



Using Guided Meditation for Lowering Senior High School Students' Anxiety to Speak English as a Foreign Language

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to discuss the ways of doing guided meditation for lowering Senior High School students' anxiety to speak English as a foreign language. Regarding to the writer's observation supported by other studies find that the students experienced the most anxiety when foreign language speaking activities begin. The noisy atmosphere suddenly changed into silence. The students' negative perception toward their own ability and other negative evaluation are the main factors why they are too quiet as the teacher asked them to speak English in the classroom. This situation may lead the students' having bad performance in learning foreign language, meanwhile the demand for having good communication skill in speaking foreign language, especially English is highly significant. Therefore, an English teacher has to encourage the student to speak English by using some useful techniques. One of them is using guided meditation that will be necessary for lowering the level of Senior High School students' anxiety to speak English as their foreign language.

Key words: *Anxiety in Foreign Language Learning, Guided Meditation*

A. INTRODUCTION

Emotion has significant role in language learning. It means that the more positive emotion one has, the better learning process they can get. Nevertheless, many students are anxious while learning foreign language. Certainly, this negative emotion may lead them to have bad performance in language learning itself. As a matter of fact, many Senior High School students in Indonesia just keep in silence while learning English as their foreign language since they are not able to communicate with their teacher and classmates using English.

This phenomenon distracting student's mentality to speak English as a foreign language may be called anxiety. That is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome (oxford dictionary). It connects to human cognitive system and will be experienced by most students while learning foreign language, especially in speaking. The students will become

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more anxious as the speaking activities of foreign language begin and it leads them into silence.

Yalcin and Volcan (2014) believed that, fear of making errors and getting evaluated by teachers in front of other students are the main reason of this silence. In addition, the study conducted by Mukminin, et al (2015) shows that the students' anxiety in learning foreign language caused by several items such as, low speaking skill due to lack of vocabulary and grammar, afraid of negative responses from others, low self-esteem to speak, fear of being evaluated by teachers, and more teacher-centered styles.

When the students have some problems above, they may not enjoy learning. How can the learning process keep on going effectively while the students have negative feeling toward the lesson they learned? It is difficult for students improving their performance due to feeling anxiety to speak English as a foreign language. The issue of students' language anxiety remains one of the greatest barriers that have to be overcome by teachers.

The use of guided meditation may be one solution to be considered by the teacher. This kind of meditation is the popular one practiced by students at school. It is the process followed by one or more participants who response to the guidance provided by a trained practitioner or teacher. So, the teacher will be an instructor that leads students to do meditation in the classroom.

Meditation may reduce depression, anxiety, and stress. In Psychology Today, a psychologist, Diana AdileKirschner says "not only is meditation an absolutely marvelous stressor, it helps people better relate to one another". Meditation process combined between one's mind and breath. This process may give positive impact on the cognitive side of anxiety in human brain. The feeling of anxiety to speak English as a foreign language may reduce after practicing guided meditation in the classroom. The students will be more relaxed and loving in learning language.

B. DISCUSSION

1. Anxiety in Foreign Language Learning

Anxiety is the consolidated sensations of disquiet, disappointment, insecure, fear and stress (Xu, 2011) . It is "a state of apprehension and vague fear" (cited in Mukminin, 2015). Those feelings are related to human cognitive system that leads to the negative performance (Xu, 2011). Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope also said that there is correlation between anxiety and "the nervous system" (cited in Mukminin, 2015). Thus, anxiety can be defined as the part of negative feelings like scare and worry derived from human brain.

Alsowat (2016) believed that most language learners feel anxiety during language learning process. Many studies showed that not only school students but also university students experienced foreign language anxiety (Ahmad et al., 2013). Karatas et al., (2016) defined foreign language anxiety as one of the personal diversities and as a condition upsetting foreign language performance. It is disquieting encountered while using non-native language due to the lack of proficiency (cited in Cutrone, 2009).

Regarding to the data analyzed by Mohtashamand Maryam (2017), there are so many factors cause language speaking anxiety between male and female students. It indicates that the female students feeling more anxiety than male students to speak English as a foreign language. The female students experience anxiety due to many causes such as, being unprepared, fear of making grammatical mistakes, being graded for speaking activities, worrying about pronunciation mistakes, coeducational courses, do not understanding teachers' words, do not give enough time to prepare for speaking, self-doubt, feeling that other language learners speak better than they do, negative reaction from teacher and classmates, presence of teacher, discussing boring topics in speaking courses, feeling embarrassed, not learning speaking skills before university. Meanwhile, The males experience anxiety caused by many factors such as, being unprepared, fear of making grammatical mistakes, lack of practicing speaking language, being graded for speaking activities, worrying about pronunciation mistakes, perfectionism, coeducational courses, do not understanding teachers' words, discussing interesting topics, do not give enough time to prepare for speaking.

Moreover, the study conducted by Mukminin, et al (2015) found several sources caused foreign language speaking anxiety. All of the participants in the study feel the following cases:

1. Low speaking skill due to lack of vocabulary and grammar
2. Fear of negative responses from others
3. Low self-esteem to speak in front of the classmates
4. Fear of being evaluated by teachers
5. Cultural influences to speak English due to a more teacher-centered styles

2. Guided Meditation

Meditation has already existed for many years ago and become more popular this day. Researchers have already conveyed various definitions of meditation. Jenkins (2015) said that it is the way to keep focusing one's mind perfectly. In line with Jenkins, Marciniak (2014) revealed that in western perspective meditation is "a self-regulatory technique" to preserve one's focus.

In the spiritual event, meditation is accepted as mean for improving spiritualism, calm, focus, positive feelings such as "love and happiness" and lowering negative feelings such as "fear and anger". Neuroscience noticed that in calm situation the brain easy to record message and maintain memory (Jenkins, 2015). Furthermore, Kumar, et al (2013) agreed to say that meditation give many advantages not only for health but also for maintaining thought and restricting "brain aging". He continued that neurophysiological lines evidence stated that meditation may be powerful to strengthen neuronal area and improve the capacity of brain. So, the principle of meditation is as a "cognitively stimulating activities" (Marciniak et al., 2014).

Meanwhile, Learning is the process of acquisition of knowledge. The right knowledge can only be obtained through concentrated and mindful learning (Grewall, 2014). Obviously, meditation is extremely beneficial for students for improving their foreign language learning achievement due to the positive atmosphere such as calm, pleasant, and focus present in the classroom. "This

technique in the primary classroom may be used in creating a calmer environment that aids language learning and attentional skills” (Mortimore, 2017). Onem (2015) said that meditation will influences anxiety and learning positively.

Furthermore, Scientists found that meditation can give positive effect on one's language production. As we know that producing the language is started by speaker's objective to convey the message. Schmidt (1990) suggested that in learning non-native language, students need to be aware of what they are learning so that they are good at producing and using the language. He, then, clarified that having awareness is important and facilitative for learner to go ahead in the language learning process and other learning side.

A study conducted by Marciniak, et al (2014) result that meditation positively affects one's attention, memory, verbal fluency, and cognitive flexibility. The study investigated by Alexander, et al. (1983) also showed that meditation may improve one's word fluency. Furthermore, in studied by Jenkins (2015) on guided meditation showed that meditation improve students' vocabulary learning in foreign language. So, meditation can be one of many effective ways for improving students' performance in learning English as a foreign language.

3. Guided Meditation in Teaching English Speaking

Guided meditation in teaching English speaking is defined as the activity leaded by an English teacher when the students feel anxiety to speak English as a foreign language. It has to be done as the students become sweaty, worried, forgetful, and difficult while learning English as a foreign language. This technique will be used in the certain situation only like anxiety experienced by students. It is purposed for the students not to be passive speaker in the classroom.

In Senior High School in Indonesia, speaking English is always practiced while teaching-learning English begins. Both teachers and students are highly demanded to communicate using English in the classroom. However, to engage the Senior High School students to communicate using non-native-language is not as simple as letting them to speak their first language. Without any requirements, they are talkative using their first language during the process of teaching learning English. In contrary, while the teacher asks them to speak English with their classmates they tend to be passive even though some of them know what to say in English. They may be afraid of being wrong and being evaluated by others, so they don't want to share ideas using English. This case is called foreign language anxiety.

The case about students' anxiety to speak English as a foreign language is frequently encountered by English teachers in Indonesia. Absolutely, this is not the objective of teaching- learning English that have to be fun and easy. In fact, as the students feel anxiety, they will not be good at learning foreign language due to some problems in their mind. Both mind and learning is connected to each other in human brain. When there is something wrong happened in brain, it will give negative effect on one's learning.

So, the use of guided meditation instructed by an English teacher may be beneficial for students to reduce their anxiety level because in guided meditation,

there is the process between students' mind and breath. The students have to remove all the negative perception in their mind and change it into the positive image or word as they either inhale or exhale. It can only take for about 3-10 minutes each day. In a study conducted by Jenkin (2015), 3 minutes is enough for meditating children before starting English lesson. Meanwhile, the study conducted by Onem (2015) just phased 10 minutes meditation before learning. The steps that should be applied in guided meditation based on Lusk's theory (2015) are preparing the group or individual, choosing the right atmosphere, using your voice, pacing yourself, using music, and processing the experience. After doing meditation, the students will not be anxious very much to speak English in the classroom because they know that doing such mistakes and evaluated by others is normal in order to make them better in using English as their foreign language.

4. Implementing Guided Meditation for Lowering Senior High School Students' Anxiety to Speak English as a Foreign Language

Every planning needs some preparation, and so does in implementing guided meditation. The teacher has to prepare the items that will be used in meditation properly in order to attain the good outcomes of the process of meditation. So, before practicing this technique, teachers should prepare several items such as, speaker, calm music, and script of imaginary words. Those items will be combined into one sense that will create positive feelings in the classroom.

After all preparation is ready, the teacher writes the meaningful word for being remembered by students as long as the meditation process begins. For instance, the teacher may write the word "happiness" on the board and gives definition about it. The teacher may say "First, you have to pay attention to this word "happiness, happiness is floating in the pool, happiness is the calm beauty of a sunset, happiness is my friend's smile", teacher says it enthusiastically.

After that, teacher instructs the students to sit in comfortable position by saying "Now, sit in relaxed position! Put your feet on the floor!" When all students looked ready, the teacher asks the students to close their eyes while she is setting the music. "Then, close your eyes" teacher says it clearly.

When students are closing their eyes, it is time to convey positive message from written script to the students together with soft and calming music as a background. In this section, teacher may use the scripts made by an expert only or modify it with her own ideas. Then, the message will be read by the teacher slowly and smoothly without whispering so that the message can be heard by all students.

The teacher may say, "Now clear your mind of all your outside thoughts. Be present; be here, in this moment. Let's focus on one thought. Happiness. Think about what happiness is to you. Think of a moment when you were happy. As you close your eyes, picture happiness. As you breathe in, see your picture. As you breathe out, let yourself feel the happiness you are picturing and say silently to yourself, "I am happy to speak English." Feel yourself relax and feel happy. Breathe in. Breathe out. "I am happy to speak English." Breathe in. "I am happy to speak English."

Teacher gives the students more time to focus on breathing process and let them to imagine their own happiness. This process is purposed to improve students feeling for being calmer and more relax than before so that they will not be afraid of speaking English anymore in front of their classmates and teachers. It is expected that the students will not fear to be evaluated by others and they will not be worry about grammatical mistake while speaking English. So, they have to be happy to speak English as a foreign language no matter what.

When the time is over, the teacher stops the music background slowly. Then, teacher gives an instruction to the students to open their eyes. The teacher says, "Now, open your eyes." When all students have opened their eyes and seem aware of their environment, teacher tries to get students' evaluation toward meditation they have done in order to know if the meditation brings positive effect on students, especially to speak English as a foreign language.

The teacher asks "Are you happy to speak English?" They may say "Yes". However, when some of them may say "No", the teacher should not judge them. The teacher has to respect all the answers given. Next, the teacher leads the students to learn English by saying "Well, let's learn English!"

C. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The "afraid" phenomenon experienced by Senior High School students in Indonesia when they are about to speak English as a foreign language has many causes and effects. It caused by internal and external factors. Students negative perception toward themselves and others is easily affect their mentality to speak English as a foreign language. As a matter of fact, fear of being evaluated by teachers and friends, lack of language grammar and vocabularies, low self-esteem and many more experienced by many students in Indonesia while speaking English as their foreign language.

As the students have such uncomfortable feelings, they will become sweaty, worried, and forgetful. Also, it is potentially contribute to the students' performance in learning other language, especially while speaking activities begin. They were too talkative using their own mother tongue. Hence, this situation indicates that the students don't enjoy their learning due to feeling anxiety. So, there must be teaching techniques done by an English teacher for lowering the students' anxiety to speak English as a Foreign Language. The use of guided meditation may help the teacher to overcome the problem. Since meditation have positive effects on one's feeling and mind, the writer believes that this teaching technique may encourage the students' to speak English without much thinking about mistakes and evaluation from others. But, when there are no any positive influences got by the students after the first trial, a good teacher should not be hopeless. The teacher may try it more or do any other alternative which is relevant with the students' needed. Overall, the most important one in teaching learning process is the teacher's style. The English teacher should not be too strict and monotonous while teaching foreign language in order to develop good relationship with the students that make them enjoy learning.

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