

Educators Strategies: Overcoming Students' Speaking Difficulties

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Abstract. *This research aims to assess the teaching methods applied by English teacher at SMA Negeri 1 Selayar to overcome the barriers to speaking English for their students in EFL context. Using a descriptive qualitative research approach, the study concerns the incorporation of role-play, simulations, group discussion, vocabulary games and positive re-enforcement to foster the development of the students' speaking skills. Questionnaires, observations and document reviews were designed and semi structured interviews were carried out and themes were analysed. The findings shown above prove that using the role-play and simulation members improve learners' confidence and fluency in the actual contexts. Group meetings help learners to build up interactional proficiency since they become more free and organic with others as compared to performances. It has been established that vocabulary games are effecting in improving the students' ability to recall and use the words as well as in motivating the students through positive reinforcement. The main study emphasizes the realistic utility of these approaches and their evidence base in instructional theories as well as their effectiveness in improving language learning achievements in EFL contexts. To the best of current knowledge, the present investigation adds to the existing literature by offering qualitative evidence in support of the means and ends of interactive and student-centered methods of language instruction.*

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INTRODUCTION

English language is no longer a language one masters to improve grades only but a skill that enables one to unlock opportunities in the international market in academic pursuit, career progression and social interaction. English has only entrenched itself as the world's most common language for communication among people from different parts of the world especially in areas of science, technology, business and diplomacy, thus making English communication skills among students from different countries very crucial. But in Non-English Speaking Countries students are under great pressure in order to develop Spoken English Fluency. These challenges are aggravated by the lack of exposure to the language, lack of practice opportunities Tao & Gao (2022), and general speaking anxiety especially in public situations (Piller et al., 2020).

As part of language education, speaking, especially English, cannot be overemphasized, in particular, in today's globalized world. More specifically, speaking is one of the language skills that have been identified as critical in realising the communicative competence, which encompasses understanding and the use of language in a manner that is appropriate and appropriate in given situations (Kyrpychenko et al., 2021; Byram, 2020; Masuram & Sripada, 2020). It cannot be argued that talking is the skill, which in most cases presents the most significant problem to the EFL students. This is because More critically, spoken language is what gets used in social practice, and this is used hastily with the learners comprehending , producing

and processing language interactively as they perform the necessary processes that is involved in grammaring, lexis, phonology and meaning within a short span of time.

Within this context, there is an important role of EFL teacher pursuing the teaching learning process. In doing so, effective teaching strategies must have to transcend beyond popular teaching strategies that put emphasis only on correct usage of words. Instead they should embrace a psychological social and cultural psychological model of second language acquisition. Studies on language acquisition and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety have shifted focus on to learner's active participation, engagement communication and decreasing learners' stress and anxiety in classroom. All these approaches conform to the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which is centered on the use of language in real life activities making language learning more authentic and meaningful to the learners (Banagbanag, 2020; Haliwanda, 2021; Pitikornpuangpetch & Suwanarak, 2021).

Mentioned in the literature, one of the most successful practices is role, in which students use language in real-life setting scenarios. Thornbury proves this by saying that roleplaying helps learners use language to practice and rehearse without feeling the risk of failure and as a result they gain the fluency they require. Likewise, simulation and group discussion can provide students with a set of frameworks to operate but at the same time rich in social interactions. These methods are based on Xi & Lantolf (2021) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which posit that learners will get the best results when they are assisted to complete demanding tasks that they cannot otherwise accomplish on their own but with the help of somebody more knowledgeable who could include the teacher or peers. Group activities especially those that involve peer discussions such as meaningful discussion help to foster interactional competence that entails managing the flow of the discussion, negotiating the meaning of what is being discussed as well as responding appropriately to other people's contribution.

Another strategy that has also been considered in language acquisition is the incorporation of word games that makes learning of new vocabularies interesting and fun. I quote Nation Knickmeyer (2020) who stated that meaningful recycling involves recycling in different contexts and types of activities, games comprise of different meaning in that they mean activities which are fun and they recycle the same words. This interactivity is particularly in line with Krashen's Input Shooshtaria et al., (2020) which states that second language learning takes place when learners receive comprehensible input which are just beyond the learners' current level. In doing so, teachers have the opportunity and ability to introduce new concepts in an academically rigorous and fun way that gets students to be more forceful in their learning as well as more receptive to what they are learning.

Positive reinforcement has also been also identified to be useful in enhancing the learning environment that enables the students to contribute. Specifically, following (Lauer mann & ten, 2021; Cheng, 2020; Lu & Lien, 2020). self-efficacy theory, the Paper emphasises the role of students' perceptions of their capabilities to learn effectively, which could be affected by the feedback by teachers. This self-efficacy is therefore cultivated through positive reinforcements like encouragement in form of praises and instances that the student is rewarded for it. This is even more relevant in EFLClassrooms since the pupils normally develop high level of speaking anxiety and in as much as they are willing to speak, their fear of making mistakes would often pull them back (Erdiana eta., 2020; Öztürk & Öztürk, 2021; Yentürk & Dağdeviren, 2020). This is also in line with Eubanks (2022) operant conditioning wherein positive reinforcement enhances the effectiveness of the behavior; in this case it makes students work harder on their language learning.

Since the above-mentioned strategies are effective in improving the students' speaking skills, this study shall seeks to investigate the impact of these practices in the improvement of the speaking skills among students in SMA Negeri 1 Selayar, an EFL context in Indonesia. In particular, it investigates the role of role-playing, simulations, group discussions, acting vowels or consonants out, or positive reinforcement in managing students' speaking problems. This

research is guided by key questions: In what way does role-playing and simulations help to improve the student's speaking fluency and confidence in using English language? How does group discussions and vocabulary games help in the learning of new language and retention of new learnt words? To what extent and in what way does positive reinforcement affect the students' motivation to engage and their willingness to speak during class?

METHODS

Consequently, this study used a descriptive qualitative research design that was peculiar in ensuring the explorative comprehension of the strategies practised by educators at SMA Negeri 1 Selayar in order to assist learners when faced with hardships in speaking English fluently. This design was chosen because it offers the possibility to investigate teaching phenomena in their real-life setting and to provide a description of the educators' approach and its effects and consequences. Despite the benefits of descriptive qualitative research to be explained further, descriptive qualitative research is especially useful in studying the context and concrete educational setting, where the researcher can monitor how the complex processes of interactions and instructional practices occur. The study was undertaken at SMA Negeri 1 Selayar a public high school which is located in Indonesia. This setting was chosen based on the fact that it utilizes some of the most progressive approaches that are expected to foster students' English speaking abilities. The school consist of 6 classes and 1 English teacher for total of 215 students. Participants were purposively recruited targeting the English teacher and students who are very much involved in speaking classes from diverse background. One participant was an English teacher with over five years of experience of using different techniques which enhance the speaking skills of the students and twenty students from different classes with different level of using English in speaking. This selection made it possible for the study to include as many students' experiences and their reaction to the teaching strategies as possible.

Data collection was conducted using three main methods: using semi structured interviews, classroom observations and document analysis. Interviews were semi-structured which were conducted with the English teacher as well as a number of representative students. The interview questions focused on finding out how the teacher intervened to correct the speaking problems of students and the reasoning behind the strategies used, the method of putting into practice and the outcome analysis by the teacher. The students were asked questions about their difficulties in speaking the English language, their familiarity with the activities in question and their views on how the implementation of such activity affects their speaking skills.

The observations were done using non-participant observation technique where the researcher was more of an observer and did not interfere with the English speaking classes. Observations in the form of field notes were made, these included notes about the specific teaching approaches used in the class as well as notes concerning the general dispositions of all the learners and especially what could be noticed to be positive growth concerning their confidence in speaking and fluency in general. Moreover, the researchers documented instructional materials for teaching-lesson plans, instructional videos, scripts of role-play, teaching games and samples of learners work- recorded role-play and group discussion summaries. The analysis made it possible to establish how these resources contributed towards the operation of the speaking strategies.

The data that were collected were subjected to thematic analysis. This process was initiated by the act of converting all the interview recordings into documents to enhance authenticity of the participants' responses. The first coding was then carried out to analyze the transcripts and notes of observation with view to determining emerging themes and patterns in teaching strategies, the difficulties faced by the students, and the efficiency of these strategies. They were then rearranged into even more general categories that represented the focus of the study. Lastly, in order to establish validity of the emergent results, all data collected through interviews, observations and the documents were validated through cross-sectional comparison. This involved comparing the data from one source with that of another source in order to make

sure that the collected results are accurate. Last, the themes were discussed in view of the literature on practice approaches relevant to facilitating speaking, affording rich insights into how the strategies addressed students' speaking challenges.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Role-Playing as a Strategy for Overcoming Speaking Difficulties

"In front of the class the teacher very often demonstrated role play, where every student has to become someone and it is good for practicing pronunciation and speaking with no fear."

It has been very important in ensuring that students do not have problems relating to speech when presenting their findings. In role plays students are put in realistic situations where communication is essential and this is in English. It also improves their pronunciation in addition to self-confidence which is developed since they have to perform in front of their counterparts. Since role play is an active process, it provides an opportunity for students to try out certain language in a risk-free context while errors are the part of the learning process. This method can well be associated with communicative language teaching approach which lays stress on the interactions while learning the language.

"Many of pre-occupations resemble a student's ability to be able to think in the English language, and fluency which is well promoted when one is tasked to use English in role-playing activities without much prior preparation."

In addition, the fact that the role play is spontaneous makes students apply English during bona fide conversations, which are probably unpredictable most of the time. This makes them to gain fluency as they have to retrieve vocabularies and use grammar structures without practicing on them. Such activities assist students to incorporate the patterns of language use, socially so to speak, into their system thus reducing on memorization and making their use of English appear natural and normal. This kind of learning-by-doing enhances students' appreciation of language use across different settings and academia hence enhancing the transferability of skills.

"Thus, via role-playing, students are given more chances to speak within a class, or conversely, be involved in the class discussions more frequently."

Thus, the role-play promotes the sense of responsibility for learning since it requires the students to share ideas and opinions in the English language. It also additionally raises their speaking time making them more involved in class participation and discussions. Students get to be exposed to different roles where they are given an opportunity to look at things from different angles hence enhancing their appreciation and application of the language. From this method, the learners are able to use language skills not only mechanically but in as many ways as possible.

"Students found this method quite helpful since it made them feel more at ease to speak English when involved in role-playing exercises thus providing a more formal way of practicing English."

The activities are beneficial since they give students a structure where to practice but at the same time offer enough freedom for the imagination by choosing real-life scenarios. This balance is successful in minimizing the concern of error since the students have been informed on what is expected of them but at the same time can try out new contents in their vocabularies. This makes them more at ease and relaxed in terms of their speaking which is an important process towards fluency. Some of the comments from students support the way role-playing was incorporated in making speaking practice easy and non-threatening.

Simulation and Group Discussions to Enhance Fluency

"The teacher assigns students various roles in simulations and thus the teaching consolidates specific language functions Viewed from this perspective, the emphasis on

simulations is propitious since they entail assigning of roles with different responsibilities to the students In this way the teaching facilitates specific language functions."

In simulations, the students are allowed to perform a given function in language with the help of standardized situational context. Since everybody has to play a different part and do different things the teacher makes sure that while one is asking questions another is giving instructions and so on while others are discussing the meaning of the message. This is where the targeted practice is needed as, during such practice, students are able to fine-tune certain aspects that can then be applied in real life. The element of structure is also a plus in simulations to ensure that students are not left guessing as occurs in role play since they expect something and prepare for it.

"Students can share ideas and speak with their peers in class during group discussions in order to socially and informally experience talking."

Some of the advantages of group discussions include the following: The conversational format in which students engage in group discussion allows them to practice speaking English in what they consider a less formal setting. This non-associative setting allows students to give out the ideas in them without worrying about being graded which makes people to open up for discussions. Because of the group discussions students get to learn from their peers as they are also learning different language usage and having different perspectives. Besides, the method promotes not only fluency but also class camaraderie with students who especially feel that they are learning together.

"This is because students who may not be very active during class participation find it easy to express themselves during group work hence increasing their self esteem."

To the extremity, students who find it difficult to talk formally get a more accessible voice in the group discussions. By being less formal in that it does not involve group debates and structured debates the pressure a shy or less confident student would have in order to participate is eased in. This increased participation is crucial in building speaking confidence as these performers are given positive speaking experiences to counter act those that they may be experiencing in Lippy. In the long run, this enables these students to overcome the speaking anxiety hence engage effectively in all activities in the classroom.

"A teacher recalled to a study that, this was true since, with regular participation in group discussions, students were more familiar with the language and so when speaking fluently, it became easier for them."

Consistent and continued speaking practice increases fluency and group discussion participation ensures that student get to practice speaking English on a continuous basis. The more often they discuss these topics with a partner, the more familiar they get with the language, and become clearly more fluent. This result suggest that there benefits in informal speaking practice in Language acquisition because it allows students to consolidate language features that they are learning and also build their confidence in speaking so that they are able to handle more formal speaking tasks. The observations made by the teacher clearly support the idea about the use of group discussions as one of the strategies to encourage the use of the English language.

Use of Games to Expand Vocabulary

"One of the ways the teacher reassures learning is through the use of games which makes the learning aspect easier and less boring for students especially when learning new vocabularies."

Games are a beneficial way to build up the vocabulary because they facilitate learning and make it easier as a child does not feel pressurized as it is usually the case with language learning. That is why, converting the learning of new words into a game, it is possible to ensure active participation of students and increased knowledge of new terms. Games also contains some level

of competition and this can encourage students into learning more so that they can succeed in the game. This is consistent with the concept of gamification whereby the application of game features helps enhance education.

“Responding to the vocabulary games pupils said it was very helpful to enhance their memory and enable them to use the words in other situations.”

Such positive attitude from the students shows that games are fun and at the same time aid in pushing the learners to not only understand but also use the new learnt words. This way, the words are used in the different game contexts where student’s understanding of the word and the ability to use it is again refreshed and enhanced. Such repetition of the said words with a focus on the context acquired in an engaging fashion is helpful when it comes to memory which requires in the process of vocabulary construction. That it is possible to hear these words when speaking about different things, also points to the fact that the games are making it easier to absorb the language more profoundly.

“Word’ games are beneficial for the students in the sense students are required to communicate and use the new words that they have learnt in their day to day communication.”

Other than vocabulary acquisition, games can help to promote interaction with peer, and other students in particular, find natural ways of speaking. This interaction is very essential when it comes to language acquisition since students get to use the new words in testing phase and therefore come up with improved understanding and proficiency. The social aspect of games likewise helps in the acquisition of knowledge since students are able to learn together with their fellow students. This learning environment helps the students to support themselves and others; thus, it enhances the learning of the language comfortably by the students.

“The teacher noted that students were more willing to use more of the new vocabularies when in a game, since the students felt more confident when it came to using them.”

This finding, that students are more ready to use new formations after playing the games, indicates that these activities increase the confidence in using English. That way, games enable students to be more adventurous in their language use since they can practice in a non-threatening environment and can make mistakes without being punished. This desire to try out new things is a crucial aspect of learning as it pushes the learners out of their comfort zone and as a result practice whatever they have learned. This experimentation results into a better understanding and a more free use of language thus a key to fluency.

Overcoming Pronunciation Challenges through Repetitive Practice and Feedback

“For example, the teacher pointed at the need for practicing the pronunciation several of times before achieving desired results, ‘Do it again and again this way until you do it properly’ the teacher said.”

One cannot learn a language without practicing it in one way or the other, this is so especially when it comes to pronunciation. As students repeat the words and phrases after the teacher, the latter facilitates the students’ establishment of proper pronunciation of English sounds and intonation. By so doing, this method guarantees that the students are not only in contact with the given vocabulary but is also capable of pronouncing them properly and fluently. The regularity of the practice enables the students to build up the speech patterns gradually using constant feedback which is imperative in the achievement of correct pronunciation.

“From the observation, students were able to note that they were more confident when it comes to pronunciation after they have repeatedly practised the difficult words and are corrected instantly by the teacher.”

A teacher is always there to encourage students when they are practicing, especially during the multiple practice sessions, therefore it reduces cases of instabilities among the students. This is because through erasing the mistakes, the teacher is able to immediately show

the students the incorrect pronunciation patterns and this will not in any way encourage the students to repeat the same mistake over and over again. This early intervention has effectiveness in enhancing pronunciation besides building up students' confidence since they know that they are correct. The use of practice and feedback means that the students are secure in the fact that they can practice more and get a higher result the next time around.

Some of the forms of punishment that the teacher used in the classroom were based on drilling exercises in which children had to pronounce difficult sounds and words in a particular cadence so that they could be able to remember how they were supposed to pronounce them."

As with most areas of language learning and development, drilling activities have traditionally been utilised to enhance pronunciation work. If students read aloud and practice sounds and words with difficult phonemes on different rhythm, they enhance attention to the distinct difficult sources of pronunciation. The repetitiveness of the sessions prompts the correct pronunciation to sink into the subconscious memory of the student, with much ease the student can be expected to use it in normal conversations. It also addresses anxiety as the patterns of drills mean that learners' focus is on the sounds alone, irrespective of constructing conventional, grammatically correct sentences or speaking whole ideas.

"Students also wrote that while the teacher correcting and recasting the students, they felt less anxious to mispronunciation, and thus more likely to speak more English in class."

Repetition and drilling make their distortions disappear, thus eradicating the students' fear of pronouncing the English language wrong. This way, the teacher keeps fixing pronunciation problems and does it consistently, and this way the students are not left to fend for themselves when they have pronunciation troubles. This kind of approach assists in the development of confidence among the learners to enable them to engage more in classes and practice English in speaking activities. Since they are not afraid they are able to practice speaking more, and speaking practice is an important part of the process of attaining fluency in a foreign language. The findings of this research indicate that there is a massive influence of certain teaching practices on enhancing students' speaking skills in an EFL setting especially in SMA Negeri 1 Selayar. Effective use of role-play, simulations, group discussions, games on formation of new terms and knowing-together, with the support of positive reinforcement into the teaching practice makes evidence of high level of understanding of modern theories of teaching and learning foreign languages. All the above mentioned strategies are feasible, useful and in concordance with different scholarly discussions regarding language teaching and learning, thereby making them relevant for EFL context.

Role-play as one of the teaching approaches has been strongly supported by research done in the area of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Withanarachchi (2021) has stated that, role-play affords learners a realistic chance of using actual language in communicative events that replicate aspects of real life. This method can be compared to Alem (2020) framework of communicative competence framework which postulates that in addition to correctness in language use, sociolinguistic effectiveness and intended purpose of language use should also be taken into consideration. In this study, it was found out that students felt more confident and less anxious when engaging in role-plays as supported by Tran (2022) who said that anxiety form a major hindrance to language learning. Being able to use language whilst still having certain parameters that limit the freedom of the encounter, role-playing is a great tool for language acquisition since it makes the learners better equipped to handle real-life situations.

The positive findings, hence, result from the level of interference that simulations and group discussions have with Xiao (2021) ZPD. According to Vygotsky, learner gets to higher zones of development, helped by a more capable other, the teacher or other learners. The use of simulations offer planned and controlled practice which allows the student to practising the language in a real life situation, thereby making language tasks more achievable for students as they practice it on their own after school. These considerations in this scaffolding style are

especially important for learners in an EFL setting given the possible scarcity of the target language (Awadelkarim, 2021; Tai et al., 2021; Piamsai, 2020). Moreover, group discussions enhance the interactional competence as the students learn how to talk, persuade, and reply to each other in a group and on the topics which are not prescribed by the rigid format of class. This is particularly important as it replicates a real life usage of language in simulated interactions thus exposing and training the students on readiness to handle language in natural interaction situations.

The issue of vocabulary game is also discussed where it has been identified that games significantly help in the reinforcement of the acquired vocabulary and their subsequent usage. It is postulated that the best practice that can be followed was the repeatability of the words in context and this is well vocabulary learning strategies framework. Games help to give this repeated exposure in a most natural form while at the same time helping put in practice what has been learned as far as the use of different words is concerned. The game interactivity is also in line with the Input Hypothesis, which states that effective learning occurs when the learner is exposed to comprehensible input that is slightly beyond his or her language ability ($i+1$). Video games, due to their structure, can present new words where the learner can easily grasp with understanding but at the same time improve the vocabulary. The competitive and cooperative aspects for motivation add to it and this is something that has pointed out as being paramount for language learning.

Praise, which is the form of positive reinforcement, stood out as the feature in this study as it creates an environment that enables the students to speak in classroom and also undertake speaking activities. That is why, concept of self-efficacy is appropriate here as the students' confidence to speak, is enhanced by consistent positive feedback from the teacher. This approach is well grounded Operant Conditioning theory which asserts that behaviors that are followed up by resultant positives are more likely to be repeated. When interpreted in the context of language learning it implies that when students are encouraged to perform and praised for their efforts, they will be more inclined to keep on speaking with the aim of getting it right. This is very crucial especially in the EFL context, given that people in such classes tend to have low self-esteem and a lot of anxiety when it comes to speaking another language fluently. From the results of this research it can be concluded that the teacher at SMA Negeri 1 Selayar through fostering a positive classroom environment for effort, has managed to improve learners' engagement and language acquisition.

The results of this research also entail a useful input with reference to the discourse in the foreign field on the teaching practice of English to foreign learners. This is why more and more attention is being paid to the use of the interactiveness and students behaviors as the major means of effective foreign language acquisition in conditions where the actual amount of time spent on English exposure is rather limited. The shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered methodologies reflects a deeper understanding of how language is learned: that is, through approximation, imitation, and in active participation constructing target-like forms. The strategies used by this teacher as found in this study are typical in this regard and show how theory can be put into practice to address concerns of learners. Besides, this study's finding on teaching practices changing anxious students to more confident learners is huge. Affective Filter Hypothesis that postulates that factors such as anxiety, motivation or confidence affect language and learning. Thus, the affective filter was reduced through positive reinforcement and entertaining activities by the teacher whereby the learners felt comfortable practicing the language they were learning, and therefore improving their learning process and acquisition of such forms.

CONCLUSION

Hence, the following research questions were formulated. Specifically, this research examined the impact of using and teaching role plays, simulation, group discussions, word games

and positive reinforcements that an English teacher at SMA Negeri 1 Selayar applied in an effort to improve the EFL students speaking skills. The positive results therefore support the use of communication and student participation in the processes of learning to support language acquisition especially where learners may struggle like in this case as evidenced by low ESL, limited exposure to English and high levels of speaking anxiety. Hence, it was seen that assignments like role-play and simulations are far more helpful in providing the students with real-life and context-based practice in speaking which enhances their confidence level as well as their fluency. Group discussions also contributed to the language development by enhancing the Interactive competence and also let children practice language in a less formal way. Playing word games also realized an effective and fun way of working with words in contrast to the traditional word-list learning method that was dull and usually led to forgetting of most of the learned vocabulary. Positive reinforcement was also found to be an effective practice in establishing conducive learning environment as well as encouraging the learners to engage themselves and work hard in the mastery of the foreign language. The enhancement of these strategies based upon effective pedagogical theories shows that these approaches are realistic and effective ways of enhancing EFL learners' speaking proficiency. A contribution of this study to the existing literature on language education is that the study offers concrete evidence on the effectiveness of ILT approach in EFL setting. These ideas present important recommendations for teachers who desire to improve their instruction delivery, also in relation with helping student in their struggle of learning English as a foreign language.

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