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LANGUAGE LEARNING ASSESSMENT

STRATEGIES TO REDUCE SPEAKING ANXIETY IN THE CONTEXT OF EFL: TEACHER'S OPINION

STRATEGI MENGURANGI KECEMASAN BERBICARA DALAM KONTEKS EFL:
OPINI GURU

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Abstract

Anxiety is still a problem in the realm of English speaking and the research focusing on the response of teachers in tackling this issue is still. Therefore, this study aims to investigate teacher strategies for reducing speaking anxiety. This study suggests English teachers attempt to use other alternatives to overcome students' speaking anxiety. To achieve the aforementioned purpose, a qualitative approach embracing a case study was employed. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview instrument which was conducted on one of the English teachers in the Garut district. Interview data were analyzed using four stages analysis including organizing, transcribing, converting, classifying, describing, and interpreting. As the result, there are five teachers' strategies to reduce speaking anxiety in the context of EFL, they are (1) Motivational Words; (2) English Practice; (3) Ice Breaking; (4) Group Working; (5) Youtube Videos. Furthermore, this study suggests teachers are expected to emphasize the motivation of students and also create creative learning to reduce anxiety in speaking English in the classroom.

Keywords: English Speaking Anxiety; EFL

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the important skills to be developed and improved as a means of effective communication. Because by speaking we have the skills needed to have a conversation with a native speaker (Mei & Ahmadi, 2017). Next, the ability to speak English is also able to understand when, why, and how to produce the language itself (Idrissova, Smagulova, & Tussupbekova, 2015). Moreover, Bahrani & Soltani (2012) mentions in their study, that the ability to speak English attracts the greatest attention for both language teachers and language learners. Furthermore, some of the advantages of speaking English skills are improving career and business, building self-confidence, getting better job opportunities, being able to give speeches, attending interviews, being able to participate in debates and group discussions, giving presentations and others (Rao, 2019). In conclusion, speaking English skills are very important.

Despite the importance of speaking as stated in the previous section, speaking is a challenge for those who want to hone it, this is inseparable from the influencing factor, namely speaking anxiety. This is in line with Ulandari, Nurhasanah, & Mahmudah (2018), that speaking anxiety, when viewed from the type of anxiety itself is of two kinds. The first is trait anxiety is the character of someone who has obstacles in reducing speaking anxiety. Second, situational anxiety associated with students will experience speaking anxiety if certain conditions, such as one example is the

situation when they want to make a presentation. According to (Akramy, 2020), speaking anxiety is generally felt among EFL students, because after all the interaction between students and teachers will always intersect, if there are situations such as correcting students' mistakes with the teacher on the spot, it is also a big cause for experiencing anxiety in speaking. In addition, (Mukminin, et al., 2015), mentions that in the context of EFL Classroom even at the Senior High School level learning English tends to be silent and passive because participants do not have enough courage to initiate communication in English in class. Next, Koosha & Yakhabi (2013), in their research cites that the method used for EFL is not suitable if applying communicative language teaching to reduce speaking anxiety, in which students will have a high level of anxiety because the teacher is impressed forcing students to speak English. In conclusion, in the context of learning speaking anxiety still exists and is high.

In this regard, speaking anxiety has been explained by previous studies. Most of them research about a learning technique that can affect the reduction of speaking anxiety by using drama techniques that produce good learning, because with drama students feel confident when speaking English (Atas, 2015). Then, another study found the effect of ASR-based web learning on EFL in vocabulary mastery in relation to speaking anxiety which showed that the web-based intervention had shown significant cognitive and effective improvement compared to students from the control group who were exposed to traditional classroom teaching (Bashori, Hout, Strik, & Cucchiarini, 2020). Furthermore, research that raises a media in reducing speaking anxiety is a study conducted by Rini, Noorman, & Nafisah (2021), regarding the use of zoom-storytelling media which is considered as one of the new learning experience media to increase confidence to speak English. Apart from a learning medium that can reduce speaking anxiety, other researchers found that there was a gender impact on foreign language speaking anxiety by showing that female students were more motivated than male students to learn English (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014). Then rather than that, researchers generally do a lot of research only to explore the factors of several types of speaking anxiety itself, one of which is the factors that cause speaking anxiety are external factors which include: language factors, grammatical factors, pronunciation factors, peer factors, and also internal factors, namely, stage fear, lack of confidence, shame factor (Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020).

From previous studies, most of the research focused on the factors and types of speaking anxiety, the media or techniques used to reduce speaking anxiety. Therefore, this study is aimed at investigating the teacher's strategies to reduce speaking anxiety in the context of EFL learning based on the teacher's opinion. Moreover, this study is an attempt to investigate to analyze the teacher's opinion about strategies for dealing with students who have speaking anxiety, so this study wanted to examine it further by conducting a study with the title "**strategies to reduce speaking anxiety in the context of EFL: teacher's opinion**".

METHODS

As previously mentioned, this study aims to investigate strategies to reduce speaking anxiety in the context of EFL based on teacher opinion. to achieve the objectives of this study, the research design used qualitative methods (Creswell, 2003). More specifically, this study uses the semi-structured interview method (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Next, this study is categorized as a case study as qualitative because of the following characteristics. First, this research is characterized as an ongoing model that takes place in a natural setting and allows the researcher to gain a degree of depth through active participation in actual events (Creswell, 1994). In addition, in support of qualitative research, this research includes the phenomenon being investigated from the participant's point of view (Williams, 2007), Namely EFL teachers who have students who tend to have speaking anxiety during English subjects to find solutions. Second, this research is said to be a case study because "the researcher explores in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals" (Creswell, 2003), related to the anxiety of speaking in English in the context of EFL

taken from the teacher's opinion. Those are some of the characteristics of this study that are included in the case study.

This research was conducted in a high school in Garut Regency, West Java, Indonesia. In addition, the participants also support this research. The participants of this study were teachers who had at least 5 years of teaching experience which ensured that there were still many students who had anxiety speaking English. This study uses interviews to answer research questions. This interview technique can allow researchers to gain as much detailed insight as possible because it is obtained directly from participants (Kleef, Trijp, & Luning, 2005). According to Moleong (2002), researchers create a process to obtain data and then turn it into relevant information to reach a decision in data analysis including qualitative. Since this is qualitative research, inductive analysis was used to analyze the data. In qualitative research, data analysis requires categorization, description, and synthesis (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter consists of research results and research discussion. Researchers analyzed the data collected from the interviews. The researcher combines the related literature with the research findings and discusses whether the related literature is well connected with the data obtained.

Findings & Discussions

In this section, the researcher describes the results of this study to answer the research questions. The data of this study were obtained from the results of interviews. This was done to a high school teacher in a Garut district. Semi-structured interviews were adopted in collecting data from interviews. From the interviews, the researchers found several strategies to reduce anxiety in speaking English in the context of the EFL classroom. Found 5 strategies that can reduce students' anxiety in speaking English. Some of them are 1) Motivational Words; (2) English Practice; (3) Ice Breaking; (4) Group Working; (5) Youtube Videos.

1. Motivational Words

Based on the interviews, the researcher identified that the participant motivated students to overcome their fear of public speaking. Motivation appears to be particularly crucial in the development of speaking abilities. The importance of motivation in learning English has a significant impact on their ability to master the target language. In motivation, the teacher say that “ *... one of them is asking students to pray before presentation ...* “ it means that surrender can make students relax when they talking in public like presentate something or doing other things. Motivation and attitudes, anxiety, age differences, personality variables, cognitive factors, and other factors all influence second language learning (Yufrizal, 2007). Besides that, “ *... and establishing the perspective that the individuals they were dealing with were just their friends.* ” implies that motivating yourself by saying a few encouraging words will help students overcome their fear of public speaking. The research of (Dörnyei, 1998) states that motivation provides learners with the primary stimuli for starting second language learning, and that later motivation becomes the driving force for learners to persevere in the tedious learning process, so that learners may be able to complete long-term goals if there is enough motivation. The teacher is also said “*Students need to practice from now on to speaks and perform in front of their friends and they don't have to be afraid of making mistake ...* ” It stand that students don't have to be worry if they make a mistakes because school is a place to learn and develop students' abilities in speking so teachers and their friends can help them to improve, to pronounced well, to practice more so they can be more confidence to speaks in public. The more

speaking practice they get, the better their English will become. Moreover, Cook (1996) agrees, stating that some L2 learners perform better than others because they are more driven.

The more motivated the students are, the more effective their learning will be (Uniroh, 1990). Based on this statement, we can deduce that students who are motivated about studying English will go to great lengths to develop their speaking skills. They will make every effort to complete the speaking task. They will also attempt to practice communicating with their pals without fear of making blunders. As a result, great drive can lead to high accomplishment when it comes to learning English, particularly speaking.

2. English Practice

Another finding in the interview results was that participants often held practical exams which were considered to reduce students' anxiety in speaking English, as stated,

Teacher: "Moreover, there are very few curriculum materials, that's why I often hold practical exams, such as singing practice, storytelling to get students used to being confident."

It means, that participants always hold practical exams which are assessed as filling in the blanks, but essentially learning still exists, because what is judged from the practice is not how the students' voices are melodious or not, but rather how students have good pronunciation, and raise their voices. self-confidence to appear in front when you have to deal with a lot of people, which if it is seen that this includes the speaking aspect. Although singing is considered a condition that can increase anxiety in speaking English, the teacher is very confident that through this process students will be able and appear accustomed to the several practical exams they have passed.

Regarding the findings above, that singing is one of the students' favorite skills in practicing English that we found from the participants we interviewed. He explained that singing skills that have been around for decades have become skills that are always present every year. There are several reasons why singing practice exams are used as a strategy to reduce English speaking anxiety. Among them, firstly singing shows that singing songs can improve students' listening, pronunciation, and speaking skills. This is reported by Millington (2011), that in practice students can learn and have fun at the same time in a context that does not seem serious but the essence of learning remains. Second, according to Keskin (2011), learning through singing is facilitated and accelerated, students do not get bored listening to and repeating the same song, so they get more sounds, words, and sentences, and students learn to pronounce sounds and words confidently, accurately, and with meaningful expressions. In conclusion, students learn through songs, and practicing singing is an alternative learning method that is considered effective as a teacher's strategy in reducing students' speaking anxiety.

Besides singing, another practical exam is storytelling. Storytelling, according to participants who have been interviewed, is one of the easiest practical exams for anyone because the content of this lesson is only told to tell stories in front of the class which is entertaining. Based on previous research, practice exams such as storytelling have been found (Doğan & Çifci, 2021), to find that storytelling has a significant relationship between storytelling acquisition and impromptu speech attitudes, and speaking anxiety.

Another impact felt by students in storytelling increases students' confidence to speak English, which is related here because students' confidence levels increase, it can be

concluded that their anxiety levels are reduced. Storytelling activities force them to talk a lot. The more they talk, the more vocabulary they have (Rini, Noorman, & Nafisah, 2021). Then the informant said that although practical exams made them increase their level of anxiety in speaking English, it helped them in getting used to it as a behavior, because students could get used to it, repeating the test, making them feel less nervous, nervous, and anxious when speaking English in front of the class.

Therefore, in English practice exams such as singing and storytelling have a positive impact even though their anxiety level is considered to be increasing, but this teacher creates an atmosphere of continuous positive behavior (students can get used to it). Passing the vulnerable speaking test often makes them accustomed to speaking English in front of the class.

3. Ice Breaking

Based on the interview the researcher identified how the participants reduced student anxiety in speaking English, by providing more motivation to students, and creating alternative learning in the classroom. *“This is in order to control students' boredom, and can attract students to be more enthusiastic in learning English, especially to improve their speaking skills.”* Said the teacher. Which means that students' boredom must be controlled in order to increase students' enthusiasm in learning English more deeply? This is supported by theory according to Eren & Coskun (2016). Boredom is an emotional that negatively affects personal, affecting student achievement and learning. Practical exams are also carried out to minimize boredom, for example singing practice, holding quiz games on TV, or role playing. However, this strategy has a constraint time. Holding alternative learners can spend more time than usual, therefore to make time effective, work groups are formed in learning.

Quiz which is an alternative learning is also carried out to reduce students' anxiety. The teacher says that Quiz can be done by selecting an envelope, which is filled with songs that have been prepared. Then when the selected song is played, students have to guess what the title of the song is and who the singer is. Then followed by a scramble round in the form of guessing the lyrics. Students must guess the empty lyrics in English. To practice singing, of course, you need tools such as speakers and a microphone. This method is supported by the theory of Benti (2014) that stated guessing has a purpose to increase student's curiosity. By having a high curiosity, students will be more interested in something they are looking for and that way they will learn more about it. For the material about explanation text, a projector is used to discuss the material, because students sometimes feel bored if the delivery of material is only glued to the text. Therefore, a projector is used by displaying videos from YouTube that are adapted to the majors taken, for example an explanation of how the process of fertilization of the fetus is, if it is in the science class.

Role play is also used as an alternative to learning. The teacher says that “the material is about speaking English on the phone, like ordering something or being a hotel staff”. This kind of material can use role play, where students can sharpen their brains to develop their ideas and make it a dialogue that they will practice in front of the class, which will provoke student interaction in the classroom. This is supported by the theory of Sumpana (2010, p. 10) believe that role play can develop students fluency which promotes interaction in the classroom and increase their motivation. It will be become a solution upon students lack motivation (Nopiani, 2013). Students are assigned to make a dialogue. However, it is not immediately implemented and practiced. But at the first meeting, students must understand the material that have discussed first and make groups to discuss writing the dialogue. Then

at the second meeting they need to check the task or dialogue they have made. Then when they are finished, they are required to practice first to make sure the pronunciation is correct or not, if there are still things that are not correct, they need to fix it. The strategy used, of course, yielded results even though it was not significant, but at least there was the courage of students to speak English. Then at the third meeting they just practiced the dialogue they had made even though students still made mistakes in English pronunciation.

4. Group Working

Based on the interviews that have been conducted, the participants stated that they often do group work to reduce their overall speaking English anxiety, because students can learn from peers who are considered more proficient in their speaking English skills. As stated by one of the informants,

“Teacher: I use group work to reduce anxiety in speaking English, at least we encourage children to speak English, not necessarily individually, and they are considered very comfortable if practical exam activities are carried out in groups.”

It is mean, that participants assume that at least in speaking learning the number of students can be represented and see, and imitate the way their friends speak as group representatives. Therefore, the participants did not hesitate to choose group working as a strategy to reduce anxiety in speaking English. In addition, participants thought that at least in speaking learning, the number of students could be represented and could see and imitate the way their friends spoke as group representatives.

Regarding the findings for group working, there are several important points about the advantages of group work in teaching the EFL context which is considered to reduce students' speaking English anxiety. Among them, resource persons said that activities carried out in groups such as discussion events that required group representatives to present the results of discussions or activities such as ice-breaking on the sidelines of teaching and learning activities. This is in line with previous research conducted by Baret, Liu & Wang (2022) that grouping for oral presentations is very effective in learning speaking which can reduce anxiety in speaking English. In addition, the resource person said that group work was able to reduce students' anxiety in speaking English, because students were able to pay attention to their friends and remind them if there were mistakes, in this case, students could accept them casually without being seen as patronizing. It means that the influence of group working must be in line with the help from peers because according to Taly (2020) the presence of peers involves and gets support from peers to overcome speaking anxiety plays an important role. Then, the theory that supports the group working is able to overcome speaking anxiety is that the resource person is in line with learning through this, students can exchange and discuss the problem of how a word is pronounced. This is in line with Yanti (2019) who said that grouping assignments can make students speak less English when presenting in class. Therefore, teachers still apply a lot of group work in improving students' speaking skills to reduce their speaking anxiety in English.

Furthermore, we can observe that group work also makes students who are at the initial level able to increase student's enthusiasm to speak English. It means students who enter the early grades are able to manage anxiety in speaking English because they feel safe with work groupings. It is related to discovery with Karpovich, Sheredekina, Krepkaia, & Voronova (2021), that the monologue speaking task paired with peer interaction and peer

assessment can improve the English skills of first-year students. Those are some important things about the advantages of group working.

5. Youtube Videos

In this study, participants stated that the use of Youtube videos was able to make children more active in speaking during learning. As said this participant expressed his statement as follows,

“Teacher, but to make the children more interested in learning, I usually use a projector. For example, discussing explanations, I look for videos sourced from YouTube that are tailored to the majors I'm taking.....”

It means, that some of these things make it possible to reduce students' anxiety when they have to speak English through YouTube videos, and participants state that this is an alternative variation of learning by practicing speaking skills, in its application students are not directly and not forced to speak, but rather the instinctive nature of students when they know students are talking and answering the teacher's questions. If not, the teacher does not force and explain the material to be delivered.

Regarding this finding, there are several advantages that YouTube has in reducing students' anxiety about speaking English. First, YouTube videos are able to increase vocabulary and provide a good speaking model. This is in line with (Jati, Saukah, & Suryati, 2019), that youtube videos have succeeded in improving students' speaking skills because the accuracy aspect of the video is able to add a good source of vocabulary and speaking models, which means that students are able to remember how vocabulary is spoken so that students can imitate what they have learned such as which has been explained in the video about the material. Second, the teacher is able to pay attention to students how their level of focus is in watching, because after being shown the teacher explains what the content of the video is using simple English answers and also slowly because the important thing is that students are able to understand and at least they are willing to try to speak English even though it is considered a little. Based on Helen & Mary (1987) speaking is a long process, repetition and imitation of Youtube videos are very helpful for students to speak how basic words are spoken which is considered an advantage of Youtube videos. In addition, the addition of image visualization and illustrations makes it easier for students to learn the content of the material explained, especially in vocabulary. This is related to that YouTube is entirely an online media sharing videos that can be used for learning, especially speaking Wahyuni & Utami (2021). Third, the advantage of learning through YouTube videos is for the teacher himself, because he is able to create a flexible, more interactive classroom atmosphere (Wang & Chen, 2020), where the role of the teacher is very bounding with students. Lastly, the use of YouTube media is able to minimize students' fear. According to Alkathiri (2019) that his research proved the use of YouTube in learning was able to minimize students' fear when they had to try new vocabulary in class, and students considered Youtube as a tool that could help them. Therefore, participants choose to continue showing videos in class that are considered to have high benefits.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

As has been mentioned, this study aims to investigate teacher strategies to reduce speaking anxiety in the context of EFL learning. The result reveal that there are five strategies of teachers in tackling students' speaking anxiety; giving motivation, doing English practice, ice breaking, group working, and using YouTube videos. This research is more about how a teacher handles the class

and efforts to find alternative learning where students must have an interest in English first. From some that have been researched, this research has a gap from previous research, where motivation is more emphasized to students because students experience a lack of motivation from the teacher which causes less enthusiasm in studying English. For further researchers, the advice to be given is to try and find out more about how motivation can influence students to speak English, and also how a teacher creates creative, innovative learning to reduce anxiety in speaking English in class.

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