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Implementing the Think, Talk, Write Approach for Developing English Language Skills in Grade 4 Students

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the implementation of the Think–Talk–Write (TTW) approach in developing the English language skills of fourth-grade students at MI Rohmatul Ummah, Mandailing Natal, North Sumatra. The study was motivated by students' limited opportunities to practice speaking and pronunciation because classroom instruction mainly emphasized writing activities. This research employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) using two cycles consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The participants were 27 fourth-grade students. Data were collected through classroom observations, interviews, documentation, speaking assessments, and writing assessments. The findings revealed that the implementation of TTW improved students' pronunciation, writing ability, classroom participation, and learning confidence. Students became more active during classroom discussions, demonstrated better pronunciation accuracy, produced more complete written sentences, and showed greater confidence in expressing their ideas. The average writing score increased from 2.07 in Cycle I to 2.88 in Cycle II, while students' speaking performance also improved. These findings indicate that the Think–Talk–Write approach provides meaningful opportunities for students to develop productive language skills through individual thinking, collaborative discussion, and structured writing. Therefore, TTW can be considered an effective student-centered approach for improving English language learning among elementary school students.
Keywords: Classroom Action Research, Elementary Students, English Language Skills, Think–Talk–Write, Young Learners

Introduction

English plays an important role in helping students communicate, access information, and participate in the global community. Therefore, learning English from an early age is essential because it provides a strong foundation for developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. These four language skills are interconnected and should be developed in a balanced way. However, English instruction in many Indonesian elementary schools still emphasizes reading and writing activities, while listening and speaking receive less attention. As a result, students often experience difficulties in communicating orally, pronouncing English words correctly, and expressing their ideas confidently.

Initial observations conducted at MI Rohmatul Ummah, Mompang Jae, Mandailing Natal, revealed similar conditions. English is taught only once a week for approximately 45 minutes, and classroom activities mainly focus on copying vocabulary and sentences from the whiteboard. Students have limited opportunities to practice speaking or listening during classroom instruction. Consequently, many students experience difficulties in pronouncing English words accurately and using them in meaningful communication. During the observation, several students pronounced English words according to their spelling rather than their correct pronunciation, indicating that they relied heavily on written forms instead of oral language practice.

This condition suggests that English learning should provide students with more opportunities to think, communicate, and express ideas actively. Student-centered learning encourages learners to construct knowledge through interaction rather than simply memorizing vocabulary or copying sentences. Therefore, teachers need instructional approaches that integrate language skills and actively involve students throughout the learning process.

One approach that supports this goal is the Think–Talk–Write (TTW) approach. TTW consists of three sequential stages: Think, where students process information and organize ideas individually; Talk, where they discuss their ideas with peers; and Write, where they express their understanding in written form. This sequence allows students to develop ideas gradually while improving both oral and written communication. Previous studies have reported that TTW improves students' writing performance, increases classroom participation, and promotes collaborative learning.

Although TTW has been widely implemented in previous studies, most research has concentrated on improving a single language skill, particularly writing, or has been conducted with secondary school students. Only limited studies have examined the implementation of TTW for developing integrated English language skills among elementary school learners. Furthermore, few studies have investigated TTW in the context of primary schools in North Sumatra, especially at MI Rohmatul Ummah. This gap indicates the need for further investigation regarding how TTW can support young learners in developing English language skills through meaningful classroom interaction.

Based on these considerations, this study investigates the implementation of the Think–Talk–Write approach in developing English language skills among Grade 4 students at MI Rohmatul Ummah. Specifically, the study aims to describe how TTW is implemented in classroom activities and examine its contribution to improving students' English language skills, particularly pronunciation and writing. The findings

are expected to provide practical insights for English teachers in selecting more interactive teaching strategies and contribute to the development of English language teaching for young learners.

Methods

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) using the Planning, Action, Observation, and Reflection (PAOR) model. This research design was selected because it enables teachers to identify classroom problems, implement instructional improvements, observe students' responses, and reflect on the effectiveness of the intervention in a continuous cycle. The study was conducted at MI Rohmatul Ummah, Mompang Jae, Mandailing Natal, North Sumatra, during the 2025/2026 academic year.

The participants were 27 fourth-grade students consisting of 15 male students and 12 female students. They were selected because they demonstrated various levels of English proficiency and experienced difficulties in pronunciation and writing during preliminary classroom observations.

The research consisted of a pre-cycle followed by two action cycles. In the pre-cycle, the researcher conducted classroom observations to identify students' learning problems and collected baseline data related to their English language skills. Based on the findings, lesson plans using the Think–Talk–Write (TTW) approach were prepared.

Each cycle included four stages. During the planning stage, the researcher prepared lesson plans, teaching materials, learning media, observation sheets, and assessment rubrics for speaking and writing. In the action stage, the TTW approach was implemented through three learning phases. First, students independently generated ideas during the Think stage. Next, they discussed their ideas with partners or small groups during the Talk stage to improve understanding and pronunciation. Finally, they organized and expressed their ideas in written form during the Write stage.

The observation stage focused on recording students' participation, classroom interaction, pronunciation performance, and writing achievement using observation sheets, field notes, students' written work, and audio recordings. During the reflection stage, the researcher analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of each cycle to determine necessary improvements for the following cycle.

Data were collected through classroom observation, interviews, documentation, speaking assessments, and writing assessments. Observation and interviews provided qualitative data regarding students' participation, confidence, and learning experiences, while speaking and writing rubrics generated quantitative data to measure students' progress. Documentation, including students' written assignments and classroom records, was used to support data triangulation.

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative data from observations and interviews were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing to identify patterns in students' learning behavior. Quantitative data obtained from the speaking and writing rubrics were analyzed descriptively by comparing students' achievement across the pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II to determine the effectiveness of the Think–Talk–Write approach in improving students' English language skills.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of the Think–Talk–Write (TTW) approach contributed positively to the development of fourth-grade students' English language skills, particularly pronunciation and writing. The improvement was observed through classroom observations, speaking and writing assessments, students' participation, and reflective evaluation conducted during two action research cycles.

Before the implementation of TTW, classroom learning was mainly teacher-centered and focused on writing activities. Students usually copied vocabulary and sentences from the whiteboard with very limited opportunities to practice speaking. As a result, many students pronounced English words based on their spelling and showed low confidence when expressing ideas orally. Most students also produced only isolated words or short phrases in their written work, indicating limited vocabulary mastery and weak sentence construction.

During Cycle I, students were introduced to the TTW learning sequence through the topic of hobbies. In the Think stage, students generated ideas individually using pictures and vocabulary provided by the teacher. During the Talk stage, they discussed their ideas with classmates and practiced pronouncing English words. Finally, in the Write stage, they organized their ideas into simple written sentences. Although many students still depended on teacher guidance, the classroom atmosphere became more interactive than during the preliminary observation.

The quantitative results from Cycle I indicated that students' performance remained relatively low. The average writing score was 2.07, while the average speaking score reached 2.23. Most students were categorized at the low or poor performance levels. Frequent errors included incorrect spelling, incomplete sentence construction, limited vocabulary, and inaccurate pronunciation. Nevertheless, classroom observations showed that students became more willing to participate in discussions and gradually gained confidence in expressing simple ideas.

Based on the reflection conducted after Cycle I, several improvements were made for Cycle II. Additional visual media, vocabulary reinforcement, pronunciation practice, and more structured pair discussions were incorporated into the learning activities. The lesson topic was changed to daily routines, enabling students to relate English expressions to their everyday experiences. Students were encouraged to use complete sentences and include time expressions when speaking and writing.

The results of Cycle II showed clear improvement. The average writing score increased from 2.07 to 2.88, while speaking performance also improved considerably. More students reached the medium and high performance categories, and only a few remained at the low level. Students produced more complete sentences, used a wider range of vocabulary, and demonstrated better pronunciation accuracy. Classroom observations also revealed greater confidence, higher participation, and more active interaction during group discussions.

The qualitative findings support these quantitative improvements. High-achieving students were able to organize ideas independently, communicate fluently with classmates, and write coherent sentences with relatively few errors. Medium-achieving students showed noticeable progress after receiving peer support during discussions, while lower-achieving students became more confident in attempting complete

sentences despite still requiring teacher guidance. These findings indicate that collaborative interaction during the Talk stage provided valuable opportunities for students to practice English before producing written work.

The improvement observed in this study is closely related to the characteristics of the Think–Talk–Write approach. The Think stage encouraged students to activate their prior knowledge and organize ideas individually. The Talk stage enabled students to negotiate meaning, exchange vocabulary, and receive immediate feedback from peers, which strengthened both comprehension and pronunciation. Finally, the Write stage helped students transform spoken ideas into organized written sentences, reinforcing vocabulary, grammar, and sentence organization.

These findings are consistent with previous studies reporting the effectiveness of TTW in improving productive language skills. Earlier research primarily emphasized writing achievement or speaking performance separately. However, the present study demonstrates that TTW can simultaneously support pronunciation practice and writing development among young learners in an elementary school context. The integration of thinking, discussion, and writing activities created a student-centered learning environment where learners actively constructed knowledge rather than simply memorizing vocabulary.

Overall, the implementation of the Think–Talk–Write approach successfully increased students' classroom participation, confidence, pronunciation ability, and writing performance. The combination of individual thinking, collaborative discussion, and structured writing enabled students to develop English language skills more effectively than the conventional teacher-centered learning observed before the intervention.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the implementation of the Think–Talk–Write (TTW) approach effectively improved the English language skills of fourth-grade students at MI Rohmatul Ummah, particularly in pronunciation and writing. The findings from the two Classroom Action Research cycles showed consistent improvement in students' learning outcomes, classroom participation, and confidence. Through the Think stage, students were encouraged to generate ideas independently. The Talk stage provided opportunities to practice pronunciation, exchange ideas, and receive feedback from peers, while the Write stage helped students organize and express their ideas in written form. The integration of these three stages created a more active and student-centered learning environment.

The quantitative findings demonstrated an increase in students' writing achievement from an average score of 2.07 in Cycle I to 2.88 in Cycle II, while students' speaking performance also showed noticeable improvement. Qualitative observations further revealed that students became more confident in communicating, participated more actively in classroom discussions, and produced more complete and accurate English sentences. These findings indicate that the TTW approach supports not only language development but also students' motivation and engagement during the learning process.

Despite these positive findings, this study was limited to one class of fourth-grade students in a single elementary school and was conducted over only two action research

cycles. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all educational contexts. Future researchers are encouraged to implement the Think–Talk–Write approach in different educational settings, involve larger numbers of participants, extend the duration of the intervention, and investigate its effectiveness in improving other English language skills such as listening and reading. It is also recommended that English teachers integrate interactive and collaborative learning approaches like TTW into their classroom practices to create more meaningful learning experiences and improve students' overall English proficiency.

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