirical findings showing positive relationships between cooperative learning, engagement, communication, and learning outcomes (Panhwar & Bell, 2023; Wijaya, 2022; Yao et al., 2022).

Another advantage is its flexibility. TPS can be implemented in face-to-face, blended, and online environments. Benjelloun (2021) demonstrated its applicability in online university speaking classes, while recent work has explored TPS structures in asynchronous online discussions (Yang et al., 2026). This adaptability makes TPS relevant to contemporary higher education environments in which language learning may occur across different instructional modes.

Limitations and Implementation Challenges

Despite its advantages, TPS also has several limitations. The original manuscript notes that effective implementation requires substantial teacher preparation, appropriate learning materials, sufficient instructional time, and changes in students' established learning habits. These limitations are important because cooperative learning requires more than simply dividing students into pairs.

Time management is one of the most important challenges. If students are given insufficient time to think and discuss, the Pair stage may become superficial. Conversely, if each pair is allowed to report extensively, the Share stage may consume most of the lesson. The lecturer therefore needs to determine clear time limits and select only representative responses for whole-class discussion.

Unequal participation can also become a problem. Some students may dominate the discussion while others remain passive. Teachers can address this challenge with explicit participation rules, rotating partners, assigned roles, and tasks that require contributions from both members. Research on cooperative learning similarly emphasizes that implementation quality and fidelity influence its effectiveness (Tamimy et al., 2023).

Another challenge concerns students' language proficiency. Students with limited English proficiency may feel hesitant to communicate with their partners. In such cases, lecturers can provide vocabulary lists, sentence starters, guiding questions, or short language models before the Pair stage. Such scaffolding allows TPS to remain student-centered while ensuring that students have sufficient linguistic resources to participate.

Implications for University English Language Learning

The findings suggest that TPS can be positioned as a practical strategy for transforming university English classrooms into more interactive learning environments. Rather than treating TPS as a single teaching technique, lecturers can integrate it into different stages of a lesson. For example, TPS can activate prior knowledge, discuss reading texts, prepare speaking activities, develop writing ideas, analyze grammatical structures, or evaluate arguments.

The approach is especially relevant in higher education because university students are expected to develop not only language proficiency but also critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and learner autonomy. Research on active and collaborative learning indicates that these competencies can be fostered when students have structured opportunities to participate actively in learning (Liu et al., 2024; Chu, 2021; Wafiroh et al., 2025).

Therefore, TPS should not be viewed simply as a technique for making classes more enjoyable. Its more fundamental contribution lies in restructuring classroom interaction. The lecturer presents the learning problem, students individually draft an initial response, peers negotiate meaning collaboratively, and the class then evaluates and expands the ideas generated. Such a sequence provides a practical bridge between individual learning and collaborative academic communication.

Conclusion

Think-Pair-Share provides a structured cooperative learning strategy for promoting active participation in university English language learning. Its three-stage sequence—Think, Pair, and Share creates opportunities for students to formulate ideas individually, negotiate meaning with peers, and communicate their conclusions to the wider classroom. The approach is therefore compatible with the communicative and student-centered orientation of contemporary English language education.

The analysis indicates that TPS can support several dimensions of learning, including classroom participation, speaking practice, reading comprehension, writing preparation, collaboration, active listening, confidence, and social interaction. Recent empirical studies

have reported positive applications of TPS across different English language skills and educational contexts, including higher education. Nevertheless, successful implementation depends on appropriate task design, sufficient time, effective classroom management, teacher facilitation, and adequate linguistic scaffolding.

For university English lecturers, TPS can therefore be integrated flexibly into speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and discussion activities. Future empirical research should strengthen the evidence base by employing clearly defined participants, comparison groups where appropriate, validated instruments, pre-test and post-test measures, and statistical analysis. Such research would allow the pedagogical potential of TPS to be evaluated more rigorously in Indonesian higher education contexts.

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