

**USING PUBLIC SPEAKING TO IMPROVE  
MALAYSIAN STUDENTS' CONFIDENCE LEVEL  
IN SPEAKING SKILL: A CASE STUDY**

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**By**

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**MENGGUNAKAN PENGUCAPAN AWAM UNTUK MENINGKATKAN  
TAHAP KEYAKINAN DIRI PELAJAR MALAYSIA DALAM KEMAHIRAN  
BERUCAP: KAJIAN KES**

**ABSTRAK**

Pengucapan awam merupakan salah satu cara untuk meningkatkan kemahiran bertutur. Berdasarkan kajian literatur yang meluas, didapati bahawa pengucapan awam dapat meningkatkan tahap keyakinan pelajar dan kemahiran bertutur. Hal ini adalah kerana program ini menawarkan peluang kepada mereka untuk meningkatkan kelancaran ucapan-ucapan mereka dan tahap keyakinan mereka dari segi bahasa badan, kepelbagaian vokal, isyarat tangan, ekspresi muka dan mata. Kajian kes ini dijalankan untuk mengkaji keberkesanan program pengucapan awam dalam meningkatkan tahap keyakinan pelajar Malaysia dalam kemahiran bertutur. Tiga pelajar telah dipilih untuk melibatkan diri dalam kajian ini selama 10 minggu. Pembentangan para pelajar direkodkan dan diperhatikan oleh penyelidik. Prestasi dan pencapaian para pelajar dinilai oleh pemain peranan (penjaga masa yang merekodkan masa pembentangan dan pengira sebutan “ah” yang mencatat bilangan pengisi yang disebut oleh para pelajar). Para pelajar juga telah ditemubual oleh pemain peranan. Temubual telah dijalankan sebanyak 4 kali sepanjang 10 minggu program tersebut dijalankan bertujuan melihat perkembangan dan peningkatan tahap keyakinan para pelajar dari semasa ke semasa. Hasil kajian daripada pemerhatian, laporan penilai, laporan pemain peranan dan data temubual, didapati ketiga-tiga pelajar telah menunjukkan peningkatan dari segi kelancaran bertutur dan keyakinan diri pada penghujung program ini jika dibandingkan dengan minggu pertama penglibatan mereka. Oleh itu, boleh dikatakan bahawa dengan bantuan program

pengucapan awam, tahap keyakinan pelajar telah meningkat dan mereka juga berjaya untuk bercakap lancar selepas menyertai program ini.

## **USING PUBLIC SPEAKING TO IMPROVE MALAYSIAN STUDENTS' CONFIDENCE LEVEL IN SPEAKING SKILL: A CASE STUDY**

### **ABSTRACT**

Public Speaking is one of the ways to improve Malaysian students' speaking skill. Through a widespread literature review, it is shown that public speaking improves students' confidence level and speaking skill. This is because the programme offers them the opportunity to improve the fluency of their speeches and their confidence level in terms of body language, vocal variety, hand gestures, facial expressions and eye contact. This study with a case study design was conducted to study the effectiveness of Public Speaking Programme in improving Malaysian students' confidence level in speaking skill. 3 students were chosen in this study to participate in the Public Speaking Programme throughout the period of 10 weeks. The students' performances were recorded and were observed by the researcher. The students' performances were evaluated by the evaluator and the role-players (timer who recorded the time of the students' presentation and ah-counter who counted the number of fillers made by students). The students were also interviewed by the role-player. The interviews were done for four times throughout ten weeks in order to check on the students' level of confidence from time to time. The findings from observation, evaluator's reports, role-players' reports and interview data revealed that all the students improved on their fluency and confidence level towards the end of the programme compared to the first week of the programme. Thus, it can be said that with the help of public speaking programme, the students' confidence level had improved and they also managed to speak fluently after joining the programme.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter aims to provide an initial understanding of the way this research was constructed. It begins with the background of the study which will elaborate the factors that led to its construction followed by the prelude of Malaysian students' background in verbal communication skill. Questions and objectives related to the current study are featured and sequenced by an explanation as to why it is believed that this research is significant. Some related terms will also be introduced and defined to provide supreme understanding of this research throughout different phases.

Communication is one of human daily activities which is very crucial as every aspect in our lives is employed by our communication with other people (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008). People can learn communication skill. As people progress in their lives, communication skills become more significant and other skills become less important (Acker, 1992). Communication can be defined as individual's skill to achieve communicative goals (Hargie, 2006). Communication is the verbal interchange of thoughts and ideas. Communication can also be described as the transfer of information. Communication can be divided into separate departments and one of the most important departments of communication is speech communication (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008). Speech communication is important because without suitable connection or conversation, communication will be restricted and the progress will be slow (Hobley, 2005). One spends much time in



verbal communication. Thus, communication skills are important to one. In order to be an effective and competent communicator, one can enrol in a speech communication course (Ang, 2009).

Skills in public speaking are becoming very helpful in everyday life especially in speech communication. Many people especially students do not realize the advantages of public speaking. It offers them opportunity to increase the level of confidence in their speech, enable them to engage in social conversations with more assurance, to approach others and to express themselves freely in any situation. We could not see vast improvement in a short period; of course, we need constant effort in order to see the progression from time to time (Hayworth, 2005). Research shows that students who successfully carry out and complete a lesson in public speaking improve their communication skills in their working area (Coopman & Lull, 2011). Learning public speaking skill can help one to be a better student and a better worker. There are lots of benefits in learning public speaking. One can improve the way they are as an individual when they learn public speaking skill as public speaking involves thinking process (Sheirer, 2002).

Public speakers can be trained to prevent nervous strain when they talk in public as they have been practicing giving speeches (Hayworth, 2005). This study is guided by two public speaking programmes which are Toastmasters International programme and 4-H Public Speaking Programme.

This study focuses on confidence level. Confident, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (1989) is 'having strong belief, firm hope, or certain expectation, feeling positive, fully assured, 'self-reliant' and having no fear of failure. Confidence level varies between people in the same situation and that people have

non-uniform range of confidence in different situations. Thus, someone who is highly confident in a known and recognizable setting, for instance, may lose confidence in an unfamiliar and challenging environment.

In language learning, especially speaking, students' confidence is one of the aspects to improve their learning (Kelly and Watson, 1986, p. 4). Dornyei (2001) suggested the methods to promote students' confidence were through giving and providing experience of success, encouraging the learners and reducing their anxiety. Gander (2006, pp. 13-14) argued that many individuals appear most satisfied and successful when they have gained at least the advance fluent levels of proficiency, where they feel more confident in their work.

Sjoberg (2006, p. 53) saw that less confident learners, or shy members may initially be gently encouraged to participate by the facilitator and introduced to a few of the other more confident members.

According Dureja & Singh (2011), self-confidence is the internal feeling of certainty; it is a feeling of assurance about oneself and the surroundings. It also attributes the sentiment that one is meaningful and valuable. Self-confidence gives one the power to build their dreams as well as being an important element that enables people to create or do certain things spiritedly. Confidence level can be improved through training especially in public speaking. Two of the public speaking programs are called Toastmasters Club and 4-H Public Speaking Program.

### **What is Toastmasters Club?**

Toastmasters club is a meeting based public speaking club which has been helping people around the world from various backgrounds and education levels to be a good speaker ([www.toastmasters.club.org](http://www.toastmasters.club.org)).

Toastmasters club is a meeting implementing on “learn-by-doing” concept in which every learner is compelled to speak. They will be given individuals roles in the meeting such as the toastmasters club or the master of ceremonies, the timekeeper, the ah-counter, the evaluators, the grammarian, the table-topic master, the speaker, the vote-counter and the joke master.

Toastmasters club is responsible in welcoming members, creating friendly environment and being a leader of the meeting. The Toastmasters club must conduct and lead the meeting from the beginning till the end. The responsibilities of the role-players are: The timekeeper keeps track of time taken by speakers while they are presenting their speech, the ah-counter will count the fillers made by participants and remind them to be aware of their use of ah’s, em’s, you know’s, like’s, and other fillers, the evaluator gives an evaluation based on evaluation guide to motivate the speakers and suggest room for improvement, the grammarian points out grammatical errors and inaccurate pronunciation in a constructive manner, the table topic master prepares the topics based on themes and provides the participants with the opportunity to practice presenting impromptu speech where participants will have to think and speak on the spot, the speaker presents prepared speeches, the vote counter distributes ballot papers and counts the vote for an award and the joke master keeps the audience and the speakers relaxed by performing jokes ([http://www.goldengatetoastmastersclubs.org/meeting\\_roles.html](http://www.goldengatetoastmastersclubs.org/meeting_roles.html)).

Toastmaster International club is a public speaking club which has been helping men and women around the world from asserted backgrounds and education levels to be a good speaker. It is a club where one will acquire the ability to communicate, to persuade and to lead. It is not a formal course in public speaking.

There is no instructor, no test and no grade will be given to speakers' performances. In Toastmasters International club, members learn by reading the manual and help each other to give constructive comments. The members of the club would be able to learn the arts of speaking, listening and thinking skills which are vital skills in advocating self-actualization, improvisation of leadership potential, expansion of human understanding and self-enhancement ([www.toastmasters club.org](http://www.toastmasters club.org)). Hence, by frequent participation and active involvement in roles, students would be able to develop leadership skill.

Toastmasters International is a club that would help student refine their speaking and listening skills. At the same time, students will be able to boost their level of confidence and enhance their presentation skill. Since 1924, more than 4 million people around the world have improved their confidence in speaking due to their participation in Toastmasters clubs. Toastmasters International is a world leader in communication and leadership development. Today, the membership is 270,000 strong. These members improve their speaking and leadership skills by attending one of the 13,000 clubs in 116 countries that make up our global network of meeting locations. ([www.toastmasters clubs.org](http://www.toastmasters clubs.org)).

### **What is 4-H Public Speaking Club?**

4-H club programs appeared as an American idea in the early 1900's. These clubs developed U.S. Extension's scope by adding young audience to its goal and aim. According to Reck (1951), 4-H clubs practiced hands on learning and practical education to youth in rural America. American 4-H would complete to chart a history defined by

science-based, non-formal educational (NFE) activities that are family and community-based (Wessel & Wessel, 1982).

4-H Public Speaking Club is a club that can train people to deliver a good presentation in public speaking. The tasks given would be able to assist people to analyse a subject and organise ideas in logical order. Public presentation are used in 4-H in order to inflate self-confidence. The methods applied by 4-H to teach others are “Show me how”, “Let me see how you do that” and “I’ll show you how”. In 4-H programme, members will get the chance to express themselves clearly, orchestrate their visions in a relevant sequence, probe dissertations, emphasise main points and acknowledge others’ opinion.

All the members of 4-H will be presenting 4 categories of talks which are: Demonstration talk, illustrated talk, formal talk and performing arts talk. When presenting demonstration talk, the 4-H members need to show and explain what he or she is doing using actual tools, steps and ingredients. At the end of talk, the audience will get the chance to touch, feel or taste the finished product. As for the illustrated talk, the 4-H members need to illustrate using flip charts, posters, pictures and slides. Next, when delivering formal speech, members would have to write the speech and its subject should be of great interest to the speaker. Performing arts public presentation requires members to collaborate with literature, musical performance, monologue and puppetry.

4-H club also emphasised on the main parts of the presentation which are the introduction, body and summary. They believed good introduction will be able to capture the audience’s attention. The body of the presentation is also important as it magnifies the objectives and stress on the main points of the speech. The summary

of the speech would be the last chance for the 4-H member to summarise the main points and restate the purpose.

Additionally, a lot of youth reported that their performance in school and their ability to be extra-ordinary speakers have improved after joining this programme. Most adults who participated in the study believed that the success of 4-H Club members was influenced by active participation and involvement in public demonstrations, community service projects, and county and state fairs. Others believed that the relationships developed in 4-H Clubs and long-term membership were the keys to positive outcomes.

## **1.1 Background of the study**

The importance and role of the English language cannot be denied as it is used widely in the world of ICT, as well as in educational field and everyday's real life situation. One needs to be competent in the English language and well-versed in spoken English with the corresponding spread of English as a global language. In the Malaysian context, the purpose of the English language is to equip the learners with effective and efficient communications in English for their social and professional situations (Citavelu, 2005).

### **1.1.1 The Students**

The first language or mother tongue influences the learning of English in either a positive or a negative way as English lessons are formally taught in public schools and most pupils are reasonably proficient in their first language. The interference of the first language is to be expected in such a melting pot of languages and cultures, and teachers must be prepared to choose and make use of suitable and the best teaching methods to go against it. Generally, in shaping students' attitudes

towards English, location and background play an important role. Pupils who live in town are exposed to the language as well as more opportunities to use and apply the language in their daily life. In reality, there are many children who use English as their first language as the parents must have chosen to use only English at home instead of their native languages. On the other hand, children who live in rural areas have little exposure to English. These children are only exposed to English through available mediums such as radio or television. Thus, the learning process of English becomes more negative. In the English language classes, teachers have to deal with students' range of abilities as best they can as the students come from different background with varying level of proficiency. The average number of students per classroom is 40 although the number may decrease to as low as 35 or elevate to as high as 45.

### **1.1.2 English in Education**

In Malaysia, English is a mandatory subject in both primary and secondary schools, and is generally taught in mainstream public schools from the first year of school (year one) until the final year of school (form five/ form six). There are usually five periods of English in a week, totalling to three hours and thirty minutes. There are three major examinations throughout the 11 years of schooling; each examination includes English as one of the core papers. The first is at the end of primary school in Year Six (UPSR or Primary School Evaluation Certificate), the second is at the end of lower secondary in Form Three (PMR or Lower Secondary School Certificate), and the third is at the end of upper secondary in Form Five (SPM or Malaysian School Certificate). After sitting for the final main exam, students may opt to enter Form Six, a two years pre-university programme consummating in the

STPM examination (the Higher Malaysian School Certificate), which is the most customary requirement to a university. Other options include continuing education at private colleges or enrolling in one of the many pre-university institutions or matriculation programmes available. Proficiency in English is highly prized in whatever field of interest, and students are mindful that their English grades will influence the chances of their acceptance into universities. They are also aware that acquiring commendable grade in English greatly boosts the probabilities of admission into both local and foreign universities as well as granting them promising jobs in the future. In addition to mainstream public primary schools, Malaysia has a large number of vernacular primary schools in which lessons are conducted using either Chinese or Tamil as the medium of instruction. In these schools, beginning from Year Four through Year Six, a minimum of one hour English lesson must be taught in a week. (From 2003 onwards, however, English lesson has been introduced in Year One.) Schools are given autonomy to allocate the time for English lesson. Schools can determine to fulfil the requirement or assign more time for English subject. Students are obligated to fulfil an additional year of school focusing on intensive studies of both Bahasa Malaysia and English before they are integrated into the mainstream secondary schools as there is no vernacular secondary school. The year of transition between primary and secondary education is called the Remove Form and this year is compulsory for all students from vernacular primary schools. Some years ago, in an effort to redress the plummeting standards of English, basic requirements for a passing grade in both the PMR and SPM were upgraded, as were the papers themselves. In order to produce a hybrid which was altogether far more challenging than the old model, the SPM 322 examination was conjoined with the Cambridge 1119 "0" Level paper . A few years later, a literature component was



added to both papers, including a carefully selected range of poetry and prose to further jumpstart students' interest in the language.

Up to 2002, students who sat for SPM examination need to undergo oral examination. The oral examination component will be graded based on the students' comprehension of a dialogue and ability to respond to pictorial stimuli. However, this test was found to be woefully insufficient since students' ability in speaking English plunge continued to 1 to the extend where prospective employers in both government and private sectors complained about the incompetence of graduates to converse in even the most basic situations. In 2003, a new oral exam was designed and implemented; intended to improve students' verbal skills by continuous assessment over a period of two years rather than a single test, in which the examiners are the students' English teachers at their own schools. Students are given the freedom to choose the form of their oral test (i.e. individual presentation, group discussion, dialogue, etc.) In order to achieve a better score, students are allowed to take the tests as often as they wish. This oral exam is aspired to be more effectual even the previous are in rendering Malaysian workers with basic English speaking skills. The founding of a new cohort of graduates who have excellent speaking skill will be a remarkable communicative tool and they will indirectly uphold Malaysia to become a fully developed and modern nation by the year 2020.

### **1.1.3 The Classroom and Syllabus**

Teachers are encouraged to diversify their materials and use resources other than government issued textbook which have been prepared according to the national English language syllabus guidelines set out by the Ministry of Education. Teachers can use other resources as long as they are able to achieve the objective of language teaching for every lesson. In order to set the examinations fairly, schools plan the yearly scope of work at the beginning of each academic year to correspond with what

has been taught. However, teachers need to decide on the language work given to each student depending on the students' language skill in a particular class.

#### **1.1.4 English and Tertiary Education**

In tertiary education, there is no deficiency of English degrees with sixteen fully funded government universities offering a wide range of courses in English Degrees in (Linguistic as well as Education degrees). University of Malaya, the oldest and largest university, has the largest English department and a separate English literature degree offered under the arts and social sciences department.

Postgraduate degrees in English are also available at many government universities. In order to establish and maintain a high standard of English language proficiency among graduates, in 1999, the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) was introduced by the Malaysian government as a requirement for students who plan to study at local universities. Malaysian education has been recognized globally and is comparatively more affordable, thus, Malaysia has big numbers of foreign students pursuing their degrees in local universities. In accordance with its Vision 2020, the government aspires to make Malaysia "The Regional Centre for Educational Excellence". Monash University of Australia is one of the off-shore campuses of foreign universities in Malaysia offering degree courses in English studies as well as the University of Nottingham (U.K.) and Curtin University of Technology in Sarawak. All these universities offer degree courses and selected postgraduate degrees in English.

#### **1.2 Statement of Problem**

There are four main skills in English. They are reading, writing, speaking and listening. ( Lindsay McNab, Imelda Pilgrim, Marian Slee, 2002). The English Language syllabus specification (2000) also stated that the teaching of language

skills include four main aptitudes namely listening, speaking, reading and writing which outline the centre of the curriculum. These are the proficiencies that students learn in order to build interpersonal relationship, gain information, communicate with others, convey their thoughts and respond productively (Bong, 2011).

According to Baker & Westrup (2003), many teachers in the world have to teach grammar and vocabulary which focus more on writing because the examinations and tests will always test on these components. Hence, speaking is a deserted skill in many classrooms around the world. It is discovered that students may score high marks for English subject but they might find it difficult to speak English outside the classroom. Communication skill is essential to the development of children. The skill prepares students for an effective school environment. Hence, students need to be polished in the communication proficiency as early as in primary and secondary school as it will assist them in their higher education (tertiary level) and in working environment (Baker & Westrup, 2003). Due to more attention being put in writing skill by teachers, students are not able to speak English well despite their excellent in writing ability. This is because; teachers rarely practice speaking technique in classroom which resulted in not being able to speak fluently and confidently. They are afraid of making mistakes whenever they speak and this could hinder them in communicating with others in English. According to Baker & Westrup (2003), there are several barriers for students to communicate:

Firstly, the cultural differences among students influence the way students communicate. Each culture has different social roles and rules for speaking. The rules influence learner's interest and ability in learning to speak in second English. In every culture, age, social status and level of education influence the level of the

language formality people use. In some cultures, students are not expected to speak until their teacher asks them to. This situation would dampen students' readiness to practice their conversation. According to Williams & Davis (2005), how individuals perceive and respond to the world are influenced by culture. Wood (2010) agreed that culture influences the way people communicate.

Secondly, students are afraid to make mistakes in a foreign language and this makes them unwilling to communicate. Teachers need to play an important role in handling these kinds of problems involving social and linguistic rules. Students are reluctant to speak because they fear they may slip up. Most students are competent in writing skills as they can deliberate over what the contents should be. On the other hand, when it comes to speaking skills, students might face difficulty in responding to their teacher in a foreign language. The reasons are that they have a limited idea about what to say and they are concerned over making grammatical mistakes and using the wrong words (Baker & Westrup, 2003). Students must be taught on how to pause and hesitate between sentences as this will give them space to think of what to say next (Baker & Westrup, 2003). Ayres, Schliesman and Sonandre (1998), in their research, found that when students feel they have a lack of knowledge, they often feel anxious and have low self-confidence.

Thirdly, a low level of confidence is one of the barriers for students to communicate. Students might lose self-esteem when some people, both in and out of the classroom, are unwilling to help them to communicate in a new language. For that reason, students need to prepare for new and unexpected situations whereby they will have to write what they wish to say on a piece of paper. This is to ensure they use the correct English and can encourage them to be more confident in the future. Students

should not feel intimidated when making mistakes as it is part of learning process. Students' motivation can be improved in a supportive atmosphere.

Fourthly, most schools focus mainly on writing skill. Their objective is to help students pass local, national or international examination which focus mainly on written techniques. There is very little or no element of speaking skill. Normazidah Che Musa, Lie and Hazita Azman (2012) mentioned that schools in Malaysia concentrate more on mastering specific language skills such as writing, reading and grammar. The teaching and learning of English is seen as learning a subject, concentrating on the technicalities of the language without relating and connecting the usage of the language in real communicative events.

Students' negative attitudes towards learning English language are one of the reasons for the deterioration in English Language competency among students. According to Hamidah (1996), research has been done on Universiti Utara Malaysia matriculation students in Learning English. The findings revealed that the attitudes of students towards language and the culture of the English speaking people are negative and similar attitudes can be seen amongst primary and secondary school students. Thus, in general, graduates in Malaysia are without gainful employment due to their shortcomings in communication skills. They are unable to impress employers during interviews, as a result of lack of proficiency in English (Phang, 2006). Many jobs require employees to have excellent communication skill especially public communication as it is essential in presenting recommendations or proposals. Public communication is also imperative in recruiting new employees, development of company, motivation and maintenance of staff (Kelly & Watson, 1989).

Many employers demand people who can speak good English as they require their staff to communicate within international marketplace (Baker & Westrup, 2003). In several countries such as USA, UK, Canada, Australia and South Africa, English is the mother tongue of millions of people. In some countries like India, France and Pakistan, it is their second. English has broken down barriers which segregate people and brought about unity and interdependence among them by being one of the six official languages of the UNO (Benju, 2009). Therefore, by learning to speak English, one can upgrade his education level, profession achievement and economic status. At the same time, one can use their valuable skill to contribute to community and country (Baker & Westrup, 2003). Hence, it is necessary for students to speak good English from young age in order to groom them for favourable future working environment.

According to Robinson and Zaiton Bakar (2008), our country's competitiveness could be affected due to the level of English proficiency in working world which is left deserted. Student these days are experiencing restrictions in securing good jobs due to lack of practice speaking skill. According to Birrell (2006), studies on 12,000 students of Monash University in Australia showed that one-third of foreign students in Australian Universities, which includes 23.5% of Malaysian students, are not proficient enough in English and the study also showed that the students were still unable to engage in a professional discussion which is the most important skill that need to be mastered by people in the employment atmosphere.

In the present days, the standard of English in Malaysia has declined so much. One of the reasons may be inadequate of necessary exposure. If no proper guidelines

are drawn up on the right and wrong in English usage as to what correct English is and what is wrong, the standard of English language is going to decline much further (Seng, 2004).

### **1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Research**

The public speaking programme will allow students to communicate effectively and improve the level of self-confidence and self-esteem. Thus, the major objective of this research is to study the effectiveness of public speaking programme on participants' speaking skill.

The objectives of this research are to:

- I. To calculate on:
  - a) Students' fillers after undergoing Public Speaking Programme.
  - b) Students' speaking rate upon concluding the Public Speaking Programme.
- II. To study on students' confidence level after wrapping up the Public Speaking Programme.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

- I. To what extend;
  - a) Can Public speaking training can help reduce students' fillers in speaking?
  - b) Can Public speaking training can improve students' speaking rate?
- II. To what extend can public speaking training boost students' level of confidence?



## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study is outlined to investigate whether Public Speaking Programme helps Malaysian students to improve on their confidence level in spoken skills. From this study, the researcher will look at the impact of the programme in helping and encouraging the selected participants to be a better speaker.

It is hoped that if it is proven that Public Speaking Programme can give great impact on students' level of confidence and communication skill, the language teachers in schools can adopt this programme to nurture students and simultaneously refine students' speaking skill.

Recent research shows that Toastmasters club which is a public speaking club in campus offers an enjoyable and pleasant technique to polish communication proficiency and the same time sharpens leadership skill. In Toastmasters club, leadership and public speaking skills can be enriched (Sun, 2008). This programme can be introduced to students in secondary education to tertiary education so as to equip them for future lifework. This module can also develop their potential to be an excellent presenter and competent leader. Therefore, with the skill they have acquired, they will have a better future and turn into successful career person. According to Baldoni (2003), influential words must be used by leaders in order to accomplish their mission. Words themselves are pieces of information. The combination of words and the personal characteristic will bring forth the power to communicate. The ability to interact verbally is a leader's most important tool as it includes the capability to construct message, transmit the message to others, listen to feedback, process the feedback and continue to communicate (Baldoni, 2003).

The technique guided by this programme can help student cultivate interpersonal relationship with the society. Public Speaking programme is a decent

place to socialise because there is reciprocally positive feedback between members. Chiang (2001) found that, more than 90 percent of the students considered that they are more informed about their friends from the activity in the club which emphasizes on important communications such as listening to jokes, expressing views and thoughts and sharing experiences among members (Chiang 2001).

Individuals can reform themselves in time. Likewise, students' presentation can also be improved. The skill acquired can help students to gain respect and admiration from friends. Besides, when they collaborate and participate actively in a group they are able to achieve the same objective which is to be a great speaker, whilst the friendly and supportive environment will stimulate the development of students' leadership skill ([www.toastmastersclub.org.com](http://www.toastmastersclub.org.com))

## **1.6 Limitations of the Study**

In the move to introduce and implement public speaking programme to improve communication skill, there are a number of limitations that teachers must deal with.

This study involves only three students selected from one urban school in Penang and hence they do not represent the whole population of the students in suburban and rural schools in Malaysia. The findings of this research should not be generalized beyond the scopes of chosen participants as different student has different background and exposure towards English language.

Some students might put in extreme efforts into preparing the speech but others might just be moderate. Their preparation will influence their performances. Moreover, the duration of the intervention was limited to only 10 assignments which were carried out on the experimental group over the period of 3 months. If all the

participants were given more time to make better preparation, the outcome would be different.

## **1.7 Operational definitions**

This part explains the definitions of the research main terms and vocabularies used in this study. The main research keywords used in this study are communication skill, confidence and public speaking.

### **1.7.1 Communication Skill**

Communication skill is the verbal exchange and expression of thought and idea. Communication can also be defined as the transmission and conveying information. To be able to communicate effectively is the vital ladder to higher level of education, career and personal growth. Without good communication skills, it is possible that there will not be advancement in professional and personal progress. The duration we spend to communicate with our friends and family influence the quality of relationship with them (Ellis.R, 2009). In the context of this study, communication skill refers to presentation of messages through speeches.

### **1.7.2 Confidence**

Confidence in speaking means an individual is not nervous to deliver a speech in front of audience. The person has great feeling of certainty and low feeling of anxiety (Nelson, 1998). In the context of this study, confidence refers to ability to speak in front of the audience fluently with less number of fillers.

### **1.7.3 Public Speaking**

Public speaking can be defined as a speech prepared and delivered before a group of people that listen without interrupting the speakers' flow of ideas (Jaffe.C, 2012). In the context of this study, public speaking means relaying information in the form of speech in front of audience.

#### **1.7.4 Speaking Skill**

According to Smith (1997), speaking skill is all about speaking English fearlessly and competently. He also added that excellent verbal skill will help one to speak coherently and persuasively. Lee and Boster (1992), mentioned that good speaking skill include speaking with suitable rate and pauses. In the context of this study, speaking skill refers to speaking with suitable rate which is between 125 to 160 words per minute with suitable pauses.

#### **1.7.5 Fillers**

Fillers are also known as filled pauses. A speaker might use the fillers such as um and uh to indicate that they are searching ideas. Sometimes, fillers indicate hesitation and uncertainty (Pfieffer & Bickmore, 2007). In the context of this study, fillers refer to unnecessary words used in speech to fill up pauses such as ‘well’, ‘uh’, ‘um’, ‘you know’ and ‘aah’.

#### **1.7.6 Speech rate**

Speech rate can be construed as the number of words spoken by the speaker divided by the duration of the speech (Pellowski, 2007). In the context of this study, the suitable speech rate for students to speak is between 125-160 words per minute (wpm) (Toastmasters, 2005).

### **1.8 Summary**

This chapter has been discussing on the importance of communication skill, speaking skill, and public speaking skill. The skills are very important in every individual daily life. The skills are useful for personal growth and personal development. Students ought to have the skills in order to succeed in life especially

in working environment as many employers demand employees who have good command of English to be able to communicate with international market.

Next, this chapter suggested that one of the best ways to improve communication skill is through public speaking. Public speaking can help students build their self-confidence and self-esteem. At the same time, students can be trained to control their nervousness when speaking in public. Students in Malaysia are unable to speak fluently in English because most schools focus more on grammar and writing skill rather than speaking skill. English usages in classrooms are limited. Therefore, students are hesitant to speak due to of lack of practice. Students are also worried of making mistakes when they speak. Study shows that the standard of English in Malaysia is declining.

This chapter also introduced a public speaking programme guided by Toastmasters Club and 4-H Public Speaking Programme. This programme aims to help Malaysian students boost their confidence level in supportive and friendly environment to each participant to enhance their speaking skill. This research is mainly aimed to evaluate the effect of Public Speaking Programme on students' communication and presentation skills.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter comprises explanations and studies related to communication skills, public speaking and speaking skills problems of spoken English among non-native speaker. Apart from the aforementioned, relevant findings on the implementation of Toastmasters in mastering public speaking skills will be exhibited along with a conceptual framework and theoretical background of this study.

#### **2.1 Definition of Communication skills**

Communication is a technique or mode used in transmitting facts, messages or thoughts. Communication strongly influences a person's image. If she is able to communicate smoothly, people will have positive perception towards her and the positive labels and responses will induce good feelings about oneself. Thus, we can see that a good communicator not only can impress others she can also positively modify her perception towards them through conversation, composition, expression or action (Kelly & Watson, 1989). People use positive and negative responses in communication to persuade or convince each other (Corson, Heath & Bryant, 2000). Most effective leaders around the world are persuasive leaders as they capitalize on their persuasive communication skills to influence the public (Nelson, 2011).

Communication can also be defined as a technical process of relaying and acquiring of information. This process involves several elements such as information sources (message), transmitter (encode the message) and receiver

(decode the message) (Baker, 2010). Fiske (2002) agreed that communication involves transferring and receiving codes and signs which is the practice of social relationship. Fiske further stated that communication is a social interaction through messages. Steinberg (1995) also has the same idea about communication. He reckons communication as sending and receiving messages from one person to another. He additionally mentioned that communication involves interpretation and apprehension the meaning of the messaged transmitted.

According to Sen (2007), ideas and thoughts are abstract. People should express them in concrete approach. Messages have to be encoded in words, sign or symbols in order to be communicated to others. Sen (2007) also expressed that communication is an act involving several steps to reach specific goal. The process requires sender (speaker) and receiver (listener) to pay attention in order to achieve better understanding in communication.

Communication can be divided into two components which are verbal and non-verbal. Verbal communication happens when the message is spoken. Non-verbal communication is a communication that covers the body language, gestures, tone of voice and facial expressions that collaborate with the content of the message (Lindh, Pooler, Tamparo & Dahl, 2009). Social Anthropologist claims that 60% of the public's communication is non-verbal. As affirmed by Bhardwaj (2008), non-verbal communication is a communication that involves body movements, gestures, facial expressions which complement spoken messages. Verderber & Sellnow (2011) agreed and stated that non-verbal communication contain all signals that associate with the message. The signs include eyes, face, gestures, voice and appearance (Verderber & Sellnow, 2011). Non-verbal communication is the first type of communication that one learns since birth. This can be seen when a baby