Chapter 2

Anxiety Reduction in Conducting English Oral Presentation using Telegram Application

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ABSTRACT
One of the important skills assessed in the academic program in Malaysian universities is oral presentations. The purpose of an oral presentation is to speak to a live audience formally about a specific topic. Despite being competent in their field of study, most of the students struggle in presenting their ideas due to their anxiety. Students may underperform in school because of anxiety and they will often avoid speaking in classroom settings. The main objective of this paper is to explain how telegram application could help to reduce their public speaking anxiety. Telegram is one of the platforms for Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) in teaching English language skills. Hence, this ‘Spice Up and Speak Up Your Mind Bot App’ is developed through this application to help English learners to improve their English presentation skills. The use of Telegram application in the classroom promotes effective, productive and communicative teaching and learning activities as well as reducing anxiety among the students. The paper would be of interest to the learners of second language particularly in English as well as to scholars in the same topic and field. The ideas behind ‘Spice Up and Speak Up Your Mind Bot App’ construction will help the learners to establish the feeling of confidence in conducting their oral presentation.

Key Words: Anxiety, Oral Presentation, MALL, Telegram application

1.0 INTRODUCTION
Krashen (1982) indicates that if a language acquirer is anxious or has low self-esteem, it will be difficult for him or her to easily learn a foreign language. The role of anxiety in English acquisition has been well documented and thoroughly studied across all areas of English language skills (Hashemi, 2011; Nazir, Bashir & Raja, 2014; Saranraj & Meenakshi, 2016; Hanifa, 2018; Shehzadi & Krishnasamy, 2018; Zheng & Cheng, 2018). Up until today
however, the issue still lingers among both the instructors and the learners of English as a second or foreign language.

There seems to be a glimpse of hope with the introduction of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL). As it offers greater flexibility, reach, and access to language learning through the use of hand-held devices such as tablets and smart phones which are connected to the Internet and equipped with various multi-function applications, it also has provided a much needed remedy in eliminating anxiety among the language learners (Yang, 2013; Lindaman & Nolan, 2015; Oz, 2015; Ozer & Kilic, 2018; Shamsi, Altaha & Gilanlioglu, 2019).

One of the most sought-after applications in a hand-held device is the social messaging applications such as Whatsapp, Facebook Messenger, Wechat, Line, KiK and Telegram. Not only that these applications are wildly popular, they are also thought to be helpful in reducing anxiety in language learners. Thus, this paper will try to shed some light on how these social messaging applications, particularly Telegram, have been utilized to reduce anxiety among the learners of English.

2.0 ANXIETY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

According to Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986), there are three forms of anxiety which are communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety. Firstly, the fear about verbal communication is related to the communication apprehension (Horwitz et al., 1991). McCroskey and Anderson (1976) described communication apprehension as a person level of fear or anxiety connected with either real or anticipated communication with another individual. The second anxiety is the fear of negative evaluation where it is an apprehension about other’s evaluation, avoidance of evaluative situations and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively. Being a second language learner, one is worried about representing inappropriate social impression about oneself especially if one is conscious about the lack of essential linguistics capability to produce the language (Aydin, 2001). The third anxiety is the test anxiety which refers to the type of performance anxiety stemming from fear of failure. There are four phases of test anxiety: test anticipation, test preparation, test-taking stage and test reaction (Covington, 1985).

2.1 Anxiety in English Oral Presentations

The Fear of using the language orally is defined as speaking anxiety (Balemir, 2009). Based on the studies by Saltan (2003) and Ozturk and Gurbuz (2013), speaking has been emphasized as the utmost anxiety-provoking skills and it is a dominant cause of anxiety in language classroom. Karatas et al. (2016) stated learners will feel frightened to complete tasks and perceived it negatively when communication competence is the main emphasis in language classroom. Thus, many learners fumble when they are requested to do verbal communication task as speaking involves more complex skills than other language tasks. Miskam and Saidalvi (2019) mentioned that anxiety in oral presentation will cause harmful impacts on learners’ performance in a communication-based classroom which involves second language teaching. This weakening effect can negatively contribute to language anxiety among learners.
2.2 Studies related to Anxiety in Conducting English Oral Presentations

A study by Razawi, Zulkornain and Mohd Razlan (2019) has been conducted on the possible causes of anxiety in oral presentations among learners who are presently taking English subjects in UiTM Dungun Campus. Several factors of oral anxiety were perceived. The findings of the study showed that all four factors: language ability, personality traits, preparation and audience interest affect the learners’ oral presentations. The researchers also recommend lecturers to set up a friendly and stimulating classroom environment to cater different learning needs, share the scoring rubrics for learners’ preparation, encourage positive attitude among audience and emphasize fluency more than accuracy are essential to reduce anxiety in English oral presentations. In addition, Maskam and Saidalvi (2019) also conducted a study to identify the level of speaking anxiety among Malaysian undergraduate learners. The result of this study indicates that the undergraduates have English language speaking anxiety to a certain level.

3.0 MOBILE-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING

3.1 Mobile Assisted Language Learning in ESL.

The integration of technology in the classroom creates new impressive methods and materials for mobile-assisted language learning (MALL). It is parallel with Hashim, Md. Yunus, Amin Embi, and Mohamed Ozir (2017) who stated that technologies particularly mobile devices help English language learners to improve their proficiency. The reason is because mobile devices for instance handphones, iPods and PDAs are handheld devices which can be carried everywhere at any time. It is also easier for learners to use it as a tool to enhance their learning. This idea is also supported by Hashemi and Ghasemi (2011) where they claimed that the function of mobile phones with the combination of camera, video and MP3 players will make learning becomes more mobile, flexible and exciting since it allows learners to experience indoors and outdoors activities across formal and informal setting. At the same time, Nalliveettil and Alenazi (2016) believed that its multimedia capabilities for example audios and videos will help students to express ideas more effectively.

Henceforth, Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is believed to be an essential factor for young adults to involve in learning where most of traditional methods have failed. In 2005, Thorthon and Houser (2005) conducted a study to investigate the role of mobile phone to acquire vocabulary in class. They have divided their students into two groups. Their study found that the group who used SMS learns more words compared to those who studied using papers. Chun and Cheng (2008) also conducted the same study. The result presented an increment in students’ vocabulary acquisition. This is due to the effectiveness of mobile phone to provide academic support such as a digital access to a textbook. The ability that the students can access to information in a minute has allowed them to engage deeply with the information provided. Hence, it is believed that MALL could improve learners’ cognitive skills whereby it encourages learners to be independent and at the same time, it helps to increase the motivation of learners to learn more. Darmi and Albion (2017) conducted a study to investigate the effect of integrating mobile phones with the aim of enhancing the oral interaction skills amongst Malaysian undergraduate learners. The participants were trained to use the features included in the mobile phones. For instance, the audio or video recording features in order to record and review their oral interaction practices. The result revealed that they exhibited progress on their level of
proficiency. In addition, the use of mobile phones allows learners to learn the skills beyond
the classroom context.

3.2. Mobile Assisted Language Learning using Social Messaging Applications in
carrying out English Oral Presentations

Students in college spend most of their time communicating using Social Messaging
Applications for example Telegram, Whatsapp, and WeChat. It is believed that
incorporating digital technologies for example social messaging application, will help
students to enhance their oral presentation skills (Jolliet, 2007). In her research, she stated
that social messaging application allows its users to record and listen to their presentation
which helps them to relisten to their utterances and amend their mistakes in their speeches.
At the same time, another research was done by Abbasi and Behjat (2018) where the
objective is to investigate the effect of storytelling via Telegram towards Iranian EFL
learners’ speaking complexity. The result indicated that Telegram has impacted the
learners’ speaking ability. Most students can improve their intonation and voice projection
after using Telegram. Hence, it shows that social messaging applications can be used as
a tool to help learners to improve speaking skills as it is used as one of the continuous
supports for language use (Andújar-vaca & Cruz-Martínez, 2017). It is believed that,
technology like social messaging applications can motivate the students to learn better as
it provides more interesting and enjoyable learning.

4.0 THE USE OF TELEGRAM IN ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING

4.1 Features of Telegram

Just like any other social messaging applications, Telegram also offers features like group
chat, end-to-end encryption, and attractive stickers to enhance its platform. However, there
are at least five features that really set it apart from the other social messaging applications
and can be utilized by educators in their teaching and learning sessions, such as:

a. Enhanced privacy as the users may choose to make secret messages disappear
after a set time and can disallow screen shots of conversations;

b. Subject-specific content through the creation of ‘Channels’, which are broadcasting
content-related feeds to its unlimited number of users. In addition, the creator of a
channel can decide who can post and other members can view the posts. It is a useful
and immediate media channel that could be utilized by educators around the world
to transmit their content directly to a specific group of people;

c. ‘Bots’. Powered by artificial intelligence and pre-programmed logic, it could be
utilized for aspects such as Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) and other automated
tasks to provide an automatic response. Hence learning can still take place even
though an instructor is not there to provide an immediate response;

d. A bigger group member capacity of up to 5000 members at a time thus allowing a
greater reach to learners of all strides of life;

e. Users on telegram can login on multiple devices at the same time and receive
messages on every device. This enables teaching and learning to happen anywhere
as long as students have their devices with them.
4.2 Telegram and English language Teaching
Xodabande (2017) who studied the use of Telegram in teaching English Pronunciation to Iranian EFL learners revealed that the participants have shown a marked improvement in their pronunciation of English vocabularies. He contributed this situation to the application’s availability for the learners in any time and place to watch and listen to the correct pronunciation of English words and practice saying it by themselves, since “most of the time, language teachers don’t find sufficient time to teach pronunciation during class hours”.

In a study on Online Cooperative Learning and the use of Telegram among Iranian tertiary level students, Aghajani and Adloo (2018) found that apart from having a more positive attitude towards cooperative learning after the use of Telegram, the participants of the study also showed a significant improvement for their overall writing performance, content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. This could be made possible as the instructors were able “to spot students who need work in improving the specific skills of writing and vocabulary word choice and incorporate Telegram into an individualized assignment for them to help improve those skills” (Aghajani & Adloo, 2018). They later concluded that a more meaningful learning environment can be created, and the comment feature makes the learning process easier and more fun as it also allows students to discuss with peers, give feedback and comment on the writing activities either synchronously or asynchronously.

Apart from that, Manna and Ghosh (2018) insist that Telegram is a better option in locating and delivering educational materials, as “it is very helpful for sending information to its users without any limitations in our modern tech-society”.

4.3 Telegram and Anxiety Reduction among English language Learners
As previously mentioned, anxiety is indeed another barrier for the learners of English language. However, Telegram could also provide a much-needed assistance in lessening the impact of this delicate situation.

Zarei, Darani, and Ameri-Golestan (2017) for example reported that in a study to determine the Iranian EFL learners’ attitude towards the use of Telegram to learn English Grammar, the learners indicated that they did not get anxious when they had to answer Grammar question via Telegram since the mean score for this item was well above the average value of the choices (M = 4.02 > 3.00).

In addition, Tabrizi and Onvani (2018), through their study on the use of Telegram to teach vocabularies to the Iranian beginning EFL learners, revealed that the participants experienced less anxiety in learning vocabulary through the Telegram environment (M=3.74 > 3.00).

Apart from that, Bakar, Fauzi, Yasin, and Yunus (2018) cheer on the use of the ‘Bot’ feature in Telegram as an educational tool. They found out that the use of ‘Bot’ through an automated quiz has greatly improved the Malaysian primary school pupils’ English spelling skills in compound noun words. Not only that the participants showed an improvement in the score of spelling exercises after the intervention by using this ‘Bot’ feature, they also exhibited a greater confidence level in spelling English words. They were no longer scared or nervous when it came to spelling, and they could spell without mumbling or stuttering even when they were wrong (Bakar, Fauzi, Yasin & Yunus, 2018).
5.0 CONCLUSION

To the best of the authors’ knowledge, studies on the impacts of Telegram in reducing anxiety among students who are conducting English oral presentation are scarce. One similar instance of such studies is by Abbasi and Behjat (2018). They reported that online oral storytelling via the use of Telegram has a significant effect on Iranian EFL learners’ speaking complexity.

Inspired by the success of studies on the effectiveness of social messaging applications like Whatsapp, the authors believe that the use of Telegram especially through ‘Spice Up and Speak Up Your Mind Bot’ which capitalizes on the use of the ‘Bot’ feature in this application could assist students in reducing their anxiety in conducting English oral presentation. Students can use this interactive platform as an extension to what they have learnt in regular classroom at their own time and pace, all through their hand-held device. As it offers insights on speech preparation and writing and presentation video samples, students who have issues in expressing themselves publicly could gain confidence in rehearsing for their utterances and amend their mistakes in speeches at the comfort of their own personal space.

It is believed that apart from its anxiety reduction aspect, the inclusion of Telegram in teaching language features is deemed as effective and promising (Xodabande, 2017). Yenka and Queendarline (2018), agree with this, as they suggest that Telegram is “a valuable extension of the classical learning methods” and it should be extensively incorporated into tertiary education.

REFERENCES


