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## FROM A CLASS TO A CLUB

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### Abstract

*Toastmasters International (TMI), from the USA is the only large successful world-wide club for public speaking. With over 300,000 active members, and over 15,000 clubs in over 100 countries worldwide it organizes the World Championships of Speaking. TM has refined the success formula for learning to speak in public to a fine art. What is it that TM clubs do so well that thousands are willing to pay good money for? Truth to tell English Speaking lecturers can learn a lot from Toastmasters. First, TMI has a well-honed formula for running friendly welcoming meetings that give both stage-shy neophytes and also experienced speakers' positive encouragement. Second, TM has excellent manuals: every new member is automatically sent the starting manual with notes for preparing the first ten speeches which, once given, will earn the new member a Competent Communicator Certificate. Third, members pledge to help each other. Fourth, all members learn to give evaluation speeches. Members learn a golden rule for evaluations: look for things to praise and then comment on one thing to do better. Fifth, all speeches are timed. Sixth, TM meetings are lively and interesting with a variety of activities— via: prepared speeches, word of the week, table topics. Club meetings are not large 15 to 30 people. Speaking Classes can learn a lot from TMI - if the Class is turned into a Club all the students who will then become its members and each student will surely benefit a lot.*

**Keywords:** *Speaking club, Toastmasters International, public speaking.*

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background to this Paper

One of the authors of this paper, Mr. Champion has been a Toastmaster for over 2 decades. He first joined a Toastmaster's Public Speaking training course at Southern Cross University in Lismore, Northern NSW, and Australia in 1995 when he was studying there. Then, after returning to Indonesia in 1996, he joined the Jakarta Toastmasters International (TMI) Club, one of about 10 clubs in Indonesia at that time, from memory almost all of them were in Jakarta. Then in 1997, Mr Champion moved to Medan as a Management Consultant and finding there were no TMI clubs there. He preceded to set-up the first two TMI clubs in Medan. Medan proved fertile ground for TMI clubs and within a few years several more clubs were formed. These clubs actively benefited from interaction with the great number of TMI clubs across the Malay Straits in Penang, KL and Singapore. At that time there was more international activity because the Indonesian Clubs were part of a Toastmaster's region that included Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore. Now, in 2016, because of the growth of TMI in Indonesia, Indonesia has a TM Region of its own. Also although some clubs have died others have formed and there are still about 9 clubs in Medan and its surrounding region.

Mr. Champion moved to Banda Aceh in 2005 after the Tsunami and continued working as a management consultant. However, as management work petered out, about 2010, he started teaching English especially teaching speaking English as a native speaker. Now as we all know teaching speaking is probably the most difficult of the four language skills to teach even though there are many books about it (Backhaus, 1997; Baxter 1954; Leads, 1991; Mallouf, 1997; O'Connor, 1997; Payne & Carlin, 1995; Smith, 2003; Turk, 2003; Walters, 2000; Wilder, 1999). This sample of 10 authors writing about speaking, all make good points about how to be a better speaker, but they all lack a good proven system which is easily replicable for turning shy neophytes into self-confident, competent speakers. Then there are many teaching techniques which have been pushed by various teachers and lecturers to try to help students to get confidence to speak like the Jigsaw, Fishbowl, and K-W-L Techniques (Crawford, 2005) and NHT by Verawaty (2016) which usually involve breaking the class up into groups. But these are all itsy bitsy – none of them provides a complete system for teaching-learning speaking and most are heavily reliant on the teacher running the show.

By contrast, the Toastmaster's International system is a complete step-by-step system (Slutsky & Aun, 1997; Green, 1999) which can be followed by students at all levels from secondary school up which combines all the benefits of co-operative learning where the students do 90% plus of the speaking, learning by doing and the teacher becomes the experienced adviser with the end result that usually all the students can speak well at the end of the semester. People, especially students, learn best when they're not actually trying to learn just doing things because they're fun i.e. playing e.g. running/joining a club, competing in games to win prizes, having satisfying experiences, accepting and completing challenges and this is what the Toastmasters International system provides.

From the beginning, Mr. Champion introduced Toastmasters techniques into his speaking classes in particular the step by step mastery of the components of good speaking and the techniques for evaluation (see later). Now, he turns his speaking classes into speaking clubs at the start of the semester and the results have been very good with average grades of B+ or even A in his classes and with all the students in his classes, who regularly attend, passing their speaking class with a high grade and giving very high approval rates in end of semester surveys. Accordingly, as Head of the English Department, Dr. Burhanuddin Yasin, felt it was time to broaden the circle of knowledge about the Toastmasters techniques.

## **METHODS**

### **Toastmasters International – The Organization**

Toastmasters International (TMI) is the leading international speaking club organization in the world. What FIFA is to football, TMI is to speaking: TMI organizes the annual World Championships of Public Speaking. TMI has a revolving membership of over 300,000 members in about 15,000 clubs in over 100 countries throughout the world. When a person joins TMI, that person joins the International organization as a member of a particular TM club. A person becomes a member of TMI for life and as a member of TMI can participate in TMI activities in TMI clubs all around the world. All TMI clubs are required to meet at least once a month, most meet twice a month or fortnightly and some even meet weekly. TMI clubs are grouped into areas which in turn are grouped into Districts and Regions covering the whole world which hold Annual Conventions and Competitions (Toastmasters District 51, 2002)

### **Officials for the Clubs and the Meetings**

Each TM club has a President, a Secretary and a Treasurer; each club also has several Vice-Presidents e.g. one each for Meetings, Education and Membership. All positions are usually rotated each year until every member has filled each position at least once. The positions are filled by the decision of the members at each club's Annual General Meeting (AGM) either by acclamation or by ballot.

At each meeting, different members fill the positions for running that meeting, these include the Toast Master (TM) of the meeting, the Table Topics Master, several speakers with prepared speeches, an evaluator for each prepared speech, a speech timer (all speeches are timed), the ballot counter, the Word of the Day member and/or the grammarian, the ah counter and the Sergeant-at-Arms, the latter's job is to make sure that all the facilities needed are ready for the meeting and are tidied up after each meeting.

### The Meeting Format

The core of the TMI meetings are the prepared “manual” speeches from the members followed by an evaluation speech for each prepared speech. The “manual” speeches follow the requirements from the speech manuals (Toastmasters, 2008). All the speech manuals are periodically revised and reprinted

The Table Topics Master runs the Table Topics session which is for impromptu speaking: At the end of which the members present vote for the best Table Topics Speaker of the meeting.

After the Table Topics session come the prepared speeches and the evaluation speeches followed by the timer’s reports, the ballots (voting) for the best speaker and best evaluation speech and then finally the selection of speakers, evaluators and officials for the next meeting. As a result of the multiplicity of roles, everyone at the meeting usually gets at least one chance to speak during each meeting.

### Basic Program: 10 Speeches for TMI Competent Communicator Certificate

**Table 1.** 10 Speeches for 1<sup>st</sup> stage TMI certificate: The competent communicator certificate (Toastmasters, 2008).

| No. | Speech                | Skills Focus ( Components for Speaking practiced one-by-one) |
|-----|-----------------------|--|
| 1   | The Ice Breaker       | Overcoming nervousness, getting started                      |
| 2   | Speak with Sincerity  | Basics of voice projection and body language                 |
| 3   | Organize Your Speech  | Better structure: opening , body, close                      |
| 4   | Show what You Mean    | How to use props or make a demo                              |
| 5   | Vocal Variety         | How to use vocal variety, use emotion in a speech            |
| 6   | Work with Words       | Expanding and exploring vocabulary                           |
| 7   | Apply Your Skills     | Combine all skills, practice eye contact                     |
| 8   | Add Impact            | Practice advanced body language                              |
| 9   | Persuade with Power   | Persuade the audience, get audience participation            |
| 10  | Inspire Your Audience | Get inspirational, inspire the audience, get participation   |

### Preparations, Notes and Practice

Members of TM clubs, especially beginner members are advised to:

- Prepare each speech by writing it out,
- Practice making the speech out-of-class before peer(s) or a mirror using cue cards.
- GIVE THE SPEECH
- If possible do not read the written speech
- Give a copy of the written speech to the Club Adviser (Teacher/Lecturer) for comments later.

### The Secrets of Toastmasters

Some Secrets of the success of the TMI program and the potential for success in teaching-learning speaking ESL using a Speaking Club are set out in the table below:

**Table 2.** Secrets of TMI Speaking Clubs and likely success of Proto TM Clubs.

| No. | Secrets of TMI Speaking Clubs   | Potential for success for Proto TM Speaking Club with students as members  |
|-----|---|--|
| 1   | Involvement of all (TM) members in group activities   | All students in the class become members of the Class Speaking Club (CSC)  |
| 2   | Each member pledges to help the other members, especially the new ones.                                   | Such a pledge can be a morale booster for a CSC, especially to help shy students   |
| 3   | A defined program of 10 speeches from the Basic Manual (BM) to get the Competent Communicator Certificate | Can be applied for a CSC, so each student has to complete 10 speeches to get a Competent Speaker Certificate and there are no exams. |
| 4   | The Speech Manual speeches progressively develop components of speaking, one at a time.                   | This is an excellent way for teaching Speaking focusing on one component at a time   |
| 5   | All speeches are timed  | Very Good for a CSC  |
| 6   | Each prepared speech is evaluated by another member   | Very important –teacher/club advisor teaches how to evaluate & members practice peer evaluation.                                     |
| 7   | Evaluations focus on the positive aspects of a speech plus one aspect that could be improved              | Excellent, students learn to give positive evaluations & to focus on self-improvement one step at a time                             |

Table 2 continued...

|    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
| 8  | Members can take their time to complete the Basic Manual                                | Within limits, shy speakers can take more time to give their first speeches  |
| 9  | Meetings are fun, nobody ever makes fun of another member                               | Very important –in particular because the students are running the meeting it takes the fear out of going out in front to speak.   |
| 10 | Members strive to do their best and at each meeting they vote for the best speakers ,   | Certificates for the best speakers encourage healthy competition   |
| 11 | Members run the meetings and develop leadership skills in the process                   | Practicing leadership skills is an important supplementary benefit (TMI Competent Leadership Manual, 2008)   |
| 12 | Members learn meeting etiquette   | Another important supplementary benefit  |
| 13 | Members develop skills in speaking impromptu in Table Topics sessions.                  | Excellent for a CSC if time is made available  |
| 14 | Members can start to practice jokes, quotes, amazing news, collocation & grammar points | Also very good for development of student speaking skills in a CSC; (O'Dell and McCarthy, 2003)  |
| 15 | Members practice one new word a meeting   | Also a very good practice for a CSC (Olsen, 1991)  |
| 16 | The Ah counter helps members learn not to use fillers or repeat words unnecessarily.    | This too can be copied for a CSC and is excellent practice. No syllabus mentions this  |
| 17 | Each member learns to project his voice and to practice vocal variety                   | The teacher/advisor can give the members/students special training in voice projection and vocal variety. (McCallum, 1998)   |
| 18 | All members learn leadership skills. (refer TMI Competent Leadership manual, 2008)      | Students too will learn many leadership skills,  |
| 19 | Specialist Trainers provide specialist training for clubs (Smedley, 1988)               | The teacher becomes a Specialist Trainer when his Class becomes a Club   |
| 20 | Members learn a lot from watching videos of Champion Speakers                           | Students learn a lot from watching internet files of Champion Speakers ( <a href="http://www.toastmasters.com">www.toastmasters.com</a> ; <a href="http://www.tedtalks.com">www.tedtalks.com</a> , 2016) |

### Evaluations

One very important feature of the Toastmasters system is that for each prepared speech one of the more competent members gives an evaluation speech (max 2 mins.). So every member (student) learns how to evaluate and will, in turn, be asked to make evaluation speeches of speeches given by other members/students and also will in turn learn to self-evaluate.

The class adviser should prepare and issue the members with evaluation sheets to guide them when making evaluations. He, himself, can also use an evaluation sheet to give a mark for each speech which can be accumulated at the end of the semester to get a total score and hence a total grade for each student, but, and this is important, he cannot fail a speech, only in exceptional cases e.g. the student cannot complete the speech should he ask the student concerned to repeat the speech at a later meeting.

### Leadership Skills

When the Class becomes a Proto Club it must be the real thing, the teacher has to learn to back out and just advise the students of the decisions they have to make and the things they have to do, usually this takes a bit of time at the beginning as it's usually a new experience for the students but after a few meetings they usually know how to run the show on their own and, with real enthusiasm, they take pride in doing so.

### Advanced Speaking Classes

The Competent Communicator program is only the beginning of the Toastmaster's program. After completing the 10 speeches in that beginner's program members can start to master the Advanced Communication Series of speeches. Each of the 12 manuals in the Advanced series has a program of 5 speech projects. (Advanced Communication Series, 2008). As members of actual TMI clubs complete the speech projects in 2 of these manuals they can move up to a higher grade within the Toastmaster organization. Similarly these advanced manuals can be used as the basis for Advanced Speaking Classes in our education institutes.

### Why We Need to Try the TM System

The TMI system works, we need to try the TMI System for teaching-learning Speaking because it works much better than traditional teaching of speaking does. Therefore we propose speaking classes should be made into Proto Toastmasters Clubs i.e. Clubs that copy the practices of TMI but are not registered with TM International.

## CONCLUSIONS

Toastmasters Methods result in developing students' speaking skills much more than standard methods of teaching speaking English EFL. This is due to several factors inherent in the Toastmaster's methods (Slutsky, 1997), in particular:

- Toastmaster's (TMI) methods lower the fear factor for speaking in front of others
- TMI programs help members develop and practice the components for speaking.
- TMI has a fixed program which students can visualize completing successfully.
- TMI provides ongoing participatory positive peer group evaluations throughout the program.
- The TM system encourages healthy competition with immediate recognition of the best performances.

The TM program is a real-world not an academic program where students can see the possibilities of mastering good public speaking'

## Recommendations

Based on the foregoing results and discussions, we recommend the following:

- Those special training classes are set up for Teachers of Speaking English to learn, by demonstration, how to run speaking classes following Toastmaster's techniques (Green, 1999).
- Those syllabi for Speaking English are modified to use Toastmaster's methods.
- Those teachers of Speaking English should use Toastmaster's methods.

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