

**THE ROLE OF CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING IN
REDUCING SPEAKING ANXIETY AND
ENHANCING SPEAKING PERFORMANCE OF
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AMONG RURAL
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

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by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------|--|
| CEFR | Common European Framework of Reference for Languages |
| OPS | Oral Proficiency in English for Secondary Schools |
| PT3 | Form Three Assessment Exam |
| STAD | Student-Teams-Achievement-Division |
| TGT | Team-Games-Tournament |
| ZPD | Zone of Proximal Development |

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**KEBERKESANAN PEMBELAJARAN KOOPERATIF DALAM
MENGURANGKAN KEBIMBANGAN BERTUTUR DAN MENINGKATKAN
PRESTASI BERTUTUR DALAM BAHASA INGGERIS DALAM
KALANGAN PELAJAR SEKOLAH MENENGAH LUAR BANDAR**

ABSTRAK

Sukatan Pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris Malaysia bertujuan untuk meningkatkan penguasaan bahasa Inggeris pelajar untuk memenuhi keperluan komunikasi harian mereka. Kemahiran berbahasa Inggeris pelajar yang lemah, bagaimanapun, menjadi kerisauan. Tambahan pula, penggunaan pendekatan berpusatkan guru adalah untuk memenuhi persekitaran yang berorientasikan peperiksaan. Pendekatan ini kurang memberi perhatian kepada faktor afektif pelajar, kepada kebimbangan pelajar dalam berbahasa. Oleh itu, kajian ini meneroka kesan pembelajaran koperatif terhadap pertuturan dalam bahasa Inggeris. Secara khusus, ia bertujuan untuk mengkaji kesan pembelajaran koperatif terhadap kebimbangan bercakap dan prestasi bercakap di kalangan pelajar luar bandar. Kajian ini juga menyelidiki pengalaman pelajar dalam pembelajaran koperatif. Pelajar tingkatan 2 dipilih dari sekolah luar bandar di Pulau Pinang, Malaysia. Reka bentuk kaedah campuran dengan pendekatan kuantitatif dan kualitatif digunakan dalam kajian pra dan pasca ujian kuasi eksperimen ini. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa kaedah pembelajaran koperatif yang dilaksanakan semasa kelas bahasa Inggeris memberi kesan positif terhadap prestasi bertutur pelajar. Walau bagaimanapun, kaedah pembelajaran koperatif tidak mempengaruhi kebimbangan bercakap pelajar. Walaupun begitu, pelajar berminat dengan pendekatan pengajaran ini. Integrasi pembelajaran koperatif dalam pelajaran kelas bahasa Inggeris membolehkan pembelajaran interaktif dan menyeronokkan di kalangan pelajar. Oleh itu, penerapan pembelajaran koperatif sesuai dan harus diaplikasikan oleh terutamanya

guru bahasa Inggeris Malaysia untuk meningkatkan minat dan prestasi pelajar dalam bahasa Inggeris.

THE ROLE OF CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING IN REDUCING SPEAKING ANXIETY AND ENHANCING SPEAKING PERFORMANCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AMONG RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

ABSTRACT

The Malaysian English Language syllabus aims to extend students' English language proficiency to meet their daily communicative needs. Students' poor English language speaking skills, however, have been a concern. Furthermore, the use of teacher-centred approach was to cater to the exam-oriented environment. This approach cared little for students' affective factor, for students' speaking anxiety in language. Therefore, this study explores the effect of co-operative learning on speaking in the English language. Specifically, it aims to examine the impact of co-operative learning on speaking anxiety and speaking performance among rural students. The study also investigates students' experience of co-operative learning. Form 2 students were selected from a rural school in Pulau Pinang, Malaysia. A mixed-method design with quantitative and qualitative approaches were used in this quasi-experimental pre- and post-test study. The results showed that the cooperative learning method implemented during the English language classroom positively impacted students' speaking performance. However, co-operative learning method did not influence the students' speaking anxiety. Nevertheless, students were interested in this teaching approach. Integration of co-operative learning in English language class lessons enables interactive and fun learning among students. Therefore, the application of co-operative learning is suitable and should be applied by especially Malaysian English language teachers to increase students' interest and performance in the English language.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Once colonised by the British, Malaysia adopts English language as the second language in its education system. The system focuses on the learner being ultimately capable of using “English to acquire knowledge, to interact with people, to enjoy literature and to inculcate the aspiration to fulfil the aims and objectives of the National Philosophy of Education and the Education Act of 1996, which seeks to optimise the intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical potential of the learner” (Curriculum Specifications for English language, 2000, p. 1). Although every student receives the same form of education in public schools, each student's proficiency level differs. Students could possess a high, average, or low level of proficiency due to varied factors.

In a classroom with students of varying degrees of proficiency in the English Language, not enough emphasis is given in the aforementioned area of teaching to develop speaking skills. Instead, the two crucial components of the written examination, writing, and reading claim precedence over “the hallmark of second language learning” (Horwitz, 2012, p. 91), namely, speaking. Another contributing factor to students' lower speaking skills in the rural setting may be attributed to the lower socio-economic statuses associated with rural students with family priorities for daily necessities overruling education's importance. This factor creates an environment limiting opportunities and exposure to using the English Language as a communicative tool rather than an academic entity (Chai, 2013; Lim, 2013; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017).

The traditional teacher-centred approach is adopted in the English language classroom. The teacher gives instructions, and the students passively receive

instructions. Accomplishing required tasks with emphasis on writing and reading to be handed in for review on an individual basis invokes anxiety, especially if the language task is problematic from the student's point of view (Salmiza & Liew, 2018). According to Slavin (1995), the learning environment is similar to the learning goal structure of competitive learning or individual learning. There will not be much interaction among peers in such a learning environment, and this lack of peer support will probably cause the students' anxiety to increase. Consequently, students will tend to be more passive in using the English Language during conversations, or engage in English Language activities with their peers (Rose, 2009).

In rural areas, the students' attitude in learning the English Language is driven by academic goals rather than their interest and enjoyment. There are currently a few centralised exams from primary school to secondary school throughout the country. In the Form Three Assessment (*Pentaksiran Tingkatan Tiga*, PT3), the weightage of speaking skills is less than reading and writing skills (Lim, Low, Baskaran, & Thedchanamoorthy, 2016). Therefore, instructional goals to focus on meeting the students' needs were required to reach the examination standard. Furthermore, in their first language, communication among the rural community is that there is no immediate need to use English language as the medium for interaction (Nadesan & Shah, 2019). To them, the English language might even be the third or fourth language (Iber, 2014). Hence, there is no incentive for these students to want to improve their proficiency in speaking English.

The teacher-centred approach with the chalk-and-talk drill highly characterises the English language classroom teaching (Ministry of Education, 2003; Normazidah, Khoo & Hazita, 2012) and is frequently used. However, there is a need to shift from

teacher-centredness to student-centredness, which is an amendment in “educational thinking” (Nunan, 2012, p.16).

Co-operative learning is one of the many learner-centred approaches. Extensive research has validated co-operative learning as a learner-centred instructional method to help individuals attain a team goal through collaborative work through mutual motivation (Lee, 2007; Nelson, 2012; Ng, 2011; Slavin, 1995; Wong, 2008). Co-operative learning has also benefited students, such as in raising their academic achievement (Ng, 2011; Pan & Wu, 2013; Sato, 2012), increasing students’ interaction (Ali, 2019; Ahlquist, 2015; Yahaya, Yahaya, Hashim, Ramli & Bahuri, 2011), and reducing anxiety in language skills (Bagavathi, 2011; Normila Isa, 2013; Osman, Nayan, Mansor, Maesin & Shafie, 2010). However, these studies do not focus on rural students.

This study aims to investigate the effect of co-operative learning instruction on the level of speaking anxiety and speaking performance among rural lower secondary students in Pulau Pinang. Furthermore, students’ experience of co-operative learning will also be examined.

1.1 Background of the Study

The Malaysian English syllabus focuses on teaching the four skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) and language contents covering grammar, sound system, and vocabulary advocating the communicative approach to English Language Teaching (Curriculum Specifications for English language, 2000). It aims to extend students’ English language proficiency to meet students’ daily needs, including knowledge acquisition and future workplace requirements (Muhammad Yasir, 2019). Besides, the Ministry of Education has also advocated for integrating 21st-century

learning skills into the current national education system to enhance students' learning in English effectively. Some of these skills are communication and collaboration, besides practical workplace skills. Communicating while socially interacting with others to attain a goal is vital in learning, in preparing themselves with the 21st-century skills (Liew, 2018).

Furthermore, the Educational Blueprint 2013 – 2025 outlines the purpose of education for students is to be “operationally proficient” in English (p. E10). Although the textbook was used to achieve the objective, the lists of vocabulary and grammar in the textbook impede the advocated approach of teaching the language for the communicative purpose (Ting, 2007). Teachers' evaluation of secondary school textbooks resulted as moderately useful (Mukundan & Kalajahi, 2013). Although all the essential elements of language learning skills are incorporated into the textbooks, practicality in the classroom is not high. Students' suitability, relatedness to the syllabus and curriculum, content suitability for learning and teaching, speaking activities, and pronunciation tasks are among the criteria felt by teachers as should be modified for students' benefits.

These implementations indicate the change of focus from the linguistic ability to focus on communicative language ability (James, Yong & Yunus, 2019). Speaking is the fundamental skills in communicating (Kathirvel & Hashim, 2020). To communicate is to use linguistics and social ability, and would lead to communicative-able speakers to globally proficient language users (Goh & Aziz, 2020). Communication involves interaction between humans which is a complex process. By using language, humans are connected. Thus, the skill to use the English language as the global language among humans is to communicate for a common interest in lives (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017).

Among the four primary language skills, speaking is the most vital skill as learners of the language are considered speakers of the language (Ur, 1996). Speaking is essential in language learning, as the language competency can be evaluated through speaking (Muhammad Yasir, 2019). With better proficiency, there is effective communication with others. Speaking enables social interaction and completion of authentic tasks using appropriate language aspects of grammar and vocabulary (Nunan, 2012). Active students could attain such communicative competence. To involve students in learning the language actively in an authentic situation, learning in the classroom should be focused on students.

At present, teaching English language speaking skills are still governed by teacher-centredness in those public schools (Salmiza & Liew, 2018). According to a study by Spawa and Fauziah (2013) on the challenges of teaching speaking skills in 15 schools around Peninsular Malaysia, the English language for communication is deemed necessary by the teachers. However, the teaching of speaking skills takes up roughly 15% of the classroom teaching time because it is only tested in the oral exam. The findings stated that writing skills were the most emphasised while speaking skills are given less weightage in the classroom. Similarly, a study by Normazidah et al. (2012) found that English teaching in the classroom emphasises writing and reading. In another study by Hiew (2012), respondents felt that English lessons were taught with the teacher-centred approach, such as teachers orchestrating the speaking lessons without pair or group discussions. They felt that learning speaking would be more attractive and give them more confidence as previously experienced by them during pair or group activity.

The Malaysian National Secondary School Syllabus (*KBSM*) for English language teaching has a communicative goal (Mukundan & Kalajahi, 2013), but the

examination does not. Therefore, teachers focus on writing and reading skills to meet examination requirements (Koo, as cited in Normazidah et al., 2012). The emphasis on speaking skills is less because the writing and reading skills have more weightage in the examination.

Furthermore, a factor contributing to low communicative competence among students is speaking anxiety (Fong, Bhattacharyya & Nordin, 2018). It is a non-linguistic factor (Nadesan & Shah, 2020). It causes students to use the language in communication because of the anxiety experienced explicitly by learners of the language. It differs from social anxiety, which prevents them from interacting with others (Dornyei & Ryan, 2015). Speaking anxiety, learners' emotional state, affects them negatively. Students feel shy to talk, feel embarrassed, afraid of being made fun of by peers, face difficulties in forming thoughts in English, struggle to see the right vocabulary to express themselves and struggle to pronounce the word correctly (Charanjit, Arnita, Tarsame, Ong, Melor & Dodi, 2020).

In rural areas, teacher-centredness adoption led to speaking skills' incompetency (Krish, Zubaidah & Pakrudin, 2019). Students' opportunities to use the language are confined in the English language classroom due to the first language usage. The English classroom, however, affords only a handful of opportunities for students to speak in English. The lack of English language resources such as newspapers and magazines (The Star Online, 14 Oct, 2019) and the limited Internet access (Halili & Sulaiman, 2018), lack of opportunities to converse in English (Noriah, Yunos, Salleh, Abu Yazid & Subhan, 2019) and their low proficiency impede the proficiency of these rural students. Their low proficiency is shown by the declining standard in the PT3, the public examination for the lower secondary schools (Chan, Melor & Maslawati, 2019).

Introducing speaking English among students needs the learner-centred approach (Ibrahim & Adnan, 2019). Co-operative learning is student-centred learning that conveys the focus of learning on students' speaking. Co-operative learning methods improved secondary students' speaking skills such as pronunciation, fluency and accuracy (Kandasamy & Habil, 2018). There were elaborations, discussions, rephrasing, and explanation among themselves. Their enjoyment of speaking decreases their anxiety and nervousness. Moreover, students' collaboration enhances rural secondary school students' speaking skills (Chan et al., 2018). Through group discussions, they gain confidence in speaking. They can express ideas, negotiate, and exchange ideas with politeness. As these skills are essential for the Malaysian students as outlined in the English language Roadmap 2015-2025, students' speaking skills improved. Furthermore, co-operative learning improved students' communicative competence (Namaziandost, Shatalebi & Nasri, 2019; Rafidah & Farahidatul, 2020; Yassin, Razak & Maasum, 2018). Student-student interaction and opportunities in authentic situations to use the language increase when students learn with the co-operative learning method. Co-operative learning did significantly affect the students' speaking anxiety (Kamarulzaman, Hassan, & Ghani, 2020). Numerous oral communication opportunities, students could receive peer's feedback in improving speaking, lessons designed to cater to students' needs created comfortable environments.

1.2 Problem Statement

There are a number of persisting problem areas that lead to the study. Firstly, students in rural areas has limited exposure to English-speaking environments (Goh, 2019; Lee & Dhamotharan, 2019; Tatania & Gopal, 2017) and knowing language

learning strategies only from their English language teacher beside electronic medium and materials. Hence, the English language is not a second language to them but a third or even a foreign language (James et al., 2019). However, students frequently use their first language to communicate both with teachers and peers (Salmiza & Liew, 2019). Thus, English is neglected in the classroom and school settings and is likely to result in low speaking performance (Kathirvel & Hashim, 2020). Therefore, students need to get adequate English language practice through oral interaction in English language classrooms (Charanjit et al., 2020).

Secondly, the teaching of the English language in Malaysia generally has a traditional teacher-fronted method. Teachers adopt this method because they need to complete the syllabus for examination purposes (Ahmad, Mohamad Faizuan & Sarah, 2019), leaving a few conversation opportunities for students in English. Krish et al. (2019) argued in their study on the teaching of speaking in Malaysian rural secondary schools that the teacher-centred approach and the high reliance on the textbook have resulted in students having limited communicative competence after years of learning. Therefore, students are anxious whenever they are required to speak (Ejeng, Hashim & Duan, 2020). The teacher-centred method needs to be transformed into a student-centred approach to reduce anxiety in using the English language orally (Hamzah & Asokan, 2016). In contrast, a student-centred environment can foster a positive, caring environment to build students' self-confidence (Mon, 2019).

Students of all levels of learning achievement and intellectual ability are believed to be affected by anxiety in language learning (Muhammad Azhar & Melor, 2019). Most second-language learners believe that speaking causes anxiety (Alghorbany & Mohd Hamzah, 2020; Woodrow, 2006). It is worse for students in rural areas, whose English proficiency is very low (Zulkefly & Razali, 2019). Students feel

shy, frightened, nervous, ashamed, and self-conscious when speaking English. Therefore, they are reluctant and hesitant to use the language for practice (Mohamad Yahya & Supyan, 2019). The anxiety experienced by these students has a negative effect, a debilitating impact on their ability to speak. Research shows that anxiety is a crucial factor in obstructing the learning of English as a second language (Dornyei & Ryan, 2015; Nadesan & Shah, 2020).

These problems of students' learning in the rural areas that are impeded by surroundings, teacher-centred approach, and speaking anxiety show a need to study a teaching approach to reduce speaking anxiety and enhance their speaking performance. Therefore, this study will focus on the use of co-operative learning on the high speaking anxiety level and low speaking performance of lower secondary schools students from a rural area in the Malaysian context. Co-operative learning, a collaborative learning approach that enhances learning through interaction, enables effective English language learning (Ng, 2011; Pan & Wu, 2013; Sato, 2012). Several researchers propose collaborative speaking activities via co-operative learning to be scaffolded in the classroom (Lim, 2012; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Normila Isa, 2013; Rose, 2009). They believe that with peer support, anxiety levels would improve, and English speaking opportunities would increase. Furthermore, the method to engage students in authentic resources is co-operative learning (Chan, 2020) and one of the best way of improving student's speaking in the classroom is the Kagan co-operative learning as believed by researchers (Davoudi, & Mahinpo, 2012; Kagan & Kagan, 2009; Mahbib, Esa, Haerani & Mohd Salleh, 2017; Yusuf, Jusoh & Yusuf, 2019).

This study will examine the effect of co-operative learning on rural secondary students' anxiety level and speaking performance. To date, there is no research conducted on this in Malaysia. Although numerous studies on co-operative learning

have been conducted in the country, the focus is not on the effect of co-operative learning on rural secondary students' anxiety level and speaking performance. Normila Isa (2013) and Seok and Hee (2018) examined co-operative learning in elementary and secondary schools. Wong, Mohd Izam and Arumugam (2016) and Siew and Chin (2018) studied co-operative learning in Mathematics, Science, and other subjects in school, and Charanjit et al. (2019), Chong and Yunus (2019), Ho and Azlina (2019), Taisin, Hamzah, Omar, and Kiting (2019), Kandasamy and Habil (2018) focused on rural students. However, Chong and Yunus (2019) focused on teaching English language grammar using co-operative learning among rural students. On the other hand, Naim (2020) investigated the incorporation of co-operative learning in Form Four Malay language writing tasks, while Nair and Sanai (2018) researched the method in an international school's writing class.

1.3 Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study are: -

- 1) to examine if co-operative learning has an effect on the level of English speaking anxiety;
- 2) to examine if co-operative learning has an effect on English speaking performance; and
- 3) to investigate students' experience of co-operative learning

1.4 Research Questions

This study is designed to elicit answers to the following research questions. They are to investigate the effects of co-operative learning on anxiety level and speaking performance and the students' experience of co-operative learning.

Research Question 1

Does co-operative learning have an effect on the English speaking anxiety level of lower secondary students from a rural area?

Research Question 2

Does co-operative learning have an effect on the English speaking performance of lower secondary students from a rural area?

Research Question 3

How do students experience co-operative learning?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

To answer the Research Question 1 and Research Question 2, the following null hypothesis are formulated.

H₀₁: There is no significant effect on the English speaking anxiety level of lower secondary students from a rural area.

H₀₂: There is no significant effect on the English speaking performance of lower secondary students from a rural area.

1.6 Scope of Study

The study's scope focuses on lower secondary students from low socio-economic status, who reside in rural areas. This targets Form 2 students who have learned English as a second language for seven years since primary school. Furthermore, this study is conducted in only one rural school, which provides secondary school education to the community residing around the school. In addition, the study specifically focuses on a school that uses Kagan co-operative learning. Kagan structure incorporates co-operative learning activities into the teaching of the English syllabus.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study can give teachers an alternative approach to teaching speaking skills to improve students' English language proficiency. Teachers can identify, select, and adapt or innovate relevant activities to incorporate into their language teaching. If the co-operative learning approach is proven effective in this study, it will promote student-student and student-teacher interactions. Teaching and learning of the language using co-operative learning will thus stimulate both teachers and students.

Secondly, this study is significant to students as they are introduced to a new approach to learn speaking skills. It will provide a method that can help students from the rural community to learn the English language with peer support. It could be a language learning strategy that they can employ to enhance their speaking skills.

This study is also significant for teacher development designers. Kagan co-operative learning can be incorporated as part of teacher training. The co-operative learning student-centred approach could be an alternative method to the teacher-centred approach. Teachers can be informed by the method used in this study for teaching speaking skills. Policymakers may find the results of this study useful in modifying the syllabus for communicative language teaching.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

Co-operative learning

Co-operative learning is “the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximise their own and each other’s learning” (Johnson & Johnson, 1999, p. 73). In their group, students co-operate with one another to reach their goal and gain the academic achievement. They interact with one another while engaged in various activities of language learning tasks. Tasks usually refer to language activities

“in which purposeful communication, authentic situations and active learner engagement are key concerns” (Dornyei & Kormos, 2000, p. 276).

Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety refers to experiences of uncomfortable feelings, uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension, and tension by individuals in oral communication (Arnold & Brown as cited in Goh, 2012; Horwitz, 2012). Secondary rural school students, learners of English as a second language, encounter debilitating anxiety when speaking because of the difficulties of finding the correct lexis, constructing appropriate syntactic structures and usage of comprehensible accent. Placed in groups with students of different proficiency levels, students feel more comfortable sharing and contributing to their task (Laily, Jasmin & Mohammad Taufiq, 2020; Rashid, Mohamed Saiful, Rahman & Shamsuddin, 2017). Speaking anxiety looks at anxiety arose when they have a negative attitude in the classroom. Negative evaluation, feeling of uncomfortableness talking with friends and fear of failing.

Speaking Performance

Speaking performance is learners' ability to use English to respond fluently and accurately and with understandable pronunciation according to their experience and understanding (Horwitz, 2012). Learners can have a basic conversation in English, initiating and responding to questions among group members and classroom learning (Baharun et al., 2016). The students' performance is viewed in their fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, and pronunciation in their response to picture stimuli.

1.9 Summary

This chapter introduces the topic under study, which is the role of co-operative learning in reducing speaking anxiety and enhancing the English language speaking

performance in a rural secondary school. As rural secondary school students lack exposure to the language and lack the opportunity to use English in the classroom, their speaking proficiency is low. Moreover, they are also anxious to speak in English. Thus, this study aims to probe the use of a co-operative learning approach to reduce their speaking anxiety and enhance their speaking performance.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Speaking is the ultimate goal of oral language learning (Mohamad Yahya & Supyan, 2019). It poses the most detailed learning as learners need to comprehend the grammatical structures, fluency, accuracy and so forth (Muhammad Azhar & Melor, 2019). As a result, speaking anxiety is the main language anxiety during second language learning. When English is a second language, students mainly experience anxiety during speaking (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Mon, 2019; Muhammad Yasir, 2019). One way to reduce speaking anxiety is through co-operative learning. Co-operative learning has been found to increase speaking proficiency and reduce students' speaking anxiety (Ali, 2019; Charanjit et al., 2020; Chong & Yunus, 2019; Kandasamy & Habil, 2018; Laily et al., 2020; Nadia & Yansyah, 2019; Nair & Sanai, 2018; Seok & Hee, 2019).

2.1 Speaking Skills

Speaking is a crucial aspect of language learning (Coffin, 2013; Council of Europe, 2000; Hughes, 2011). Speaking skills are the abilities of communicative competence. Canale (1983) proposes four interrelated aspects of acquiring the speaking skills of the English language. The first is discourse competence, defined as the ability to talk about a specific topic. The second is grammatical competence in speaking, referring to the ability to use correct grammar. Thirdly, sociolinguistic competence, the ability to be sociable to others during the interaction. The fourth, strategic competence, refers to using strategies to start and end a conversation (cited in Tarsame, 2013). In agreement with the communicative competence one should have, Qamar (2016)

mentioned that speaking skills are the ability to communicate regardless of situations. It includes giving suggestions, explanations, statements of agreement or disagreement, overlapping opportunities, conditional responses, and prompting (Bagavathi, 2011).

Furthermore, communicative competence is coined to include both the social and functional aspects of language (Liang, 2002; Tavakoli, 2012). It is the ability to give and understand messages and to interpret meanings in a specific background. Saville-Troike (2006) agrees with the definition of the term, emphasising a speaker's knowledge in purposeful communication with the community of that language. Such ability comprises the application of the language in vocabulary, phonology, grammar, and the appropriateness of time, person and situation to speak. Therefore, listening to partners and responding with accuracy is vital during interaction (Nadia & Yansyah, 2019).

Specifically, various elements entail speaking proficiency. Hew and Cheung (2014) posit that students' oral proficiency requires proper pronunciation, correct sentence structures, new or alternative vocabulary. Students are expected to perform with intelligible pronunciation, fluency of complete sentences, clear comprehension of words spoken, varied vocabulary, and grammatically correct sentences to convey intentions. Nadesan and Shah (2020) quoted Bygate (1987) on production skills and interaction skills in speaking as the ability to produce the language regardless of the time and using the language while learners hold concession with each other respectively. Speaking skills, therefore, are the performance of learners in using proper grammar with fluency and correct pronunciation to have a conversation with others (Bagavathi, 2011; Sato, 2012).

2.2 Speaking in a Malaysian Second Language Classroom

In the classroom, three constructs of speaking skills outline the outcome ability, the main goal of learning the English language. They are accuracy, fluency and complexity. Students, equipped with these skills for purposeful communication and conversation, can have appropriate interaction. In the current study, students' competency in responding to questions based on authentic materials with fluency, accuracy and varied vocabulary is the primary construct of a student's speaking skills (Ministry of Education, 2013).

As a second language in Malaysia, the English language is an important language to be learned in Malaysia. The government has put the appropriate effort into ascertaining that the students are equipped in the language. The imminent purpose of learning the language is to speak and communicate well (Ministry of Education, 2013). The situation is, however, different from the anticipated goal. The students' English language speaking level is low (Oral Proficiency in English for Secondary Schools in Malaysia, 2014).

According to the annual report of the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (2013), improvement of the students' speaking performance is the aim of the Oral Proficiency in English for Secondary Schools programme. This is a preparation for students to sit for the Form 3 Assessment. The oral-based assessment was integrated into the PT3 exam for English language learning to promote 21st-century skills such as communication and creative skills (Nanson, Elengovan, Singh, & Hashmi, 2014).

Difficulty in reading reveals the struggle to use the language orally as evidenced in a global assessment result called Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 surveying Malaysian 15-year-old students' fundamental knowledge and skills essential for full participation in society (OECD, 2018). It shows that the English

language proficiency level is below the world standard as it is an indication of low socio-economic families' indifference to children's psychological needs (Hin, 2020). Another study by Ramiaida et al. (2017) reported that "The English Language Education in Malaysia: An Agenda for Reform 2015-2025," or else known as "The English Language Roadmap 2015-2025," is an indication of the low level of speaking performance among the students. As such, the country lacks the ability to be developed into a successful nation that can communicate in every way using the English language around the globe (Ministry of Education, 2015). Through the English Language Roadmap 2015-2025, a substantial change was adopting Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), representing the international standard for describing and measuring language proficiency (Zuraidah & Mardziah, 2019). According to the report, students' level has not reached the competency of using the language for any text of interest as outlined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

2.3 Factors Affecting Speaking Proficiency among Malaysian Students

Research shows that several factors contribute to the students' low speaking performance (Krish et al., 2019; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Nadesan & Shah, 2020). The main ones are the institutional, the social-cultural and the affective factors.

2.3.1 Institutional Factors

Learning English as a second language with an emphasis on writing and reading offers less time for students to practise speaking. Curricula in the second language pose a challenge to the students who cannot perform in speaking (Norul Haida, 2012; Ramiaida et al., 2017; Salmiza & Liew, 2018). Besides, students are not given autonomy

in the English language classroom to practice speaking (Qamar, 2016). I concurred with (Charanjit et al., 2020) that using the language is for the enhancement of the speaking level. Furthermore, James et al. (2019) claimed that students' performance is much restricted in the English language classroom. They could only respond to the teacher's orchestrating, which limited English language usage in a more exploratory way. Saeed, Khaksari, Eng and Ghani (2016) concurred with the research that inadequate interaction in the classroom has a negative effect on the students' speaking performance. Salmiza & Liew (2018) found that secondary school teachers confessed that activities involving verbal and interaction among students are few. Students were passive during the lesson conducted with the teacher-centred approach.

Students are not keen to communicate in English language classrooms as they perceive that language learning is mostly assessed on writing and reading (Littlewood, 2007; Saeed et al., 2016; Salmiza & Liew, 2018). They, therefore, would rather excel in these two aspects of the language. In an exam-oriented learning environment, the writing and reading aspects are crucial. As such, students perceive that speaking skills are of lesser relevance and significance in their current situation. To obtain better grades, students tend to prioritise writing and reading skills over speaking skills that are not tested until when they sit for the Form Three public examination. As reported by Fariza Ramiaida, and Yuslina (2015), there is less speaking in the second language in the Malaysian classroom

The institution is the dominant factor affecting the low level of students' speaking performance. As a part of institution, instruction lays its emphasis on the language aspects of writing and reading. The teacher uses the teacher-centred approach to guide the students to improve students' academic performance (Hiew, 2012). Furthermore, leadership in rural schools provides more emphasis on the exam results as

they are the basis for the school's status upgrade to a high-performing school (Ahmad et al., 2019; Lim, 2012). Besides, the school environment, entwined with students' background of low speaking performance, cannot provide ample support for more English speaking opportunities to the students (Hazlina Aziz, 2016; Manesha et al., 2015). Manesha et al. (2015) found that schools, which allow students to practice and apply newly learned vocabulary during informal opportunities promote better English language achievement. Hazlina Aziz (2016) further argued that the lack of teaching skills and the teachers' low proficiency level deprived the students of the support and the help they need to improve their language achievement.

The grammar-translation method, dominating English language teaching for centuries (Hadfield & Dornyei, 2013; Liang, 2002), offers less support for the students speaking, increasing their writing competency. Therefore, the method contains little support for Malaysian students' affective aspects, such as motivation and anxiety, in learning the language (Nikian, 2015). Some teachers still consider using the method as communicative activities could not provide the necessary grammar aspects in English language. As described by Hughes (2011), the method has

“a strong focus on isolated sentences, mechanical translation of sentences in and out of mother tongue, arcane and overly complex grammatical explanation, no place for real (spoken or written) communication” (pg. 25).

2.3.2 Social-cultural Factors

The family background is another influential factor affecting their competency in speaking (Ahlquist, 2015). Malay-educated families' view in using a language is based on their living surroundings (Darus, 2009; Lee & Ting, 2016). This situation

affects the children's usage of the language. To them, English language is either a second language or, at times, a foreign language. Tarsame (2013), in his study of a few secondary schools in Kedah, concurs with their findings. Their family background impacted their ability to use the language and presented a challenge to their level of English language speaking competency. He argues that those Malay students are affected by their English language competency. Furthermore, as suggested by Hin (2020), the family's socio-economic status is a factor in the lack of success of students in rural areas.

Family upbringing could affect students' speaking performance. English language materials and support by family influence students. Students could have difficulties to improve their performance in a low socio-economic status family (Hin, 2020). In these families, students find themselves deprived of magazines, newspapers, and books, which will help them learn the English language. Parents, furthermore, spend less time to accompany their kids in learning the language. Students will be discouraged from using the language due to a lack of a supportive environment.

The feedback given by peers and teachers in the classroom when students make speaking mistakes impedes their learning (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Nadia & Yansyah, 2018; Rose, 2009). Immediate and constructive feedback was the students' need (Hashim, Yunus & Hashim, 2019), but others gave negative evaluation during the English language learning. Negative evaluation in the English language classroom was first posited by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986). Students become apprehensive when they have to encounter, avoid and expect such social situations in the classroom. Salmiza & Liew (2019) found that the fear of students of being reprimanded by their teachers should be attended to as students speak less. Indefinite and critical feedback will not produce success in teaching communicative skills.

Furthermore, the settings beyond the classroom, during which English language is applied for some daily chores, do not promote language use. The home environment, the community life, social life, and so forth do not provide them with much opportunity to communicate in the English language. Therefore, such a situation inhibits students from using the language and further exploring its usage (Lim, 2012; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017).

2.3.3 Affective Factors

Language learning in the academic setting is believed to vary based on mastering language skills which are prone to deteriorate due to several affective factors, particularly, second language anxiety (Dewaele, MacIntyre, Boudreau, & Dewaele, 2016; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1988; Teimouri, Goetze, & Plonsky, 2019; Young, 1991). Anxiety, an emotional state of learners, plays a role in determining their learning extent (Eddie & Aziz, 2020). Anxiety impedes Malaysian second language learner's speaking skill (Nadesan & Shah, 2020). A student experiences anxiety, and uncomfotability to speak the second language in front of people. Fong et al. (2018) are in view that secondary school students cannot learn when they experience apprehension that results in poor performance in speaking skill. Similarly, they exhibit the same attitude in the classroom setting when they encounter such emotion. Zulkefly and Razali (2019) believe that rural students reacted differently towards anxiety, but sometimes anxiety becomes an obstacle in a learning environment that affect speaking activities.

In second language speaking, motivation is another affective factor (Azizinezhad et al., 2013; Herbein et al., 2018; Tavakoli, 2012). Speaking can be intrinsically or extrinsically motivated through tasks. Intrinsic motivation refers to a

motivating factor for a learner to fulfil the desire to learn, while extrinsic motivation refers to the learner's objective of gaining learning rewards (Ahlquist, 2015). English language speaking task creates motivation in learners. During speaking tasks, learners talk to participate in communication with others, and the reward comes from gaining a linguistic competency (Liang, 2002).

2.4 Teaching Speaking in Malaysian schools

According to the curriculum specifications drawn out by the Ministry of Education (2003), the teaching of English language enables students to attain a certain degree of competency in using the language in their daily life, in acquiring knowledge and for future purposes in the workplace. Primary and secondary school students are taught according to the English language syllabus as a second language.

Teaching speaking, promoting English language skills, both socially and functionally (Nadesan & Shah, 2020), is to produce English as a second language students. Previously the traditional approach emphasises accuracy and form of language, which uses correct structure and vocabulary and suitable choice of linguistic items during speaking (Ladousse, 2003). Students learn language through the repetition of structural patterns in conversations (Nunan, 2012). However, it is not extensively used because it lacks the twofold method, unlike the communicative approach.

The syllabus for teaching speaking is for communicative purposes (Darus, 2009; Hardman & Rahman, 2014). Ramiaida et al. (2017) posited that the curriculum shift for the English teaching in school would be conformed to a scale as benchmarks, which is the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR). It is to develop independent English users, to develop students who can use English to communicate and interact. The shift of curriculum begins with the Malaysian Education

Blueprint 2013-2025, citing students to have “the linguistic fluency required to participate fully in professional and academic life” (pg. 113). Following this, the Malaysian Education Ministry implemented programmes to enhance students’ listening and speaking skills. Oral Proficiency in English language for Secondary School Programme (OPS-Programme) is one of them. It redirects the lessons’ focus on listening and speaking skills intended to improve communicative English learning. Communication skills are needed for students to be proficient in the language to utilise their future language.

Hashim, Yunus and Hashim (2019) provided guidelines in obtaining communicative competence. They state that the present age students should be placed actively in peer interaction cooperatively using authentic materials. In the 21st century, students need to be active, have communicative and collaborative skills. Student-centredness is essential to produce students with social and cognitive problem-solving skills (Nunan, 2012).

Factors contributing to teaching speaking are institutions not providing the most appropriate teaching method, using the first language with the students and not attending to the students’ affective need in learning (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). As these issues appear in the secondary schools, Nadesan and Shah (2020) propose that teachers, having the crucial role of guiding and instructing the students, should plan lessons carefully with varied approaches to create a comfortable and supportive environment for successful learning. This will assist students’ communicative competence in the classroom (Rafidah & Farahidatul, 2020).

2.4.1 Teaching Approaches

Teaching approaches are generally the prerequisite for the learning of non-native languages. There are two main approaches: teacher-centred and student-centred approaches.

2.4.1(a) Teacher-centred Approach

Generally, teacher-centred approach is used for students with a low English proficiency level (Ali, 2019; Hardman & Rahman, 2014). To support students' language needs, teachers present and orchestrate speaking activities. Teachers are dominant in the classroom while students wait for stimulus or initiation from the teachers (Salmiza & Liew, 2019; Sato, 2012). With a lack of courage and confidence, students prefer to keep silent during the lessons. This, however, has created concern among educators. Students' creativity in thinking was not encouraged in teacher-centred culture, and students' freedom to explore speaking in English was limited.

2.4.1(b) Student-centred Approach

The student-centred approach complements the teacher-centred approach. It centralises students in learning activities. This approach is vital to enhancing students' speaking proficiency (Almaguer & Esquierdo, 2013; Moore, 2015; Nunan, 2012). Students, the focus of learning in this approach, assume self-directed learning's active role (Kanamaru et al., 2013; Tello, 2012; Yunus, 2018). Furthermore, teaching students to enhance their communication skills, which differs from the teacher-fronted approach, returns the learning to students to communicate among themselves. Kandasamy and Habil (2019) recently found that this approach was more appealing to students learning