

The Use Of The Fishbowl Technique In Teaching English Speaking Skills: A Library Research Study

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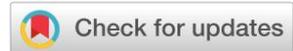
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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze previous research on the implementation of the Fishbowl Technique in teaching speaking skills. Specifically, the study seeks to examine how the Fishbowl Technique is applied in speaking instruction across different educational levels and to identify its effects on students' speaking performance. This research employed a qualitative library research design by reviewing five scientific studies published between 2019 and 2025. The selected studies were analyzed to identify common practices, variations in implementation, and reported outcomes related to the use of the Fishbowl Technique. The results of the analysis indicate that the Fishbowl Technique was implemented in similar ways across the reviewed studies, although minor differences were found in classroom procedures and student grouping. In general, the technique provided structured opportunities for students to speak actively while other students observed and learned from the interaction. The findings show that the Fishbowl Technique had a positive impact on students' speaking skills, particularly in improving fluency, participation, and confidence. Students became more willing to express their ideas and engage in classroom discussions. Overall, the reviewed studies demonstrate that the Fishbowl Technique effectively promotes active speaking practice and enhances classroom interaction, making it a beneficial strategy for teaching speaking skills.

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1. Introduction

Speaking is one of the language skills that has to be mastered by English learners. Speaking is a medium of communicating between individuals. According to Tarigan (2015, p. 16), "Speaking is the ability to pronounce articulation sounds or words that express, state and convey thoughts, ideas and feelings." Meanwhile, according to Tarigan, (2015, p. 16), "Speaking is a tool to communicate ideas that are compiled and developed according to the needs of the listener or listener." There are four skills in English: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Based on the four language skills above, speaking is the most important skill in gaining our daily communication. By speaking we can know what people said to us and what we are going to say to other people, thus speaking English is important to people (Aswad et al., 2019; Rahman, 2018; Yaumi et al. 2023; Rahman & Weda, 2019).

Speaking is a very important skill that students must master to learn English. Speaking is a big asset that can help students in everyday life because by speaking students are able to communicate, give ideas, give suggestions, and also convey student ideas (Rahman & Weda, 2018; Anggriyani et al., 2025; Andini et al., 2026). Another factor of the importance of mastering English skills is because English is the second most widely spoken language in the world so it is very important for students to master these skills (Said et al., 2021; Pratiwi et al., 2026; Weda et al., 2022; Yaumi et al., 2024).

Many students still face difficulties in learning English Speaking skill. According to Heriansyah (2012), the student problems in speaking English are: first, students do not have ideas about what to say, so they tend to keep silent. Second, they also lack of confidence. Third, the students are worried about making mistakes in class as their friends will laugh at them. Fourth, the students are not used to talking in class since the pronunciation and vocabulary are poor and confined.

Many techniques have been proposed to help students improve their speaking skills, such as pair work, small group discussions, short conversations, retelling stories, and speech activities. In this study, the researcher focuses specifically on the Fishbowl Technique, which is a structured discussion method where an inner circle of students discusses while

others observe, then switch roles to give everyone a chance to speak (Silberman, 1996, p. 110). Recent research supports the effectiveness of the Fishbowl Technique in improving students' speaking abilities. For example, a study conducted with primary stage pupils demonstrated that the Fishbowl strategy significantly improved EFL speaking test scores compared to traditional methods, showing its positive impact on language performance (Ramadan et al., 2023). Another recent investigation found that the Fishbowl Technique enhanced classroom engagement and self-regulated learning among intermediate EFL learners, indicating benefits beyond speaking accuracy by fostering active participation (Burhan Burhan et al., 2025). These findings suggest that the Fishbowl Technique not only provides structured opportunities for students to practice speaking but also promotes collaborative learning and increases learners' confidence in using English.

The Fishbowl Technique is a way to organize a discussion group that contains students inside and outside the circle. Students inside the circle do the discussion, while students outside the circle are tasked with being listeners and observers. Fishbowl is able to make students more active and confident in delivering their ideas and sharing information with others. Then, it could make the students deliver and comprehend the messages discussed to their friends. Finally, the students enabled them to speak accurately in terms of using appropriate expression/language function, intonation and pronunciation. There are eight steps in the implementation of the Fishbowl Technique, Teuscher (2009, p. 2) also presents some variations to conduct Fishbowl Technique. Those variations are as follows. First, develop one or more topics for the group activities. Second, set up chairs in a Fishbowl design. Make an inner circle and a surrounding outer circle. Third, instruct the members of the inner circle to talk based on the topic discussed while the outer circle listens, takes notes, and learns. Last, allow members of the outer circle to tap on inner circle members in order to switch positions. Due to the many researchers who have used the Fishbowl Technique, the researcher would also like to conduct a library research study to learn more about *A Study of Fishbowl Technique to improve students speaking skill*.

2. Methodology

This research used qualitative research design to collect descriptive data. The method that the researcher used in this study is library research. According to Mirzaqon & Purwoko (2018), library research is a study conducted through collecting the data with the help of various reading materials found in a library, such as documents, books, articles, etc. Sari (2020) also concludes that library research is research activities carried out with how to collect information and data with the help of various materials in the library such as books references, results of previous studies similar, articles, notes, as well related journals problem to solve. Therefore, in conducting this research, reading and taking notes are important to help the researcher obtain information from the data to be collected. The researcher used library research method to collect data, information, and facts that are used to answer research questions. The source of data in the study is the subjects from which the data can be collected for the purpose of research (Arikunto, 2010, p. 129). This study uses theses and scientific articles between 2019 until 2025 to be the primary data. The literature to be collected in this study focuses on the implementation of Fishbowl Technique to improve students' speaking skill.

2.1 Technique Of Data Collection

Data collection method is a way to collect data used in this research. The researcher used qualitative research design in collecting data. The documents collected are theses and scientific articles related to the implementation of the Fishbowl Technique to improve students' speaking skills. The researcher used the following steps adapted from Sari & Asmendri (2020).

- 1) Choosing a research topic. The researcher chooses a research topic by deciding what to focus on.
- 2) Searching for supporting information. As the first step, the researcher then finds out the supporting information needed to support the research topic.
- 3) Emphasizing the focus of the study with the supporting information needed was found, the researcher emphasized the focus of the study. Therefore, the later discussion is more detailed.
- 4) Finding and selecting bibliography or required reading sources. Finding and selecting reading sources are highly required to support the main discussion of this study.
- 5) Classifying the reading sources found, the researcher classified them to make it organized.
- 6) Reading the sources found and taking notes of the important points and key information. Reading the sources was proposed to help the researcher understand the content better and taking notes was proposed to help the researcher memorize the important points and key information.

- 7) Reviewing and enriching sources. Once the data sources are found, the researcher reviews them to check whether they need to be enriched or not.
- 8) Re-classifying the reading sources and starting to write down the results. Finally, as a seventh step, the researcher reclassifies the sources if necessary.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Result

The researcher focused on analyzing writing as suitable representation of the implementation of fishbowl technique in teaching and learning process to improve students speaking skill. In Collecting The data, the researcher used library research design. Additionally, the findings described in this research are organized into their classifications based on step 7 of the data analysis which include researcher names, Years, title, methods, findings and procedure.

Table 1. The Findings of Data Sources

No	Authors	Year	Title	Method	Findings	Procedure
1	Kamisah, Gabby Maureen Pricilia, Sarayanti Simbolon	2019	The Effect of Fishbowl Method on Students' Speaking Ability	Experimental	Fishbowl significantly improved speaking scores from 59.25 (Failing) to 80.18 (Good); t-test result 2.04 shows significant effect.	-Explain Fishbowl concept. -Divide students into inner & outer circles. - Inner circle discusses topics. - Outer circle observes & gives feedback. - Switch roles if needed.
2	Raisa Anakotta, Nursalim, Jubahida Latuheru	2020	Fishbowl Technique Towards the Students' Speaking Skills	Experimental	Similar findings as Study 1: significant improvement in speaking skills using Fishbowl method, with mean score increase from 59.25 to 80.18.	-Prepare descriptive topics. - Retelling as warm-up. -Explain Fishbowl rules. - Inner circle discusses, then switch roles. - Give feedback & challenges.
3	Isma Rachmadani Siregar, Maria Ariana Luardini, Natalia Asi	2022	Improving Students' Speaking Skills and Writing Skills by Using Fishbowl Technique	Classroom Action Research	Speaking scores improved from 67.84 to 78.00; writing scores improved from 70.30 to 80.61, showing Fishbowl effective for both skills.	-Explain Fishbowl steps. -Students discuss given topics. - Observers write notes. -Rotate speakers.

				- Evaluate with questionnaire.
4	Meliya Sari, 2025 lis Sujarwati	The Effect of Using the Fishbowl Strategy Toward Students' Speaking Ability	Quasi-Experimental	Experimental group using Fishbowl scored significantly higher ($t = 70.00$) than control group; Fishbowl created engaging learning environment.
				-Teach Fishbowl structure. -Students discuss in turns. - Observers take notes & give feedback. - Teacher monitors & reflects.
5	Sri Wahyuni, Ana Kuliahana, 2025 Afifah	The Effectiveness of the Fishbowl Technique Towards Students' Speaking Skills	Quasi-Experimental	Fishbowl significantly improved speaking skills; $t\text{-count} = 28.847 > t\text{-table} = 2.048$ ($p < 0.05$), confirming effectiveness.
				-Explain Fishbowl purpose. - Divide students into circles. - Inner circle discusses, outer observes. - Rotate roles. - Reflection & feedback.

Based on the five studies reviewed, it is clear that the Fishbowl Method is consistently effective in improving students' speaking skills at various educational levels. Almost all studies used either an experimental or quasi-experimental design, while one study applied Classroom Action Research to monitor progress across multiple cycles.

Overall, all studies reported a significant increase in students' speaking scores after using the Fishbowl Method. For example, Kamisah et al. (2019) and Raisa Anakotta et al. (2020) both found that average speaking scores rose from about 59 (classified as "Failing") to around 80 (classified as "Good"), with t-test results far exceeding critical values, indicating a strong statistical effect. Interestingly, the study by Isma Rachmadani Siregar et al. (2022) also found improvements not only in speaking but also in students' writing skills, suggesting that the Fishbowl technique can support multiple language skills.

Across the studies, the Fishbowl Method generally followed several key steps:

- The teacher explains the concept of the Fishbowl to the class.
- Students are divided into roles, forming an inner circle (active discussants) and an outer circle (observers).
- Students in the inner circle take turns discussing a given topic while outer circle students observe and take notes.
- Roles are rotated so that all students get the chance to speak.
- The session ends with reflection and feedback provided by both teachers and peers.

Many studies highlighted that the Fishbowl Method created a more engaging learning atmosphere, built students' confidence, and encouraged active participation. However, some challenges were noted, such as students initially feeling shy to speak, the method requiring more time, and the importance of teachers providing clear rules to keep discussions focused and productive.

Overall, these findings strongly support the view that the Fishbowl Technique is an effective and engaging strategy for improving students' speaking abilities in English classes. It aligns well with current educational trends favoring active learning, including Indonesia's Merdeka Belajar curriculum, which emphasizes student-centered and participatory teaching approaches.

3.2 Discussion

This study aims to explore how the Fishbowl technique is implemented in learning speaking at different levels of education. Based on the five articles and journals analyzed, both similarities and differences in the application of this technique are evident. Based on the analysis of the five studies reviewed, it was found that the implementation of the Fishbowl technique in learning to speak showed a relatively uniform pattern.

The first stage, which is generally carried out, involves the teacher providing an initial explanation of the procedure for implementing Fishbowl. At this stage, the teacher provides students with an understanding of the concept and rules of the discussion, including the division of roles between the inner circle, which serves as active participants, and the outer circle, which serves as observers. Next, students are divided into two large groups, namely the inner circle and the outer circle, with a rotating mechanism that allows each student to actively participate in the discussion.

During the discussion process, the teacher presents topics or questions that are relevant and appropriate to the learning context, such as daily life themes, opinions on specific issues, or descriptive texts. This topic serves as the primary discussion material for students in the inner circle. During the activity, role rotation is carried out periodically so that all students gain experience speaking directly in front of their peers.

Meanwhile, the students in the outer circle observe and record the key points of the discussion. After the session ended, they gave feedback, both orally and in writing, to the discussion participants. The teacher also provides reflection and reinforcement on students' performance to encourage continuous improvement of speaking skills. Thus, the Fishbowl technique is proven to create an interactive, participatory learning environment that supports the development of students' speaking skills as a whole. The Fishbowl Technique implementation procedure, proposed by Brozo et al., (2007) and Teuscher (2009), provides a systematic framework for implementing this strategy in the classroom. When compared with the five articles analyzed, there is general conformity in the basic principles, although some stages are not thoroughly adopted.

The first step in Brozo et al.'s model starts with determining an interesting and provocative discussion focus, which is then followed by paired discussions and recording initial ideas. In practice, all the analyzed articles demonstrate that teachers initiate the lesson by directly explaining the Fishbowl procedure to students (as in the studies by Siregar et al., Kamisah et al., and Wahyuni et al.). However, the initial paired discussion stage, as suggested by Brozo et al., was not explicitly found in any of the five studies, indicating that this stage has not been part of standard practice in the field.

In terms of format and role demonstration, all studies conformed to Brozo and Teuscher's guidelines, particularly in the division of roles between the inner circle, as active participants, and the outer circle, as observers. The explanation of the observer's role was also conducted systematically, as seen in the studies by Sari & Sujarwati, Wahyuni et al., and Anakotta et al.

The implementation of discussions and rotations was also an essential part of all the articles analyzed. The inner circle always initiated discussions, while the outer circle observed, took notes, and provided feedback. Role rotation was applied in all studies to ensure the active involvement of all students, in line with Brozo and Teuscher's recommendations. However, the 'tap-in' feature that allowed students from the outer circle to spontaneously replace discussion participants, as recommended by Teuscher (2009), was only explicitly applied in the study by Kamisah et al. and implicitly in Siregar et al.'s study, where students were allowed to replace participants who had difficulty speaking.

At the reflection and feedback stage, Brozo's procedure emphasizes the importance of comments and questions from the outer circle as well as the facilitation of reflection by the teacher. This is reflected in the studies by Sari and Sujarwati, as well as Wahyuni et al., which included post-discussion reflection sessions to evaluate the process and learning. Anakotta et al. also provided space for observers to offer challenges and feedback, which aligns with the reflective principles of the Fishbowl method.

Finally, in terms of equal participation, Brozo et al. emphasize that all students should have the opportunity to be in the fishbowl and understand their role. All five articles addressed this aspect through role rotation, although not all explicitly stated that all students had a turn in a session. However, the studies by Wahyuni et al. and Anakotta et al. highlight the importance of role equity and ensuring that every student has an equal opportunity to actively participate in the discussion.

Overall, the five studies analyzed have adopted the core of the Fishbowl Technique procedure as outlined by Brozo et al. and Teuscher, with implementation varying depending on the school context and educational level. However, there

is room for optimization through the application of elements that have not been fully integrated, such as the initial paired discussion and the 'tap-in' technique, to maximize the effectiveness of this strategy in speaking learning.

In general, the five studies analyzed have successfully implemented the main principles of the Fishbowl Technique as proposed by Brozo et al., (2007) and Teuscher (2009), particularly in aspects such as student role structure, discussion implementation, and participation rotation mechanisms. All studies demonstrated consistency in the application of the basic Fishbowl model, specifically the division of students into inner and outer circles, the provision of discussion topics, and the rotation of speaking and observation roles.

However, there are some essential procedural elements of the original model that have not been fully adopted in practice. Among these is the initial discussion stage, conducted in pairs before entering the Fishbowl session, as suggested by Brozo et al., which aims to activate prior knowledge and foster students' initial engagement. In addition, the 'tap-in' technique that allows students from the outer circle to spontaneously replace active participants in the discussion, as described by Teuscher (2009), is still rarely applied explicitly. Another essential element that has not been consistently observed in all five studies is explicit modeling by teachers on how to deliver practical questions and comments during the discussion.

The absence of these elements suggests that, although the Fishbowl Technique has been used effectively in learning, the overall adoption of the procedure in accordance with theoretical guidelines can still be improved. Refinements in these aspects have the potential to further optimize students' active participation, enhance the quality of discussion interaction, and more optimally strengthen the learning outcomes of speaking skills.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of five studies on the implementation of the Fishbowl Technique in language learning demonstrates that this method has been consistently and effectively applied across different educational levels. The studies reveal a typical procedural pattern involving the teacher's explanation of the technique, role assignment between inner and outer circles, topic-based discussions, systematic role rotation, and reflective feedback. This approach has been demonstrated to foster active participation, enhance student confidence, and promote a collaborative learning environment.

However, when compared to the theoretical frameworks proposed by Brozo, Frey, and Ivey (2007) and Teuscher (2009), several critical procedural elements remain underutilized in practice. These include paired pre-discussions to activate prior knowledge, the use of the 'tap-in' mechanism for flexible role exchange, and explicit teacher modeling of effective questioning and commenting techniques.

Therefore, while the Fishbowl Technique has proven to be a valuable strategy for enhancing speaking skills, its full pedagogical potential can be further realized through the comprehensive adoption of these recommended procedures. Strengthening these aspects may lead to richer interaction, increase student engagement, and more substantial improvements in speaking proficiency in English language learning contexts.

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