

**A STUDY ON TEACHERS' STRATEGIES IN MINIMIZING  
STUDENTS' SPEAKING ANXIETY AT 11<sup>th</sup> GRADE  
SMAN 2 TEMBILAHAN**

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**ABSTRACT**

The problem of this research was students' speaking anxiety seems high. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to know "what teachers' strategy in minimizing students' speaking anxiety at the second grade of SMAN 2 Tembilahan are". This research was descriptive quantitative research. The researcher was distributing questionnaires and interviewing two English teachers as samples to know their strategies in reducing students' speaking anxiety. The sample was taken by using total sampling because there are only two English teachers there. After collecting the data, the researcher found that teachers use many teaching activities to help students' anxiety problems. They used many teaching activities, such as small group work, pair work, simulations, and structure exercises. Besides, the teachers also motivate students to be positive thinking in learning English.

**Keywords:** *Teachers' Strategy, Anxiety*

**INTRODUCTION**

Learning a foreign language is not easy for some people, mostly students at the school level. Sometimes, feeling anxious is one of the factors causing them challenging to practice the language they learn. Some other factors can be school facilities that are not supporting it, the way teachers teach it, and also the environment which also does not support them to practice.

In Indonesia, the students are obligated to learn English, a foreign language, even if it is started from elementary level, but now that rule has been changed, only junior and senior high school students should learn English. Such as in SMAN 2 Tembilahan, all students there should learn English. They learn English twice a week. It is because the government wants all students in Indonesia to use English, both in writing or in speaking.

Some students had high anxiety when the teacher asked them to speak in front of the class. It could be seen from some phenomena happen; they are: some students seem afraid to speak English in front of the class, most of the students seem lazy when teachers asked them to speak in front of the class, some students said that they were not confident to speak English and some students said that they feel shy to speak English.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Definition of Students' Anxiety**

Anxiety is not a kind of trouble in language learning if it can be controlled. However, when it is too high, it will be becoming an obstacle in mastering language. In other words, someone will get difficulties in producing the language he or she learns when they have high anxiety; as explained by Brown (2000) in Hershner (2015: 9) that anxiety is a state of mind connected with feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, or worry.

Besides, Horwitz et al. (1986), as quoted by Al-Duaile (2014: 4), state that Language anxiety (L.A.): a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process.

Another theory from Ramsay (2003) in Handayani & Rahmawati (2107: 218) states that anxiety is a feeling of fear, dread, or uneasiness and some anxious people suffer from conditions, phobias, stress, sadness, panic, and depression.

Then Abdul (2016: 6) also states that anxiety correlates negatively with measures of second language proficiency, including grades awarded in foreign language classes, meaning that higher anxiety tends to go with lower levels of success in learning. Burden (2004: 5) agrees that anxiety is related to self-focused, negative, and anxious cognition during an interaction. Highly anxious students often have relatively negative self-concepts, underestimating the quality of their speaking ability when compared with others. It is also supported by Fujii (2011: 3) that foreign language anxiety is an affective variable that troubles many students in many situations in foreign language classrooms.

### **Components of Anxiety**

According to Horwitz et al. (1986) in Zhiping & Paramasivam (2013: 3) conclude that foreign language anxiety (FLA) can be related to three variables: a) communication comprehension, b) fear of negative evaluation, and c) test anxiety. Students who suffer from communication comprehension usually do not feel comfortable communicating in the second or foreign language among other people, especially if they are needed to use their listening and speaking abilities. People who experience a high level of communication apprehension "withdraw from and seek to avoid communication when possible." Introverted and reserved people tend to be quieter and less willing to communicate. Students who suffer from fear of negative evaluation do not accept their language errors as a normal part of the learning but consider them a threat to their face. So they decide to remain silent and do not get involved in the class activities. Students who suffer from test anxiety consider foreign language learning, especially oral production, a testing situation rather than a chance to improve their linguistic and communication abilities.

### **Types of Anxiety**

There are some types of anxiety, according to Maria (2017: 7), they are:

#### **a. State anxiety**

State anxiety is named so because it arises in a particular event or situation. It is considered as a hindrance and disturbance of anyone's emotion. Usually, it starts as fear of any specific incident, such as attending the language classes, and they experience this only for a short time and then fading with this passing state. High levels of state anxiety can immobilize the person's affinity to participate in adaptive behavior to end and overcome his/her difficulties. It may affect normal day-to-day activities.

#### **b. Trait Anxiety**

It is a negative attitude and reaction of the individuals, which creates a tendency to experience negative emotions like worries, fears, stress, and anxiety in many situations that are not hard or complicated. People who suffer from trait anxiety experiences more anxiety in less dangerous and difficult situations.

**c. Situation-Specific Anxiety**

This type of anxiety is dependent on a particular situation or on a learning context in which the learner finds him incapable of being proficient in second language learning. It focuses on the situation in which the anxiety arises. It refers to the learners' communicative apprehension in the learning situations.

**d. Facilitative and Debilitative Anxiety**

Anxiety can also be an encouraging type that we call facilitative or helpful anxiety. It can be a strong motivational constraint to some learners if it can be recognized as a chance for their language learning and optimizing their negative affectivity for their betterment. This type of anxiety motivates the learners to succeed, and as a result, learners aim to improve the progress of learning and performance. So, it works as a facilitative for the learners to gain his/her desired success.

Besides, debilitating- anxiety is considered as the harmful type of anxiety as it harms learner's motivation and preparation before and during exams, such as waiting until the last minute to revise and prepare for a big test or exam, feeling more anxious and unprepared or arriving at a test late and having to answer all of the questions in time.

**Teacher's Strategies**

There are several definitions of strategy in teaching. According to Santrock (2011) in Purwanti et al. (2017: 02), teacher' strategy is a way of making decisions about a course, an individual class, or even an entire curriculum, beginning with an analysis of key variables in the teaching situation. These variables include the learners' characteristics, the learning objectives, and the teacher's instructional preferences.

Then, Nurhamidah et al. (2018: 302) emphasize that strategies are the teachers' efforts in learning process so that the purposes of the learning can be achieved. It is also stated by Reiser and Dick (1996) in Widyaningsih and Robiasih (2018: 46), they argue that teachers can use different strategies of teaching to achieve teaching learning goals. In learning, teachers are given a chance to apply various teaching strategies to help students speak well. The strategies were used based on the students' needs and interests.

Based on some theories above, the researcher concludes that strategy is anything teachers do to overcome students' problems and help them be active and creative in learning.

### **Teacher's Strategies in Minimizing Students' anxiety**

To help students who have high anxiety in speaking class, the teacher can prepare some students' strategies. Crookall and Oxford (1991) stated in Al-Duwaile (2014: 14) that there are several approaches to reducing language classrooms' anxiety. Activities such as small group work, pair work, games, simulations, and structured exercises, can help shift the classroom's communication pattern away from being a teacher-learner approach to a more interactive one.

Besides, Kondo (2004) in Handayani & Rahmawati (2107: 219) indicates five strategy categories to cope with speaking anxiety in the EFL classroom. The first category, a preparation that refers to controlling the impending threat by improving learning and study strategies. Secondly, relaxation involves reducing anxiety symptoms (taking a deep breath or trying to calm down). The third one is positive thinking by diverting attention from a stressful situation to positive and pleasant cues and brings relief to the anxious student. The fourth category is peer seeking. It is about students' willingness to look for other students who seem to have trouble understanding the class or controlling their anxiety. The fifth one is resignation. It is about students' reluctance to do anything to alleviate their language anxiety (e.g., giving up, sleeping in the class). Besides those five strategies above, Abdul (2016:7) also adds one more nonverbal communication strategy. In presenting students' ideas, students also used gestures such as moving their hands and body. The gestures used were for minimizing the students' anxiety and emphasizing the point of the idea. Therefore, the teacher can also follow the lists of strategies above to help students minimize their anxiety.

In other theory, Fujii (2011: 15) concludes from an analysis of his research findings, a four-dimensional conceptualization of anxiety-reducing strategies was formulated. The four dimensions were: cooperation with others, building confidence; assistance from the teacher; and less-stressful teaching methods. The teacher can also try these concepts to cope with students' anxiety problems in the classroom.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The type of research is descriptive quantitative. According to Gay and Airasian (2000: 11), quantitative descriptive or survey research involves collecting data to answer questions about the current status of the subject or topic of study. The samples of the study were the English teachers of 11<sup>th</sup> grade of SMAN 02 Tembilahan. In collecting data, the researcher used a questionnaire in the Gutman scales and interviewed to support the questionnaire. The data were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis technique.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### Result of Questionnaire

#### 1. *The result of the questionnaire*

In this part, the researcher would present the result of the research. The data was taken from a questionnaire given to English teachers of SMAN 01 Tembilahan. The teachers were asked to answer ten items about teachers' strategies in minimizing students speaking anxiety. Every statement's percentage to make it detail and easy to be understood. Here is the tables' presentation:

##### a. **Remind students to calm Every**

The first item in the questionnaire was, "When students stand in front of the class, I always remind them to calm down." It was about teachers would tell the students to calm down when they were speaking in front of the class?"

**Table IV.1**

No	Question Statement	Selection Item	Amount	Percentage
1	When students start to speak in front of the class, I always remind them to calm down	Yes	1	50%
2	When students start to speak in front of the class, I always remind them to calm down	No	1	50%
	<b>Total</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above showed that only one of two teachers chose that they always remind students to be calm down for the first statement. It means that this statement cannot be chosen as one of the answers to the research question.

**b. Remind students to take a breath**

The second item in the questionnaire was "when students start to speak in front of the class, I always remind them to take a deep breath." Was it about teachers telling their students to take a deep breath before speaking in front of the class?

**Table IV.2**

No	Question Statement	Selection Item	Amount	Percentage
1	when students start to speak in front of the class, I always remind them to take a deep breath	Yes	1	50%
2	when students start to speak in front of the class, I always remind them to take a deep breath	No	1	50%
<b>Total</b>			<b>2</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above showed that only one of two teachers chose that she always remind students to take a breath for the second statement. It means that this statement cannot be chosen as one of the answers to the research question.

**c. Remind students to help their friends in speaking**

The third item in the questionnaire was "I always remind students to help each other activate their speaking." It has about would teachers told their students to help each other in their speaking activity.

**Table IV.3**

No	Question Statement	Selection Item	Amount	Percentage
1	I always remind students to help each other in activating their speaking	Yes	1	50%
2	I always remind students to help each other in activating their speaking	No	1	50%
<b>Total</b>			<b>2</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above shows that only one of two teachers chose to remind students to help their friends in learning for the third statement. It means that this statement cannot be chosen as one of the answers to the research question.

**d. Motivate students in order to be the spirit**

The fourth item in the questionnaire was "I always motivate students to be a spirit in practicing English." It is about teachers would motivate their students to improve their spirit in order to speak?

**Table IV.4**

No	Question Statement	Selection Item	Amount	Percentage
1	I always motivate students in order to be a spirit in practicing English	Yes	2	100%
2	I always motivate students in order to be a spirit in practicing English	No	0	0%
<b>Total</b>			<b>2</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above showed that both of the teachers chose that they always motivate students to be spirited for the fourth statement. It means that this statement is chosen as one of the answers to the research question.

**e. Motivate students to think that English is easy to be learned**

The fifth item in the questionnaire was "I always motivate students to think that English is easy to be learned." it is about teachers would tell their students that English is easy to be learned to motivate them in their speaking?

**Table IV.5**

No	Question Statement	Selection Item	Amount	Percentage
1	I always motivate students to think that English is easy to be learned	Yes	2	100%
2	I always motivate students to think that English is easy to be learned	No	0	0%
<b>Total</b>			<b>2</b>	<b>100%</b>



The table above shows that both of the teachers chose that she always motivate students to think that English is easy to be learned for the fifth statement. It means that this statement is chosen as one of the answers to the research question.

**f. Small-Group Work**

The sixth item in the questionnaire was, "I sometimes set small group work to help students minimizing their anxiety in speaking." It is about teachers would conduct a small group work activity to lessen students' anxiety in speaking?

**Table IV.6**

No	Question Statement	Selection Item	Amount	Percentage
1	I sometimes set small group work to help students minimizing their anxiety in speaking	Yes	2	100%
2	I sometimes set small group work to help students minimizing their anxiety in speaking	No	0	0%
<b>Total</b>			<b>2</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above showed that both of the teachers chose that they also use small group work in the classroom for the sixth statement. It means that this statement is chosen as one of the answers to the research question.

**g. Pair Work**

The seventh item in the questionnaire was, "I sometimes set pair work to help students minimizing their anxiety in speaking." It was about teachers would conduct a pair work activity to lessen students' anxiety in speaking.

**Table IV.7**

No	Question Statement	Selection Item	Amount	Percentage
1	I sometimes set pair work to help students minimizing their anxiety in speaking	Yes	2	100%
2	I sometimes set pair work to help students minimizing their anxiety in speaking	No	0	0%
<b>Total</b>			<b>2</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above showed that both of the teachers chose that they also use Pair work in the classroom for the seventh statement. It means that this statement is chosen as one of the answers to the research question.

**h. Games**

Eight items in the questionnaire were "games." it is about teachers would conduct games in the classroom to lessen students' anxiety in speaking activity?

**Table IV.8**

No	Question Statement	Selection Item	Amount	Percentage
1	I conducted games in the classroom to lessen students anxiety in a speaking activity	Yes	1	50%
2	I conducted games in the classroom to lessen students anxiety in a speaking activity	No	1	50%
<b>Total</b>			<b>2</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above showed that only one of two teachers chose that she always use games for the eighth statement. It means that this statement cannot be chosen as one of the answers to the research question.

**i. Simulation**

The ninth item in the questionnaire was "I often give students opportunity to practice their speaking in front of the class.". It is about teachers would allow students to speak in front of the class to get used to a speaking atmosphere in the classroom?

**Table IV.9**

No	Question Statement	Selection Item	Amount	Percentage
1	I often allow students to practice their speaking in front of the class	Yes	2	100%
2	I often allow students to practice their speaking in front of the class	No	0	0%
<b>Total</b>			<b>2</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above showed that both of the teachers chose that they also use simulation in the classroom for the ninth statement. It means that this statement is chosen as one of the answers to the research question.

**j. Structured Exercises**

The tenth item in the questionnaire was "I always prepare speaking exercises for students to minimize their anxiety.". It is about would teachers always prepare structured speaking exercises for students?

**Table IV.10**

No	Question Statement	Selection Item	Amount	Percentage
1	I always prepare speaking exercises for students to minimize their anxiety	Yes	2	100%
2	always prepare speaking exercises for students to minimize their anxiety	No	0	0%
<b>Total</b>			<b>2</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above showed that both of the teachers chose that they always use structured exercises in the classroom for the sixth statement. It means that this statement is chosen as one of the answers to the research question. The questionnaire in this research is a questionnaire of Guttman scale type.

No	Indicators	Sub Indicators	Amount	Percentage
1	Relaxation	1. Remind students to calm down	1	50%
		2. Remind students to take a breath	1	50%
2	Peer seeking	1. Remind students to help their friends in learning.	1	50%
3	Positive Thinking	1. Motivate students in order to be a spirit	2	100%
		2. Motivate students to think that English is easy to be learned	2	100%
4	Many Activities	1. Doing small group work,	2	100%
		2. Pair work,	2	100%
		3. Games,	1	50%
		4. Simulations	2	100%
		5. Structured exercises	2	100%

The table above shows that only two indicators were chosen as strategies that teachers use in reducing students' anxiety in speaking from four indicators. Teachers always ask students to be positive thinking and use many classroom activities such as doing small group work, pair work, simulations, and structure exercises.

### **Result of the Interview**

**Teacher 1:** she told the students to relax when presenting something in the class, ask them to memorize many vocabularies, and reassure them that making mistakes in speaking is fine. She is asking students to help each other. Use group discussion, but she is not considering using games in the classroom because of time for teaching materials. Nevertheless, she has another strategy to reduce students' anxiety that was making a joke.

**Teacher 2:** she has many ways in helping students to deal with their nervous, such as tell them to relax, tell the importance of English, ask students to help each other in speaking, asking them to work in pairs; she also used game such as role-playing, but not often. Moreover, she always uses another strategy to help her students cope with anxiety is storytelling.

### **CONCLUSION**

This research aimed to investigate teachers' strategies in minimizing students' speaking anxiety at the second grade of SMAN 2 Tembilahan. After conducting research and getting the data about it, the researcher concludes that teachers use many teaching activities to minimize students' anxiety in speaking. Both of the teachers confirmed that they use many teaching activities, such as doing small group work, pair work, simulations, and structure exercises. Besides, the teachers also motivate students to be positive thinking in learning English.

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