UNDERSTANDING THE STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY EFL LEARNERS TO OVERCOME SPEAKING ANXIETY IN THE CLASSROOM

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Abstract:　This research study aims to investigate the strategies employed by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners to overcome speaking anxiety in the classroom. Speaking anxiety is a significant challenge faced by EFL learners, hindering their development of fluency and confidence in speaking. However, there is limited understanding of the specific strategies used by EFL learners to cope with and overcome this anxiety in the classroom context. This study adopts a qualitative research design, utilizing interviews and observations to gather in-depth data from EFL learners. The findings reveal a range of strategies employed by participants, including cognitive strategies (positive self-talk, visualization, and reframing anxious thoughts), preparation and practice, a supportive learning environment, gradual exposure and desensitization, and emotional regulation techniques. These strategies contribute to the effective management of speaking anxiety and the promotion of speaking proficiency among EFL learners. The insights from this study provide valuable implications for educators and practitioners, enabling the development of targeted interventions and instructional approaches to support EFL learners in managing their anxiety and enhancing their speaking skills. By addressing speaking anxiety effectively, language teaching and learning practices in the EFL context can be improved, fostering a positive and inclusive environment for EFL learners to develop their speaking abilities with confidence.

Keywords: EFL learners, speaking anxiety, teaching strategies

INTRODUCTION

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners frequently encounter impediments in the cultivation of their speaking competencies, with speaking anxiety emerging as a pivotal factor. Speaking anxiety, as defined by Suleimenova (2013), encompasses the emotional states of fear,

apprehension, and nervousness that EFL learners undergo when participating in oral discourse within the context of the target language. This condition bears significant consequences for the process of language acquisition, notably hindering the development of linguistic fluency and self-assuredness in oral expression. The resolution of speaking anxiety stands as a paramount undertaking for EFL learners due to its direct impact on their efficacy in English communication (Octaberlina et al., 2022). While the body of research on speaking anxiety is growing, there remains a dearth of comprehensive insight into the precise strategies deployed by EFL learners for the management and surmounting of this anxiety, especially within the classroom milieu.

This study seeks to address a notable void in the existing body of literature by delving into the strategies adopted by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in order to mitigate the impact of speaking anxiety within the classroom context. By attaining a comprehensive understanding of these strategies, educators can be better equipped to design and implement targeted interventions and pedagogical approaches aimed at assisting students in the effective management and alleviation of their speaking anxiety. The research will employ rigorous qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews and systematic observations, to collect data that is both comprehensive and nuanced, as suggested by Babu et al. (2013). Through extensive interviews conducted with EFL learners, this study will undertake an exploration of the specific strategies, techniques, and coping mechanisms employed by students to successfully surmount the challenges posed by speaking anxiety.

The outcomes of this study stand to augment the extant corpus of knowledge concerning the issue of speaking anxiety within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. Furthermore, they are poised to yield invaluable insights into the subjective experiences of EFL learners when confronted with this specific challenge. In addition to this scholarly enrichment, the findings are anticipated to yield practical ramifications for educators within the realm of EFL instruction. More specifically, these insights can serve as a foundation for the development of pedagogical strategies and interventions aimed at ameliorating learners' confrontation with speaking anxiety and enhancing their spoken language proficiency (Shamsuri et al., 2021). By elucidating the tactics deployed by EFL learners to surmount speaking anxiety, this research endeavors to deepen comprehension of this multifaceted phenomenon. In so doing, it seeks to contribute substantively to the ongoing refinement of language teaching and learning methodologies within the EFL milieu.

METHODOLOGY

This research study will employ a qualitative research design to investigate the strategies utilized by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners to mitigate speaking anxiety within the classroom context. Qualitative research, as a methodological approach, facilitates an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors, thereby yielding data that is rich in detail and nuance. The study's participant cohort will consist of EFL learners who have reported experiencing speaking anxiety in a classroom setting, as indicated by Tercan and Dikilitaş (2015).

To select the participants, a purposive sampling technique will be employed, guided by the intention to encompass a diverse spectrum of language proficiency levels, ages, and genders, in accordance with the method outlined by Lopez and Whitehead (2013). The determination of the sample size will be predicated upon the attainment of data saturation, ensuring the inclusion of an adequate number of participants for the comprehensive capture of diverse perspectives.

The primary data collection method will be in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the selected participants. The interview protocol will be developed based on a comprehensive review of relevant literature and initial pilot interviews. The interviews will seek to elicit the participants' insights into their experiences with speaking anxiety, the strategies they employ to confront and mitigate it, and the perceived effectiveness of these strategies. Probing questions will be strategically employed to encourage detailed and comprehensive responses. Furthermore, to supplement the interview data, classroom observations will be conducted. During these observations, the researcher will closely monitor the participants as they engage in speaking activities, with the objective of gaining insights into their nonverbal behaviors, interaction patterns, and observable manifestations of anxiety. Field notes will be diligently recorded during these observations to capture pertinent observations and contextual details.

The subsequent transcription of the interview recordings will adhere to a verbatim style, ensuring a precise and faithful representation of participants' responses. The field notes derived from the classroom observations will also be integrated into the overall data analysis. The study will embrace a thematic analysis approach to unveil recurring patterns, themes, and categories within the data. Transcripts and field notes will be subject to systematic coding and analysis, facilitated either through qualitative data analysis software or manual procedures. Themes linked to the strategies utilized by participants to confront and surmount speaking anxiety will be systematically identified and methodically organized.

To guarantee the accuracy and validity of the findings, the research will employ a member checking approach. This entails providing participants with the opportunity to review the analysis outcomes and offer feedback, thereby validating the interpretations of their experiences. Throughout the research endeavor, strict adherence to ethical guidelines is of paramount importance. All participants will be required to provide informed consent, ensuring that their participation is voluntary, confidential, and anonymized. Furthermore, the study will undergo a comprehensive ethical review and secure approval from the relevant institutional ethics committee.

It is imperative to acknowledge the inherent limitations of this study. The findings may exhibit context-specific attributes and, as such, should be applied with caution before generalization to the broader EFL learner population. Additionally, the research methodology relies predominantly on self-reported data and participant perspectives, thereby potentially exposing the results to biases and individual interpretations.

FINDINGS AND DISSCUSIONS

The present research has yielded valuable insights into the strategies that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners employ in order to mitigate speaking anxiety within the classroom setting. By means of a rigorous qualitative analysis of the experiences and perspectives shared by the participants, this study has delved into a range of cognitive, preparatory, environmental, and emotional strategies that are harnessed by EFL learners. The resultant findings have illuminated a multifaceted array of techniques adopted by the participants to effectively address and manage their speaking anxiety.

Among the cognitive strategies, it was discerned that positive self-talk, visualization, and the reframing of anxious thoughts play pivotal roles in enabling EFL learners to contend with their anxiety. Furthermore, the research underscores the paramount significance of preparation and consistent practice as key strategies, underscoring their pivotal role in the amelioration of anxiety and the cultivation of self-assurance. Participants have also underscored the critical role of fostering a supportive learning environment characterized by constructive feedback and collaborative activities, thereby creating a secure space for honing their speaking skills.

In addition, the research has unveiled the efficacy of gradual exposure and desensitization techniques, as well as the deployment of emotional regulation methods, including deep breathing exercises and engagement in physical activities, as compelling means for reducing anxiety levels. These findings constitute a noteworthy contribution to the body of knowledge concerning the diverse strategies that EFL learners employ to surmount speaking anxiety. Moreover, they offer valuable insights to educators and practitioners, informing the creation of nurturing language learning environments.

Cognitive Strategies

A notable discovery in this study was the utilization of cognitive strategies by numerous participants to effectively manage their speech-related anxiety. These strategies encompassed the employment of positive self-talk, visualization techniques, and the reframing of anxious cognitions. Notably, self-affirmations were commonly employed to bolster self-confidence in preparation for speech-related tasks. Utterances such as "I possess the capacity to excel" or "I have diligently prepared" were frequently invoked to cultivate a constructive mental outlook and counteract self-doubt.

Additionally, the practice of visualization techniques demonstrated efficacy in alleviating anxiety and enhancing self-assurance. Participants described the mental imagery of successful communication scenarios, envisioning themselves as articulate and poised speakers. Through such mental rehearsal of favorable outcomes, participants succeeded in mitigating their anxiety levels and approaching speech-related tasks with heightened confidence. Another cognitive strategy that participants actively engaged in was the process of reframing negative thoughts. Systematically identifying and replacing apprehensive and unrealistic thought patterns with more affirmative and rational alternatives constituted this cognitive restructuring process. Participants effectively harnessed this technique to manage anxiety during their speech-related activities.

Furthermore, the deployment of self-affirmations and visualization techniques assumed a pivotal role in nurturing a constructive mindset within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Recognizing the significance of positive self-talk in bolstering their confidence, participants purposefully echoed affirming statements, thereby restructuring their self-perceptions and redirecting their focus towards their strengths and capabilities. Visualization techniques functioned synergistically with these cognitive strategies by providing participants with a mental blueprint of successful communication scenarios. As they mentally projected themselves speaking with fluency and efficacy, their anxiety diminished, and self-assurance surged. The amalgamation of positive self-talk and visualization techniques proved to be potent cognitive tools in the management of speech-related anxiety and the augmentation of EFL learners' confidence in their oral communication skills.

Moreover, the cognitive strategy of reframing anxious thoughts emerged as a substantive technique for participants to surmount their speech-related anxiety. Participants proactively undertook the task of recognizing their negative and irrational thoughts in the context of speech-related tasks. Subsequently, these disquieting cognitions were replaced with more sanguine, rational, and pragmatic alternatives. For instance, apprehensive thoughts like "I will humiliate myself" were transmuted into "Mistakes are an integral facet of the learning process, and I can refine my skills through practice." This process of challenging and substituting negative thoughts significantly reduced participants' anxiety levels and allowed them to confront speech activities with a more constructive and adaptive frame of mind. This cognitive restructuring process contributed substantially to their overall capacity to manage speech-related anxiety and engage in oral communication with enhanced confidence.

In summary, the study's findings unveiled the pivotal role of cognitive strategies in assisting EFL learners in mitigating speech-related anxiety. Positive self-talk, visualization techniques, and the practice of reframing anxious thoughts emerged as instrumental strategies harnessed by participants. Self-affirmations played a pivotal role in elevating their self-confidence and cultivating a positive mindset. Visualization techniques allowed participants to mentally rehearse successful communication scenarios, thereby diminishing anxiety and enhancing self-assurance. Moreover, the process of reframing negative thoughts empowered participants to challenge and replace anxious thoughts with more constructive and realistic alternatives. The cumulative effect of these cognitive strategies significantly contributed to the adept management of speech-related anxiety and the development of heightened confidence among EFL learners within the classroom milieu.

Preparation and Practice

One prominent strategy adopted by participants to mitigate their speaking anxiety revolved around thorough preparation and diligent practice. A considerable number of participants underscored the pivotal role that comprehensive preparation played in ameliorating their anxiety levels prior to engaging in speaking tasks. They cogently recognized that robust preparation engendered heightened self-assurance and concurrently abated their anxiety. This preparatory phase was characterized by concerted efforts involving meticulous research and meticulous ideational organization. It ensured a profound grasp of the subject matter or content to be articulated. By investing considerable time and dedication in these preparatory measures, participants felt substantially equipped and substantially less perturbed when confronted with the prospect of verbal expression in the English language. This preparatory strategy, thus, emerged as an indispensable cornerstone in the effective management of speaking anxiety.

In parallel, consistent practice surfaced as another pivotal strategy accentuated by participants for the alleviation of speaking anxiety. Engaging in recurrent practice activities, encompassing simulated conversational exchanges and methodical presentation rehearsals, was deemed highly efficacious in fostering confidence and diminishing anxiety. Participants attested to the notion that the more they honed their speaking abilities, the greater their ease when communicating in English. Routine practice facilitated the acquisition of linguistic familiarity, enhanced fluency, and conferred a sense of dominion over oral expression. Through recurrent practice, participants acquired a degree of automaticity, heightening their confidence in their aptitude for oral communication.

Furthermore, participants acknowledged that practice, in addition to enhancing linguistic proficiency, assisted in the anticipation and management of anxiety. Prolonged exposure to speaking tasks gradually habituated them to the exigencies of oral communication. This exposure enabled participants to identify specific areas of difficulty and undertake targeted improvement efforts. With each practice session, participants reported a growing sense of ease and a diminution in anxiety when confronted with speaking challenges. The amalgamation of regular practice and heightened familiarity with speaking scenarios led to a commensurate reduction in anxiety levels and an augmented sense of mastery over linguistic performance.

In summation, the strategies of comprehensive preparation and systematic practice were conspicuous techniques employed by participants to mitigate the specter of speaking anxiety. Elaborate preparatory rituals, including thorough research and ideational organization, furnished participants with a sturdy underpinning, engendering heightened self-assurance. Concurrently, recurring practice, manifested through simulated conversations and presentation rehearsals, not only elevated linguistic proficiency but also rendered participants increasingly at ease and self-

assured in their English-speaking endeavors. As practice and exposure to speaking tasks burgeoned, participants experienced a gradual attenuation of anxiety and the cultivation of a heightened sense of command over their oral communicative competence. These findings underscore the paramount importance of preparation and systematic practice as efficacious strategies for the management of speaking anxiety among learners of English as a foreign language.

Supportive Learning Environment

The participants in this study underscored the paramount significance of a conducive learning environment in the management of speaking anxiety. They astutely acknowledged that the attitudes and behaviors exhibited by both educators and peers wielded considerable influence over their levels of anxiety. Notably, the provision of positive and constructive feedback by teachers and peers emerged as a pivotal factor in mitigating anxiety and bolstering the self-assurance of the participants. The preference expressed by the participants was for pedagogical guidance that accentuated their strengths and delineated areas for improvement, eschewing an exclusive fixation on errors. This cultivation of a supportive learning milieu engendered a palpable sense of psychological safety, thereby affording the participants the capacity to undertake linguistic risks and partake in oral communication activities with diminished trepidation and apprehension.

The participants also extolled collaborative endeavors, such as paired or group discussions, as an efficacious strategy for ameliorating speaking anxiety. Engagement in these communal activities provided a haven wherein the participants could hone their speaking competencies without the specter of judgement or censure. Within this supportive ambience, the participants felt emboldened to articulate themselves and engage in verbal interactions more comfortably. Collaborative activities offered opportunities for peer solidarity and constructive critique, thereby further augmenting the participants' confidence and diminishing their anxiety. The presence of a congenial community of learners served as a catalyst in fostering a sanguine and non-intimidating atmosphere, thereby permitting the participants to refine their speaking proficiencies within an environment that was marked by relaxation and support.

Moreover, the participants articulated their gratitude for pedagogical settings wherein errors were construed as valuable learning opportunities, rather than being stigmatized or evaded. They underscored the salience of a paradigm that embraced mistakes as an inherent facet of the language acquisition process. Such an atmosphere gave rise to a supportive and non-coercive milieu, thereby effecting a notable reduction in anxiety. The participants were rendered more at ease in the knowledge that their errors were regarded as constructive stepping stones in their learning journey, rather than as sources of embarrassment. This transformation in mindset served as a catalyst in inculcating a more positive disposition towards speaking tasks, thereby motivating them to undertake greater linguistic risks and engage with greater confidence in oral discourse.

In summary, the import of a supportive learning environment in the mitigation of speaking anxiety was cogently articulated by the study participants. The dispensation of positive and constructive feedback by both educators and peers played a pivotal role in alleviating anxiety and augmenting the participants' self-assuredness. Collaborative activities, including paired or group discussions, furnished a sanctuary wherein participants could refine their speaking proficiencies free from the shackles of judgment. The existence of a supportive cohort of learners contributed to the cultivation of a positive and non-coercive ambiance that attenuated anxiety. Furthermore, the participants lauded educational contexts that valorized errors as invaluable learning experiences. These findings underscore the centrality of a supportive learning environment in the

amelioration of speaking anxiety and the creation of a constructive and all-encompassing milieu for learners of English as a foreign language to nurture their speaking aptitudes.

Gradual Exposure and Desensitization

Numerous participants articulated their experiences in implementing a systematic gradual exposure approach to ameliorate speaking anxiety within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) acquisition. This approach was characterized by an initial engagement in less challenging speaking activities, followed by a deliberate progression towards more intricate tasks. This gradual, incremental maneuver was instrumental in nurturing participants' self-assurance. By commencing their endeavors with rudimentary speaking exercises, such as concise presentations or informal dialogues, the participants were able to embark on a journey of honing their speaking proficiency in a less daunting environment. As competence and self-confidence evolved, participants methodically transitioned to more demanding speaking tasks, encompassing formal presentations and debates. This staged advancement effectively facilitated anxiety mitigation by affording individuals opportunities for accomplishment and fostering a sense of capability in their linguistic articulation.

Moreover, participants underscored the pivotal role of exposure to authentic English materials as a strategic measure for desensitizing themselves to the anxiety-inducing facets of foreign language speaking. These materials encompassed diverse sources, including cinema productions, podcasts, and interactions with native English speakers. The sustained exposure to such authentic linguistic contexts provided participants with an avenue for acclimating to diverse accents, speech patterns, and communicative scenarios. Through the regular assimilation of genuine English content, participants progressively cultivated a heightened level of comfort with the language and concomitantly bolstered their confidence in their capacity to engage in spontaneous, real-world linguistic exchanges. This deliberate engagement with authentic materials effectively bridged the chasm between pedagogic classroom instruction and practical communication, ultimately empowering participants to surmount their apprehensions and foster heightened fluency and self-assuredness in their speaking proficiencies.

In summation, participants elucidated their utilization of a gradual exposure approach to counteract speaking anxiety, underpinned by the significance of commencing with uncomplicated speaking activities and methodically ascending the ladder to more intricate linguistic tasks. This methodological, progressive paradigm was instrumental in nurturing incremental self-assurance and linguistic proficiency. Furthermore, participants underscored the instrumental role of exposure to authentic English materials, such as cinema, podcasts, and native speaker interactions, in their quest to desensitize themselves to anxiety-inducing elements of EFL speaking. Consistent engagement with authentic linguistic resources played a pivotal role in enhancing participants' adaptability to a plethora of language contexts, thereby augmenting their fluency and self-confidence. These revelations underscore the efficacious nature of gradual exposure and authentic material engagement as paramount strategies in alleviating speaking anxiety and augmenting the communicative capacities of EFL learners.

Emotional Regulation Techniques

The participants in this study reported the utilization of diverse emotional regulation techniques as effective means of managing their speaking anxiety. These individuals demonstrated an awareness of the significance of addressing their emotional states in order to mitigate their anxiety levels. One prominently featured strategy among them was the practice of deep breathing exercises. The participants articulated their engagement in the deliberate inhalation of slow, deep breaths with the express purpose of ameliorating their nervousness and diminishing their feelings

of anxiety prior to undertaking speaking tasks. This practice was observed to enable them to exercise control over their respiration, thereby inducing a sense of relaxation, which, in turn, facilitated their approach to speaking activities with a more composed mindset.

Additionally, mindfulness practices emerged as an efficacious technique in this context. Participants detailed their involvement in mindfulness exercises, such as anchoring their awareness in the present moment and adopting a non-judgmental stance toward their thoughts and emotions. These practices were identified as instrumental in enabling participants to disengage from negative ruminations and emotions that provoke anxiety. Consequently, these individuals found themselves in a better position to speak with greater confidence and fluency.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of relaxation techniques in alleviating speaking anxiety was underscored by participants. Techniques including progressive muscle relaxation and guided imagery were employed with the aim of inducing a state of relaxation and reducing tension before engaging in speaking tasks. Participants elucidated their systematic approach of alternately tensing and relaxing their muscles or visualizing tranquil and serene imagery to allay anxiety. By consciously engaging in these relaxation exercises, participants succeeded in unwinding both their bodies and minds, thus creating a more conducive emotional state for effective communication. Notably, these relaxation techniques not only assisted participants in the immediate management of their anxiety but also empowered them to confront future speaking tasks with heightened confidence and a more tranquil disposition.

Moreover, participants shared their experiences regarding the engagement in physical activities as a means to dissipate tension and anxiety prior to speaking tasks. Activities encompassing exercise, stretching routines, or brief physical movements were identified as effective strategies in this regard. These individuals found that physical exertion aided in the discharge of pent-up tension and nervous energy, thereby resulting in a notable reduction in their overall anxiety levels. By incorporating physical activity into their pre-speaking rituals, participants experienced an augmented sense of serenity and preparedness for speaking tasks. The exertion of these activities additionally conferred the advantage of boosting their energy levels and enhancing their overall focus and concentration, thereby manifesting improved performance during speaking activities.

In summary, participants in this study harnessed a variety of emotional regulation techniques to effectively manage their speaking anxiety. Deep breathing exercises, mindfulness practices, and relaxation techniques were identified as potent strategies for diminishing anxiety levels. Moreover, the inclusion of physical activities, encompassing exercise and stretching, was found to be beneficial in the dissipation of tension and anxiety before engaging in speaking tasks. These findings underscore the paramount importance of addressing emotional well-being and the deployment of diverse strategies to regulate anxiety levels among learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The implementation of these emotional regulation techniques afforded participants the ability to proficiently manage their anxiety and approach speaking tasks with heightened self-assurance and equanimity.

These findings elucidate the breadth of strategies employed by EFL learners in surmounting speaking anxiety in the classroom. The strategies identified encompass cognitive techniques, meticulous preparation and practice, the nurturing of supportive learning environments, gradual exposure and desensitization, and, significantly, the deployment of emotional regulation techniques. These insights serve to augment our understanding of the experiences and coping mechanisms of EFL learners, thereby contributing to the body of

knowledge concerning effective strategies for addressing speaking anxiety within language learning contexts.

Disscusions

The present study yields valuable insights into the tactics employed by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners to mitigate speaking anxiety within an educational setting. The ascertained cognitive strategies, comprising positive self-affirmation, visualization techniques, and the cognitive reframing of anxious thoughts, have demonstrated a substantial role in ameliorating participants' ability to manage their anxiety levels and augment their self-assuredness when engaged in oral communication (Dewaele Chengchen Li, 2020). These findings are consonant with antecedent research that underscores the pivotal role of cognitive strategies in the amelioration of anxiety and the enhancement of performance

Through the deployment of positive self-affirmation and visualization techniques, participants were able to cultivate a constructive mental outlook, thus mitigating their anxiety and bolstering their self-belief. Moreover, the cognitive process of refashioning pessimistic ideation enabled participants to contest and supplant anxious cogitations with more sanguine and pragmatic ones, resulting in a reduction of anxiety levels during speaking activities (Lee & Chen Hsieh, 2019). The employment of these cognitive strategies accentuates the potential for the formulation of efficacious intervention programs that accentuate the enhancement of learners' cognitive faculties for the purpose of managing speaking anxiety.

The findings of the study also underscore the significance of meticulous preparation and consistent practice as fundamental strategies for mitigating speaking anxiety among EFL learners. Thorough groundwork prior to oral tasks, including comprehensive research and preliminary ideational organization, was found to augment the confidence of participants and mitigate their anxiety levels (Macintyre & Gregersen, 2012).. These findings concur with preceding research that underscores the pivotal role of preparation in heightening performance and mitigating anxiety.

Moreover, recurrent practice sessions, such as simulated conversations and the rehearsal of presentations, not only bolstered the linguistic proficiency of participants but also facilitated the development of a sense of mastery and familiarity with speaking tasks. Through persistent practice, participants gradually acclimatized themselves to the demands of speaking activities, thus engendering an increment in comfort and confidence, which, in turn, resulted in a reduction of anxiety levels (Mahmud, 2018). These findings underscore the importance of the integration of comprehensive preparation and recurrent practice opportunities within language learning curricula, aimed at aiding EFL learners in the cultivation of self-assurance and the effective management of speaking anxiety.

Furthermore, the emergence of a supportive learning milieu is underscored as a pivotal determinant in the management of speaking anxiety. Favorable and encouraging feedback emanating from both educators and peers, coupled with cooperative learning activities, played a pivotal role in diminishing anxiety levels and amplifying the self-assuredness of participants (Chaaban et al., 2021). The existence of a supportive community of learners engendered a secure environment, wherein participants were able to hone their speaking proficiencies without apprehension of disparagement or criticism (Dewaele et al., 2018). These findings are commensurate with earlier research emphasizing the import of nurturing supportive learning environments for the promotion of learners' well-being and the mitigation of anxiety.

The creation of an environment that embraces errors as opportunities for learning and dispenses constructive feedback can bolster learners' self-esteem, attenuate anxiety, and foster a constructive attitude toward speaking tasks. These findings underscore the necessity for educators to inculcate a supportive and all-encompassing classroom milieu, which nurtures learners' self-belief and efficaciously addresses their speaking anxiety.

Additionally, gradual exposure and desensitization emerged as efficacious strategies for the mitigation of speaking anxiety. The commencement of simpler speaking activities, with a gradual progression toward more intricate tasks, enabled participants to incrementally bolster their self-belief (Radosavlevikj, 2020). This discovery is congruent with extant research positing that incremental exposure to anxiety-inducing situations can assist individuals in surmounting their apprehensions and in enhancing their self-assurance. Furthermore, exposure to authentic English materials, encompassing materials such as films, podcasts, and conversations with native speakers, provided participants with opportunities to familiarize themselves with diverse linguistic contexts and to insulate themselves from the anxiety-inducing aspects of speaking in a foreign language (Jin et al., 2020). This finding buttresses the value of the integration of authentic materials and real-world communicative experiences within language learning environments, as a means of aiding EFL learners in surmounting speaking anxiety and enhancing their fluency and self-assuredness.

Lastly, the implementation of emotional regulation techniques, encompassing deep breathing exercises, mindfulness practices, and engagement in physical activities, has proven to be efficacious in the management of speaking anxiety. These techniques have enabled participants to regulate their emotional states, elicit relaxation, and curtail anxiety levels. These findings align with antecedent research, which accentuates the affirmative effects of emotional regulation strategies on anxiety reduction (Hofmann et al., 2012). Through the attending to their emotional well-being, participants have been able to approach speaking tasks with a placid state of mind, leading to an elevation in performance and a concomitant reduction in anxiety levels. These findings underscore the necessity of incorporating emotional regulation techniques into language learning programs, aimed at offering support to EFL learners in the effective management of their speaking anxiety.

To sum up, this study provides cogent insights into the strategies deployed by EFL learners to surmount speaking anxiety in the educational milieu. Cognitive strategies, in the form of positive self-affirmation, visualization techniques, and the cognitive reframing of anxious thoughts, have assumed a pivotal role in the amelioration of anxiety levels and the fortification of speaking confidence. Preparation and practice, alongside the cultivation of a supportive learning milieu, gradual exposure and desensitization, and emotional regulation techniques, have surfaced as fundamental strategies for the mitigation of speaking anxiety. These findings proffer consequential implications for educators and practitioners, vis-à-vis the formulation of efficacious interventions and the creation of nurturing language learning environments, with a view to empowering EFL learners to cultivate their speaking skills with confidence and to efficaciously manage their speaking anxiety.

CONCLUSION

In summation, this research has elucidated the methodologies employed by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners to mitigate speaking apprehension within the classroom setting. The discerned outcomes underscore the paramount importance of cognitive tactics, including positive self-affirmation, visualization techniques, and the cognitive reframing of anxious ideation,

in the amelioration of anxiety levels and the concomitant bolstering of speaking self-assurance. Foremost among the strategic considerations are the elements of preparation and diligent practice, which have been identified as pivotal in assuaging anxiety and fostering heightened confidence in the execution of spoken language tasks. The study has further underscored the pivotal role played by a supportive learning milieu wherein constructive feedback, collaborative activities, and an educational ethos that embraces errors as instructive opportunities collectively engender a secure space conducive to honing speaking skills. In tandem, the gradual exposure to and the systematic desensitization toward challenging speaking scenarios, when complemented with exposure to authentic English language materials, have proven efficacious in reducing anxiety levels while concurrently augmenting fluency and self-assuredness. Moreover, emotional regulation techniques, such as the adoption of deep breathing exercises, mindfulness practices, and the incorporation of physical activities, have surfaced as potent mechanisms for the efficacious management of speaking anxiety.

These findings proffer tangible implications of a practical nature for EFL educators and practitioners. A comprehensive understanding of the strategies implemented by EFL learners to contend with speaking anxiety empowers educators to craft precise interventions and pedagogical approaches that aid students in the competent management and amelioration of their anxiety. The integration of cognitive strategies, the facilitation of preparatory phases and rigorous practice, the cultivation of a conducive and encouraging pedagogical environment, and the systematic employment of gradual exposure and desensitization techniques collectively contribute to the attenuation of speaking anxiety and the concomitant cultivation of eloquence among EFL learners.

Nonetheless, it is imperative to duly recognize the constraints inherent in this study. The outcomes of this inquiry may be constrained by their context-specific nature and may lack universal applicability to all EFL learners. The research was predicated on self-reported data and participant perspectives, a facet that may render them susceptible to biases and individual interpretations. Further research endeavors are warranted to delve into the efficacy of these strategies across diverse contexts and demographical cohorts.

In summative consideration, this research augments our comprehension of the tactics leveraged by EFL learners in the mitigation of speaking anxiety. The insights it furnishes hold substantial value for educators and practitioners, offering guidance for the formulation of classroom methodologies and interventions designed to assist learners in effectively coping with their anxiety and thereby cultivating heightened proficiency in spoken language. The apt handling of speaking anxiety augments the landscape of language teaching and learning practices within the EFL domain, ultimately establishing a more sanguine and inclusive milieu wherein EFL learners can confidently cultivate their speaking competencies.

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