

SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS ENGLISH TEACHERS' STRATEGIES IN TEACHING SPEAKING IN THE EAST COAST OF PENINSULAR MALAYSIA

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Abstract

Speaking is often ignored by some teachers, resulting in students' lack of opportunities to practice English during classes and apprehensive in utilizing the language promptly. Teaching speaking is the way to provide the students with the knowledge on how to communicate efficiently. This research aims to identify the effective speaking strategies activities based on students' perspectives and identify the strategies implemented by English teachers in teaching speaking. This research uses a quantitative method involving two surveys for teachers and students. The questionnaire was distributed using an online platform called Google Form among 135 students from Pahang, Terengganu, and Kelantan and 38 English teachers as the subjects of the study. The data is analyzed using descriptive analysis. It is revealed that the students preferred to use Crazy Stories and Role Play or Simulation activities as they were more effective. The teaching strategies used by English teachers contrasted as they used Discussion Group for students' oral activities practices. The findings of the study may be used as a reference for future researchers to build the students' confidence in speaking based on their preferred speaking activities.

Keywords: Speaking strategies, Effective, Teachers, Students

INTRODUCTION

The mastery of speaking skills in the English language is necessary for many second language countries and foreign-language students (Richard, 2008). The purpose of teaching speaking is

to give students the opportunity to define themselves in the chosen language to deal with the fundamental communication skills, such as exchanging pleasantries, thanks, and apologies, expressing their needs and requesting information and services (Brown & Yule, 2000). In learning English, both students and teachers have certain methods in teaching and developing the ability of students to communicate well. To attain teaching-learning goals, teachers can use various teaching methods to Reiser and Dick (1996). According to Cole (2008), teachers' role is to provide effective plans or strategies to accomplish students' educational needs and communicate using the language learned. In order to improve the students' speaking skills, teaching speaking strategies plays a vital role in providing the students with more learning techniques and strategies on how to learn it effectively.

Problem statement

Since speaking skill is commonly overlooked during English lessons as the focus is typically on the writing and reading skill, students tend to struggle when they need to speak in the English language and lack the confidence in speaking. Those problems caused the students to be unable to communicate fluently and accurately as they did not have ample knowledge and opportunity in this field (Riftriani & Rezeki, 2019). According to Ur (1996), the students are usually reticent to speak as they worry about making mistakes and are simply shy in speaking English. In addition, according to Ur (1996), the students cannot think of anything to say as they have no motivation to express themselves through speaking. Many researchers believe that several factors may contribute to this problem. According to Rababa'ah (2005), teaching strategies may lead to this problem as some do not emphasize teaching speaking, resulting in a meagre development of this skill.

Moreover, vocabulary items are commonly taught separately. With the massive group of teachers relative to the number of cassette tapes available, listening materials are not used by most school teachers. Furthermore, the focus of teaching speaking is to improve the students' oral production. Oral communication training has been ignored since the belief that oral communication skills gradually evolve over time and that the cognitive abilities involved in writing immediately develop transfer to analogous oral communication skills (Chaney, 1998). Littlewoods (1981) argued on the usage of L1 for class management by some teachers, which caused the foreign language as a medium for contact to appear to be devalued. This

caused the learners to use the target language dedicated to conversationally non-essential realms such as exercises or conversation practice. At the same time, the mother tongue remains the appropriate medium for immediately relevant issues to be addressed. Vocabulary and grammar are other prime factor for other teachers to use the L1. Although their behaviours are in conflict with the L1, their practice does not reflect this (Al-Busaidi, 1998).

In order to overcome these problems, according to Ur (1996), the use of group work increases the sheer amount of learner talk within the class time as the barriers of learners who are unable to speak in front of the entire class are also reduced. Moreover, teachers can carefully choose topics and tasks to stimulate the students' interest. If the activity is focused on group discussion, some instructions or training emphasizing discussion skills should be provided and guidance during their participation. For instance, ensuring each team member responds during the discussion alongside nominating a leader to control their participation (Ur, 1996: 121). This implies that the teaching strategies used by the teachers are indeed impacting the students' proficiency in speaking. Therefore, this study aims to identify the effective speaking strategies activities based on the students' perspective and identify the strategies English teachers implement in teaching speaking.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) What is the students' perception towards speaking strategies activities that are effective for them?
- 2) What are the strategies used by English teachers in teaching speaking?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching Strategies

Teaching techniques are ways to make decisions about a lesson, an individual class, and the whole curriculum, starting with an overview of the attributes, learning goals, and educational preferences of the learners (MIT, 2002). Thus, it can be said that teaching strategies are

teachers' ways of handling students during the teaching and learning process. In addition, using strategies would help to ease the process of achieving the goal of teaching. Strategies can allow the students to interact easily and effectively in the case of teaching speaking. Richards and Renandya (2005) stated that since language teaching aims to provide learners with communicative competence through classroom activities that develop learners' ability to express themselves, speech will tend to be an essential element of a language class. It will be more important for teachers who plan and conduct such activities. Hence, teaching strategies are critical in ensuring the effectiveness of the lesson. Cooperative activities such as role play, creative tasks, and drilling are strategies used in teaching speaking (Anjaniputra, 2013).

Teaching Speaking

The way to provide students with the knowledge of how one can interact would be through speaking. Speech instruction aims to communicate effectively. Students should recognize the importance of speaking and develop their current level of speech proficiency to the fullest. To avoid misunderstanding in the statement due to the inaccuracy of pronunciation, use of grammar or vocabulary, and follow the rules of the society that applies in each communication encounter, they should try to develop their skills. Nunan (2003) claims that speaking teaching aims to teach students how to create the sound of English speech and the sound pattern. Next, it would encourage students to properly use the words stress and phrases, intonation patterns, and the second language rhythm. The appropriate words and phrases should be selected based on the appropriate social environment, audience, circumstances, and subject matter. Teaching speaking also helps students organize a meaningful and logical sequence of their thoughts.

Teacher Roles in Teaching Speaking

According to Paul (2003), teachers' strategies have many concepts that the teachers need to take into consideration in training the students to interact in English:

1. Introducing and implementing styles in ways that the learners feel meaningful, such as with games, in circumstances where they want to describe themselves, and through personalization.

2. Combining the other patterns the learners have mastered, they practice new patterns to internalize them quicker.
3. Giving the learners more chances to learn how to use trends in new circumstances flexibly.
4. Providing the learners the trust to step out in front of everyone by speaking with the other learners and the whole class individually.
5. Building the inner strength of the learners to cope with challenging and novel circumstances, providing them with puzzles to resolve, and ensuring that they are eventually successful.

Role Play or Simulation

The role-playing strategy is an excellent way to talk in a reasonably secure classroom setting (Nunan, 2003). Cameron (2001) notes that role play is a teaching method suitable for learners and knowledge of social culture. The activity should allow learners to use the language they know and begin with basic dialogues before continuing to more advanced activities. According to Shi (2006), role play is an effective method to get the students to pretend that they are someone else and play that part, typically involving a specific situation.

Discussion Group

Oradee (2012) notes that in the language classroom, communicative practices such as conversation can be effectively used. Discussion is an ideal instrument for improving students' cognitive abilities as it allows them access to their thought processes and directs students to a higher level of thinking (Ozer, 2005). There are some benefits of using discussion groups for student performance, according to Ozer (2005). Firstly, the advancement of the language can improve the level of students' comfort in utilizing the language. Next, their critical thinking is established, and lastly, it also helps improve students' problem-solving skills.

Information Gap

Information gap operations serve many functions, such as solving an issue or gathering information. Students are expected to function in pairs in this operation. The other partner's data will be accessible to one student, and their partner will share their data. Each partner often

plays a key role, and if the partner does not know that other needs, the mission will not be completed. Harmer (1991) says that the information gap indicates “a gap” in the information they have between the two persons, and the interaction helps close the gap so that both speakers have the same information.

Drilling

Drilling is a method of standardizing a language item’s pronunciation and improving fluidity, which can rapidly and effortlessly incorporate language (Houston, 2013). Harmer (2007) explains that drilling is a mechanical way to display and exercise the ability of students to use language objects in a controlled manner. Drilling has several benefits, according to Thornbury (2005), including encouraging students to pay attention to new teacher-provided content, focusing words, phrases, or utterances on the mind of students, transferring new objects from working memory to long-term memory, and providing a way to acquire control over the language through articulators.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs quantitative methods as the fundamental aspect of the study. According to Aliaga and Gunderson (2002), the quantitative research method is defined as explaining an issue or phenomenon through gathering data in numerical form and analysing with the aid of mathematical methods in particular statistics. The respondents for this research are both students and teachers of secondary schools in the East Coast Peninsular Malaysia, particularly Pahang, Terengganu, and Kelantan. The respondents are chosen approximately 135 of Form 2 students from East Coast Peninsular Malaysia (Pahang, Terengganu, and Kelantan), while the respondents for teachers are approximately around 38 English teachers in that area.

The instruments used for this research are in the form of surveys. The surveys consist of two different types of questionnaires that have been adapted from previous researchers Huang and Hu (2015) for the students and Alonso (2013) for the teachers. The surveys were distributed among 135 Form 2 students in Pahang, Terengganu, and Kelantan with a number

of 75, 23, and 37 students, respectively, and among 38 English teachers through an online platform called *Google Form*. The questionnaires administered to the students consist of two sections: Demographic and Research questions. The demographic section consists of 4 questions requiring students to provide their gender, school names, opinions on English speaking class, and opinion in increasing educational activities to English speaking class.

The research questions section consists of 6 questions requiring to identify the speaking strategies activities that are effective based on their perspective by using the Likert scale, 1 for Strongly Disagree, 2 for Disagree, 3 for Neutral, 4 for Agree, and 5 for Strongly Agree. The questionnaires administered to the English teachers also consist of two sections: Demographic and Research questions. The demographic sections consist of 6 questions that require teachers to provide their age, years of teaching experience, duration of classes conducted, duration of oral practice activities, the type of assessment in speaking activities, and type of activities used. The research questions section consists of 4 questions that teachers require to identify the speaking strategies activities often used in teaching speaking classes using the Likert scale.

Data Collection Procedures

The survey was distributed on the 19th December 2020 until 19th January 2021 which took about a month to collect all the data from the survey done. The researcher distributes the questionnaire through an online platform, Google form, for teachers' and students' questionnaires. The participants are required to complete the questionnaires with their information and answers. The researcher then analyses the data acquired from the survey using descriptive analysis and is presented in tables, graphs, and charts for a better and clearer understanding.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaires are analysed by using descriptive analysis. Using statistical methods to explain or summarize a collection of data is descriptive analysis, also

known as descriptive analytics or descriptive statistics. Descriptive analysis is a scientific explanation of the particular phenomena by demonstrating one variable to another without defining the interaction that could be useful for further study. Gay says a descriptive study describes and defines how issues are resolved (Gay, 2000). The analysed data are then presented in multiple forms such as tables, graphs, and charts, where frequency counts are tabulated and converted to percentages to ease the understanding of the data acquired. Descriptive analysis is suitable for this study as the results were gathered based on the opinions and perceptions of the large population on a specific topic.

RESULTS

Based on both of the questionnaires distributed for students and teachers, the data were collected and analysed to achieve the purposes of this study which are to identify the effective speaking strategies activities based on students' perspectives and recognize the strategies implemented by English teachers in teaching speaking.

The effective speaking strategies activities based on students' perspective

Students' opinion about English speaking class

Figure 1 shows the students' opinions about English speaking class. Students were given choices from "Very boring" to "Very interesting" to describe their opinions.

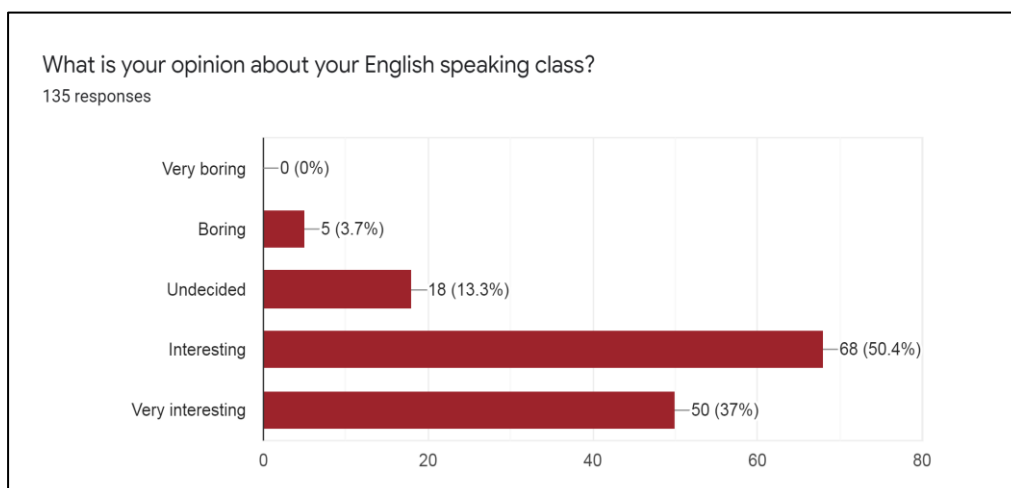


Figure 1: Students' opinions about English speaking class

It can be seen clearly that the most students chose "Interesting" with a total of 68 students resulting in 50.4% and "Very interesting" with a total of 50 students, 37%. Meanwhile, 18 students, with 13.3%, chose "Undecided" and none chose "Very boring".

Students' opinion in increasing educational activities to English speaking class

Based on Figure 2 shown, it emphasizes the students' opinion in increasing educational activities to English speaking classes. Students were given options as 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree to describe their opinions. The highest result obtained shows that 62 students strongly agree with the statement with 45.9% and 61 students agree with the statement with a percentage of 45.2%. Meanwhile, 11 students voted on the neutral with 8.1%, and only 1 with the percentage of 0.7% chose to strongly disagree with the statement to increase the educational activities to English speaking class. None of the students chose to disagree with the statement.

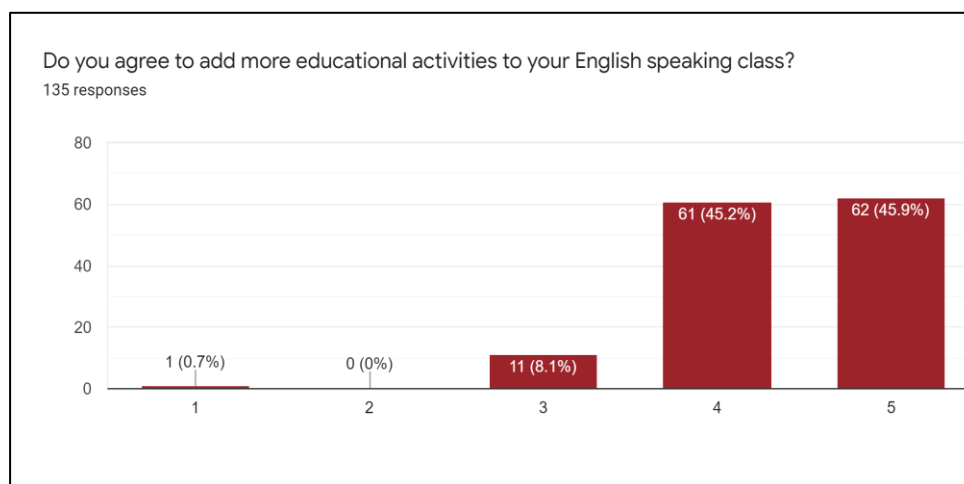


Figure 2: Students' opinion in increasing educational activities to English speaking class

Research Question 1

The research questions section consists of 6 questions required by them to identify the speaking strategies activities that are effective based on their perspective using the Likert scale, 1 indicates Strongly Disagree, 2 indicates Disagree, 3 indicates Neutral, 4 indicates Agree, and 5 indicates Strongly Agree.

Table 1: Speaking strategies activities that are effective based on students' perspective

Types of speaking strategies activities that are effective.	1 Strongly Disagree		2 Disagree		3 Neutral		4 Agree		5 Strongly Agree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Role Play or Simulation (playing a role of someone) is a funny activity to use in English speaking class.	1	0.7	2	1.5	20	14.8	56	41.5	56	41.5
Discussion Group (discussing a topic in a group) is an interesting activity to use in English speaking class.	1	0.7	1	0.7	25	18.5	48	35.6	60	44.4
Information Gap (activity where learners are missing the information, they need to complete a task and need to talk to each other to complete it) is an interactive activity to do in the class.	0	0	2	1.5	19	14.1	54	40.0	60	44.4
Drilling (repeating what is heard) is an attractive activity to use in English speaking class.	0	0	3	2.2	24	17.8	47	34.8	61	45.2

Crazy Stories (taking turns to finish a story) is a funny activity to use in English speaking class.	0	0	2	1.5	18	13.3	38	28.1	77	57.0
Presentation (using PPT to make a presentation in the class) is an attractive activity to use in English speaking class.	1	0.7	5	3.7	22	16.3	46	34.1	61	45.2

Table 1 stated the data of speaking strategies activities that are effective based on students' perspectives by using the Likert scale. The highest data for "Strongly Disagree" is 0.7% that consisting of only one student who answered for the Role Play or Simulation, Discussion Group, and Presentation activities. In comparison, the lowest data collected for this scale is 0% for the Information Gap, Drilling, and Crazy Stories activities. In addition, the highest data for "Disagree" is 3.7% that consisting of 5 students who answered for the Presentation activity. At the same time, the lowest data is only one student, which resulted in 0.7% for the Discussion Group activity.

Furthermore, the highest data for "Neutral" is 18.5%, consisting of 25 students who answered for the Discussion Group activity. The lowest data consists of 18 students, which resulted in 13.3% for the Crazy Stories activity. Moreover, the highest data for "Agree" is 41.5% consisting of 56 students answered for the Role Play or Simulation activity. The lowest data consists of 38 students, which resulted in 28.1% for the Crazy Stories activity. The highest data for "Strongly Agree" is 57% consisting of 77 students who answered for the Crazy Stories activity. In contrast, the lowest data consists of 56 students, which resulted in 41.5% for the Role Play or Simulation activity.

The strategies implemented by English teachers in teaching speaking

Figure 3 indicates the types of activities the teachers used in the English-speaking class based on the research conducted.

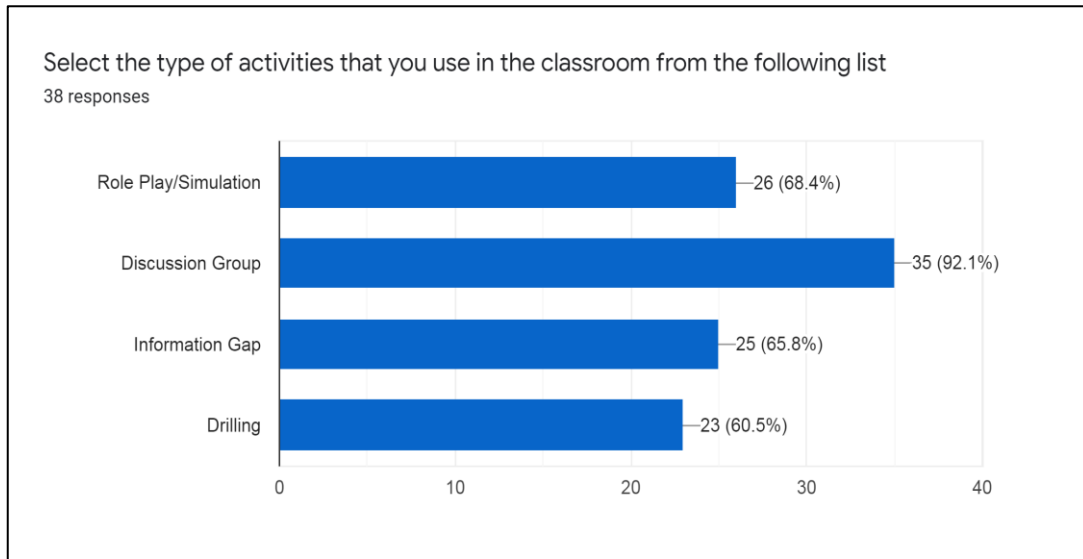


Figure 3: Types of activities used

It can be seen clearly that the highest frequency used is the “Discussion Group” as an activity in English speaking class with a total of 35 teachers, resulting in 92.1%. The second highest is by using the “Role Play or Simulation” as a type of speaking activity with 26 teachers, resulting in 68.4%. This is followed by the third frequently used activity, “Information Gap” with 25 teachers and a percentage of 65.8%. The least activity used by the teachers in English speaking class is “Drilling” with only 23 teachers answering this activity, resulting in 60.5% from the overall sample.

Research Question 2

The research questions section consists of 4 questions that teachers require to identify the speaking strategies activities often used in teaching speaking classes using the Likert scale, 1 indicates Strongly Disagree, 2 indicates Disagree, 3 indicates Neutral, 4 indicates Agree, and 5 indicates Strongly Agree.

Table 2: Types of speaking strategies activities used in classes

Types of speaking strategies activities used in class.	1		2		3		4		5	
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Role Play or Simulation	2	5.3	3	7.9	8	21.1	17	44.7	8	21.1
Discussion Group	0	0	0	0	3	7.9	11	28.9	24	63.2
Information Gap	1	2.6	0	0	10	26.3	14	36.8	13	34.2
Drilling	3	7.9	3	7.9	6	15.8	11	28.9	15	39.5

Based on Table 2, the highest data for “Strongly Disagree” is 7.9%, consisting of 3 teachers choosing the Drilling activity. The lowest data collected for this scale is 0% for the Discussion Group activities. In addition, the highest data for “Disagree” is 7.9% that consisting of 3 teachers who answered for the Role Play or Simulation and Drilling activities. In comparison, the lowest data is 0 % for both Discussion Group and Information Gap activities. Furthermore, the highest data for “Neutral” is 26.3% that consisting of 10 teachers who answered for the Information Gap activity, while the lowest data consists of 3 teachers, which resulted in 7.9% for the Discussion Group activity. Moreover, the highest data for “Agree” is 44.7% that consisting of 17 teachers who answered for the Role Play or Simulation activity, while the lowest data consists of 11 teachers, which resulted in 28.9% for the Discussion Group and Drilling activities. The highest data for “Strongly Agree” is 63.2% that consisting of 24 teachers who answered for the Discussion Group activity, while the lowest data consists of 8 teachers, which resulted in 21.1% for the Role Play or Simulation activity.

Based on Figure 4, Role Play or Simulation is highly emphasized as an activity in teaching speaking strategies by the teachers who participated in this research. The chart reflects that the teachers mostly answered “Agree” for this type of activity with a total number of 17 teachers with a percentage of 44.7%. Meanwhile, the least number of teachers chose “Strongly Disagree” which consisted of only two teachers and a percentage of 5.3%.

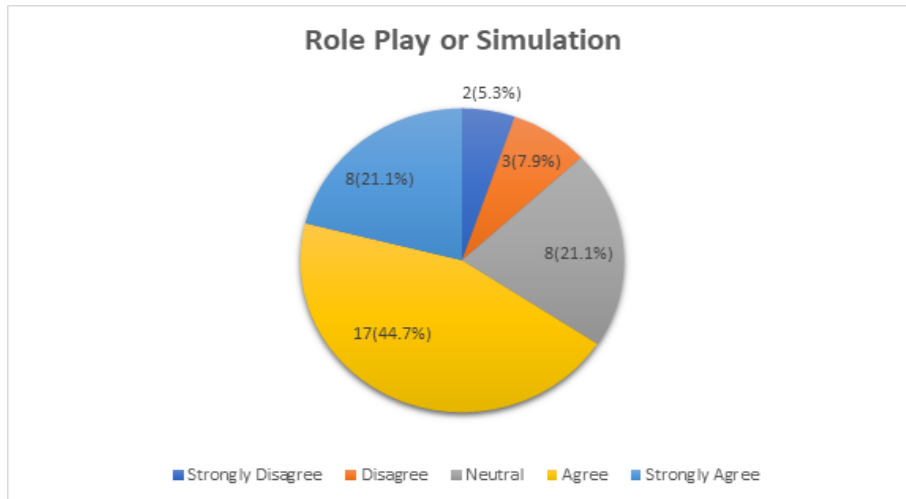


Figure 4: Role Play or Simulation activities used as strategies in teaching speaking

Figure 5 demonstrates the great use of the Discussion Group as an activity in teaching speaking strategies used by the English teachers in this study. The teachers mostly chose “Strongly Agree” for this type of activity with 24 teachers and a percentage of 63.2%. Meanwhile, none of the teachers answered “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree” for this particular question.

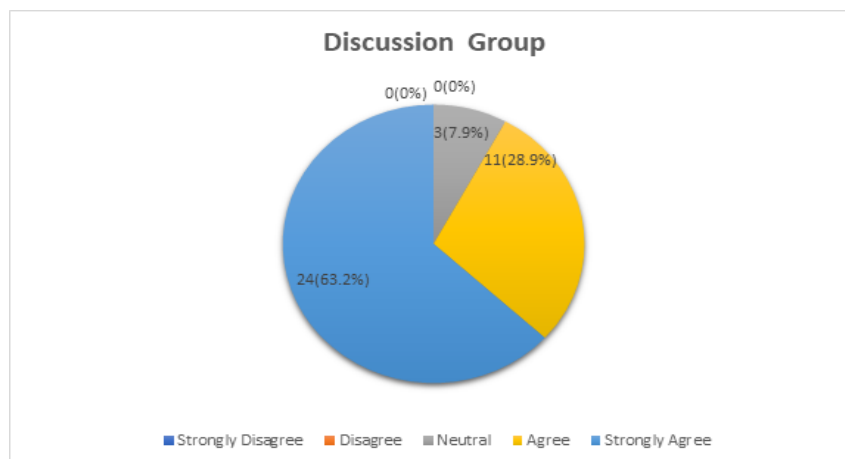


Figure 5: Discussion Group activities used as strategies in teaching speaking

Based on Figure 6 shown, it emphasizes the use of Information Gap as an activity in teaching speaking strategies by the teachers in this research. The chart exemplifies that 14

teachers answered “Agree” for this type of activity with a percentage of 36.8%. The second-highest number of teachers chose “Strongly Agree” with 13 teachers and a percentage of 34.2% and “Neutral” as the third highest number of teachers, amounting to 10 teachers and 26.3%. Lastly, none of the teachers answered “Disagree” for this question.

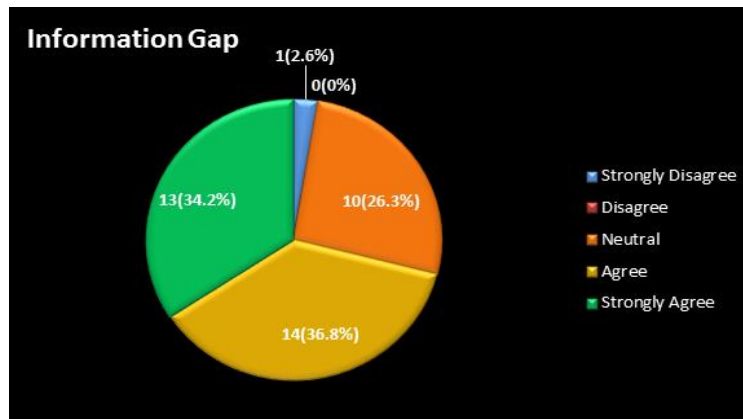


Figure 6: Information Gap activities used as strategies in teaching speaking

Figure 7 emphasizes the use of Drilling as an activity in teaching speaking strategies by the teachers in this research. It demonstrates that the majority of the teachers answered “Strongly Agree” for this type of activity with a total of 15 teachers and a percentage of 39.5%. The second-highest number of teachers answered “Agree” with a total of 11 teachers and a percentage of 28.9%, followed by “Neutral” as the third-highest number of teachers amounting to 6 teachers and 15.8%. The least number of teachers chose “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” with a total of 3 teachers, resulting in 7.9% respectively.

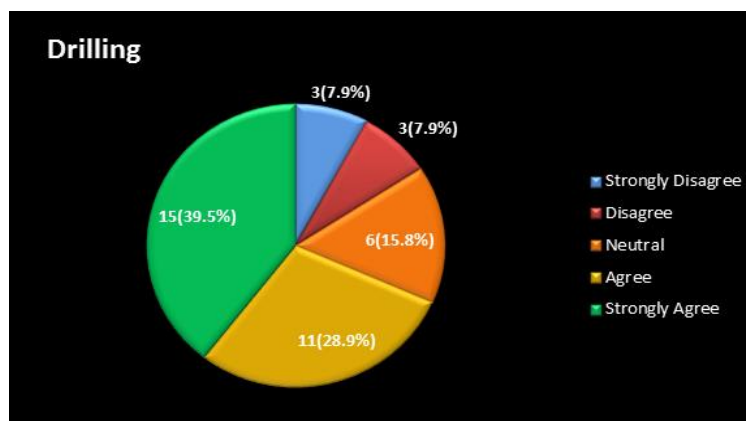


Figure 7: Drilling activities used as strategies in teaching speaking

DISCUSSION

The effective speaking strategies activities based on students' perspective

Teaching strategies are teachers' ways of handling the students during the teaching and learning process. Additionally, using strategies would help ease the process of achieving the goal of teaching. Richards and Renandya (2005) remarked that as the aim of language teaching is to establish effective communication skills for the learners, classroom practices that improve the ability of learners to express themselves through speech will therefore appear to be an essential component of a language course, and it is fundamental for teachers who plans and administers such activities. Thus, the findings of this research conclude that the students prefer to use Crazy Stories and Role Play or Simulation activities as they were more effective.

Moreover, the Crazy Stories activity enhances and assists the students in being creative while improving their motivation in speaking English. According to Shi (2006), Role Play or Simulation activity is an appropriate method to get the students to pretend they are another person involved in a particular situation, which would be an exciting and enjoyable task. Kasri supports this, and Ardi (2013) one of the strategies that the students can be influenced by is crazy story games. Students can speak openly and humorously through this method without feeling embarrassed or anxious when speaking in the classroom. Furthermore, the findings were also supported by Razali and Ismail (2017), which state simulation and role-play boost students' speech ability by providing many communication activities by simulating a real-life experience as in the actual world alongside encouraging them to learn vocabulary that improves fluency. Moreover, students expressed an excellent opinion of the use of simulation and role-play in the classroom since they discovered that these exercises were essential in enhancing their vocabulary and reducing shyness, raising their level of trust in English, and experiencing new ways of learning English, as well as strengthening their abilities to communicate (Razali & Ismail 2017).

The strategies implemented by English teachers in teaching speaking

The aim of teaching speaking is to communicate effectively, and thus, the students should understand the importance of speaking and improve their current proficiency level of speaking

to the fullest. Besides, it has been proven that teachers play a fundamental role in facilitating constructive communication in the classroom. The research findings conclude that teachers prefer to use Discussion Group to practice oral activities in English speaking class as 35 out of 38 teachers. The total percentage of 92.1% chose Discussion Group as the activity that they often use during the lesson. Therefore, it can be concluded that the majority of the teachers who chose this activity were mainly around the age range of 25-40 years old. It can be seen that the experienced teachers with the age range of 40 years old and above tend to conduct activities that can be controlled easily. Meanwhile, the younger teachers with the age range of fewer than 40 years old often create more flexible activities to allow the students to be more independent in navigating the tasks.

This result was supported by Alonso (2013), who remarked that Role-plays, discussions or debates, and simulations are the most popular of the less-controlled speaking activities within the Expression of interest (EOI or Tutor) community. The information shows that Expression of interest (EOI or Tutor) teachers base speech practices on a range of social circumstances, promote critical thinking in these activities, and help students decide and educate them in communicative skills such as communicating agreements and disagreements. Additionally, most EOI or Tutor teachers are commonly around 50 years old and above. This clarifies the result of this finding as also supported by Patel (2014), whereby group activities and techniques of group discussions are better than the traditional methods.

CONCLUSION

Generally, teaching speaking strategies are crucial in enhancing students' fluency in speaking the English language. On top of that, the findings show that most of the students agreed with the demographic section's question that suggested increasing educational activity to the English-speaking class. It can be seen that students are interested in learning and improving their speaking skills using their preferred teaching strategies: Role Play or Simulation and Crazy Stories. Therefore, teachers need to design and provide lessons that suit the students' needs and interests, other than the Discussion Group activity, to maximize their acquisition and apprehension of the knowledge in the English language.

Moreover, teachers should explore more teaching strategies that can be used in classes to ensure that their teaching techniques are up-to-date and on track with 21st century learning. Besides, teachers hold a vital role in developing this ability as they are responsible for facilitating constructive dialogues in the classroom. To conclude, both teachers and students need to cooperate to ensure that the teaching and learning sessions sail smoothly. A major limitation of this research is that it was conducted within a short time period with a large population scope. This research was also conducted through an online platform as the world faces a global pandemic Covid-19. Therefore, future researchers with a similar aim in discovering the most effective strategies for English speaking classes may also consider a mixed-method study by conducting complementary interview sessions to increase the validity and precision of the data.

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