



## **STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARD COLLABORATIVE LEARNING STRATEGY FOR OVERCOMING SPEAKING ANXIETY AMONG STUDENTS OF AN ISLAMIC SENIOR SCHOOL**

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**Abstract:** Anxiety is one of the most frequent problems in speaking a foreign language including English. High levels of anxiety prevent students from speaking English fluently. Therefore, teachers need to apply a strategy that can reduce these anxieties. One of the strategies is the collaborative learning strategy. This research aimed to find out students' perceptions toward collaborative learning strategies for overcoming speaking anxiety. The research was conducted on eleventh-grade students at an Islamic Senior School in East Lombok regency. The total number of samples in this research was 33 students from XI social 4 class. This study was qualitative in nature since it used observation, a questionnaire, and an interview to collect the data. Students' perception of using collaborative learning in learning speaking reached 85.5% based on the students' responses to the questionnaire, while data from the observation and interview reveal that the perception of using collaborative learning strategy in overcoming students' speaking anxiety was positive because it can increase students' confidence, help the students to understand the material easier, and make the students more active in the class. It can be concluded that collaborative learning strategy can help students to overcome their speaking anxiety.

**Keywords:** perception, collaborative learning, speaking, anxiety

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Speaking is one of the skills that students fear the most. Lack of confidence and courage to speak up in English are among the symptoms of anxiety experienced by students in speaking class. Furthermore, the classroom procedure and teaching strategy of teaching English that is irrelevant to the topic also cause anxiety among the students. Amrullah (2015: 130) stated that problems in teaching and learning English as a foreign language are closely related to both teachers and students. This is one of the learning problems caused by the teaching methods used by teachers. To avoid this situation in speaking class, a teacher, as a facilitator in the teaching and learning process, should find an interesting way to engage students in conversation in English class. In addition, Amrullah, Sahuddin, Fajri, and Apriyanto (2019) stated that English teachers should create a classroom environment in which students can communicate in real life through authentic activities and meaningful tasks that can increase the use of oral language.

One of the strategies to overcome students' speaking anxiety is applying collaborative learning as a teaching technique in classroom activity. This technique will motivate students to actively participate in the teaching-learning process. According to Pattanapichet and

Changpueng (2014), collaborative learning is a learning strategy where the teacher separates students into small groups consisting of four or five students, with a mixed level in each group. Using this strategy will allow students to express opinions, have good communication and interaction among students, receive adequate attention from the group members to correct each other's mistakes, and support one another.

Furthermore, the perception of students after employing a strategy employed in teaching English, particularly in a speaking class, is critical. It may assist the teacher in determining whether or not the students are engaged in the teaching and learning process in order to overcome their speaking anxiety, and it may assist the English teacher in teaching more effectively. Perception is crucial in the learning process, according to Szilagzyi and Wallace (1980:70), since it determines one's behavior, attitudes, and motivation to learn. In other words, students' perceptions of learning activities will have an impact on their motivation to participate in the teaching and learning process. Knowing the student's perception of the use of collaborative learning strategy in learning speaking gives a representation toward the teachers. If the students' perceptions are good, it means that the collaborative learning strategy can be implemented in a speaking class especially to overcome students' speaking anxiety.

## RESEARCH METHODS

A qualitative research design was used in this research. According to Creswell (2003), qualitative research is commonly used to establish the importance of the central idea, as well as to investigate the topic and develop knowledge of small-scale societal issues. The population of this research was the total number of students in the eleventh social class of Senior Islamic School in East Lombok regency. There were four classes and 129 students in total. The sample was obtained by using purposive sampling and one class, XI social 4, comprising 33 students was selected as the sample.

Observation, questionnaires, and interviews were utilized as instruments for collecting the data. The questionnaire contained 20 statements, ten of which were positive statements and the remaining ten (10) contained negative statements. The students' perceptions toward collaborative learning were collected using a questionnaire and an interview.

Table 1. The statement scales

Positive statement		Negative statement	
Category	Score	Category	Score
Stronglyagree (SA)	5	Stronglyagree (SA)	1
Agree (A)	4	Agree (A)	2
Neutral (N)	3	Neutral (N)	3
Disagree (D)	2	Disagree (D)	4
Strongly disagree (SD)	1	Strongly disagree (SD)	5

Table 2. Classifying the students' responses based on the criteria

No	Qualification	Interval
1	Strongly agree (SA)	86-100 %
2	Agree (A)	71-85 %
3	Neutral (N)	56-70 %
4	Disagree (D)	41-55 %
5	Stongly disagree (SD)	≤ 40%



To calculate the percentage, the following formula was used.

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

P = The percentage

F = Total score

N = Number of students

The researchers then analyzed the data to present all of the information from the interviews and questionnaires in the form of a description after calculating the percentage of the questionnaire.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

Following completion of the questionnaire, the students received a total score of 2823. According to the findings, the students' questionnaire responses accounted for 85.5 percent of the total. This demonstrates that students have a positive perception of collaborative learning strategies for overcoming speaking anxiety. There were 93% of students who claimed to feel more confident, 90% of students agree that collaborative learning allows them to help each other, 90% of students agree that collaborative learning helps them to understand the material easier, and 87% of students agree that collaborative learning makes them became more active in the class.

To support the data from the questionnaire, interviews were conducted. There were five questions asked to eight respondents related to students' perception of collaborative learning strategies in overcoming students' speaking anxiety. Based on the interview, all of the respondents admit that the collaborative learning strategy helped them to overcome their anxiety in speaking because using the collaborative learning strategy makes the students feel more confident, have better comprehension, and more actively engage in the learning activities. Respondents 1, 3, 6 and 8 said that collaborative learning helps them feel more confident because in group activities there is a task division and they can help each other.

*"I become more confident when I'm in a group, I'm not too afraid of being wrong again because I can ask my group members that way. That's how we help each other". (Respondent 1)*

Then, respondents 2 and 5 said that collaborative learning makes them have better comprehension.

*"I'm happy Sis, because I can understand the material easily through discussion. Usually, it takes a long time for me to understand the material because I can not speak English. If I have friends to discuss the topic it's become easier for me because we share some different opinions". (R5)*

Meanwhile, respondents 4 and 7 said that collaborative learning makes students actively engage in the learning process.

*"My opinion is that the group study that you apply in class is a new thing for me, because usually we just have regular discussions. But this is different. We are in groups and all members work and have their own tasks, therefore we are active and want to learn, Sis". (R4)*

### Discussion

Based on the findings, the students' perception of collaborative learning was positive. It can be seen from the data of the questionnaire. The data shows that there were 93% of students feel collaborative learning makes them more confident in speaking English. It is indicated that collaborative learning was able to help the students in overcoming their



speaking anxiety, because a lack of self-confidence is one of the anxiety symptoms that students usually feel in speaking English. This finding is in line with the theory from Kadir & Salija (2018) that learning in groups can be a factor which positively influences the students' anxiety in EFL learning because they can learn together and gain self-confidence. Moreover, using collaborative learning also helps the students to understand the material easier. This is proved by the presence of 90% of students who believe that the collaborative learning strategy helps the students to understand the material easily because they discuss and share more knowledge with their friends. It is supported by Jonassen & Kwon (2001) who stated that when students discuss information with other members of their group, they can learn better because discussions can contribute to understanding the knowledge if they share with each other. Furthermore, there were 87% of students who show that students feel more active when learning to speak using collaborative learning. This is in accordance with the findings of a previous study by Novitasari (2019), which found collaborative learning effectively helped learners learn in a comfortable environment. By implementing collaborative learning, the learners could work together to solve problems, get meaningful feedback, and trigger confidence, and leading to more opportunities to practice speaking and making the students more active in the class.

To support the data from the questionnaire, interviews were conducted the results of which show that the students have a positive perception toward collaborative learning because it can overcome their anxiety. The first reason was collaborative learning helps students overcome their speaking anxiety as collaborative learning helps the students to be more confident. It was felt easier and more comfortable when students are divided into several groups and discussed a topic with their members, rather than talking directly to the whole class and will become the spotlight. Thus, in group activities, the students share ideas, discuss different opinions related to the topic, and motivate each other. This finding is supported by Suwantarathip & Wichadee (2010) who stated that students felt less anxious when they had group members to help them in the learning process. It creates a sense of community in the classroom and students were more relaxed and confident. The second reason is that collaborative learning activities assist the students to have a better comprehension of the material given. It is because the activity that the students did is very interesting and fun. Moreover, the researchers chose a topic that is familiar to the students' daily activities. The students were really enthusiastic about discussing it and the material was easier for the students to understand. This perception was in accordance with a statement by Jonassen and Kwon (2001), who state that when the students discuss information with other members of their group, they can learn better because discussions can give benefit their understanding of the knowledge if they share it with each other. The third reason is that collaborative learning activities can minimize the students' speaking anxiety because they are motivated to more actively participate in class. These findings are supported by Harmer's (2007) statement that group work significantly increases speaking opportunities for students, and creates the greater possibility for students to voice different opinions.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the students' perceptions of the collaborative learning strategy were positive. Collaborative learning activities help the students in terms of overcoming speaking anxiety. It is proven that 93% of students agree that collaborative learning increases students' confidence. 90% of students claimed collaborative learning helped them understand the material easily, and 87% claimed collaborative learning made them more active to participate in the class. It shows the positive result regarding the use of collaborative learning to overcome students' anxiety. Therefore, it can be argued that



collaborative learning is an appropriate strategy to help students in overcoming their speaking anxiety.

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