

## OVERCOMING STUDENTS' ANXIETY IN SPEAKING ENGLISH THROUGH COLLABORATIVE LEARNING STRATEGY

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### Abstract

The aim of this paper is to discuss about theories and previous studies underlining the use of collaborative learning strategy to minimize students' anxiety in speaking English. It is well recognized that speaking English is a measure whether learning English is successful or not. Unfortunately, speaking is considered extremely difficult by some students especially in English as a foreign language (EFL) context. One of the main problems in speaking English is students have excessive anxiety when speaking in front of people. If the students have high anxiety, they cannot speak English fluently. Therefore, to reduce their anxiety teacher need to apply the collaborative learning strategy in teaching speaking. This article then will discuss about the challenges of speaking English, language anxiety, collaborative learning, the advantages of cooperative learning, and applying cooperative learning activities in English speaking class. Previous studies will be provided in the next discussion to underline the effectiveness of the cooperative learning. This paper finally recommends the use of cooperative learning strategy to reduce students' anxiety in speaking English.

*Keywords: speaking skill, students' anxiety, cooperative learning strategy*

### Introduction

Students of the English language are definitely required to have a good speaking skill. It is common that speaking skill determines whether a study in English is successful or not. It is in line with Nunan (as cited in Indrianty, 2016) who underlines that the success of EFL learning is seen from the ability when learners speak up with other people using the English language. Unfortunately, for English foreign language learners, there are some problems that appear in learning speaking such as lack of vocabulary, incompetence in pronunciation, and very limited exposure to target language (Novitasari, 2009). Moreover, the most frequent which occurs in English learning is students have excessive anxiety when speaking in public speaking. It is like what Alrabai (2014) states that in psychology and language learning, anxiety is the crucial personality concepts. In EFL learning there is correlation between students' anxiety and speaking skill such as when students speak English in front of people they will feel nervous or worry about mistakes. This statement is supported by Azhar (2017) who points that the two variables between

students' anxiety and speaking skill were moderately correlated. It means that the more intense the anxiety of students will be followed by their less ability to speak. Partners are needed to practice speaking skill and to decrease their anxiety. In speaking, students cannot speak alone; they need other people to train their speaking skill. Similarly, Indrianty (2016) who points out that in speaking lesson students need interactions; therefore, students cannot speak alone, they must have great effort to find the partner to speak English. Considering the fact above, one way that can be done in the classroom activity is by implementing collaborative learning strategy. The writer intends to review some research and theories about the use of collaborative learning to reduce students' anxiety in speaking English. It is expected that this paper will provide some insights into the effectiveness of collaborative learning so that the students will easily enhance their speaking skill.

### **The Challenges in Learning Speaking English**

Speaking English can be more challenging for students, especially for EFL learners. The challenges appear from for example, how to pronounce the correct word such pronunciation. Gilakjani (2011) argues that pronunciation is very important in speaking English. The next problem is about grammatical items and lack of vocabulary. According to Riankamol (2008) to have high competence in English speaking, students must pay attention to many aspects of the English language such as grammatical items, vocabulary and so on. Novitasari (2009) further points that sometimes students lack of practice with their partner and sense afraid of making mistakes such as making mistakes in pronunciation and grammar. The last is the biggest challenge which students should be able to reduce is their anxiety. Often the students worry if they have problems with pronunciation and grammar when speaking in public because they guess that their friends will be laughing. This situation makes students have high anxiety. It is in line with Sari (2017) who states that anxiety is when students feel nervous, anxious, and confused. She also suggests that students' anxiety is the common problem that happens in EFL learning. Therefore, it should be found the best way to decrease students' anxiety.

### **Language Anxiety**

Students' anxiety in speaking English is the most principle problem that happens in EFL learning. It is in line with Oda (2013) who mentions that anxiety is the important variable in language learning.

#### **Category of anxiety**

According to Woodrow (2006), Liu and Chen (2013) and Indrianty (2016) in their research, anxiety definite into several types:

- a. Trait anxiety (a personality trait). This type of anxiety is likely felt anxious or nervous in varying situations. For instance, in any situation especially when many people focus on her or his performance students always feel nervous and anxious. This type of trait anxiety is permanent and difficult to change.
- b. State anxiety (an emotional state). It means that people feel nervous just on the particular situation. For example, a student gets nervous easily in any situations that make them stressful. This type is a combination between trait anxiety and specific-situation anxiety and not permanently.
- c. Specific-situation anxiety (anxiety a well-defined situation). This anxiety well-defined situation can be called as a subcategory of trait anxiety at a context that they are experiencing. The students feel nervous while they do the presentation inside the class or outside the class. It is one example of specific-situation anxiety.

**Factor influencing anxiety**

Learners may feel anxious due to problem which related three dimensions in foreign language learning (Horwitz et, al., 1986 as cited in Indrianty, 2016):

- a. Communication apprehension is anxiety about a fear communication to other people. Horwitz at, al. (1986) also define communication apprehension as the shame of communicating with others (as cited in Indrianty, 2016). Students feel like someone is observing them watching out for them to make mistakes in their grammar. This case makes students anxious when speaking English (Sari, 2017).
- b. Fears of negative evaluation occur when students feel pressured and uncomfortable at evaluative situations.
- c. Test anxiety is also related to the discussion of foreign language anxiety. Test anxiety is fear of failure in test or bad experiences in many situations (Indrianty, 2016).

**Collaborative Learning**

Smith and MacGregor (1992) explain in their research that David and Roger Johnson at the University of Minnesota, Robert Slavin at Johns Hopkins University, and Elizabeth Cohen at Standford are the pioneers in collaborative learning. They found that psychology; adjustment, self-esteem, and social skill are having influence to increase students' achievement (Smith and MacGregor, 1992). "Cooperative learning" is a term for a variety of educational approaches to engaging students and teacher joint intellectual effort (Smith & MacGregor, 1992). It means that collaborative learning is a classroom activity in which the teacher divides students into small groups which consist of mixed level students. In this activity, students will be more active to deliver their opinion, have good communication among students, and get sufficient attention from the entire member of group to correct their mistakes (Pattanaoichet and Changpueng, 2014). Pattanaoichet and Changpueng (2014) also propose that the concept of collaborative learning or small groups which consists a different level of students seems to attract a lot of attention of language teachers. Dooly (2008, p. 21) further points out that "Collaboration entails the whole learning process. This may include students teaching one another, students teaching the teacher, and of course the teacher teaching the students, too". Dooly also says that collaborative learning is to drive the students to take responsibility for working together, learning together, and improving knowledge together. Collaborative learning is, therefore, believed as the best way to make EFL learners easier to achieve their accomplishments. Cooperative learning models consist of five general principles as follows (Pattanaoichet and Changpueng, 2014):

- a. Positive interdependence, where team members are depending on one another to achieve a common goal
- b. Face-to-face primitive interaction where each group member provides feedback, challenges one another, and teaches his or her group mates although their individual assignment was done.
- c. Individual accountability where each member of the group is respects to others for their own learning and participation.
- d. Appropriate use of collaborative skills where students are provided with the opportunity to build and implement trust-building, leadership, and communication.
- e. Group processing in which team members develop group goals, the assessment of their performance as a team occurs periodically, and they often identify changes that need to be made in order for the group to function more effectively.

These five components are called by five essential elements in cooperative learning (Faulin and Sofendi, 2013). Therefore, using collaborative learning strategy in the classroom can be a good opportunity to reduce students' anxiety (Smith & MacGregor, 1992).

### **The Advantages of Collaborative Learning**

It is proven by many researchers that using cooperative learning in language teaching and learning bring many advantages. Cooperative learning upgrades some students to increase their speaking English skill. It is in line with Fung (2010) who states that one of the benefits from collaborative learning is that students can recognize how other learners think and they can impersonate after their partner give expression. Not only their speaking skill, but also the students are able to reduce their anxiety when speaking English. According to Pattanapichet and Changpueng (2014), cooperative learning is helping students to create a supportive environment, students can reduce their anxiety and students are not much stress in a speaking class. Gilliet (2016) also mentions that with cooperative learning there are some benefits. First, all of the members will understand about the problem and it will build students' self-confident then decrease the students' anxiety. Second, create a great interaction social. The next train is about individual accountability. As the result, students will more enjoy speaking English activity in a small group and it will help them to minimize their anxiety. Moreover, it is likely students can learn effectively and help one another during language learning. Another researcher of the advantages of cooperative learning is given by Ozturk and Kalyoncu (2018) who suggest that cooperative strategy has an important effect on anxiety as well. It is supposed that anxiety considered as one of a chief factor affecting productivity and the construction of positive relations. Johnsons (1989) and Pantiz (1999) as cited in Laal and Ghodsi (2012) have listed 50 benefits for collaborative learning. The list above is defined into four major categories:

- Social benefit:
  - Collaborative learning builds social support for learners
  - Collaborative learning leads to build interaction among students
  - Collaborative learning create positive atmosphere for processing learning
  - Collaborative learning construct learning communities
  
- Psychological benefits:
  - Collaborative learning increase interaction students' self-esteem
  - Collaborative learning degrease students' anxiety
  - Collaborative learning develops good attitudes to teacher
  
- Academic benefits:
  - Collaborative learning makes good critical thinking students
  - Improvement in classroom result
  - Appropriate students solving techniques
  - Collaborative learning is especially helpful in motivating students
  
- Alternate students and teacher assessment techniques:
  - Collaborative learning strategy make teacher more creative

### **Applying Collaborative Learning Activities in Speaking English Skill**

According to Faulin and Sofendi (2013), Al-Duwaile (2014), and Pattanapichet and Changpueng (2014), there are several steps in applying cooperative learning activities in speaking class that will be explained below;

1. The teacher makes small group which consists five students. Each member will get a unique material to learn and understand. Each member will explain one another in turn. For instance, the student gets a mystery material to be solved. Then, the students must

- study it and search any important information about mystery material. After practicing for a while, students start explaining one another in turn.
2. The teacher makes small group which consists of four-five students with one student selected as the recorder. The teacher gives a question to groups and students must discuss with their group. During a discussion, the teacher announces that each group has three minutes to review what has been thought, ask and answer the question. After the time is up, one of the members must answer the question. The recorder takes notes of the answer and the next member recorder begins, then each member of the group gives an answer.
  3. Students solve problems as a team, then with a partner, and finally solve the problem by their own. It is inviting students to train their psychology, self-confidence about their own statement and ability. This way can call by "Team pair solo".
  4. Three-step interview is a great activity for speaking class. In a group all the members give question to their partner, and finally students who give some question will review what their partner answer. It is like a question and answer section for each member.

### **Previous Study about Collaborative Learning Strategy and Students' Anxiety**

To support insight into engagement cooperative learning to reduce students' anxiety, some previous researches related to this were presented below.

The first study is conducted by Pattanapichet and Changpueng under a title "*Cooperative Learning: An approach to Reduce Students' Anxiety in Learning English*" that research was carried out in 2014 with students' anxiety in English Foreign Language (EFL) at a classroom. The writer used MacIntyre (1995) measurements that anxiety can cause anxious students to divert their attention to different condition at the time; they need to focus on both the assignment and their response to it. The purpose of this study is to find out the strategy of overcoming students' anxiety in EFL learning. This study showed that collaborative learning strategy is giving a big effect on decrease students' anxiety. The students implement a kind of collaborative learning in speaking class and this way success reducing their anxiety slowly.

The second study is carried out by Falkner, Vivian, and Falkner who investigate the effect of collaborative learning to overcome students' anxiety. The research entitled "*Collaborative Learning and Anxiety: a Phenomenal Study of Collaborative Learning Activities*" was conducted in 2013. The researchers describe about students' reflection on collaborative learning, including perception and about behaviors. In addition, the data are collected by interview were formed from three questions. This study indicates that students' anxiety can be decreased by collaborative learning strategy.

The next study is from Al-Duwaile who states that most of the English foreign language learners agree that speaking anxiety is the biggest problem in EFL learning and he found out a strategy which can decrease students' anxiety in speaking. The title is "*The Effectiveness of Using Specific Teaching Strategies in Reducing EFL Learners' Speaking Anxiety*". The teacher uses collaborative learning strategy as the effectiveness learning. The result shows that the experimental group of English Foreign Language learners, there are great improvements in their enthusiasm to speak.

These studies above are conducted in the different EFL learning area, and all the studies show the positive result regarding the use of collaborative learning to overcome students' anxiety. So it can be concluded that students speaking skill improvement can be captured through collaborative learning strategy.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper provides reviews about some collaborative learning's theories and research which are conducted by some experts. It can be proven that through collaborative learning, teachers can help students to reduce their speaking anxiety. However, the teacher must pay attention to students' vocabulary, grammatical structures, and students' interaction. There are some type of speaking anxiety such as trait anxiety, state anxiety, and specific-situation anxiety. Speaking anxiety has also several factors that conduce people feel over anxious that are communication apprehension; fear of negative evaluation; and about test anxiety. To reduce their anxiety the best strategy that can be implemented is collaborative learning. To make collaborative learning more effective, there are five principles like positive independence, face to face primitive interaction, individual accountability, appropriate use collaborative skill, and group processing that must be considered.

The studies and theories above show the positive result regarding use of collaborative learning to overcome students' anxiety. So it can be concluded that overcoming students' anxiety in speaking skill though collaborative learning is the best one.

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