

The Use of Public Speaking in Motivating ESL Learners to Overcome Speech Anxiety

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Abstract: *This paper would be discussing about the use of public speaking, problems faced by ESL learners in public speaking, speech anxiety among ESL learners' in speaking English and theories related to motivation in communication skills. Speaking skills in English is becoming more crucial in the globalization era. Most ESL students are facing problems especially in speaking skills as they are lacking of confidence. Public speaking would be useful in improving the ESL students' speaking skills as they will be given opportunity to practice speaking in front of others to train in reducing their speech anxiety in speaking English. Lastly, by introducing a public speaking programme to practice speaking English in an encouraging and comfortable environment, students would be able to overcome their fear in speaking English and improve on their motivation level to speak.*

Keywords: *Public speaking, Motivation, ESL Learners, Speech Anxiety, Communication Skills, Integrative Motivation Theory, Cognitive Theory, Communicative Approach.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In time of globalization, English has appeared to be a universal language to link people from different background around the world. The main purpose people learn English is to be able to communicate with each other regardless of their first language. However, the use of English has become an essential need not only for routine life, but also for official communication. As English is seen as a strong communicative language, an excellent communication skill in English is also a crucial factor when it comes to the criteria for a job application (Abdullah, 1-2).

Through the learning of public speaking skills, it would be beneficial for the students as they will be able to brush up on their personal and social interaction, academic improvement and most importantly on their career benefits. From the practice of public speaking, a student will be able to build up confidence in persuading others more effectively on the ideas and opinion that they would like to share. Besides, in an academic setting, being involved in public presentations and group discussions are common activities that a tertiary student need to master. After the students overcome the anxiety to speak in public, through the lime light of speaking in front of others, it will also improve the motivational level of the students (Bodie, 15). As when students have the chances to present their speeches in front of their peers, observing the feedbacks given, this would prompt the student to be more self-motivated in getting new ideas and forming opinions to share for the next time.

2. USE OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

According to Templeton & Fitzgerald, public speaking is having a speaker to stand before the audience to deliver a speech in a structured manner, with the purpose of either persuade, inform or entertain the audience (1). Public speaking is quite alike to presentation, where the difference is the latter is usually meant for commercial or academic environment.

There are various purposes for a speaker to speak in front of the public. It can be just to tell a story, to share an experience, to inform about a message, or to motivate others to take an action. Public speaking skill can be used for leadership/personal development, business, customer

service, large group communication, and mass communication too. For instance, the audience emotions might even be stirred up, if the speaker is good in getting into personal sharing and show sincerity in what he is delivering. With confidence, a public speaker can use such skills to create an exciting atmosphere among the audience. Thus, his overall speech effectiveness can be increased.

According to Public Speaking, public speaking is the activity of speaking to a group of people. The speech should be in a structured and deliberate manner, delivered with sincerity. Every public speaking speech usually will have a function, it is whether intended to inform, influence or to entertain the audience. At least, at the end of the speech, the audience should be able to bring back a message that they can learn from the speech.

2.1 Public Speaking Programmes

Fulton had suggested that there is a need to have a standard set of courses for undergraduate and post-graduate public speaking courses in colleges (160). It is important in designing a course based on a strong scientific, cultural, and inspirational course. His objective is to provide the students with a method and a proper manner to start off in learning public speaking rather than to be trained merely by imitation. There were a number of 10 courses that was discussed in this paper.

Course 1, namely Elocution, would be a basic study on the philosophy of expression. Students will be involving in practical training pertaining to the basic principles of expressive power. Course 2, Argumentation and Debate, requires the students to learn about theoretical study of the nature of argumentation and frequent class debates. Course 3, Parliamentary Usage, will deal with the ethics and management of public speaking for parliamentary usage. Moving to Course 4, Oratory would be about all other forms of public speaking other than debate. Course 5 until Course 9, which are Rhetorical Criticism, Oratorical Seminar, Literary Analysis and Interpretation and Interpretative Seminars would be offered as advanced public speaking courses. Lastly, Course 10, Normal Methods, which is on expressive pedagogy, will be offered for teachers (Fulton, 161-164).

Ryan had discussed on the pedagogical tendencies on public speaking in college during 20th century. Public speaking was defined as the art of beautiful and effective speech during a conversation whether in private or public gatherings. The purposes of studying speaking are to discover the knowledge of speech, the art of speaking well, and to develop the thinking ability of social life and culture. The public speaking courses are generally conducted once a week for two hours. The courses were conducted using practical laboratory method. Speeches done were preferably original speech written by the students. Finally, the teaching methods are in three tendencies, which include the reporting, the speechmaking and the lecturing (90-95).

Another public speaking organization is Toastmasters International, which was started at a basement in a YMCA in Santa Ana, California, in 1924 by Ralph C. Smedley. It was because Smedly had observed that the need of training in the art of public speaking and in presiding over meetings among the youth and he wanted to help them. In his Toastmasters meeting, members practiced speaking skills in a supportive, informal atmosphere. This programme is a world leader in the communication and leadership development programmes. There are more than 4 million people around the world that have participated in the programme and have effectively improved their public speaking and leadership skills by attending one of the clubs meeting around the world (Toastmasters International).

Stated by Toastmasters International, the educational programmes and resources are the most important part of Toastmasters International's success and growth. Starting with the Competent Communication Manual, the training has expended with another 15 Advanced Communication manuals for specific communication skills. Besides, of public speaking, members were given the opportunity to evaluate, give feedbacks, mentoring and also practice in their leadership skills.

Through participating in Toastmasters meetings, students would have the chance to practice their speeches in an organized strategy to learn public speaking step by step. In this programme, ten speech assignments were designed to build up the learners' public speaking skills starting from organisation of the speech, delivering the main points, vocal variety and body gesture, used of

visual aids to producing a motivational and inspiring speech in well-developed materials. Furthermore, Toastmasters meeting were designed to be friendly, motivating and non-threatening environment for the speakers to practice speaking in front of the members in an encouraging way (Toastmasters International).

In addition, 4-H is a youth development organization founded in 1902, by A.B. Graham, a school principal in Ohio, with his club of school boys and girls. 4-H is identified by its logo with the design of a green four-leaf clover with an H on each leaf. The four "H"s in 4-H stand for, we pledge our Head, Heart, Hands and Health to our club, community and our country. Now, 4-H is the one of the largest youth development organization based at land-grant universities in the United States with more than 7 million members of youth ranging to 21 years old (4-H).

4-H Public Speaking Project is a project that develops the members with the skills to research, organize and present a speech and developing their members to acquire the ability to speak in public convincingly. In 4-H Public Speaking Project, the members were given the opportunities to learn the skills to deliver a message. In addition, 4-H Public Speaking Project also trained their members to organize the materials to be presented carefully and how to recognize and obtain information on a given topic. There are club meetings, events and communication contests in the 4-H Public Speaking Project.

During a 4-H club meeting, there are few types of public speaking speeches which were conducted. These include the demonstrations, illustration talks, formal speech and performing arts. During a demonstration speech, members explained how to do something step-by-step using real materials to show the steps. During an illustrated talk, the members describe or explain a topic using visual aids such as flip charts, posters, pictures, slides, flannel board, chalkboard, or transparencies. The purpose of a formal speech is to stimulate thought or present a point of view. The speech is given from memory, with the help of brief notes or an outline on index cards. Lastly, the performing arts public presentation involves dramatics, oral interpretation of literature, creative movement and puppetry.

After the speeches were delivered, judges may ask questions and evaluate the speakers based on the given evaluation forms. The judges need to provide constructive feedbacks and give positive reinforcement to facilitate the learning process. The length of a speech is suggested to range from 3-5 minutes for first time participants and 5-8 minutes for older members (4-H).

2.2 Problems Faced During Public Speaking

Hindo has mentioned that individuals with social anxiety, with specific fear of public speaking are due to their concern about being embarrassed and judged. According to the cognitive-behavioural theory, it has stated that factors that influence the symptoms of anxiety and avoidance are the sense of danger due to the event or object and the inability to cope with the threat. Individual will avoid from the situation that they have in their mind as appraisal of dangerous. They will judge themselves as not able to handle such situation. People who are fear of getting negative evaluation, they are usually self-conscious of what others might think about them (528).

In Hindo's study, the participants who are adult college students were given a 3 hours treatment that was consisting of group public-speaking activities, such as and followed by homework. This study shown that with a few session of exposure to public speaking tasks, it would be effective to reduce the anxiety level among the students. The study also suggest that exposure therapy itself can be effective to treat social anxiety. In conclusion, students would avoid from public speaking because they believe that after they speak, they will be criticized and humiliated by others (Hindo, 529).

3. SPEECH ANXIETY AMONG ESL LEARNERS

As stated by Liu, the investigation of anxiety is especially importance to non-English major students who seldom have contact and the chances to use English in their daily life. Foreign language anxiety is usually associated with public speaking and it affects language learning too. Anxiety would cause learners to be less responsive to learning the language. Language anxiety surface when students avoid conveying complex message in foreign language, lack of confidence, froze up in role play activities or forgot previously learned vocabulary or grammar. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale was developed to measure anxiety. The three dimensions

measured are communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. When the language anxiety score indicated increment, learning competences would decline (119-122).

Liu (2007a) explained that some students are reluctant to speak due to anxiety. This may be caused by low English proficiency, lack of practice, competition and task difficulty. The awareness of performing badly in English also will lead to the loss of self-esteem among the students. Besides, speaking was frequently described as an anxiety-provoking activity. This study has revealed that a multitude of variables has contributed to students' anxiety when speaking English in class. The causes are mainly lack of vocabulary, low English proficiency, lack of preparation and practice, fear of making mistakes, being laughed at and losing face inability to express ideas and memory disassociation (121-131).

In order to cope with anxiety, it was suggested by Liu that teacher can try to create a friendly, supportive and non-threatening learning environment to encourage the learners to speak English in class. Besides, ice-breaking activities that help the students to get to know each other would be helpful to train the students to be supportive to each other in class. Students need to acknowledge that anxiety does occur when they speak in English in class. Improvement on English proficiency, expand vocabulary, better preparation and practice on oral English would be very important for the learners. Finally, to reduce anxiety, learners' confidence level needs to be increased (132-133).

According to Abdullah & Abdul Rahman, the study on University Technology Malaysia students is to determine the perceptions towards the feeling of anxiety experience when speaking English as second language. Despite of eleven years of English learning in schools, students still find difficulty in using English language effectively. Learners show poor speaking performance when they are not competent in using the target language. Making learning context less stressful for students and use of suitable teaching methods will help learners to minimize their anxiety in second language (2-3).

Through the study, types of speaking activities that causes high anxiety level were identified. Most people would experience communication apprehension when speaking to people in a formal setting. Abdullah & Abdul Rahman found that participation of the students in communicative activities helped to build their confidence in communicating in second language. In conclusion, factors that contribute to speaking anxiety were communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and general feeling of anxiety (4).

According to P'Rayan & Shetty, many students have speech anxiety. One of the speaking test results had revealed that majority of students have high communication apprehension and 60% of them are lacking in communication skills. On-campus recruitment is based mainly on demonstration of communication skills which most students were lacking of. To the recruiters, the ability to communicate well and to think clearly was the attribute of successful students. Therefore, as speaking well is crucial in getting a job, nearly half of American colleges and universities require a public speaking or communications course (1-2).

P'Rayan & Shetty also discussed that English teachers of professional colleges should undergo paradigm shift and not merely be a teachers of grammar and structure, they also need to play the role as communication and soft skills trainers. Teaching English should not be just a subject for examination, it should be taught as a life skill to be prepared for workplace. English teachers are responsible to help their students in overcoming fears in communication and developing more positive perceptions communication activities, to produce confident students that would reach out symbolically to others, rather than withdrawing from them (2-5).

Communication apprehension is a multi-based anxiety linked to oral communication. It is how people feel about communication, but not how they communicate. People that are good in written communication may have problems of speaking in front of audiences, while those who are good at interpersonal communication may not be comfortable in making presentations. Fear of speaking in public is very common. It takes one of five forms, which are career terror, perfectionism, panic, avoidance and trauma (P'Rayan & Shetty, 5-6).

The study revealed that most of the students' personal report of communication apprehension in public speaking matched their performance in the diagnostic speaking test. P'Rayan & Shetty

concluded that communication apprehension can be overcome in three stages. The first stage, group sharing, is the sharing of communication anxiety or problems on making presentations and public speaking and how they overcome them. The second stage, the One-to-one session, where the students were encouraged to discuss communication problems with the teacher. The third stage would be the learner-centred training. In this stage, the attention paid should be individualised when having the activities such as learner-centred group discussion, meetings, interpersonal communication and public speaking (14-18).

4. MOTIVATION

Liu has investigated on the attitudes and motivation of the Chinese university students towards learning English. Liu has mentioned that the students had positive attitudes and were highly motivated to learn English. In this study, it was found that the students were more instrumentally motivated than integratively motivated to learn English. Besides, Liu also explained that the students' motivation level and learning attitudes also were positively correlated with their English proficiency level (126).

According to Liu, motivation to learn a second language is grounded in positive attitudes toward the second language community and in a desire to communicate. This desire is integrative orientation, which is a better support for language learning, while an instrumental orientation is associated with a desire to learn or pragmatic gains such as getting a better job or a higher salary (127). In general, motivation enhances second/foreign language acquisition, and that learners ranking high on integrative orientation work harder and learn faster than those who are low on integrative motivation.

In this study, it was shown that motivation had a direct effect on situational anxiety and second language achievement. In addition, Liu explained that integrative orientation was closely related to persistence, language attrition and retention (127). The study also revealed that achievement in English was significantly related to self-confidence, the evaluation of the learning environment and the motivational indices. The attitude and effort index was also found to be related to self-confidence, the learning environment, and a cluster of affectively based attitudes and motivational factors (Liu, 128).

Generally, there are two types of motivation, which are intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for learning the target language. According to Liu, extrinsic motivation such as instrumental orientation, refers to the desire to learn a second/foreign language because of some pressure or reward from the social environment such as career advancement or a course credit, internalized reasons for learning a second language such as guilt or shame and personal decisions to do so and its value for the chosen goals (128).

On the other hand, Liu explained that intrinsically motivated students, like integratively motivated ones, learn a second language because of the inherent pleasure in doing so (128). They are expected to maintain their effort and engagement in the second language learning process, even when no external rewards are provided. Liu concluded that both integrative and instrumental orientations and intrinsic and extrinsic motivations contribute to the learning of a second/foreign language (129).

According to Norris-Holt, motivation has been identified as the learner's orientation with regard to the goal of learning a second language. Norris-Holt also explained that students who are most successful when learning a target language are those who like the people that speak the language, admire the culture and have a desire to become familiar with or even integrate into the society in which the language is used. This form of motivation is known as integrative motivation.

When someone becomes a resident in a new community that uses the target language in its social interactions, integrative motivation is a key component in assisting the learner to develop some level of proficiency in the language. It becomes a necessity, in order to operate socially in the community and become one of its members. Besides, Norris-Holt also suggested that integrative motivation is usually associated with successful acquisition of a native like pronunciation.

Norris-Holt also stated that in contrast to integrative motivation is the form of motivation referred to as instrumental motivation. This is generally characterised by the desire to obtain something practical or concrete from the study of a second language. Norris-Holt explained that with

instrumental motivation the purpose of language acquisition is more utilitarian, such as meeting the requirements for school or university graduation, applying for a job, requesting higher pay based on language ability, reading technical material, translation work or achieving higher social status. Instrumental motivation is often characteristic of second language acquisition, where little or no social integration of the learner into a community using the target language takes place, or in some instances is even desired.

Norris-Holt suggested both integrative and instrumental motivations are essential elements of success. It is integrative motivation which has been found to sustain long-term success when learning a second language. In addition, integrative motivation is viewed as being of more important in a formal learning environment than instrumental motivation. Integrative motivation has continued to be emphasised, although the importance of instrumental motivation is also stressed. Norris-Holt found that generally students select instrumental reasons more frequently than integrative reasons for the study of language. Those students who do support an integrative approach to language study are usually more highly motivated and overall more successful in language learning.

5. THEORIES RELATED TO MOTIVATION IN COMMUNICATION SKILLS

There are a lot of theories used when it comes to motivation level which are behaviourism theory, cognitive theory, constructivism theory, integrative motivation theory, and so forth. In this study, public speaking programme was introduced. Through the public speaking programme, two theories were implemented as shown in Fig. 1 Theoretical Framework. The reasons for using Piaget's cognitive theory is to use exposure therapy to reduce learner's anxiety and Gardner's integrative motivation theory is because through the internal favourable attitude and desire students will be able to achieve the goal of learning the language. On the other hand, communication approach is referred on learning language fluency through public speaking practices.

5.1 Integrative Motivation Theory

According to Gardner, motivation is a central concept of the socio-educational model, and it has a social dimension that reflects the individual's reactions to other language communities (168). That is, motivation to learn a second language is influenced by group related and context related attitudes. However, people have to mentally and physically engage themselves in the target language and culture to be successful language learners.

Gardner stated that the motivation to an individual learning a second language is in order to learn about, interact with or become closer to the second language community this is referring to as integrative orientation (11). Gardner also stated that the acquisition of a new language involves much more than mere acquisition of a new set of verbal habits. The language student must be willing to adopt appropriate features of behaviour, which characterize members of another linguistic community. The words, grammatical patterns, mode of pronunciation, and the sounds themselves should have significance for the learner and not just simple translations or equivalences given by a teacher, grammar book, or dictionary. Integrative motivation led to greater success in second language learning (11-14).

Besides, instrumental motivation is other type of self-determined motivation. Gardner also explained that a person who acquire languages through instrumental motivation are seeking a goal that doesn't seem to involve any identification or feeling of closeness with the other language group, but instead focus on a more practical purpose that learning the language would serve for the individual, as they prepares to learn a code in order to derive benefits from a non-interpersonal sort and their language skills develop as a desire to gain social recognition or economic advantages through knowledge of a foreign language (52).

5.2 Cognitive Theory

Tucker-Ladd has conducted a case study on fear of public speaking. The fear of public speaking not going to be physically hurt but your pride and self-esteem may be damaged. The fear of public speaking will bring about anxiety. Anxiety, thus, involves constant tension of being

vigilance, expecting trouble, and a wrong sense that we will be unable to handle a possible danger.

Tucker-Ladd also has stated that Piaget's cognitive theory returns the mind to a central role in psychology. It contends that our conscious cognitions (thinking) largely determine what we do and feel. Our minds work in wondrous ways and may be rational (accurate) or irrational (wrong). Cognitive theory also says both the reasonable and unreasonable fears (phobias) are based on our thoughts. The ordinarily rational cognitive processes run amuck and exaggerate the dangers, as when beginning spelunkers think the cave will crash down on them or speakers fear the audience will think they are dumb or people avoid revealing their personal opinions and intimate feelings.

Piaget's cognitive theory says the idea, but it is hard to believe that emotions have no role to play in producing some of the irrational thinking in the first place. The cognitive theory explained that illogical thoughts create anxiety as well. Even before facing the scary situation, there are self-defeating thoughts: "I will fail," "they will laugh," etc. Once in the situation, we tell ourselves we are doing poorly or looking silly. Afterwards, we think about all the awful consequences of what we have done. Tucker-Ladd explained that, by correcting the thoughts and reasoning, we can lower the anxiety level, and the vicious circle can hopefully be broken.

Some of the common signs of anxiety that can be observed are muscles tight, hands unsteady, restlessness, touching oneself repeatedly, clearing throat, sweating, stiff posture, holding things tightly, walking or talking faster, blushing, getting tongue-tangled, strumming fingers, poor memory, confusion, stumbling over words, inattentiveness and excessive worrying (Tucker-Ladd).

A case study conducted by Tucker-Ladd with Jane who had difficulty to speak in front of groups. Jane had avoided speaking up during class or any other public speaking activity, but Jane was not a shy girl. As a cheer leader, she felt confident of her talent, as long as speaking was not involved. She felt very nervous, before her speech and especially when she was delivering her speech. However, she was determined to overcome stage fright and this had motivated her. Although she even tried joining for the debate team but she didn't make it. Later, Jane was given a chance to be the news announcer in her campus radio. Even though she was scared, but she did it.

Through Piaget's cognitive theory, the exposure therapy focuses on psychological aspects of the learning process. Exposure therapy would help the students on reducing anxiety in public speaking through practice speaking in a friendly and supportive environment. When their anxiety is reduced, learners' confidence level will improve. As learners are self-motivated with proper speech attitudes and self-esteem, they will be more willing to share their ideas and thought effectively.

5.3 Communicative Approach

Chang has stated that Communicative Approach emphasizes on the fluency of grammar while the Grammar Translation Method emphasizes on accuracy of grammar. Communicative Approach's goal is to achieve communicative competences. Communicative Approach is not only concerned with what is grammatically right but also with what is appropriate in a given situation. A complete and well-conceived Communicative Approach does not involve the rejection of grammar but recognizes grammar of its mediating role in the use and learning of English Language (13-14).

According to Chang, Communicative Approach shifts the attention from language competence to communicative competence (16). Communicative Language Teaching stresses the importance of providing opportunities to use English for communicative purposes. Chang also explain that Language always occurs in a social context and should not be divorced from its context when it is being taught (16).

Communication approach also emphasis on presentation skills and intelligibility of the speech. Through communication approach, students' English level can be improved to have a better understanding of grammar, observed correct pronunciation, stress, rhythm and intonation with minimal fillers and pauses.

5.4 Theoretical Framework

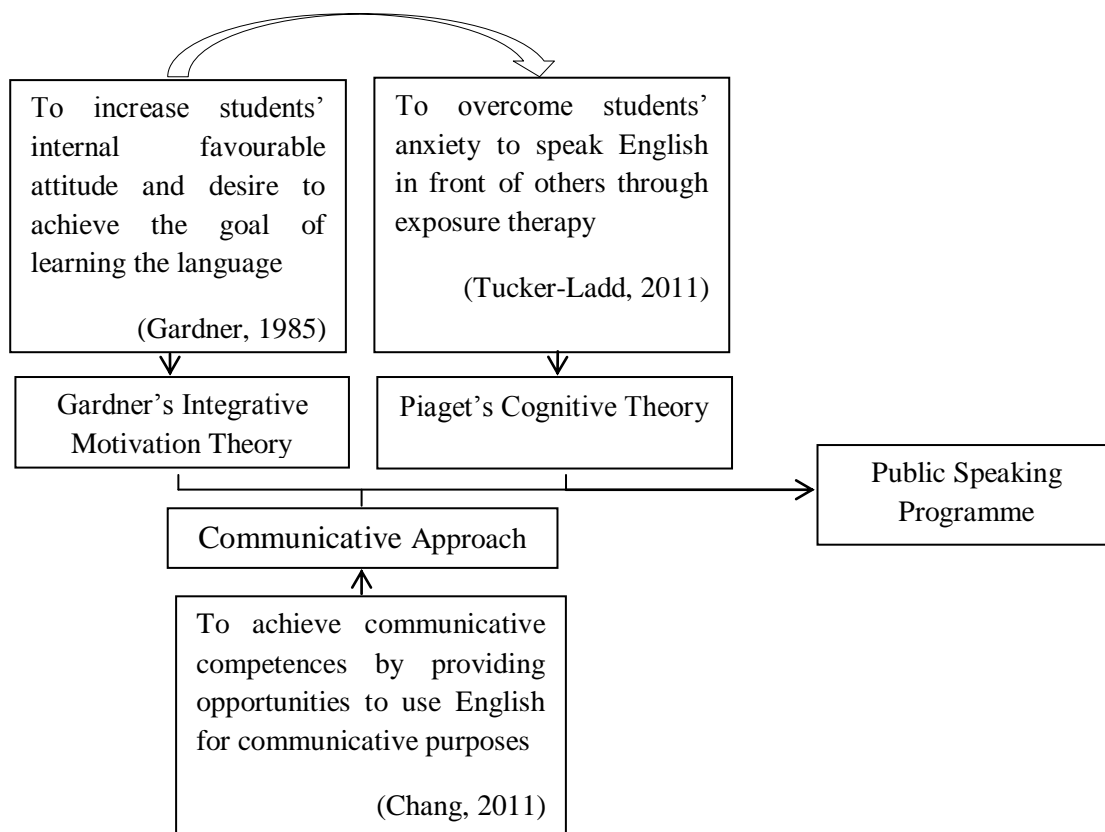


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

6. CONCLUSION

This paper had discussed about the previous researches on speech anxiety problems that exist among the ESL learners, the problems faced by the ESL students in public speaking activities and motivation for second language learners in learning English. Besides, theories related to motivation in communication skills were discussed with a case study on exposure therapy to overcome speech anxiety. Lastly, the theoretical framework presented in this paper is based on the Gardner's integrative motivation theory, Piaget's cognitive theory and combined with the communicative approach, aiming to help the second language learners to overcome their speech anxiety and improve on their motivation level in speaking English. Hence, learners are introduced with a public speaking programme to practice speaking English in a positive, non-threatening, encouraging and comfortable environment.

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