

A Review on External and Internal Approaches to Overcome Speaking Anxiety and Coping Strategies among Pre-service ESL Teachers

Ayu Rita Mohamad, Wan Farah Wani Wan Fakhruddin,
Nurhasmiza Abu Hasan Sazalli

Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

Email: ayuritam@gmail.com

Corresponding Author Email: wanfarah@utm.my

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Abstract

This study comprehensively reviews previous literature in the investigation of language and anxiety. In this review study, we reviewed previous studies on how individuals cope with speaking anxiety and identified useful external and internal approaches used by teachers to help students alleviate anxiety when delivering their speech in an online classroom as well as pinpointed effective strategies used by learners to cope with speaking anxiety. It is hoped that findings of this review study will provide valuable information with significant theoretical and practical importance to increase the understanding of speaking and anxiety. In this study, several external and internal approaches used to cope with speaking anxiety among pre-service ESL student teachers include sociological factors, pedagogical factors, technological factors, linguistics factors, psychological factors and skills training in assisting learners to deal with speaking anxiety.

Keywords: Language Learning Anxiety, Second Language Acquisition, Pre-Service Teacher Education, Speaking Anxiety, Coping Strategies.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to review the role of anxiety in the learning of English as a second language (ESL) and to explore the factors of speaking anxiety among ESL learners. This study was conducted, in part, due to the growing number of ESL pre-service student teachers who experienced anxiety during their teacher training program in one of the private institutions in Malaysia. In order to find out whether other pre-service ESL student teachers face the same problem, this study thus critically reviews previous studies investigating speaking anxiety. Sources of our data include academic publications and scholarly web resources. The results of this study are expected to aid the understanding of anxiety and language, hopefully leading to the development of a comprehensive theoretical framework of anxiety in second language acquisition.

Anxiety has sparked a lot of attention in the second speaking activities. Horwitz et al (1986) stressed that speaking is one of the most anxiety-provoking situations for most learners. Most ESL students say that speaking English is difficult and it is the most obvious source of anxiety in language classroom where students avoid talking because they are unprepared, uninterested, or unable to express themselves, most anxiety stems from feelings of alienation in classroom, lack of confidence, or because students fear communication itself. Sometimes when their teacher asks them a question, the students just keep silent. Many students still cannot master English language and feel anxious when dealing with the language (Fook, 2009), let alone to communicate fluently in English is utterly worrying. Therefore, it can be more stressful when they are expected to speak in the second language before the fluency is achieved (Abdullah & Abdul Rahman, 2010). Speaking anxiety could lead to inhibition of L2, especially English learning and affect students' speaking ability, which may have negative impact on students' SLA and performance (Hwa, 2012).

In order to ensure that pre-service ESL teachers should be able to have good English language skills and speak comfortably in English language classroom after leaving university, Rao (2018) emphasized that meeting the difficulties today is not enough, and teachers must understand that they need to concentrate more on this ability in order to train students for jobs, connect with others, and perform well in workplaces. Pre-service ESL should be exposed to several strategies in coping anxiety which can be divided into two approaches; externally and internally. Past studies used by (Zheng, 2008) emphasized that studies of this nature provide insights into how educators can develop appropriate interventions to decrease language anxiety among second/FL learners. Horwitz et al (1986) argued that the teacher holds the major responsibility for reducing learner anxiety by either focusing on the students' anxiety-provoking situation or by establishing a relaxed and less stressful learning atmosphere in the language classroom.

Materials and Methods

This is a literature review study with a qualitative design. This study follows the routine literature review approaches from qualitative and quantitative design approaches. The method is database search consisting of three categories: keyboard search in electronic database, selecting the most suitable articles, and comparing the findings from selected articles. First, the keywords are anxiety, speaking anxiety, oral delivery, strategies to cope with anxiety, Theory of Anxiety and Communication Apprehension Theory. The articles are restricted from 2000-2020 in consideration of novelty and research finding. Articles that are more than ten years old are selected only if the results presented are essential to this analysis. Secondly, the article selection is made by reviewing the abstract, the highlight, and the body articles sequentially. Besides, the researchers also analyzed articles from complementary sources including conference proceedings, Google Scholar, official websites and many more. Thirdly, comparison between the findings reported in previous studies theories adopted in this study were collated to derive answers which may potentially be linked to the Pre-Service ESL Teachers speaking anxiety in Malaysian context. Lastly, the findings of the previous studies are grouped and synthesized into its sub-categories and are presented accordingly in this study.

Results and Discussion

Strategies of Coping Speaking Anxiety

Several strategies in coping with anxiety among pre-service ESL student teachers can be divided into two approaches; external and internal. For external approaches it includes sociological approach, pedagogical approach, technological approach and skills training and linguistics approach. Meanwhile, internal strategies for coping with speaking anxiety involved psychological approach in assisting learners to deal with speaking anxiety (Chuang, 2019; Lian, 2015; Alzahrani, 2019; Ustuk & Aydin, 2016; Budianto, 2010).

Pedagogical Approach

In terms of the pedagogical approach, Chuang (2019) investigated how tertiary EFL teachers deal with students' potential learning anxiety in the classroom. Seven female Chinese teachers who are currently teaching English University subject to non-English major students at a university in Southern Taiwan participated in the study. The results revealed four issues: the lack of teachers' voices, the importance of their involvement, their sensitivity to learners' psychological needs and their methods for inhibiting negative learning emotions.

Lian (2015) investigated the pedagogical preferences of pre-service teachers of different language anxiety levels through administration of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al., 1986). Participants involved included 113 pre-service teachers (29 males, 84 females) in the second semester of the Foundation Program for a B. Ed. (TESL) Program in a Teachers' Education Institute. The pre-service teachers were in five intact groups randomly selected from six groups available. Pre-service teachers were categorized into three levels of language anxiety, namely low language anxiety (LLA), moderate language anxiety (MLA) and high language anxiety (HLA). Pre-service teachers were also required to respond to a 22-item questionnaire on their pedagogical preferences in English class. It was found that LLA pre-service teachers appeared to have greater preference for working individually at learning tasks, being involved in oral exercises, and taking part in role plays, drama, simulations and games as compared to HLA pre-service teachers. Pre-service teachers' reasons for liking or disliking specific pedagogical activities are also presented. The LLA pre-service teachers prefer to work alone because these activities give them the autonomy to express themselves, to be creative, and also help to increase their self-confidence in writing and doing oral presentations. HLA pre-service teachers' reasons for disliking the same activities. The responses show that HLA pre-service teachers reasons for disliking the activities were due to lack of self-confidence in completing tasks individually, afraid of making mistakes in front of others and being laughed at by them, and no confidence in their ability to act in role plays, drama and simulations. The above findings provide a glimpse into how HLA pre-service teachers actually feel in English class. This also explains their learning behaviour, for example, why they tend to be reticent, passive and avoid active participation in learning activities in English class.

Pedagogical, Technical Approach and Skills Training

Meanwhile, Alzahrani (2019) in his study suggested on pedagogical, technological and skills training. On the pedagogical factor, it was found that the objectives of the curriculum in the Department of English language at Najran University should emphasize on communication and increase the numbers of English contact hours. Instructors should give English Department's students better opportunity to develop speaking skills in their class and vary

the strategies (e.g. verbal problem-solving, role-playing, presentation, intonation, and body language etc.) in order to encourage his/her students to speak the English language fluently and accurately in front of his/ her colleagues. Next, in terms of technological factor, the findings revealed that the use of effective modern technology such as videos, smartphones, and computers should also be emphasized to teach English. And lastly, regarding skills training, the findings sound out that instructors should also teach oral skills courses in the laboratories and decrease the number of students in the speaking class (not to exceed 25 students).

Linguistics Approach

Ustuk & Aydin (2016) however conducted a study on the linguistics factors. They examined the level of Foreign Language Acquisition (FLA) among English as a foreign language learners (EFL) and the effects of the use of paralinguistic features on FLA among English EFL speakers. Researchers investigated the effects of the use of paralinguistic features on FLA regarding speaking skills towards 40 EFL learners at an advanced level. The results of this four weeks of speaking activities indicated that the use of paralinguistic features in EFL speaking classes considerably decreases FLA in terms of communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation, while it increases test anxiety. In addition, the use of paralinguistic features prevents panic, confusion and physical symptoms of anxiety.

Psychological Approach

Psychological factors in coping with language anxiety was conducted in Budiarto (2010) study who stressed on Kando (2004) suggestions on five strategies in coping with language anxiety. The five strategies are preparation strategy, relaxation, positive thinking, peer, and labeled resignation.

Table 1
Strategies for Coping with Speaking Anxiety

Source	Internal -Psychology	External -Educational	External -Pedagogical
Chuang (2019)			Minimal teachers' voices, involvement, sensitivity and inhibiting methods
Lian (2015)			Working style and pedagogy with different level of anxiety of preservice teachers
Alzahrani (2019)			Effective communication, teaching contact hours, speaking skills opportunity, strategies and modern technology use, training facilities
Ustuk & Aydin (2016)		Paralinguistic features used to prevent panic, confusion and physical symptoms of anxiety.	

Budianto (2010)	Preparing relaxing strategies, positive thinking, peer and labeled resignation		
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Conclusion

This paper reviewed the strategies of coping with speaking anxiety among pre-service ESL teachers. The mentioned strategies in this paper have an important role to alleviate the anxiety among pre-service ESL teachers when delivering their oral presentation. The findings of this paper indicated that in terms of pedagogical approach teachers should have minimal voices and involvement, sensitivity and inhibiting method. It is suggested that the instructor should vary their working style and pedagogy with different level of anxiety of pre-service teachers. In addition, instructors/teachers should stress more on implementing effective communication, and adding more teaching contact hours so that the learners will have more opportunity to develop their speaking skills. As a result, learners will more opportunity to use other strategies and utilize modern technology. Therefore, this study concludes that pre-service ESL teachers should be given more training facilities and enough guidance. Instructors/teachers should provide learners with more opportunities to speak English through some speaking tasks and also to use the technology that assist them to speak and urge them to take part in speaking activities. In addition, this study shows that paralinguistic features should also be used to prevent panic, confusion and physical symptoms of anxiety. And lastly, in terms of internal approach, learners will be exposed to prepare a relaxing techniques, to practice positive thinking and peer and labelled resignation. The researchers call for more research in this area to explore more strategies that can be adopted to cope with speaking anxiety among ESL learners to assist them in developing skills that can help them deliver speech and communicate effectively.

Therefore, strategies for coping with speaking anxiety can be suggested and practiced by pre-service ESL teachers during their oral presentations. Pre-service ESL teachers' knowledge in coping with their speaking anxiety should be varied and the combination of internal and external perspectives i.e. technology, pedagogy, and educational content in the classroom should be fully optimized between one and another. Many of the researchers above have reviewed and recommended strategies of coping with speaking anxiety across teacher education institution curricula and support pre-service ESL teachers with the possibility to experience an oral presentation that can support them internally and externally. From the review, the studies have contributed to the further development of strategies of coping with speaking anxiety. The studies also explore internal perspective (psychology) and external perspectives (educational and pedagogical) among TESL and EFL pre-service teachers in the certain countries in which the English Language is a second or foreign language in the countries. However, there is still a lack of further research on strategies of coping with speaking anxiety conducted among TESL pre-service teachers in Asian countries, especially among pre-service ESL teachers in a private higher learning institutions. Thus, a study should be carried out to address this issue in the future.

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