# SPEAKING ANXIETY: DISCOVER THE POWER OF PUPPETS

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## ABSTRACT

*One of the attributes needed by every learner to be globally competitive is to be equally competent in Bahasa Malaysia and English as reflected in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025. In fact, one of the objectives of teaching English in schools is to ensure that school leavers use English in everyday situations and work situations. Unfortunately, the acquisition of English as Second Language (ESL) especially the speaking skill still remains critical despite numerous actions taken to improve the use of English. One of the factors which hinder learners from speaking in English is anxiety. Means to reduce anxiety should be explored and employed. Hence, the study reported in this paper concerns reducing anxiety among primary school learners to speak in English through the use of puppetry. A case study research design therefore suits the purpose of this study as the aim was to explore how the use of puppetry reduces anxiety. Data was collected through interviews and triangulated through observations and document analysis. Six ESL learners from a sub-urban primary school in Semporna, Sabah participated in this study. The findings show that the use of puppetry reduces learners' anxiety to speak in English. It changes the learners' perception towards speaking in English. The findings have significant implications on ESL teachers, teacher trainees, policy makers, and also future researchers towards enhancing the teaching and learning process in the classroom which will eventually impact learners' competency in English.*

Keywords: anxiety, English as a second language, fun learning, puppets, speaking skills

## Introduction

English is one of the main subjects in all primary and secondary schools in Malaysia in accord with its status as second language. One of the objectives of teaching English in schools is to ensure the school leavers to use English in everyday situations and work situations (Education Policy, 1979). This is evident in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 which emphasizes the need of each student to be competent in Bahasa Malaysia and English language in order to be competitive nationally and internationally. Unfortunately, according to a study by government's Performance Management Delivery Unit (Pemandu), more than 400,000 Malaysian graduates are jobless with one of the reasons which is incompetent in the English language and lack of communication skills (Karim, 2016). The acquisition of English as Second Language especially speaking skills still remains critical despite numerous actions taken to improve the use of English (Yunus & Kaur, 2014; Fung & Min, 2016).

One of the obstacles which prevent learners from learning to speak in English is due to anxiety (Fung & Min, 2016). They are anxious and lack of confidence when it comes to speaking in English for fear of making mistakes (Nascente, 2001; Fung & Min, 2016). Normally, they are afraid of being teased or laughed at by their friends which stop them from practising the language. Hence, they are not motivated to speak in English as they find it difficult and purposeless. These negative attitudes are the reasons for the deterioration of English language competency among learners (Samuel and Bakar, 2008). One of the reasons in the failure of young learners learning a new language is the inadequate elements of fun in the teaching and learning process.

There is a need to find a means that would overcome this fear and develop learners' confidence to use the language in a fun and motivating ways. Incorporating puppets in the classroom can be very motivating and appealing as there is element of fun in the teaching and learning (Toledo & Hoit, 2016; Christamia, 2014). Hence, it is believed that incorporating puppetry during the speaking lesson will reduce learners' anxiety and therefore encourage them to speak in English. Numerous studies have evaluated the effectiveness of puppetry in enhancing learners' English proficiency especially in speaking skills. However, little study have been carried out on the use of puppetry in teaching English among Malaysian primary school learners especially in a sub-urban area in Sabah.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the use of puppetry as a fun learning approach in reducing learners' anxiety to speak in English in a sub-urban primary school in Semporna, Sabah. It is hoped that the study will illuminate a better understanding on the use puppetry in reducing anxiety to speak in English from the perspectives of six primary ESL learners. This study also provides insights for ESL teachers to improve their pedagogy and design interesting activities which will eventually motivate the learners to participate in the speaking lesson. In addition, the findings of this study is also hoped to be useful for teacher trainees, policy makers, and also future researchers towards enhancing the teaching and learning process by incorporating fun learning approach in the classroom to enhance learners' proficiency in speaking skills.

Hence, this paper presents the problem statement that underpinned to the study and a brief review of literature to provide an understanding of the context. This is followed by description of the study and methodological concerns of the study. The findings and the discussion, implications and recommendations are presented prior to the conclusion of this article.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

Learners usually face problem when it comes to speaking in English. Majority of the learners who are proficient in reading and writing skills are not able to speak in English. They are nervous and tend to be silent during the speaking lesson carried out in the classroom. This was also evidence in the study done by Subramaniam et al (2011) as many learners especially from rural areas are weak and lack of confidence in speaking skills. She added that communicating in English cause high anxiety to the learners. Most of them are afraid of being laughed when it comes to speaking in English.

Anxiety and lack of self-confidence are some of the reasons which hinder the learners from speaking in the target language (Nascente, 2001; Fung & Min, 2016). Next, according to a study done by Yulianti & Latief (2014), if there is any competition held for English Carnival, most of the learners even those with good scores in English examination hesitate to join oral competition such as storytelling, poetry recital, and public speaking. Speaking in English has always been seen as a difficult task to learn especially when it is the second language of an individual.

There are several reasons which cause learners to become anxious and less motivated to speak in English. Firstly, both teachers and students in Malaysia are exam-oriented due to the education system which emphasizes on examination (Lee, 2016; Christopher, 2016). According to Lee (2012), Malaysian education system lacks creativity which causes students to feel bored and dreadful. Next, teachers neglect fun activities due to lack of ideas or knowledge on how to utilise it in the classroom to help students to speak (Chang & Goswami, 2011; Chen & Goh, 2011). In addition, not all the schools in Malaysia especially rural schools have access to internet (Ghavifekr et al. 2016) which cause difficulty for teachers to expose learners to fun and authentic materials.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### ANXIETY IN SPEAKING

In general, anxiety is defined as "the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system" (Horwitz 2001, p.113). Anxiety in language or better known as language anxiety is best defined as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope 1986, p. 133). Consequently, the effect of anxiety can lead to poor performance in speaking skills (Brown, 2007).

Next, Cutron (2009) believes that language anxiety has a debilitating effect on learners' success in second language, and that teacher should make an effort to alleviate it in their classroom. Therefore, teachers are required to motivate the learners in order to reduce their anxiety. When learners have the opportunity to be involved in fun activities, they will be more interested in learning and practising to speak in English. Next, according to Khamies (2006) affective factors are the most important issues that may promote learners' speaking skills. Affective factors include self esteem, emotion, attitude, anxiety, and motivation.

In this study, anxiety is seen as an obstacle which hinders learners to speak in English. This feeling of anxiety is parallel to the concept of 'affective filter' introduced by Krashen (1982); that anxious and tense are metaphorical barriers which prevent learners from acquiring the language (Lightbown & Spada, 2008). This 'affective filter' can only be reduced or removed when learners are in a stress-free environment. For optimal learning to occur, the affective filter must be weak. A weak filter means that a positive attitude towards learning is present (Krashen, 1982).

There are many past researches carried out, which revealed that anxiety is the cause for ESL learners to avoid speaking in English. Meyes's (2003) study revealed that ESL learners experienced certain affective factors such as lack of confidence, anxiety and lack of motivation when they are required to speak in English. This was also evident in the study carried out by Fung and Min (2016) which shows most of the learners (66.6%) often experience the feeling of anxiety and uncomfortable especially during oral presentation in front of the class. In addition, the study carried out by Christopher (2016) identified the same problem where 15 out of 30 year 5 primary pupils admitted that the anxiety of being criticised by others stopped them from speaking in English.

## PUPPETRY IN TEACHING ENGLISH

### DEFINITION OF PUPPETRY

A puppet is a figure or thing and it is movable. According to Yulianti & Latief (2014), puppet is a traditional art used to provide entertainment as well as to educate about character building. The movement of a puppet is controlled by rods, strings and even by placing hands into it. Some of the common puppets are the sock puppets, stick puppets and box puppets. Puppetry is a variation and creative way of presenting stories. During the ancient time, the goal of using puppetry is to bring the element of fun and excitement to the viewers. In puppetry, the whole story is presented using inanimate figure to represent the characters in the story. The person who controls the puppets may or may not be visible to the audience.

As time passed, puppetry started to gain its popularity in the world of education as a helpful and effective educational tool (Christamia, 2014; Toledo & Hoit, 2016). In fact, specific lesson can be taught with full of enjoyment for children. Most importantly, a puppetry lesson will only be effective if the teachers are good and can take the place of an artist who normally manipulates a puppetry play. Puppetry is a teaching aid or tool rather than a teaching method. To make it work, puppetry must be

correctly connected with curriculum and syllabus. In fact, according to Lee (2016), it is essential for teachers to take into consideration types of fun activities that can be used, how to connect them with the syllabus, textbook, and how it can benefit the learners.

## ADVANTAGES OF USING PUPPETRY DURING SPEAKING ACTIVITES

There are many advantages of incorporating puppetry in the teaching and learning process to help the young learners to speak in English. Firstly, it is believed that puppetry is very helpful in reducing anxiety among young learners. They tend to feel more relax because the 'affective filter' which prevents the learner from learning the language will be reduced (Brezigar, 2010). Moreover, according to Alam (2002), puppet has special advantage to nervous and shy learners and it provides them the confidence to become part of the activity. The moment learners experience something exciting, fun, new, and interesting, it will help them to speak spontaneously.

Most importantly, learners need to speak in the target language in a stress-free environment without anyone pressuring them to speak. Therefore, learners will speak confidently with the usage of puppets because according to Ozdeniz (2000), when a learner speaks using a puppet, it is not the learner who is seen to make the errors during the presentation but the puppet instead. Hence, learners find this very convincing. This is one of the reasons why using puppetry in the classroom can bring the feeling of fun, excitement among the learners and at the same time it helps in achieving the goals to be a competent speaker (Christamia, 2014).

Puppetry also helps to motivate the learners to be part of the speaking activities. According to Harmer (2001), sustaining and developing learner's motivation is one of the biggest challenges faced by teachers in schools. Teachers have to encourage learners to participate in the individual and group work, concern for their feelings, as well as ensure the appropriateness of the task. Primary learners need something which is appealing, interesting, as well as meaningful to encourage their participation in the classroom. Primary learners like things which are colourful to motivate them to speak actively in the classroom. If the techniques and materials used are intrinsically motivating and appealing to learners' goals, then it can have a positive impact on their speaking skills (Brown, 2001). Puppetry creates contexts and allows learners to use their curiosity and imagination to be part of the activities (Toledo & Hoit, 2016). Moreover, puppets stimulate learning, build self-confidence, and provide the opportunity to learn communicative skills at an early age (Brezigar, 2010).

In addition, the use of puppetry will benefit all types of learners; visual, audio as well as kinaesthetic. This is suitable for the situation in Malaysian classrooms which consist of large number of learners with different learning styles and preferences. According to Philips (1999), some of the activities which work well for young learners are total physical response such as colouring, gluing, cutting, and simple repetitive activities. Therefore, puppetry will cater the needs of all types of learners. Learners can view the puppetry presentation of their friends and listen to the voice simultaneously. In fact, puppetry activities will keep learners actively engaged with hands-on activities and this will definitely attract kinaesthetic learners.

Moreover, puppetry also promotes many aspects of oral communication which enhances learners' speaking skills. Learners will learn to use correct pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation patterns. Next, the learners can also improve their oral communication skills by the means of repeating, responding, understanding, and applying their new knowledge. According to Gronna, Serna, Kennedy & Prater (1999), using puppets for speaking lesson is one of the best ways to teach social skills and language functions like greetings, giving directions or instructions and to initiate conversation. These are important aspects of speaking skill which the learners can apply in their group discussions or even in their daily conversation. According to Toledo & Hoit (2016), these aspects of oral communication eventually enable the learners to become confident speakers who can communicate clearly, appropriately and coherently in any given context.

## THE STUDY

The purpose of the study discussed in this paper was to explore the use of puppetry in reducing learners' anxiety to speak in English. Three research questions underpinned the whole study. However, this paper presents the findings and discussion of one of the research questions related to the first research question: **How does the use of puppetry reduce learners' anxiety to speak in English?**

In order to obtain result for the research question, this study adopted a qualitative approach. Semi-structured interviews were carried out after the implementation of puppetry in the classroom. Interviews was chosen as a data collection tool as it is suitable and useful to obtain the learners' responses, feelings, preferences, and perceptions about the puppetry based on their own experience. The interview questions used for this study were adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al, 1986). There were 14 questions prepared to investigate the learners' anxiety on the use of puppetry during the speaking lesson.

Next, all the six learners were also observed and requested to write a journal about their puppetry experiences. The observation checklist consists of 7 items to investigate the anxiety level among the participants during the performance. The observation items on anxiety were adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al, 1986). Observation was chosen as one of the instruments to collect data because it is suitable to be conducted among young participants as it occurs in a setting which is stress-free and comfortable (Creswell, 2012). The observation was carried out during the teaching and learning process when participants perform the puppet show. Each participant needs to present individually for about 10 minutes and their presentation was tape recorded. In addition, each participant was also asked to keep a journal to

express their thoughts and feelings about the usage of puppets during the speaking lesson in the classroom. Document analysis was chosen as one of the instruments because it provides information needed to study the problem in order to find for relevant solution. According to Creswell (2012), document analysis provides advantage of being in the language and words of the participants, who have usually given thoughtful attention to them.

The participants of this study are six primary school learners (3 males and 3 females) and they study in Sekolah Kebangsaan Pekan Semporna II. All of them are from the Bajau ethnic. The participants are twelve years old and they learn English as a Second Language (ESL). The participants were chosen through purposive sampling technique based on certain common ability identified among all six of them. These learners obtained 'A for both English papers in all the tests and examinations held in the school. They are proficient in reading and writing skills, unfortunately not in speaking skills. This is based on the formative assessment carried out in the classroom as these learners could not communicate well in English.

The data collected through the interview was transcribed. The transcriptions were analysed to the principles of grounded theory and past studies through constant comparative analysis to identify the themes and categories for coding purpose. After the coding has been done, the copies of transcriptions were given to the head of English Panel in the school as a means of validating the coding process.

**FINDINGS**

Table 1 shows the responses of the six participants during the interview on the use of puppets in reducing their anxiety to speak in English. The meanings of the codes are shown in table 2.

| Participants | Responses | Code |
|---|---|---|
| P1 | Related question<br>1. Do you think puppets help you to speak in English? Why?<br>*Yes, kerana puppets boleh mengurangkan perasaan gemuruh.* | **RAN** |
| P2 | Related questions<br>1. Do you feel shy speaking in English now?<br>*No.*<br>2. Do you think puppets help you to speak in English?<br>*Yes* | **SOA** |
| P3 | Related questions<br>1. How do you feel when you speak in English?<br>*I'm scared because I'm not fluent.*<br>2. So, how do you feel speaking in English with the use of puppets?<br>*Excited.... I'm not scared.* | **SOA** |
| P4 | Related question<br>1. Do you think puppets help you to speak in English? Why?<br>*Yes.... because with the use of puppet.... with the use of puppet I can speak confidently in English because I don't feel nervous.* | **RAN** |
| P5 | Related questions<br>1. How do you feel speaking in English with the use of puppets?<br>*Happy*<br>2. Are you still scared or afraid to speak in English now?<br>*Not really.... I think my speaking skill is better now...* | **SOA** |
| P6 | Related question<br>1. Do you think puppets help you to speak in English?<br>*Yes... puppetry boleh menurunkan rasa gemuruh.* | **RAN** |

**Table 1: Participants' Responses on Anxiety during the Interview**

| No | Code | Details |
|---|---|---|

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | **RAN** | Puppets reduce anxiety and nervousness |
| 2. | **SOA** | Participants were not shy or afraid to speak in English with the help of puppets. |

**Table 2: Meanings of the Codes**

| No | Code | Details | Participants | | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 | |
| 1. | **RAN** | Puppets reduce anxiety and nervousness | Y | | | Y | | Y | 3 |
| 2. | **SOA** | Participants were not shy or afraid to speak in English with the help of puppets. | | Y | Y | | Y | | 3 |

**Table 3: Summary of Interview on Anxiety**

As can been seen in Table 3, three participants (P1, P4, and P6) stated that puppets helped them in reducing anxiety and nervousness while speaking in English. Equally, another three participants (P2, P3, and P5) agreed that they were not shy or afraid to speak in English with the use of puppets.

**OBSERVATION**
The interview above was also supported with the result of the observation. The following table shows the checklist for anxiety.

| No | Code | Details | Participants | | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 | |
| 1. | **SOA** | Learner is comfortable. | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | 6 |
| 2. | **RAN** | Learner does not stutter. | Y | Y | Y | Y | | | 4 |
| 3. | **SOA** | Learner does not tremble. | Y | Y | Y | Y | | | 4 |
| 4. | **RAN** | Learner does not get panic. | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | 6 |
| 5. | **SOA** | Learner does not refuse to do the performance. | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | 6 |
| 6. | **SOA** | Learner does not feel shy. | Y | Y | Y | Y | | | 4 |
| 7. | **SOA** | Learner manipulates the puppets well. | Y | | | Y | | Y | 3 |

**Table 4: Checklist for Anxiety during the Observation**

As Table 4 shows, all the six participants were comfortable while presenting the puppetry show. Next, four out of six participants (P1, P2, P3, and P4) did not stutter during the performance. Another two participants (P5 and P6) stuttered a bit especially at the beginning of the show. In addition, the same four participants (P1, P2, P3, and P4) did not tremble when they performed the puppetry show. Where else two participants (P5 and P6) trembled as their hands were shivering while holding the puppets. After a few minutes of presentation, both the participants 5 and 6 begin to perform well without stuttering and trembling. Next, all the six participants did not get panic and did not refuse to do the puppet performance. Four out of six participants (P1, P2, P3, and P4) were not shy to perform the puppet show. They proudly walked to the front with their puppets. Only two participants (P5 and P6) were quite shy as they were hiding their puppets at their back while walking to the stage. Finally, when it comes to manipulating the puppets, three participants (P1, P4, and P6) manipulated the stick and socks puppets well during the story telling. Where else the remainder three participants (P2, P3, and P5) were not that expert in manipulating the puppets as they were using big box puppets and their hands are small.

**DOCUMENT ANALYSIS**
The table below shows the participants' reflection about the use of puppets in reducing anxiety to speak in English.

| Participants | Journal Entry | Code |
|---|---|---|
| P1 | Puppets:<br><br>- *help me speak English because I am not scared.* | **SOA** |

| P2 | *- After using puppets, I got the nice feeling and I happy about speaking in English. I not scared to talk in English.* | **SOA** |
| P3 | *- I don't feel scared to show my puppet to friends. I excitedly present my puppet to my friends. I bravely talk in English to my friends using puppet.* | **SOA** |
| P4 | *- I am not nervous to speak after using the puppets.* | **RAN** |
|  | *- I am not ashamed to speak in English. Puppet helps me.* | |
| P5 | *Puppet is nice and good because I can talk in front of many friends.* | **SOA** |
| P6 | *Puppets:* | **SOA** |
|  | *- give me bravery* | |
|  | *- make me strong to talk in English.* | |

**Table 5: Participants' Responses on Anxiety in their Journals**

As can be seen in Table 5, five participants (P1, P2, P3, P5, and P6) revealed that they were not shy or scared to speak in English with the help of puppets. They were brave enough to speak in English in front of their friends with the use of puppets. Only one participant (P4) stated that puppets help to reduce the nervousness in her which indirectly helps her to speak in English bravely.

**DATA TRIANGULATION ON ANXIETY**
The table below shows the triangulation of the three instruments on the use of puppetry in reducing anxiety. It can be seen from the table that the responses given by the participants during the interview is the same with the attitude observed and reflection written in their journals. The findings from all the three instruments indicate that that puppets help to reduce the anxiety and nervousness among the participants. Participants admitted that they were not shy or afraid to speak in English with the use of puppets.

| Instruments / Codes | **Interview** | **Observation** | **Document Analysis** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Puppets reduce anxiety and nervousness **(RAN)** | Do you think puppets help you to speak in English? Why? <br><br> *P1: Yes, kerana puppets boleh mengurangkan perasaan gemuruh.* <br><br> *P4: Yes.... because with the use of puppet.... with the use of puppet I can speak confidently in English because I don't feel nervous.* | **P1,P2,P3, P4** <br><br> • Learner does not get panic. <br> • Learner does not stutter. | **P4:** <br> - I am not nervous to speak after using the puppets. |
| Participants were not shy or afraid to speak in English with the help of puppets **(SOA)** | 1. How do you feel when you speak in English? <br> **P3:** *I'm scared because I'm not fluent.* <br><br> **P5:** *Shy* <br><br> 2. So, how do you feel speaking in English with the use of puppets? <br> **P3:** *Excited.... I'm not scared.* <br><br> **P5:** *Happy* | **P1,P2,P3, P4** <br><br> • Learner is comfortable. <br> • Learner manipulates the puppets well. <br> • Learner does not refuse to do the performance. <br> • Learner does not feel shy. <br> • Learner does not tremble. | **P2:** - After using puppets, I got the nice feeling and I happy about speaking in English. I not scared to talk in English. <br><br> **P3:** - I don't feel scared to show my puppet to friends. I excitedly present my puppet to my friends. I bravely talk in English to my friends using puppet. |

**Table 6: Data Triangulation on Anxiety**

**DISCUSSION**

Based on the interview carried out, three out of six participants responded that with the use of puppets, they were not shy or afraid to speak in English. Similarly, another three participants said that puppets reduce their anxiety and nervousness. This attitude was also observed among the participants during the puppet performance and interview session. All the six participants were comfortable and they were not panic during the puppetry performance as stated in the observation checklist. During the interview also, the participants were relax and comfortable. This finding on participants' feelings and attitude is aligned with Krashen's hypothesis on affective filter which explains that for optimal learning to occur, the affective filter must be weak. A weak filter means that a positive attitude towards learning is present.

Moreover, at the beginning of the interview, these participants were asked on their opinion about speaking skills before the use of puppets. Most of them gave negative feedbacks, for instance P1 said "*I can't speak fast in English*", P4 answered "*I cannot speak in English well*", and P5 said "*it is difficult to speak correctly*". After the exposure of puppets, participants went forward willingly and did not refuse to present the puppet show individually. They also cooperated well during the interview and five out six participants tried their best to speak in English without feeling nervous or shy. This is also supported in the participants' journal as they wrote "*after using puppets; I not scared to talk in English*", "*I am not ashamed to speak in English, puppets help me*", and "*puppet is good, I can talk in front of many friends*". This is parallel to the study done by Brezigar (2010) which stressed that puppetry is very helpful in reducing anxiety among young learners as they tend to feel more relaxed because the 'affective filter' which prevents the learner from learning the language will be reduced.

In addition, at the beginning of the interview, these participants were asked about the activities they preferred in the classroom. One of the participants (P3), said that he preferred choral speaking and the reason is because "*sebab ramai-ramai boleh menghilangkan rasa takut*" (which means by doing it in a group it can reduce fear) which indicates that the feeling of being anxious exists in the participant when it comes to speaking in English. This is similar to the study done by Fung and Min (2016) which showed most of the learners (66.6%) often experience the feeling of anxiety and uncomfortable especially during any oral presentation in front of the class. This attitude changes after the exposure of puppets as this participant was brave enough to do the puppet show individually in front of his friends and give his opinions during the interview. In fact, he wrote in his journal that "*I bravely talk in English to my friends using puppet*". This is parallel to the study carried out by Toledo & Hoit (2016), which emphasizes that puppetry is a helpful and effective educational tool to benefit the learners.

The findings indicate that all the six participants showed positive changes in their attitude in terms of their anxiety level, willingness, and motivation to speak in English. The use of puppetry also changed the participants' perceptions towards speaking skills as they became to be more motivated to speak in English. The participants were brave and willing to speak in English during the interview despite making grammatical errors and having difficulties in pronouncing certain words. The findings indicate that the use of puppetry as a fun learning approach helps in reducing learners' anxiety to speak in English. These findings were validated as illuminated by the data collected through the triangulation of interviews, observations, and document analysis. Therefore, this answers the research question on how the use of puppetry reduces learners' anxiety to speak in English.

**IMPLICATIONS**

The result of this study has several implications. Firstly, the use of puppetry could make the speaking activities carried out in the classroom more appealing, interesting and exciting. Fun learning environment reduces the anxiety and low self-concept among the learners and therefore develops their confidence and inspire them to participate in the activities carried out. When learners participate willingly, they will practice speaking in the language. This implies that teachers should provide a fun, friendly English learning environment that does not create tense or anxiety so that students do not fear to speak in English. It is indeed important for teachers to pay attention to learners' feeling as it influences the input they receive. This brings to another implication related to teacher training. Teachers should be trained or retrained to improve their pedagogical knowledge and skill that would interest students to participate in speaking in English.

Next, the use of colourful puppets helps in attracting the learners towards the lesson. The colourful and concrete materials enabled them to understand the real situation through fantasy. In this study, puppets give the learners excitement as they experience something which they consider as playing tools to help them to become a competent speaker. Thus, indirectly they are learning to speak while playing with the puppets. This again has pedagogical implications.

Another implication is related to language policy. Perhaps, English language teaching and learning policy should not look at the process as teaching and learning a subject matter but rather as a tool for communication. As the findings show that when the students were happy using the language through this fun language use, they no longer fear to speak in English. This brings to another implication related to assessment. Assessment should not focus on written skill alone but equal attention and assessment should also be given to speaking proficiency. If this is done, then students have no choice but to use the language; for example to speak the language in order for them to perform well in the spoken skill too.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**
As a result of this study, there are a few recommendations for English teachers, future researchers, teachers training college and policy makers.
1.      English Teachers

English teachers should develop and use various fun and appealing materials in the classroom like puppets to generate an inspiring, a lower affective filter and pleasant environment leading to higher morale and a greater sense of confidence among the learners in speaking skills. English teachers should join seminars or conferences to gain knowledge on incorporating fun and interesting activities which can be very useful in the classroom.

2.      Teachers training college

Creating fun and environmentally friendly materials should be made as a part of the syllabus for teacher trainees. This will be very helpful for the future teachers to face the real challenges of teaching in schools with lack of ICT facilities when they are being posted to rural schools. In teachers training college, more emphasis is placed on incorporating ICT in the classroom. Thus, when these teachers are being posted to rural areas with lack of internet facilities, they tend to give up. Teacher trainees are not exposed to face the real challenges in schools. Therefore, it is indeed necessary to expose teacher trainees to environmentally friendly materials and its usage which can give impact towards learners' competency in English.

3. Future researchers
This study is mainly to identify the use of puppetry in reducing learners' anxiety and build confidence to speak in English. Other researchers may follow this study in different contexts in order to discover more tools or activities which can be taught to young learners to enhance their speaking skills. In fact, other researchers can carry out studies using puppetry among secondary schools learners who are weak in speaking skills.

4. Policy makers
Finally, policy makers should encourage teachers to develop materials or modules on fun learning. Teachers who are able to develop effective tools or modules which benefit the learners should be given incentives. These modules should be distributed to schools just like school textbooks so that both teachers and learners can utilize it. This will give the motivation and advantages for both teachers and learners. In addition, oral assessment should be made compulsory in Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR). This will indirectly encourage both teachers and learners to focus on speaking skills instead of just reading and writing skills.

**CONCLUSION**

As presented in the findings and discussion, it may be concluded that puppetry helps in reducing learners' anxiety and building their confidence to speak in English. This summarizes the conceptual framework underpinning this study. The findings indicate that the use of puppetry creates interesting and exciting atmosphere which leads to fun learning. This eventually reduces the participants' anxiety and develops their confidence to speak in English. When learners have the confidence to speak in English, they tend to practice the language and ultimately it will enhance their speaking skills.

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