Use of Spoon Game in Improving Students' Oral Participation

ABSTRACT

Aims: The main purpose of this study was to determine the experiences of the students in the use of spoon game technique. It also looked into the influence of the technique in the enhancement and improvement of the oral participation of students. Specifically, it sought answer how the spoon game technique was conducted; how it helped improve the oral participation of the students; and what were the suggestions of the students to improve the use of the technique.
Study design: This study used the qualitative-phenomenological method. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was used to obtain the essential information from the participants. Validated open-ended questions were used to cull the participants' experiences.
Place and Duration of Study: This study was University of Southern Mindanao for one-semester among the freshmen students enrolled in the Study, Thinking and Speaking Skills.
Methodology: The interview protocol was followed before the conduct of the interview. The participants were grouped into focus groups. The recorded interviews were transcribed, analyzed into themes and core ideas.
Results: The teachers followed procedures in the conduct of the spoon game technique. The instructions of the game were clearly relayed to the students. The student-participants believed that the spoon game technique helped improved their oral participation. The technique greatly motivated them to ask questions and clarify issues regarding the topic being discussed; thus, they actively shared ideas. Moreover, they found the technique was fun and interesting.
Conclusion: The problem on oral participation in the classroom can be addressed if language teachers are hands-on and interactive in doing the tasks; if the teacher gives appropriate and clear instructions; if teachers utilize group-work activities; and if teachers listen to the suggestions for improvement of the students. It is also noteworthy to note that the next time the spoon game is used; the teacher needs to contextualize the questions according to the cognition level of the students and students need to be given reasonable time to think of their answers.

Keywords: Spoon game technique, oral participation, qualitative, phenomenology

1. INTRODUCTION

The study of English has been a remarkable phenomenon in many parts of the world. As a second language, English has been used in many countries as medium of instruction in some form or another (Ghaith, 2003). English is, undoubtedly, a universal language. It is spoken by 400 million individuals as a second language and 350 million as their native tongue. For researchers and English language educators, one of the most challenging aspects in defining English as an international language remains the notion of students' oral participation.

In learning foreign a language, Hammer (2009) mentions that speaking gives the learners the opportunity to practice what they have learned through different activities represented in daily life situations. Studies in language learning have addressed the necessity of classroom interaction or students' oral participation in class. However, getting students to respond in a language classroom, especially a foreign language class, is a problem that most language teachers face. According to Al-Badi (2009), the general difficulty of English teachers in teaching the language is the apathy that the students show; thus, students could not perform well in classroom activities. Oral participation is not demonstrated by the learners.

On the other hand, Carter and Nunan (2001) aver that oral participation is a cognitive and socio-linguistic communication skills developed through classroom interaction. Parra (2006) also mentions that encouraging learners to participate orally in class discussions and interactions is an important tool contributing towards the development of oral fluency and communicative competence. However,

despite the importance attached to oral participation as a significant macro skill, it was observed by the researchers that a considerable number of high school graduates remained largely unprepared to function in an all-English curriculum at the university level.

In the United States of America, Zygouris-Coe (2001) reports that 36% of the total population in public elementary and secondary schools come from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. Many of them have limited-English proficient (LEP), which means that they have no sufficient speaking and understanding of the English language and many of them are at risk for school failure and placement into special education classes. Interestingly, in the Philippine Educational system, practitioners of English language have launched major initiative to develop English language teaching. However, educators have observed that college students lack oral participation. The Social Weather Station (SWS) in 2006 found the big drop in the number of Filipinos who can speak in English.

The inability of students to argue in class and their phobia for oral examinations are only two of the discrepant behaviors that educators observed in schools. These attitudes of not being able to communicate also extend to the failure of a student to develop writing skills (Mendoza, 2004). San Jose (2011) mentions that speaking proficiency of college students is generally poor and one of many seen factors that affects students' proficiency particularly in the delivery is the used of dialects in the day to day speaking engagements. Thus, it is safe to say that college students can formulate sensible topics using English language but are afraid of expressing their ideas by speaking because their ability of delivery is hindered.

In the University of Southern Mindanao (USM), the faculty members of the Department of English Language and Literature have observed that most of the students do not participate orally in classroom discussions. Majority of them show apprehensions and anxiety in giving their responses. The students have the tendency to stammer and hesitate to participate during classroom activities. Logically, fear causes the students not to try and advance their skills, especially when they feel they are under pressure. Just like the lack of practice will make introverts less likely to fully acquire the second language. With these apprehensions, they develop among themselves the lack of motivation in any English-related classroom discussions and activities. These situations indicate an essential problem that majority of the students face in English language learning. Thus, it was in this ground that this research was conducted.

1.1 Research Questions

The main purpose of this study was to determine the influence of spoon game technique in the enhancement and improvement of the oral participation of the students. Specifically, it sought answer how the spoon game technique was conducted in the classroom; how the spoon game technique helped improve the oral participation of the students; and what were the suggestions of the students to improve the use of the technique to enhance and improve oral participation.

1.2 Significance of the Study

Over the years, the teaching of communication skills has reflected in the increasing significance of students' oral participation across the world. However, great consideration may be given to the adversaries of its production and performance. San Jose, Bontuyan, Luspo, and Salazar (2013) find that learners' cultural background and psychological experiences may bar learners' participation; Orbeta and San Jose (2013) also find that anxiety particularly apprehension of students may contribute to oral performance; while San Jose and Vicencio (2018) point out that learners' inhibition, ability to deliver and develop a topic affects his/her participation. On the other hand, Sosas and San Jose (2016) mention that contextualization of the subject matter may tickle students' active class discussion and participation.

Considering the above literatures on oral participation, the researchers believed that the spoon game technique may not only contribute to the improvement of students' oral participation but also help the English language teachers come up research-based approach and technique in language teaching and learning. The findings of the study may provide students with essential insights as to how the spoon game technique may help them improve their oral participation. It may also help them become aware of the idea that their oral participation could be developed using an ordinary but creative game. They may also identify their weaknesses and strengths which would serve as their motivation and

93   challenge for an improved language performance. On the other hand, the results of the study may
94   also serve as guide and reminder for language educators that oral participation may influence and
95   affect the learners' achievement not only in English but also in other academic subjects as well. The
96   findings may add to the consciousness of the language educators on the importance of improving an
97   approach based on the suggestions and comments of the learners. Likewise, this research may
98   serve as an example to teachers on how to conduct an action research. Lastly, this study may also
99   help the school administrators and curriculum developers on the importance of the role of the learners
100   in developing and strengthening a teaching approach or strategy. This may also encourage them to
101   implement the conduct of action research in all areas of specializations of teachers.
102

103 **1.3 Theoretical Lens**
104
105   The study was anchored on the model of *Using Games to Promote Communicative Skills in Language*
106   *Learning* developed by Chen (2005). This model showed that games can be a powerful language
107   learning tool. On the surface, the aim of all language games is for the students to "use the language";
108   however, during game play, learners also use the target language to persuade and negotiate their
109   way to achieve the desired results. Thus, use of games involves the productive and receptive skills
110   simultaneously. Games encouraged the development of oral and written communicative
111   competences.
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114 **2.   METHOD**
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116 **2.1 Research Design**
117
118   This qualitative research study utilized phenomenology approach. Campbell (2014) mentions that in
119   qualitative research takes place in a natural setting, use multiple inter-active and humanistic methods,
120   collects emerging information rather than prefigured, and fundamentally interpretative. Hammersley
121   (2018) says it involves 'unstructured data collection like interviewing and observation. On the other
122   hand, phenomenological approach underpins the science of experience-based design (Greenhalgh,
123   Procter, Wherton, Sugarhood, Hinder, and Rouncefield (2015); describes how one orients to live
124   experience (Van Manen, 2016); tackles what is to know and be in this world (Vagle, 2016); answers
125   "what really matters?" (Jackson, 2017). In this study, the information were taken through in-depth,
126   face to face interview with the participants. Moreover, the purpose of the interview was to obtain the
127   participants' experiences with spoon game technique and their comments to improve the same.
128   Further, analysis and description of the responses of the participants were coded to come up with
129   theme, which indicates commonality of experiences and what matters to them.
130

131 **2.2 Research Participants**
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133   The participants of this study were the freshmen students enrolled in the study, thinking and speaking
134   skills subject. The class was appropriate for this research study for it required the students to speak
135   and participate actively in classroom discussions. The participants were selected using purposive
136   sampling procedure. According to Creswell (2013), purposive sampling gives the researcher an
137   opportunity to choose the participants of the study who are believed to be the best source of
138   information.
139

140 **2.3 Gathering of Information**
141
142   The sources of information for this research study were taken from the responses and reflections of
143   the participants in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Interview guide questions based on the
144   research questions were provided. Also, probe questions were included to exhaust relevant answers
145   which were pertinent to the study.
146
147   A group of twenty participants were divided into four focus groups. The interview was conducted
148   separately so as not to spoil the information. However, before the conduct of the research, a letter of
149   consent was given to each participant. This was done to address one of the requirements of ethics
150   which was to ask permission. Moreover, prior to the formal interview, each participant was given a
151   copy of the interview guide questions so that they could follow and participate actively in the interview.
152   After the conduct of the FGD, the interview proceedings were transcribed. After which, the information

153 were coded and subjected to thematic analysis. The thematic analysis was presented and table
154 format and discussion was provided.
155
156 2.4 Trustworthiness of the Study
157 One of the loopholes of a qualitative research method is the aspect trustworthiness. To answer this
158 delicate issue verisimilitude, the researchers considered and answered the five components:
159 credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Dye, Schatz, Rosenberg, and Coleman,
160 2000).
161
162 This study was credible because the information were obtained from the right individuals. The
163 participants involved were students who were learning English where oral participation was required.
164 Further, the student-participants of the study were students of the researchers; thus, they already
165 formed trust with each other. Creswell (2013) mentioned that to obtain credibility, there was a need to
166 have persistent engagements with the participants. Moreover, the information obtained were coded,
167 analyzed and formed into themes. Misinterpretation of the information was hindered by providing the
168 verbatim transcription of the transcribed information in the results. Macnee and McCabe (2008) said
169 that credibility is established when interpretation is drawn from the participant's original data and
170 original views. Likewise, transferability is the generalization of the findings to other situations and
171 contexts (Tobin and Begley, 2004). This was addressed through citing various literatures in the
172 discussions. On the other hand, dependability was address through the use of code and recode
173 strategies and triangulation. In the code and recode processes, the information were checked several
174 times to verify if the information were in agreement and remained the same and unaltered. According
175 to Bitsch (2005), dependability is the stability of the findings overtime. Finally, conformability was
176 addressed by incorporating other researches to corroborate with the findings. Bowen (2009) said that
177 confirmability of results is depended on its relatedness with the findings of other investigators.
178
179 2.5 Ethical Considerations
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181 Necessary protocols were conducted to address this aspect. Letter of consents with confidentiality
182 clause were made and dialogues among the participants were done. Justice was also observed by
183 not compelling the participants to participate and by revealing to them the results of the study.
184 Convenience of the participants was also considered. High regard of respect to each participant was
185 also done. The students-participants were not exploited and their autonomy was greatly served.
186 Lastly, the dignity of all participants was respected by not sharing their personal information which
187 incurred during the conduct of the study.
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191 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
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193 **Themes and Core Ideas on Spoon Game Technique**

Themes	Frequency of Response	Core Ideas
Formation of Groups	General	Organizing a group of 4-8 members Members are facing each other
Placement of spoons	General Typical	Placing spoon at the center of the table Giving of spoon to each member at the middle of the table
Distribution of playing cards	General Typical	Giving of four cards which contain questions to each member Shuffling of the four cards given
Facilitation of the game	General	Requesting each student to pick and answer one of the cards. Getting a spoon if answer was correct. She assured that students shared and imparted his/her ideas about the topic orally. She encouraged the students to participate and engage actively in the activity.
	Typical	The teacher served as the time keeper of the activity. She gave instructions and ensured the smooth flow of the activity. The first eight (8) students to answer four questions in the cards and get four spoons remained and considered winners of the game
Improved oral	General	Students were motivated to ask questions.

participation		Students shared and discussed ideas. Participate actively in class discussions.
	Typical	Class interactions increased.
Enjoyed the class	General	The spoon game technique was fun and very interesting.
	Typical	The students enjoyed the learning process with the use of spoon game.
Suggestions for improvement	Typical	The game would have been better if words used in the questions are easy. Adequate time should be given to students in sharing and answering questions.

3.1 Formation of Groups

In the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), the student-participants stated and observed that the activity was introduced by forming groups. They were asked to form groups composed of four to eight (4-8) members and requested to sit in a circle, facing each other in a group. This could be glimpsed from the statements extracted from the student-participants:

> "I observed Ma'am that we started the class by dividing us into several groups composed of 4-8 members." We were instructed to go with our group members and sit in a circle facing each other."

> "Our class started by forming groups composed of four to eight (4-8) members. Each member was asked to sit in a circle."

This was indeed true. The whole class was instructed to form several groups composed of four to eight members as a way of beginning the lesson and activity. Each student counted from one up to eight to determine the group members. Afterwards, they instructed to sit with their group members in a circle, facing one another. Slavin (1991) stresses that students learn in groups in a much better way than they do it individually. Working in groups encourages students to engage and involve actively in the lesson and activity, thus building a social personality in them; groups interaction is achieved (Idrissi, 2018; Jackson, 2014); group work overcomes communication problems among members (Raba, 2017); and group work encourages deeper reflection (Debbagh and Jones, 2018).

3.2 Placement of Spoons

Another essential theme was placing of spoons which went after forming the groups. According to the student-participants, they noticed that spoons were the main materials used in the activity. Each group was given spoons which were placed at the center of each table. The student-participants indicated:

> "We were given spoons after the groupings and we placed them at the center of our tables as instructed. The activity was called spoon game because of the important role of spoons."

> "The spoons have important roles in our activity. We were instructed to place the spoon at the center of the table."

In the activity, the students were oriented on the roles of the spoons. Spoons served as motivation to encourage the students to share their ideas which were relevant to the topic being discussed. According to Mubaslat (2012), one useful strategy to encourage learning a foreign language is using language games. Furthermore, Ariza (2001) concludes that "games are good activities for developing oral participation because they permit students to use the second language in communicative situations. It also helps lower tension and anxiety that prevent students' from acquiring the language; games are essential tool for active participation (Rodriguez-Torres, 2017); games enriched students' participation (Hilas and Politis, 2014).

3.3 Distribution of Playing Cards

Giving and shuffling of cards was also noted as one of the essential themes in this study. Based on the statements given by the student-participants, each group member was given four cards to play. They observed that the cards given contained questions about the topic being discussed. The cards containing the questions were first shuffled to make it fair and the same were given to each group member. The student-participants mentioned and illustrated that:

> "I was given four cards. However, before the cards were distributed, they were shuffled first and then each group member was given four cards to play. The cards given to us contained questions about the topic being discussed."

> "The cards given to us were shuffled. It was a way of giving fair chances, I believed. Four cards were given to each member. The cards contained questions relevant to the topic."

3.4 Facilitation of the Game

The next essential theme was how to play the game. The processes of playing the game were clearly illustrated by the student-participants in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). According to the participants, to play the game, every student in a group was given an opportunity to stand, pick, and answer one question from his/her cards. A student must answer the chosen card to get a spoon. If not, his/her turn to play was given to the next member. The turn of the group was determined by the teacher through random selection and draw lots.

The student-participants also observed that their teacher facilitated the activity. They stated that their teacher served important roles in the conduct of the activity. She was the time keeper and facilitator of instructions to ensure the smooth flow of the activity. She assured that students shared and imparted his/her ideas about the topic orally. She also encouraged the students to participate and engage actively in the activity.

Lastly, the student-participants noticed that the first eight (8) students, who could answer four questions would get four spoons, remained, and considered winners of the game. The student-participants mentioned that:

> "In the activity, I noticed that everybody was asked to stand, pick, and answer one of his/her cards. Someone will get a spoon if a student answers the chosen card to avoid giving his/her turn to play to the next member."

> "I also observed that you, our teacher facilitated the activity. She served as the time keeper and gave instructions to ensure the smooth flow of the activity. She also assured that we, students, shared and imparted our ideas about the topic orally. Our teacher encouraged us to participate and engage actively in the activity."

> "In winning the game, I noticed that the first eight (8) students, who answered the four questions in their cards correctly, got four spoons, and considered winners of the game."

According to Byrne (1997), games, especially traditional language games, are effective because the learners are so involved in playing game that they do not realize that they are practicing language items or functions. Secondly, games are also kinds of activities that encourage learners to speak. In monolingual classes, shyness and lack of wiliness to speak English in front of peers is a very common problem. One way to deal with this is to get learners to talk about the problem and agree on a solution. Moreover, Huyen and Ngae (2003) games can also be used to provide the learners with opportunities to use language rather than simply practice it. Using games, according to Wright, Betteridge and Buckby (2006) give the learners the opportunity to express their ideas, feelings, and thought orally.

3.5 Improved Oral Participation

Based on the responses of the student-participants, the spoon game technique improved their oral participation. According to them, the spoon game technique greatly motivated them to ask questions and clarify issues regarding the topic being discussed. In class discussions, the student-participants participated actively and shared ideas; thus, increasing the class interactions of the students. The spoon game technique, based on the student-participants' point of view, was a great and useful tool in improving their oral participation. These were clearly noticed in the statements given by the student participants:

> *"The spoon game technique really helped and motivated me to participate in class discussions. Before, I was shy to ask questions, during the activity, spoon game, I was encouraged to ask questions and share ideas."*

> *"I noticed that through the use of spoon game, the class interactions increased. Everybody participated actively in the class discussions. Some asked questions and some shared ideas."*

The above statements showed evidence how the spoon game technique helped improve the oral participation of the students. It was observed that the students became participative and active in class discussions. They even volunteered to share ideas and asked questions for clarification.

Research studies in language learning have addressed the necessity of classroom interaction or students' oral participation in class. However, getting students to respond in a language classroom—especially a foreign language class—is a problem that most language teachers face. In fact, according to Hardy (2005), many teachers are frustrated by the fact that students often do not respond to their questions or seem unprepared for section. With this, there is a need to improve second language learners' participation in oral communication. However, Byrne (1997) emphasized that games, especially traditional language games, are effective because the learners are so involved in playing game that they do not realize that they are practicing language items or functions. Secondly, games are also kinds of activities that encourage learners to speak. In monolingual classes, shyness and lack of wiliness to speak English in front of peers is a very common problem. One way to deal with this is to get learners to talk about the problem and agree on a solution. Moreover, games can also be used to provide the learners with opportunities to use language rather than simply practice it. Using games, the learners have the opportunity to express their ideas, feelings, and thought orally.

3.6 Enjoyed the Class

Another essential theme observed was the students enjoyed the class with the use of spoon game technique. The student-participants stated that the spoon game technique was fun and very interesting. The students enjoyed the learning process with the use of spoon game as mentioned in their statements:

> *"I found the game very interesting."*

> *"I enjoyed. I had fun."*

According to Ariza (2001), students generally enjoy oral participation in class and it enhances learning and critical thinking. They get immediate feedback from classmates and teachers. They have to learn the material thoroughly in order to explain it and this improves their metacognitive skills. Being questioned or challenged forces them to think quickly. Everyone ends up with new knowledge and skills and this is a welcome break from teacher-centered lessons. Oral presenters also improve their communication skills and self-confidence. On the other hand, Harris, Baron and Ratcliffe (1995) observed that oral exchanges interaction increases enjoyment. Moreover, Norlock (2016) mentioned that the rise in enjoyment directly affect oral participation. Likely, Sweat (2014) said that oral participation is linked with affective outcomes such as warmth, comfort and class enjoyment.

3.7 Suggestion for Improvement.

The student-participants highlighted the need to choose the appropriate which were within the level of students for them to easily grasp the questions. As gleaned from the student-participants statements, it can be observed that easy words were suggested to be utilized in the construction of questions. This would greatly help the students better understand the points raised by the teacher and would be able to generate ideas appropriate for the questions given. It was clearly mentioned by the student-participants in the Focus Group Discussion.

> "I would like to suggest that the words that should be used in the sentence were easy to understand. Easy words could help us better understand the questions. It would be easier for us to generate ideas."

> "I hope that the words were easy for us to understand so that we can answer the questions immediately."

The student-participants also highlighted that more time should be given to students who shared and answered questions. Based on their point of views, they were not used to participate orally in class discussions. It was difficult for them to answer the questions immediately considering the time given to generate ideas. For them, some of the questions consisted difficult words and this added to the pressure they felt during the activity. The student-participants mentioned that:

> "I am a shy person. I do not share ideas or even ask questions during class discussions, so it is very difficult for me to answer the questions immediately with the limited time given."

> "The words used in the questions are difficult so It is difficult for me understand and answer the questions immediately. I suggest that there should be more time to prepare and generate ideas."

4. CONCLUSION

Students' oral participation in a language classroom is of paramount importance nowadays. Several studies have already been conducted and focused on how to help students improve their oral production, or their participation in class. However, despite the efforts of the language teachers, students remain passive and non-participative. This situation greatly moved the researchers to conduct this action research. The researchers have come to the idea of using new ways to develop and increase students' interaction; hence, the spoon game technique. Based on the findings, students' inhibitions to speak can be addressed if a teacher is seen hands-on in doing the activity; the instructions are clear; tasks are done through group-activity; and students' suggestions for the improvement of the activity are heard. It is also noteworthy to take that if a next spoon game is used, the teacher needs to be aware on the wordings of the questions and the time allotted for each question.

4.1 Implications for Educational Practice

The use of teaching and learning strategies are never new to our educational system. It is known to have helped both the teachers and students cope with the complexities of the teaching and learning processes.

The spoon game technique is not new; thus, language teacher can think of any other technique which may develop the oral communication of their learners. The use of spoon is a compelling technique for the learners because a spoon serves an image of "help". Thus, a technique can use any other materials to contextualize the activity.

School administrators and policy makers may develop or adopt programs, strengthen old policies or implement new ones that can help enhance the class interaction especially the oral participation of students through realizing the importance of the use of strategies like the spoon game technique. The results of this study may give them enough bases to promote proper understanding on the strength

423 and weaknesses of the learners which are important for the communicative competence both of the
424 teachers and the students.
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427 **COMPETING INTERESTS**
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429 Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.
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431 **CONSENT**
432
433 All authors declare that 'written informed consent was obtained from the participants (or other
434 approved parties) for publication of this case report and accompanying images. A copy of the written
435 consent is available for review by the Editorial office/Chief Editor/Editorial Board members of this
436 journal.
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438 **COMPETING INTERESTS**
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440 Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.
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