

The Effectiveness of Activity Based Four-Dimensional Integrated Strategy for Alleviating Speaking Anxiety

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Abstract—Speaking in English is always a tough challenge for second language learners. It is a proven fact that anxiety is considered as one of the main factors responsible for speaking difficulty. An increasingly significant area of research and emerging trends in teaching and learning English language highlight speaking anxiety, methods, strategies and techniques that can be adopted to alleviate anxiety. Activity-based teaching is an effective and interesting method that can be adopted to enhance speaking skills of the learners. The present study focuses on the impact of group activity by incorporating a Four-dimensional integrated strategy: motivation, explaining rubrics, skill integration and grouping. Activity based intervention was given to 105 students who are pursuing Engineering Programmes in different disciplines in Chennai, India. Data was collected before and after the intervention to identify the existence of anxiety and to analyse the difference in anxiety levels. The results prove the effectiveness of Four-dimensional integrated strategy based group activity in alleviating speaking anxiety.

Index Terms—speaking, anxiety, alleviating, intervention, strategy

I. INTRODUCTION

Speaking English is a pre-requisite for success in academic and professional domains, particularly in ESL/ EFL contexts. Effective communication with individuals or groups is necessary for the job market. According to Zhang and Zhong (2012), speaking entails intricate mental processes that assure efficient delivery. However, while learning a language, these brain processes may be impacted by several circumstances, affecting the learner's performance and speaking ability. Anxiety is one of these components. Takahashi (2014) stated that rather than reading, writing or listening, speaking was perceived as the more anxiety-inducing factor. Speaking was instinctively perceived as more anxiety-inducing than reading, writing, or listening. Teachers are expected to be aware of the problems that students face while communicating in English and adopt various methods, strategies and approaches to alleviate speaking anxiety. Activity-oriented education is an excellent way of kindling the interest of the learners and to make them improve their speaking skills.

A. Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety is viewed as a specific social phobia or trouble speaking in front of people that could interfere with one's studies or overall quality of life (Horwitz et al., 1986). Students frequently report that speaking in English in class causes them the most anxiety. Several researchers have observed that speaking in front of audience while learning a foreign language can also cause significant stress. Language learners reported higher level of anxiety while communicating than any other language skill (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002).

B. Impact of Anxiety

The oral communication is the most negatively impacted by language anxiety, even though anxiety can be detected in all four basic language learning skills (Horwitz et al., 1986). Communication anxiety intensifies the fear of learning a second language. Language anxiety delays the process of learning a language and also affects a person's self-worth; it interferes with their capacity to focus and limit their ability to speak the target language fluently. Dörnyei (2001) noted that speaking performance is affected when a learner experiences language anxiety while communicating in the classroom. It causes more nervousness than a learner generally encounters in other behavioural circumstances. Furthermore, self-critical students tend to experience high level of communication anxiety.

Students frequently report that speaking in English causes stress especially while speaking in front of an audience in classroom. Several researchers have observed the same phenomena. According to Kalra and Siribud (2020), speaking anxiety among university students is "alarming" and affects up to half of all language students. During classroom speaking activities, the students face certain difficulties and problems like lack of confidence, anxiety, uneasiness, fear,

shyness, mental block and forgetfulness. These are some of important psychological factors which effect strongly during speaking performance. Apart from these, the physiological factors like nervousness, trembling hands, palm sweating, butterflies in the stomach, shivering do have deeper impact. "The anxiety level varies from person to person according to the physical and psychological condition and specific situational demands" (Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020, p. 1054).

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Various researches prove that learners have speaking anxiety whenever they are required to speak in the classroom. Sulistyowati (2023) analysed what causes English Speaking Anxiety (ESA) and provided qualitative and statistical data about how language anxiety affects motivation to speak, what causes it, and how students deal with it. Thirteen English major students from a postgraduate class in the Language Education Department took part in this research. The analysis revealed that speaking anxiety negatively impacts a student's speaking performance. The students feel uncomfortable, unsure, nervous and scared when they have to speak in ESL/EFL contexts. This affects their motivation to speak and their fluency during presentations and discussions in class.

Taly and Paramasivam (2020) investigated the causes of speaking anxiety in a university academic setting. The study also intends to identify how students manage their speaking apprehension. The issues are explored in this study using the qualitative method and interview questions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two university instructors and fourteen overseas postgraduate students from a public institution in Malaysia. According to the research study, speaking anxiety is caused by students' self-perceptions of their learning difficulties. Numerous affective and behavioural techniques were used to deal with speaking anxiety. According to the investigation results, pupils' ability to communicate in English is impacted by stress.

The previous studies indicate that the fear of speaking a second language was substantially correlated with oral communication abilities. Verbal communication abilities also mediated the relationship between interpersonal skills and speaking anxiety in a second language. A study by Abu-Rabia et al. (2014) shows a link between linguistic proficiency and communication apprehension. The study suggests that linguistically underdeveloped pupils have communication anxiety. When considered collectively, social and interpersonal traits are believed to be closely associated with communication anxiety. As mentioned, social and interpersonal situations where people feel awkward speaking in front of a group, such as in a classroom, contribute to communication anxiety. There has been a move toward making EFL classes more interactive in India.

Baharuddin and Rashid (2014) examined the link between individual demographic factors, academic performance and anxiety. The study looked at FLA using two measures: foreign language reading anxiety and classroom anxiety. 252 English major undergraduates participated in the study. Various items related to communication anxiety and fear of criticism were included. The study indicated the impact of anxiety on communicative competence. According to Abdullah and Rahman (2010), speaking and linguistic stress can also be correlated with self-esteem. Language anxiety is high in learners who lack self-esteem and have fear of public speaking and social anxiety. An analysis of speaking anxiety in second language classes should include psychological factors connected to speaking anxiety.

Çağatay (2015) investigated explicitly how anxiety affects speech. In his study, he found that confidence has a good impact on the speech performance of the participants. He identified a connect between oral response patterns and anxiety. In contrast to less nervous participants in her study, more worried participants tended to be less subjective and more objective in their verbal responses. According to Onwuegbuzie et al. (2000) analysis of language learners, competitive nature can cause anxiety when language students compare themselves to others or have an idealised self-image. Thus, these studies show that stress and performance are negatively correlated.

Miles (2021) investigated oral presentations for English proficiency purposes. In this qualitative research study, the effects of teachers' attitudes on students' English speaking anxiety are descriptively identified. English speaking anxiety issue was addressed by identifying the teachers' attitudes toward students concerning their speaking achievement and anxiousness, as well as students' perceptions of those attitudes while giving speaking performance. Fifteen students and six teachers who participated in this study were questioned using an interview that included open-ended questions. The interviews show that instructors' attitudes have implications on students' fear of speaking English. Students' fear of making mistakes and falling short of their teachers' expectations can be reduced by teachers' student-friendly approaches and interactive instructional strategies. Teachers who are strict and firm in monitoring their students' language use make the learners anxious. This attitude of teachers increases the learner's fear of making mistakes and they fall short of their teachers' expectations. This study concluded that teaching strategies significantly influences students English Speaking performance.

Research has proved that various factors are involved in creating speaking anxiety among learners. Lack of motivation and self-confidence, self-perception of learning difficulties, lack of linguistic proficiency, teachers' attitude and expectations are some of the common factors. Various in-depth studies are conducted to develop innovative strategies to encourage learners develop speaking skills in the foreign language or English as second language which is very important in the present globalized context. Teachers should develop innovative strategies to encourage their learners to take efforts to speak given the current emphasis on oral skills.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To identify the difficult language skill of the students.
- To examine speaking anxiety from students' perspectives.
- To analyse the effectiveness of Four-dimensional integrated strategy to alleviate speaking anxiety.

IV. THE PRESENT STUDY

Enhancing speaking skills of the learners is a challenging task for teachers. The responsibility of language teachers is to make students enhance their speaking skills and it demands more attention, service-oriented-mind set, involvement, sincere efforts and concern for students. In the current learning scenario with the demands of the globalised world and the unique learning style of students, activity-based teaching and learning seems to be a result-oriented system, especially for developing the speaking skills of the learners. Teachers should also adopt suitable strategies for teaching speaking skills.

A. *Group Activities as Methodology*

Group activities are more useful and effective compared to individual participation and performance. Role-plays, dramatics, skit and group discussions are considered to be interesting for learners' as they give them opportunities to talk or speak with their peers. "Past studies on activity-based have focused more on the effectiveness of such strategies on pupils/students' performance" (Salami, 2014, p. 96). Learners enjoy the group-activities than the individual activities. The other members' performance is observed with keen interest and there is a sudden interest and involvement to better as an individual performer. This gives a sense of comfort and confidence. The moral support they get from the group members helps during speaking situations and when it becomes challenging. The findings of Madjid (2020) reveal that group work method solves the problems that arise while teaching speaking and also improves the performance of the students. Activity-based learning certainly improves speaking skills.

B. *Motivation as Strategy*

The significance of motivation from teachers' side is one of the most important strategies to be implemented to improve students speaking performance. Several researchers have identified and proved that motivation is a very prominent factor. "Motivation is the primary factor that determines whether a difficult action succeeds or fails. It has been proved that if individuals have appropriate motivation to learn second language, it would be easier for them to gain achievements" (Xu, 2023, p. 2321). Lack of motivation can be the cause and effect of both success and failure as well. To make the motivation process more effective, certain supporting strategies can be included.

As a first step in motivation strategy, creating the interest of the students play a vital role as it will motivate the students to participate and do the activities enthusiastically and confidently. Thus, creating interest through setting up proper ambience to explore their language flow and efficiency is a strong foundation. Their participation and performance are the soul of the entire teaching and learning process.

C. *Explaining Rubrics as Strategy*

Obviously, it is better to explain the rubrics or evaluation process and criteria. The detailed description of the marking system will enable the learners to have a better clarity of grading. "True rubrics feature criteria appropriate to an assessment's purpose, and they describe these criteria across a continuum of performance levels" (Brookhart, 2018, p. 1). The grading pattern will give a detailed process of how one is going to be evaluated for their speaking activity. The students have the possibility to understand what would be the expectation of the teacher from their performance. This in turn, instigates the students urge to perform carefully to score more marks.

D. *Skill Integration as Strategy*

Integrating language skills is a meticulous strategy to enhance a particular language skill without much stress and pressure. Integrating reading will enable learners to understand the context, improve vocabulary knowledge and grammar skills. Dash (2013) concludes that reading takes the learners to a broader and wider spectrum of language and context. Through reading learners will also be able to improve speaking and grammar skills in a skill integrated process. Thus, integrating skills and fine tuning the activity process in a structured manner becomes an integral part of the whole progression. Skill integration is an effective strategy and influences deeply the language teaching and learning process. Tavit (2010, p. 765) indicates that "The group practicing the skills in integration was found to be more successful than the group practicing the skills separately".

E. *Grouping as Strategy*

In language teaching process, group-activities are conducted to alleviate the difficulty level of the students; grouping is one of the most important strategies. Grouping can be done in heterogeneous or homogeneous type. The temporary group formation provides the learners a chance to work together. Muchiri and Njenga (2020, p. 227) state that "Mixed-ability grouping based on academic achievement was observed to be the most effective grouping strategy". The key

element in grouping is that, all the learners work or takes effort to achieve the same goal. It is a proven fact that the impact of grouping is always positive and outcome is highly result-oriented in language teaching and learning process.

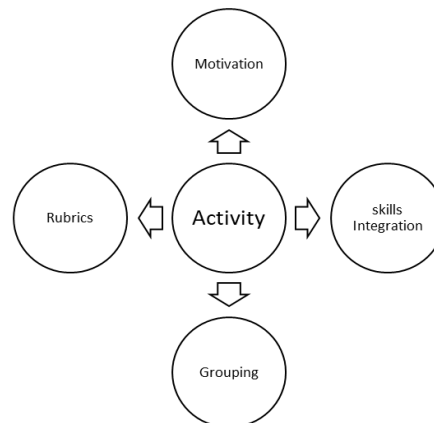


Figure 1. Activity Based Four-Dimensional Integrated Strategy

The present study brings out the fact that the group-activities are extremely supportive in terms of improving speaking skills. Furthermore, the study elucidates the importance of linking various strategies like motivation, language skill integration, grouping and explaining rubrics for alleviating students' anxiety. The study highlights and suggests activity based Four-dimensional integrated strategy for alleviating anxiety.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This small-scale survey was conducted to examine the speaking anxiety of the students before and after intervention. In this study, the researcher created a questionnaire to analyse the level of anxiety the students experience while speaking in English class. The responses were received through google form questionnaire administered in class.

Questionnaire was the primary tool for collecting data during the study. This study used a convenience sampling methodology and data was collected from 105 students from a renowned institution in Chennai, India, employing a quantitative and qualitative research paradigm. Researcher created two questionnaires for pre and post intervention based on Horwitz et al. (1986) foreign language classroom anxiety Scale. There were 15 similar questions for both before and after intervention and open-ended questions were also added. Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis was done for qualitative data and thematic analysis for quantitative data.

A. Before Intervention

Initially, the students were asked to answer all the 15 multiple choice questions and an open-ended question as part of the research study. Thus, the qualitative and quantitative data was collected before intervention. After completing the process, the learners were given activity-based intervention following Four-dimensional integrated strategy teaching approach to alleviate anxiety.

(a). Dimension 1: Motivation Strategies

The study adopted stage-wise motivation process of creating interest among the learners: (i) To start with, the teacher creates interest by appreciating their existing level of speaking skills by using encouraging words: "you can do better", "your effort is highly appreciated", "I see a good change in your participation", etc., The comforting words given is to indicate that everything is going to ultimately make a huge difference in the speaking skill. (ii) The teacher explains the significance of enhancing speaking skills in the present globalised world.

(b). Dimension 2: Explaining the Rubrics

Simultaneously, the teacher explained the rubrics or the grading pattern to the learners' to achieve the expected outcome. Thus, the learners' got better clarity of marking system and it will enable them to understand that they have to give their best.

(c). Dimension 3: Grouping Strategy

The teachers' understanding of students' ability, performance, and learning style enabled to systematically allocate students into different groups. Meticulous planning was done before grouping them based on the mixed-ability skill set. The groups worked together till they completed the activity to develop the required skill.

(d). Dimension 4: Skill Integration

After the formation of mixed-ability group, the teacher incorporates the designed and integrated the language skills into the group-activity. In addition to this, proper instruction was given on how to do the activity. Besides, the suitable and interesting study materials, e-content, related videos and audios were also shared for preparatory measures.

B. The Intervention

The students then performed the group-activity with zeal and enthusiasm as the Four-dimensional integrated strategy made them to interact with their peers; they experienced less anxiety while mingling in a group. The support that they received from the teacher and peers increased the confidence level to overcome the difficulties faced before intervention. The whole group activity process, apparently, helped the students to learn not only about the content but also the overall skill development and exposure to e-learning as well.

C. Post Intervention

The students were asked to answer 15 multiple choice questions and an open-ended question as part of post intervention study.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Quantitative Analysis

A question regarding the most difficult skill was included in the questionnaire to identify students' perception on the toughest language skill. Among 105 students 12 students (11%) affirmed that listening is the toughest. Whereas, around 73(70%) of them revealed that it is speaking. Seven of them (7%) feel that it is reading not the other skills. Out of 105, 13 students (12%) stated that it is writing compared to the other three language skills.

TABLE I
DIFFICULT LANGUAGE SKILL

Skills	Number of Students	Percentage
Listening	12	11
Speaking	73	70
Reading	7	7
Writing	13	12

The questionnaire was prepared to check the responses on both pre and post intervention to examine whether the difference in speaking anxiety is significant. Table II shows the result of 105 students pre and post intervention. The data grading and calculation is done by using Likert scale measures: Strongly agree -5, Agree-4, Neutral -3, Disagree-2, Strongly disagree-1.

For the first question, whether they feel quite sure of themselves when they are in English language class, the pre-intervention mean value is 3.39 and SD is .872 and post-intervention result is 3.02 and 1.028. It is evident that there is a difference between pre and post intervention. Learners responded whether they tremble when they know that they are going to be called on in their English language class to do the activity. The value for pre-intervention is 3.69 and SD is .984 and post-intervention the mean value as it is 2.8 and SD is 1.048. For the third question whether it frightens them when they don't understand what the teacher is saying in the English language class the pre-intervention mean value is 2.85 and SD is 1.090 and post-test mean value is 2.42 and SD is .918. With regard to the pre and post mean value 2.84 and SD 1.145 and 2.55 and SD 1.209, the result justifies that they think about things that have nothing to do with the English course. The result proves that the group-activity makes the learners comfortable and they proceed to the next level. The mean value before and after intervention 3.30, 2.76, and SD 1.126, 1.148 explicates that anxiety due to the thought that other students are better at language is at higher level for learners during pre-intervention and gradually the four dimension integration strategy helps the learners to do the activity successfully and apparently reduces the level of anxiety. Thus, the post-intervention result is proves the effectiveness of intervention.

It is obvious that the students start to panic, if they are forced to speak in English without preparation in English class. It has been strongly expressed by learners that there is a radical difference in terms of their performance before and after intervention. The difference in the pre and post 3.93 and 2.96 mean and SD 1.022 and 1.100 substantiates the differences. Initially, students were facing a little embarrassment to volunteer and answer in the class. The mean values of pre and post are 3.52, 2.99, and SD of pre and post 1.001, 1.070 clarifies that even hesitation level is reduced. Students claim that they face anxiety in language class even if they prepare well. It is a proven fact that through the mean value of pre-intervention 3.34, whereas it is comparatively less as the mean value is 2.74 which is very low after intervention. The learners reveal that they often feel like not going to their language classes before intervention .The mean value before intervention is 3.00 and SD is 1.263, whereas the post intervention is 2.49 and SD 1.161. This is perhaps due to the impact of both internal and external factors involved in the English speaking activity process.

TABLE 2
PRE AND POST INTERVENTION

S.NO	Questions	Before Intervention (n=105)		After Intervention (n=105)	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my English language class.	3.39	.872	3.02	1.028
2	I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in my English language class.	3.69	.984	2.81	1.048
3	It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the English language class.	2.85	1.090	2.42	.918
4	During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course	2.84	1.145	2.55	1.209
5	I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am	3.30	1.126	2.76	1.148
6	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English language class	3.93	1.022	2.96	1.100
7	I worry about the consequences of failing in my language class	2.96	1.176	2.38	1.113
8	In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know	3.40	1.043	2.70	1.011
9	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class	3.52	1.001	2.99	1.070
10	Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it	3.34	1.134	2.74	1.118
11	I often feel like not going to my language class	3.00	1.263	2.49	1.161
12	I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.	3.56	1.018	2.69	1.041
13	I always feel that the other students speak English language better than I do.	3.42	.998	2.92	1.035
14	I feel very self-conscious about speaking in English in front of other students.	3.67	.906	3.18	.969
15	I feel more tense and nervous in my English language class than in my other classes	3.04	1.126	2.51	1.039

“Heart Pounding” is the other issue, stated by the learners. They feel that when they are about to be called on in the language class. This might be due to the issues related to anxiety. In this case, the mean value before intervention is 3.56 and SD is 1.018 and after intervention is 2.69 and SD is 1.041. It indicates heart pounding is less after intervention. Certain students strongly believe that the other students speak better than them. Results exhibit that there is a good change in the pre and post intervention. It is evident in the pre and post result; the mean value is 3.42 and 2.92 and SD .998 and 1.035 respectively. Evidently, students have also rightly manifested that they are conscious about speaking in English in front of other students. The pre and post mean value 3.67 and 3.18, SD .906 and .969 significantly states that there is a gradual change and improvement. Among the 105 students, some of them have mentioned that they feel more tensed and nervous in their English language classes than in other classes. This could be definitely because of anxiety related issues. The result shows that the mean is 3.04 before intervention and 2.51 after intervention and it indicates less anxiety after intervention.

TABLE 3
PAIRED SAMPLE STATISTICS

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Before Intervention	105	49.9048	8.39932	.81969
After Intervention	105	41.1238	9.30022	.90761

In the table 3, the paired sample statistics is shown. The mean value before intervention is 49.9048 and standard deviation is 8.39932. The standard error mean value is .81969. Comparatively, the mean after intervention is 41.1238 and it is lesser than the value of before intervention and the difference is evident.

TABLE 4
T - TEST

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of difference		t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Before and after intervention	8.78095	12.569	1.2266	6.34839	11.2135	7.158	104	.000

The result of the test of significance of difference indicates that there is a difference in anxiety level before and after intervention $t(104) = 7.158$ and the difference is significant at .000 level. This proves that the Four-dimensional integrated strategy is effective in alleviating anxiety.

B. Qualitative Data

(a). Before Intervention

An open-ended question regarding the students' views on speaking in class was given. The qualitative data submitted added value to the research in terms of identifying their anxiety before intervention. The qualitative data analysis explicitly displayed the outcome of the in-depth information in terms of themes.

i) *Fear and nervousness*: Predominantly, fear and nervousness seem to be the two common factors affecting the speaking skills. The following are the few points stated by learners: "Frightened", "I need to speak boldly without any fear", "I fear a lot", "I forgot what I have practiced also when I go and give any speech in class", "I'm very afraid to talk in front of class", "I know that my English is too bad and I get fear talking in front of others", "I feel very nervous when I speak among a group of people, If I speak wrong it brings me fear", "Little bit nervous", "I am nervous, I have anxiety when i am speaking in front of the class", "I'm too nervous and I have stage fear so I think not to go to the class mainly when speaking activity are done".

ii) *Self-awareness*: Learners are able to realise the fact that they are not strong in speaking English language. Students declare that "I am weak at my English speaking skills", "I am not afraid of speaking but I feel my English skills are not that good", "My speaking is not so good and not so bad, I am just able to manage, but I am trying to improve myself when it comes to speaking". The students share their views as "I have lot of things to share but when it comes to reality some struggle happens". Speaking unnecessary and irrelevant words and blabbering are some of the difficulties faced by the students. "I am so conscious that when I am speaking I start to utter unnecessary words not relevant to the context". Another student says that "forgetfulness is one of the problems". "I forgot what I have practiced also when I go and give any speech in class". Obviously, it could be because of fear, anxiety, tension or stress.

iii) *Stage fear*: Stage fear is also another impact factor that influences the speaking skill. They say, "I'm very afraid to talk in front of class", "I have stage fear and my mind becomes blank when they call my name to give speaking activity", "I have stage fear that is my weakness". The students share their views as "I have lot of things to share but when it comes to reality some struggle happens while presenting in front of others", "I think I have less strength in speaking in front of the class", "I have stage fear and mind becomes blank when they call my name to give speaking activity".

iv) *Physiological anxiety*: Anxiety is experienced physiologically by learners while trying to speak in English. The existence of anxiety is the identified factor. Many of them say that they, "Feel very anxious while speaking in front of others, "legs are shaking while speaking", "My fear is shown clearly in my voice", "When they ask to speak I am getting more anxiety", "I think when I stand in front of everyone in the class my legs start trembling and I can't speak as I wanted to do". In all aspects, the study proves that the students have difficulty while speaking.

v) *Language mistakes*: Fear of making grammar mistakes and usage of language are the other important language problems they face. The following inputs clearly indicate, "I feel nervous because of my grammatical mistakes I make while speaking", "My English grammar is bad".

vi) *Lack of confidence*: Lack of confidence leads to all complications in terms of speaking in English. The cause and effect of lack of confidence is much higher always in all possible speaking situations. Some of them emphasises, "I think I'm not that good but I just try to make it correct", "I think I have less strength in speaking in front of the class". Lack of confidence is one of the main reasons for students' low performance level.

vii) *Fear of audience*: Students are unable to speak in front of others. "After seeing too many audiences staring at me I feel so tensed and I forget the content whatever I have prepared before that makes my confidence down", "what my classmates think of me", "If I do not perform well my classmates will laugh at me", "when I look at my classmates I forget what I have to say", "Fear of audience", "I get distracted when my classmates are talking with each other." Fear of audience becomes a serious mental agony or stress. It completely blocks the speaking performance of the learners.

viii) *Lack of knowledge about the content*: As a matter of fact, it should be noted that if the students prepare well and try to speak, things are fine. These are the following inputs given by the students, "If I'm well prepared then I present myself neatly without any fear and nervousness but if I don't prepare then I feel anxious". The subject knowledge or knowing the topic helps the learners to perform or speak better. The given statement by the learners justifies it in this way, "I am okay if I have the knowledge about what I am going to speak about. I will manage with it. But if i am in a situation to learn and present of a new thing it frightens me a lot".

ix) *Fear of evaluation*: Evaluation is the most important part of any activity or purpose of the activity. The learners' thought about how they are going to be evaluated by the teacher and peers create a high level of fear. This view is clearly stated by a learner. "First before giving any speech or doing any activity we may feel a little anxious whether we have met the expectations of the faculty and audience or not", "Scarred of teacher". Learners expect guidance, instructions and suggestions along with evaluation or grading pattern before doing any individual or group activity. This makes them understand the process of evaluation and expectation of the teachers well. Students do expect the teachers to offer proper flow of the activity to be conducted. One of the students makes it clear that, "Need a clear outline of what we are going to do", "How marks will be given".

(b). After Intervention

The study focuses on the qualitative data collected from students after the intervention activity. Students were asked to give information for an open-ended question regarding their learning experience of the group activity. It is satisfying to note or observe that the learners have mentioned positive inputs.

i) Improvement: The students revealed that the group activity improved their speaking skills. “It has improved my communication skills a lot”, “Its good and helped to improve our skills”, “My English speaking skills has improved after these activities”, “I think that I should be much better than before”, “Good to learn something new and speaking too”, “Yes I think I had improved a lot”, “I feel like I'm improving in speaking”, “Improved, nice interaction in class”, “Sometimes, I get stammered in between the conversation”, “I believe that I could work on it, and improve myself”, “The activities which I do in class really has made me to improve”, “I felt I came out from nervousness and improved communication with everyone”, “I feel that I improved a bit in speaking skills with new mates”. One of the students said that “starting I felt shy and trouble while speaking but I believe that this activity helped me to get me more confidence on my English speaking for my future opportunities”, “I felt nervous at starting days, but it’s quite better and interesting”, “Now-a-days I really feel some improvement is there in my speaking skills”. These valuable feedbacks from learners could be considered as proven facts that students gained through gradual improvement in speaking.

ii) Result oriented group activity: Learning from peers and experiencing a joyful learning are also reflected as a better result of the group activity. Learners felt that the group activity motivated to mingle with their peers and to overcome fear. “Motivated me to speak English without fear”, “I feel it was a great opportunity to explore my new things with my classmates and learn more from them”, “It’s was very useful and we learned to mingle with all kinds of people”, “I felt that I got many ideas from my team members, their thoughts and opinions, so definitely it helped me a lot to speak aloud in the class and come out of fear of speaking”. The success of any learning activity depends on the learners’ improvement, feedback, result-oriented and expected outcome. Some of the students have revealed that, “It was nice doing group activity, while doing that we can estimate the others view”, “It is a wonderful opportunity to learn and correct our mistakes”. They expressed that they feel comfortable mingling with peers after the activity. They have projected and proved that they were “unable to speak with new people but I can find myself sharing more points and thoughts with my group and feels free to speak”, “In group activity, we'll open up with our own thoughts and creative ideas”, “It gave me a good experience on interacting new people and I enjoyed it, but till now I was bit nervous in speaking activity”, “After group activity I felt happy because I can able to speak in front of people without any nervousness and I didn't forget anything what I have prepared before”. “Time was given to use inputs and to discuss with my team members at that time I become comfortable with my team members and at the time of final group activity I really performed well”. Students also stated, “We are now better in our language and communication skills”, “It was an enlightening experience”, “Got a chance to show my talent”, “It has been worthy. Learnt a lot on speaking skills”, “Wonderful, I have learnt many new things”. The joy of learning is a reflection of well-planned and skill-integrated group activity. It has been effectively indicated by learners.

iii) Skill integration: By all means, the following is the appreciable feedback and result of skill integration. Perhaps, this can be considered as a motivating factor for teachers’ effort of their teaching strategy. “I learnt writing, reading, listening activities, it'll help me to perform further speaking activities in my upcoming classes”, “Motivated me to speak English without fear because of the study material and interaction”. Learners also specifically mentioned that how integrating skills helps them to improve other skills as well. “We were discussing in group and interacting with each other with the study material. It taught me how to get points and talk in group discussions”. One of the students has stated that “I love the English class. Teacher gives a lot of time for discussion. So we get a lot of information as well”, “The audio-video on the topic was useful”, “The inputs for preparation helped me to note down relevant points”, “Reading of the articles helped”, “Study material gave more points”, “Materials improved my content”, “They gave new idea”, “Helped me to arrange my points”. These statements indicate that through discussion and skill integration, learning happens in a very effective and informative way.

iv) Increase in confidence level: This study has led the learners to overcome fear, anxiety and other difficulties. Many of them have stated that, “Now I feel quite confident while in front of everyone, because of this class I got interacted with my peers and now I don’t fear to speak in front of them”, “I learnt new things”. With high level of confidence many of them have happily expressed their positive and joyful learning experience, “I gained lot of confidence and experience from this activity”, “It did change my previous way of presenting a bit, but I'm still trying to communicate and present myself much better”. Learners did feel that “The experience was good enough and I started to speak fluently without any preparation”. Furthermore, it is truly encouraging to note that the learners gained confidence, “I learnt many things, I interacted more with members and I have lost my stage fear, I am learning English course that means a lot for me”. “It gives a self-motivation and self-confidence by doing activity”, “All these group activities helped me to gain some confidence in my language”, “I can say that the fear and anxiety which I had when speaking in front of class got reduced”, “after group activity I am confident”.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study identifies the existence of anxiety among language learners before intervention and the necessity to take measures to alleviate anxiety. Activity based methodology was adopted using Four-dimensional integrated strategy. The effectiveness of teacher’s motivation, explanation of the rubrics, skill integration and grouping are evident in the post intervention results. The feedback also proves that group activity helps the learners to perform better. Apparently, the difficulty factors responsible for anxiety are fear and nervousness, self-awareness, stage fear, physiological anxiety, language mistake, lack of confidence, fear of audience, lack of knowledge about the content and fear of evaluation.

Subsequently, the study also focused on the remarkable changes after intervention. The highlight of the effective outcome of the group activity is the improvement in speaking skills. The students enjoyed the group activity which resulted in increasing the interest and confidence level. Moreover, skill integration provided sufficient material for discussion and it led the learners to improve other language skills as well. It can be concluded that the research significantly proves that group activity-based intervention and the Four-dimensional integrated strategy adopted will alleviate the speaking anxiety level of the learners, since there is significant difference in anxiety level before and after intervention.

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