

**THE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE
ENGLISH TEACHER'S STRATEGIES IN TEACHING SPEAKING ON 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 practise English during classes and being apprehensive about utilising the language promptly. Teaching speaking is a way to provide students with knowledge on how to communicate efficiently. This research aims to identify practical speaking strategy activities based on students' perspectives and the strategies implemented by English teachers in teaching speaking. This research uses a quantitative method that involves two sets of surveys for teachers and students. The questionnaire was distributed using an online platform called Google Form among 135 students from Pahang, Terengganu, and Kelantan, as well as among 38 English teachers as the study subjects. The data is analysed using descriptive analysis, revealing that the students prefer 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 Groups for students' oral activities practices. The study's findings may be a reference for future researchers to build students' confidence in speaking based on their preferred speaking activities.

Keywords: speaking strategies, effective, teachers, students

INTRODUCTION

Mastering 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 allow students to define themselves in the chosen language to deal with fundamental communication skills, such as exchanging pleasantries, thanks and apologies, to express their needs, and expressing formation and services (Brown & Yule, 2000). In learning English, both students and teachers have specific methods for teaching and developing the ability of students to communicate well. To attain teaching-learning goals, teachers can use various teaching methods (Reiser and Dick, 1996). According to Cole (2008), the teacher's role is to provide effective plans or strategies to accomplish students' educational needs by purposefully communicating using the language learnt. To improve students' speaking skills, teaching speaking strategies is vital in providing them with more learning techniques and strategies to learn them effectively.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Since speaking skill is commonly overlooked during English lessons as the focus is typically on writing and reading skills, students tend to struggle when they need to talk in the English language and lack 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, 2019). According to Ur (1996), the students usually are reticent to speak as they worry about making mistakes and simply are shy in speaking the English language. 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 emphasise teaching speaking, which results in a meagre development of this skill. In addition, vocabulary items are commonly taught separately. With the massive group of teachers relative to the number of cassette tapes available, most school teachers do not use listening materials.

Furthermore, the focus of teaching speaking is to improve the student's oral production. Oral communication training has been ignored since the belief that verbal communication skills gradually evolve over time and that the cognitive abilities involved in writing immediately develop and transfer to analogous oral communication skills (Chaney, 1998). Littlewoods (1981) argued that some teachers' usage of L1 for class management caused the foreign language as a medium for contact to appear 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 conflict with the L1, their practice does not reflect this (Al-Busaidi, 1998).

To overcome these problems, according to Ur (1996), group work increases the sheer amount of learner talk within the class time as the barriers of learners who cannot speak in front of the entire class are also reduced. Moreover, teachers can carefully choose topics and tasks to stimulate the student's interest. If the activity is focused on group discussion, some instructions or pieces of training emphasising discussion skills should be provided and guidance during their participation. For instance, they ensure each team member responds during the discussion alongside nominating a leader to control their involvement (Ur, 1996: 121). This implies that the teaching strategies used by the teachers are indeed impacting the student's proficiency in speaking. Therefore, this study aims to identify practical speaking strategies and activities based on the student's perspective and the strategy implemented by English teachers in teaching speaking.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) What is the student's 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 quickly and effectively in the case of teaching speaking. Richards and Renandya (2005) stated that language teaching aims to provide learners with communicative competence through classroom activities that develop learners' ability to express themselves. Therefore, speech will be an essential element of a language class and will be more critical for teachers who plan and conduct such activities. Hence, teaching strategies are crucial in ensuring the effectiveness of the lesson. Cooperative activities such as role play, creative tasks, and drilling are some 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 the teaching of speaking. Speech instruction aims to communicate effectively. Students should be able to recognise the importance of speaking and develop their current level of speech proficiency to the fullest. To avoid misunderstanding the statement due to the inaccuracy of pronunciation, use of grammar or vocabulary, and to follow the society's rules that apply in each communication encounter, they should try to develop their skills. Nunan (2003) claims that speaking is aimed at teaching students how to create the sound of English speech and the sound pattern. Next, it would encourage students to properly use stress and phrases, intonation patterns, and the second language rhythm. The appropriate words and phrases should be

selected based on the proper social environment, audience, circumstances and subject matter. Teaching speaking also helps students to organise 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 personalisation.
2. Combined with the other patterns the learners have mastered, they practice new ways to internalise them quickly.
3. Giving the learners more chances to learn how to use trends flexibly in new circumstances.
4. Providing the learners with the trust to step out in front of everyone by speaking individually with the other learners and the whole class.
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 that should be suitable for learners and knowledge of social culture. The activity provides opportunities for learners to use the language they know and should begin with essential dialogues before continuing to more advanced exercises. Role play is an effective method for the students to pretend that they are someone else and play that part, typically involving a specific situation (Shi, 2006).

Discussion Group

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

Information Gap

Students are expected to function in pairs in this operation. The data the other partner does not have will be accessible to one student, and their partner will share their data. Information gap operations serve many functions, such as solving an issue or gathering information. Each partner often plays a key role; if the partner does not know what the 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 hole so that both speakers have the same information.

Drilling

Drilling is a method of standardising a language item’s pronunciation and improving fluidity which is the ability to 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 a process of explaining an issue or phenomenon by gathering numerical data and analysing it with the aid of mathematical techniques, particularly statistics. The respondents for this research are students and teachers of secondary schools in the East Coast Peninsular Malaysia, particularly Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan. The respondents are chosen from approximately around 135 Form 2 students from East Coast Peninsular Malaysia (Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan). In contrast, the teachers' respondents are about 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 adapted from previous researchers Huang, X., & Hu, X. (2015) for the students and Alonso, R. (2013) for the teachers. The surveys were distributed among 135 Form 2 students in Pahang, Terengganu, and Kelantan with several 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 demographic and Research questions. The demographic section consists of 4 questions requiring students to provide their gender, school names, opinions on English-speaking classes, and belief in increasing educational activities to English-speaking courses. The questionnaire section consists of 6 questions that require them to identify the practical speaking strategies activities based on their perspective 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 required 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 question section consists of 4 questions that teachers require to identify the speaking strategies and activities often used in teaching speaking classes using the Likert scale.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher distributes the questionnaire through an online platform, *Google Forms*, for both teachers and students. The survey was distributed from 19 December 2020 until 19 January 2021, and it took about a month to collect all the data. 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 the form of tables, graphs, and charts for better and clearer understanding.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaires are analysed by using descriptive analysis. Using statistical methods to explain or summarise data collection is descriptive analysis, also known as descriptive analytics or descriptive statistics. Descriptive analysis is a scientific explanation of a particular phenomenon by demonstrating one variable to another without defining the interaction that could be useful for further study. According to Gay (2000), it is a descriptive study that describes and explains how issues are resolved. The analysed data are 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 acquired data. 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.

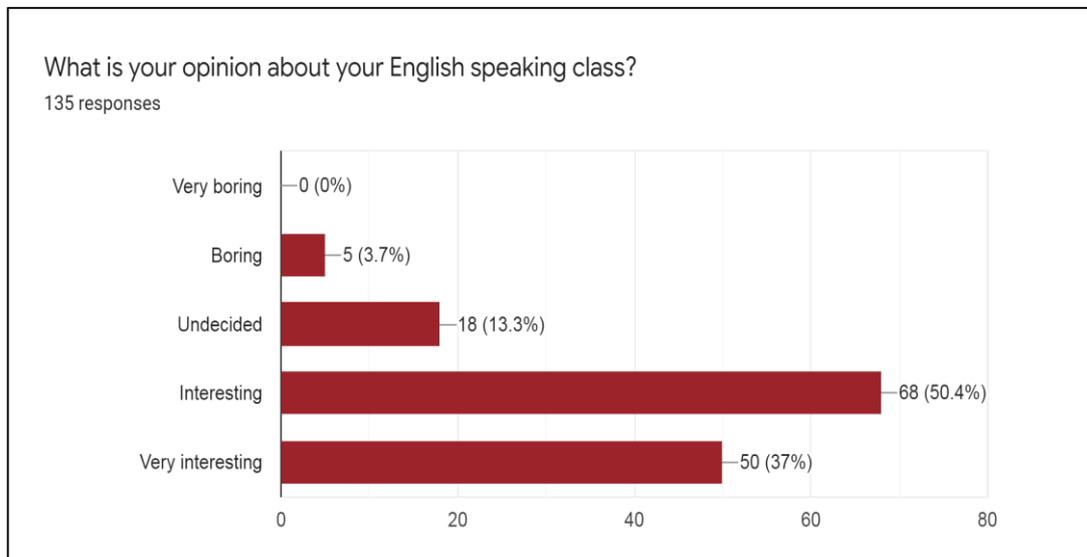
RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

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

4.1 The practical speaking strategies activities based on students' perspective

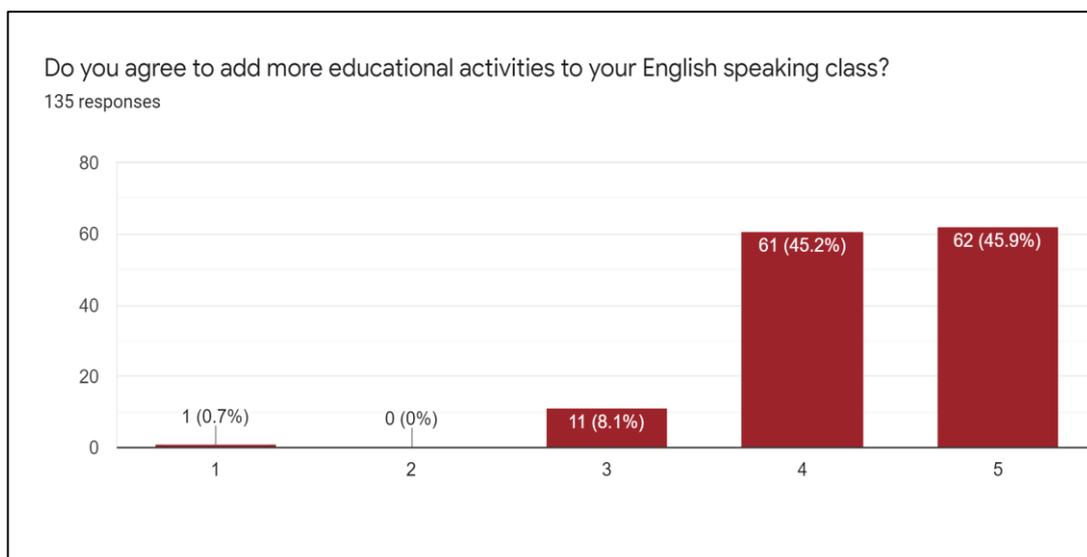
a) Students' opinion about English speaking class



Graph 1: Students’ Opinions About English-Speaking Class

Graph 1 shows the students’ opinions about English speaking class. Students were given choices from “Very boring” to “Very interesting” to describe their views. It can be seen clearly that most students chose “Interesting”, with 68 students resulting in 50.4% and “Very interesting”, with a total of 50 students, 37%. Meanwhile, 18 students, 13.3%, chose “Undecided”, and none chose “Very boring”.

b) Students’ opinion in increasing educational activities to English speaking class



Graph 2: Students’ Opinion On Increasing Educational Activities to English Speaking Class

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

4.1.2 Research Question 1

The following questions required them to identify the practical speaking strategies activities based on their perspective using the Likert scale; one indicates Strongly Disagree, two shows Disagree, 3 indicates Neutral, four indicates Agree, and five indicates Strongly Agree.

Table 1: Speaking Strategies Activities That Are Effectively 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 the role of someone) is a funny activity to use in English-speaking classes.	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 exciting activity to use in English-speaking classes.	1	0.7	1	0.7	25	18.5	48	35.6	60	44.4

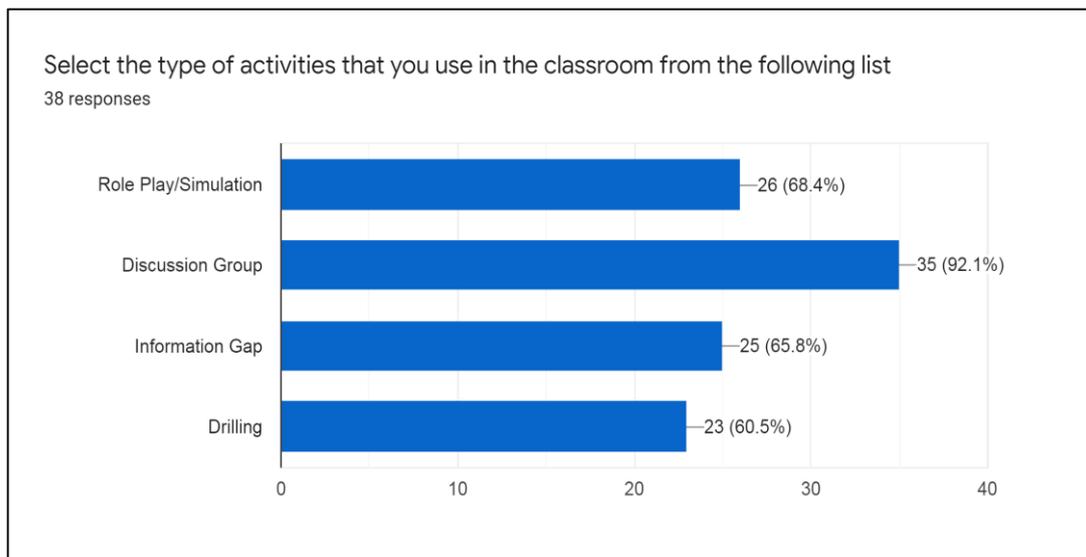
Information Gap (an activity where learners are missing the information they need to complete a task and talk to each other to complete it) is an interactive activity to do in the class.	0	0	2	1.5	19	14.1	54	40.0	60	44.4
Drilling (repeating what is heard) is an engaging activity to use in English-speaking classes.	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 engaging activity to use in English-speaking classes.	1	0.7	5	3.7	22	16.3	46	34.1	61	45.2

Table 1 shows the data of practical speaking strategies activities based on students' perspectives using the Likert scale. The highest data for "Strongly Disagree" is 0.7%, which consists of only one student who answered for the Role Play or Simulation, Discussion Group and Presentation activities. 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%, which consists of 5 students who answered for the Presentation activity. In comparison, 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%, which consists of 25 students who answered for the Discussion Group activity. In comparison, the lowest data consists of 18 students, resulting in 13.3% for the Crazy Stories activity. Moreover, the highest data for “Agree” is 41.5%, which consists of 56 students who answered for the Role Play or Simulation activity. In comparison, the lowest data consists of 38 students, resulting in 28.1% for the Crazy Stories activity. The highest data for “Strongly Agree” is 57%, which consists of 77 students who answered the Crazy Stories activity. In comparison, the lowest data consists of 56 students, which resulted in 41.5% for the Role Play or Simulation activity.

4.2 The strategies implemented by English teachers in teaching speaking



Graph 3: Types of Activities Used

Based on Graph 3 shown, indicates the types of activities that the teachers used in the English-speaking class based on the research conducted. 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 using “Role Play or Simulation” as a type of speaking activity with a total number of 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 minor activity operated by the teachers in English speaking class is “Drilling”, with only 23 teachers answering this activity which resulted in 60.5% of the overall sample.

4.2.1 Research Question 2

The questions section consists of 4 questions teachers require to identify the strategies and activities used in teaching speaking classes. Using the Likert scale, one indicates Strongly

Disagree, two shows Disagree, three indicates Neutral, four indicates Agree, and five indicates Strongly Agree.

Table 2: Types of Speaking Strategies Activities Used in Classes

Types of speaking strategies activities used in class.	1 Strongly Disagree		2 Disagree		3 Neutral		4 Agree		5 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%, which consists 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%, which consists of 3 teachers who answered for the Role Play or Simulation and Drilling activities. In comparison, the lowest data is 0 % for the Discussion Group and Information Gap activities. Furthermore, the highest data for “Neutral” is 26.3%, which consists of 10 teachers who answered the Information Gap activity.

In comparison, 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%, which consists of 17 teachers who answered for the Role Play or Simulation activity. In comparison, the lowest data consists of 11 teachers, resulting in 28.9% for the Discussion Group and Drilling activities. The highest data for “Strongly Agree” is 63.2%, which consists of 24 teachers who answered for the

Discussion Group activity. In comparison, the lowest data consists of 8 teachers, which resulted in 21.1% for the Role Play or Simulation activity.

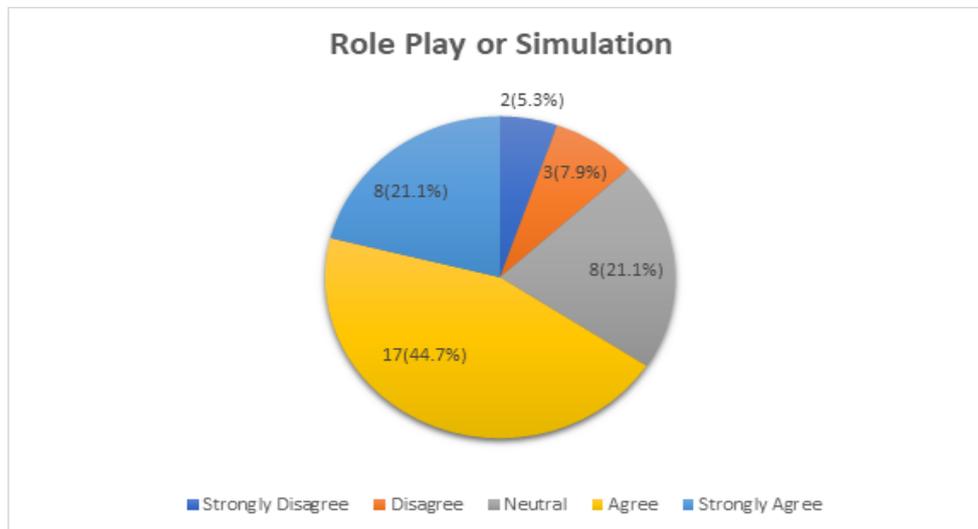


Chart 1: Role Play or Simulation Activities Used as Strategies in Teaching Speaking

Based on Chart 1, Role Play or Simulation is highly emphasised 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, totalling 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%.

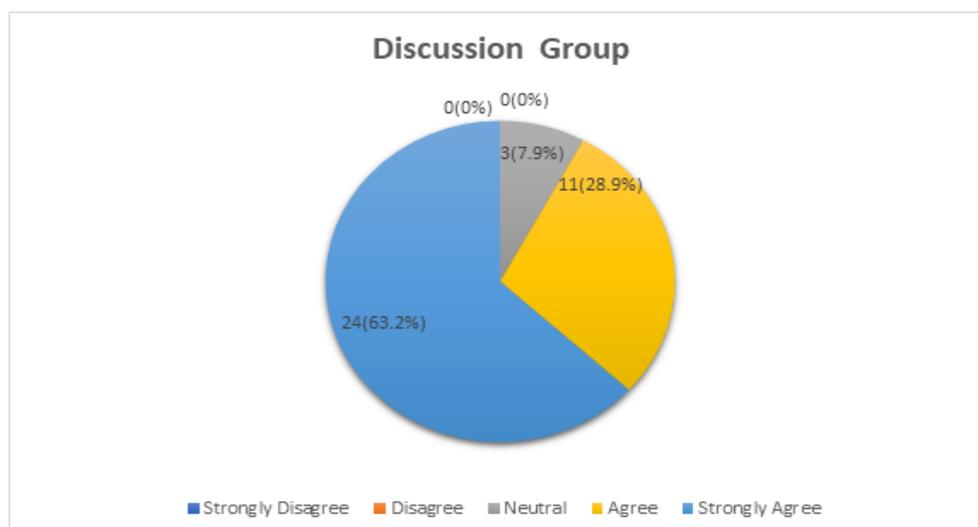


Chart 2: Discussion Group Activities Used as Strategies in Teaching Speaking

Chart 2 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 mainly chose “Strongly Agree” for this type of activity, with an amount of 24 teachers and a percentage of 63.2%. Meanwhile, none of the teachers answered “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree” for this particular question.

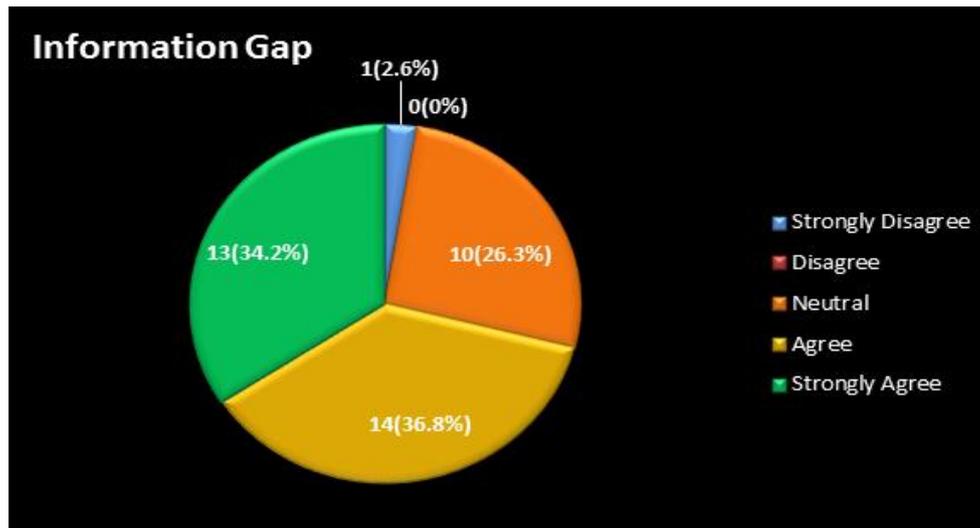


Chart 3: Information Gap Activities Used as Strategies in Teaching Speaking

Based on Chart 3 shown, it emphasises 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 a total of 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” with this question.

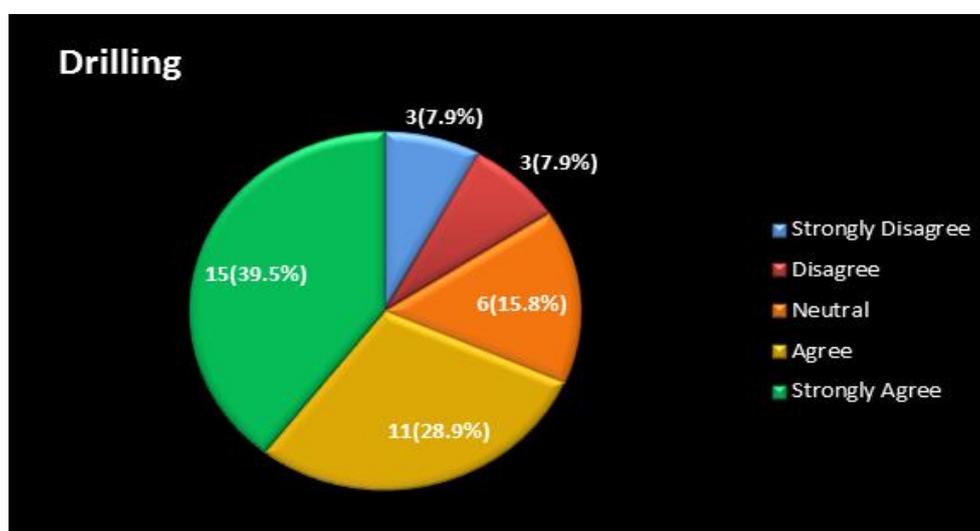


Chart 4: Drilling Activities Used as Strategies in Teaching Speaking

Chart 4 emphasises the use of drilling as an activity in teaching speaking strategies by the teachers in this research. It demonstrates that most 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 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 three teachers, resulting in 7.9% respectively.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1.1 The practical speaking strategies activities based on students’ perspective

Teaching strategies are teachers’ ways of handling students during teaching and learning. Additionally, using strategies would help ease the process of achieving the goal of teaching. Richards & Renandya (2005) remarked that as the aim of language teaching is to establish practical 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. It is fundamental for teachers who plan and administers such activities. Thus, this research concludes that the students preferred 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 to speak 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 for the students. This is supported by Kasri & Ardi (2013), one of the strategies for students to be influenced by his 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 & Ismail (2017), that states simulation and role-play boost students’ speech ability by providing many communication activities by simulating a real-life experience 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).

5.1.2 The strategies implemented by English teachers in teaching speaking

The aim of teaching speaking is to communicate effectively; 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 Groups to practice oral activities in English-speaking classes, as 35 out of 38 teachers, with a total percentage of 92.1%, chose Discussion Groups as the activity they often use during the lesson. Therefore, it can be concluded that most of the teachers who

chose this activity were around the age range of 25-40 years old. It can be seen that 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 an age range of fewer than 40 often create more flexible activities to allow the students to be more independent in navigating the tasks.

This result was supported by Alonso (2013). He 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 to decide and educate them in communicative skills such as communicating agreements and disagreements. Additionally, most EOI or Tutor teachers are 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.

5.2 Conclusion and Recommendation

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

Moreover, teachers should explore more teaching strategies used in classes to ensure that their teaching techniques are up-to-date and on track with 21st-century learning. Besides, teachers are vital in developing this ability as they are responsible for facilitating constructive dialogues in the classroom. To conclude, teachers and students must cooperate to ensure that the teaching and learning sessions sail smoothly. A significant limitation of this research is that it was conducted within a short period with an enormous scope population. This research was also achieved through an online platform as the world is facing 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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