

‘3-Minutes Pitching with Flip Grid’: An Antidote of Innovation for Speaking Anxiety

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Abstract : Globalisation has increases the need for us to speak a common language. One of the most used international language is English language. More and more people are focusing on enhancing their English Language skills, especially communication skills as it will give them the necessary edge in education and employment. It is to be considered as crucial and essential to develop good communication skills to express opinions, feelings and thoughts. Students, especially those in tertiary institutions have realised the importance of mastering English language yet still unable to conquer the skills of communicating in English language. Hence, it is believed that the practice of of speaking routine intervention in the classroom as an innovation will be able to be one of the antidotes in combatting the issue of speaking anxiety among learners. A qualitative study is conducted involving twenty-two undergraduate students of English for Communication Course at a local public university. The findings have found out that the routine of 3-minutes pitching with the help of an application called FlipGrid in combination with face to face classroom is helpful in the run towards making learners to be good in communication skills. The findings have gathered that this innovation has helped learners to develop self-confidence and to combat speaking anxiety. Further recommendations and suggestions are discussed in this study..

Index Terms: Innovation, Communication Skills, ESL Learning, Speaking Anxiety, 3-Minutes Pitching.

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's era of 21st century that is overflowed with competitions towards a better future, the younger generations are needed to have excellent level of proficiency in English language. The importance of acquiring English language is repeatedly stressed by leaders and policy makers. English language is to be considered as one of the main privileges that will be able to help today's younger generation to secure good future. This includes good communication skills. Individuals with excellent English communication skills tend to be more outstanding than those who are not so proficient. This is applicable to university graduates as there is a high demand for graduates who speak fluent English in the employment sector, especially in international companies in the private sector. With a strong command of the language, fresh graduates will have first pickings when they apply for jobs not only locally but overseas as well. There have been many strategies and methods done by educators in the run to help to improve their students' communication skills. Presentations, group discussions and even class discussions have been practiced since primary and secondary level of education to nurture and develop students' communication skills in English language. Regardless, there are still many university students entering tertiary education with little communication skills of English language. However, it is

undeniably true that learning a language, especially English language is not a simple process. It takes strategies, routines, and steps to learn a language (Wenden & Rubin, 1987). Learning and acquiring a language is a complex process. English language is divided into a few skills namely listening skills, reading skills, writing skills, grammar and vocabulary skills, and the hardest part for learners to acquire is the speaking skills (Hashim, 2018). University students usually encounter struggles and difficulties with verbal as in communication skills. They tend to be afraid and having the anxiety of having to communicate in English language. Some are not motivated to learn and improve on their communication skills. Majority of them do not acquire good English communication skills. Speaking anxiety hits them whenever they are needed to speak in front of the classroom, during presentations and even worse during crucial interviews. One of the reasons is because they are lack of confidence, low self esteem and sometimes, some are worried about making grammar and pronunciation mistakes. This is worrying as it is very crucial in today's world for graduates to acquire good communication skills. Hence, it is believed that there is a need for a research on finding an antidote for students to improve on their communication skills.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Innovations on technology related to language learning have been making waves in the education system. Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) has been introduced for quite some time and has becoming quite of a favourite among educators. Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is the process or strategy of language learning involving smartphones or other mobile devices. Both Kukulska-Hulme (2018) and Hwa Shing et al., (2016) agreed that mobile learning can be a bridge connecting students in and out of the classroom which involved students to apply their knowledge to real situations. Eventually, creating meaningful learning which led to more recurrent language practice. Mobile learning is convenient. Hashim, Yunus and Hashim (2018) in their study on the use of mobile learning (WhatsApp) concluded that intervention and integration of mobile learning with a face to face classroom is helpful in providing students with a platform for them to practice on their English communication skills. In recent years, Sabri and Qin (2014) figured that many ESL studies have found that most graduates are critically lacking in speaking skills especially among Malaysia graduates.



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Many English language teachers encounter problems having students that are not willing to participate in speaking class. Most of the time students are seen as not willing to communicate and participate in the class. This is due to the issue of speaking anxiety encountered by the students. Having anxiety in communicating in other foreign language, in this case is the English language, making the students to not feel comfortable communicating in the language in front of others. This is due to their limited knowledge of the language and the fear of negative evaluation or criticism (Ansari, 2015). Ansari (2015) also suggested for teachers or practitioners to first get to know their students and taking the role of a researcher in overcoming the issue of second language speaking anxiety. Generation Z in today's era have started to realise the importance of being fluent in English language and also the benefits of being able to acquire good communication skills as English language is not only used for communication but also for other purposes (Thirusanku & Yunus, 2014). Thirusanku and Yunus also believed that English language has been recently viewed as an asset to acquire knowledge and to achieve development. In the process of language learning, students should be given the chance to be autonomous learners. It is crucial for learners to be able to reflect on how they learn and also analyse their learning methods (Yunus & Mohd Arshad, 2015). Today's younger generation's level of proficiency has improved because of their exposure to electronic media and Internet and also the increased level of focus on English language studies in school. It is believed that technology has brought quite of an impact and wave in education system. Teaching and learning activities tend to become more meaningful with the help of technology (Yunus, et al., 2018). This study is supported by the theory of Zone of Proximal Development by Vygotsky (1978) where the use of mobile learning as the device for students in practicing their 3-minutes pitching routines acts as a catalyst in driving students out of their comfort zone and help them to be more confident in using the language to improve on their communication skills and eventually getting rid of their speaking anxiety.

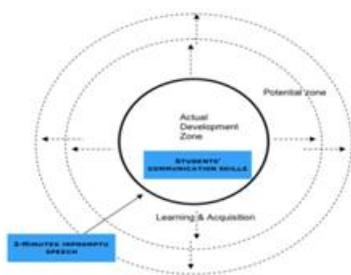


Figure 1: A theoretical framework adapted from Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (1978) adapted from Hussin (2007).

Vygotsky (1978 cited in Thirusanku and Yunus, 2014) figured that when the learner has control over the new function or strategy, he or she will be able to use it as a tool, hence making the learner to play an active role in the learning process. Communication strategies are also as equally important which helps learners to develop and reach their communicative goal. Omar et al (2012) believed that communication strategies are crucial as it is proven that less competent and proficient learners often face difficulties in

expressing their thoughts. They also proved in their study on communication strategies that learners' building competence can be developed by sharpening their ability to use communication strategies. This issue is further agreed by Yunus (2018) in her paper on innovation in education and language learning in 21st century. She mentioned that in order to enable the learners to become better communicators, we should go beyond grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. Instead, we should look at helping them to communicate effectively.

III.METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative study that employed impromptu speech routines as an intervention in an English communication course. This study involved twenty two undergraduate students altogether and the sampling for this study is purposive sampling. These students' level of proficiency is to be considered as intermediate level of proficiency. The concept of '3-Minutes Pitching' is used for the impromptu speech as the students need to convey their messages and accomplish their impromptu speeches by recording themselves in a video in duration of only three minutes during the teaching and learning session in the classroom. The process of recording is helped with an application called FlipGrid. The application enable learners (respondents) to record a video of themselves and this particular application is widely used among educators. In each lesson, every students are asked to randomly pick any topics provided by the teacher and they are given two minutes to think about that particular topic. After two minutes, each and every students are then asked to record a three-minute duration video of themselves talking about the topic using their own smartphones. Later, students reflections on the routines are taken into considerations and the findings are then analysed.

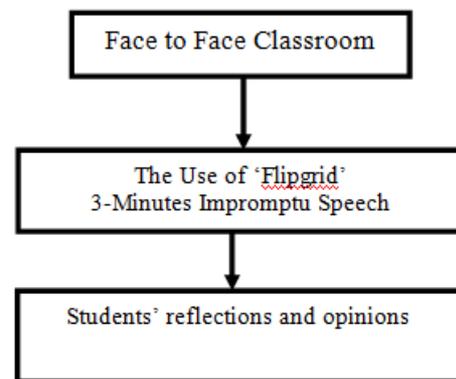


Figure 2 : Steps of methodology of this study

IV.FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

All of the respondents, who are the undergraduate students of a local public university believed that the intervention of 3-minutes pitching routine with the face to face classroom is helping them in their communication skills.

Does having impromptu speech in the class helps you in your English communication skills?

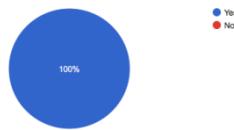


Figure 3 : Respondents' vote on the usefulness of impromptu speech in helping them with their communication skills

However, their feelings are taken into consideration and 22% of the respondents poured out that they were feeling nervous and not feeling good enough to accomplish the 3-minutes pitching. The moment they are asked to pitch the topic given to them, the speaking anxiety started to hit them. One of them also mentioned that they are not confident to talk about the topic given to them, quoting "...It's hard to give a speech without any references...". Their limited knowledge of the language or certain topics making them to not be able to ace the task. This is parallel to the study done by Ansari (2015) who believed that speaking anxiety among learners is normal due to their inadequate knowledge, eventually making to not feel comfortable with speaking related activities or routines. Since lack of self-confidence and low self esteem is also to be said as one of the contributors towards speaking anxiety, 17% of the respondents believed that this routine has made them to feel more confident in speaking using English language. "Great because the impromptu speech helps to increase my self-esteem..", is what mentioned by one of the respondents. He believed that by giving them the chances to practice the language, it helped them in being more comfortable with themselves to converse in English language. 22% of the respondents considered that their English language and communication skills have improved through the routine. In regards to that, it is also believed that this routine of 3-minutes pitching is able to act as a reinforcement for the learners to do better in English communication. This is due to the responses given by 17% of the respondents saying that they wish they could do better because they find that this routine is a good practice and they believed that they will be able to do more the next time they were given the chance to. As it is believed that hearing to learners' perceptions on the strategy provided by the teachers is very crucial, respondents reflections towards the intervention are also considered and analysed. This is further agreed by Yunus and Mohd Arshad (2015) in their study on the importance of learners to be given the chance to be an autonomous learners in the process of language learning. Learners should be able to reflect and analyse their learning methods. Hence, respondents reflections are taken into considerations. Respondents are asked on what ways the intervention of 3-minutes pitching routine are able to help them with their communication skills. The findings have resulted to the routine has helped them in their critical thinking skills which is one of the cores in communication skills. Respondents also believed that the routine in a way

helped them to improve on their confidence level as once they are given the chance to practice the language, they are able to make themselves feeling comfortable in using the language. Some of the responses from the respondents were "it can make me to creative and elaborate my own point", "it help my critical thinking skill and choose the right word to express what i am trying to say", "Improves critical thinking in order to elaborate my speech can be understand and clear more to audience". It takes baby steps to learn a language, it is believed that the innovation of having the students to record a video of themselves talking about certain topics as one of the communication strategies, it has helped them to improve on their confidence level and self-esteem and this finding is parallel to the findings gathered by Omar et al (2012) on their study on how communication strategies help to boost up learners' communication skills.

V.CONCLUSION

Learning a language takes up energy, efforts and strategies. Practice is all what it takes towards acquiring good communication skills. One of the most important parts in helping learners to learn a language, is to nurture them to have autonomy towards their own learning as each individual has different learning preferences and methods. Learners should be able to judge their own learning style and even the strategies provided by the teacher. On the other hand, teachers should be able to get to know their students first as the first step in the run towards improving their communication skills. Language learning is a continuous process that takes place not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom with the help of technological tools which is why it is very crucial for both learners and teachers to equipped with technical skills to be competent for life-long learning and teaching. Indeed, in today's globalised world, the value and importance of communication skills cannot be underestimated and the arisen of technology has been proven to be able to help improving communication skills.

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