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Bachelor's project in Primary and Lower Secondary Teacher
Education for Years 5–10

Supervisor: Karina Rose Mahan

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A STUDY ON SPEAKING ANXIETY IN THE ESL CLASSROOM



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SPRING 2021

Abstract

This research investigates which factors of speaking anxiety most commonly affects the ESL learner and how teachers can work with ESL learners' speaking anxiety. The study is twofold: it examines which main factors contribute to ESL learner speaking anxiety (literature review of empirical research), and how ESL teachers can work with students' speaking anxiety (semi-structured interviews). The literature review is an analysis of literature gathered from various search engines and the tailing method. The review is based on eight empirical studies from the years 2013-2020. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with two Norwegian ESL teachers.

The literature review revealed four reasons ESL learners may have speaking anxiety: lack of linguistic knowledge, feelings of self-worth and self-esteem, social demands from peers and pedagogical factors. Through the semi-structured interviews, three topics were identified as ways teachers can help their students with speaking anxiety in the ESL classroom: classroom environment, adaptation and creativity, and authentic tasks. The main finding of this study was that the teachers focused primarily on the pedagogical implications of language learning, and not the psychological factors, which is in contrast to the findings from the literature review. This might suggest that teacher education should focus more on the psychological factors affecting their students' language learning. This study would then suggest an evaluation of the importance of students' affective factors in teacher education and argue its importance for effective language learning.

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Introduction

Anxiety is the most common mental health disorder in the world; over 200 million people are affected by it every year (Richie & Roser, 2018). It is one of the most common psychological disorders in the US affection around 18% of the population every year (ADAA, 2021). It is also a common disorder among both adults and children in Norway (NIPH, 2018, p. 7). The Norwegian Institute of Public Health (2018) found through a study on the Norwegian population's mental health, that anxiety is in fact the most common mental disorder in Norway (p. 7). Feelings of anxiety can be a direct result of being put in a specific situation, and foreign language anxiety is one example of this. The term was introduced in the 1980s and since then studies have found a significant amount results suggesting that foreign language anxiety have great effects on students' ability to acquire and learn a foreign language (Horwitz, 2010, p. 1; Teimouri, Goetze & Plonsky, 2019, p. 364). These findings might then argue a need for more research on the topic, due to the world becoming increasingly more globalized resulting in more people having to utilize a second or foreign language, such as English (Rindal, 2019, p. 336).

Learning English is an important asset to Norwegian students and deemed highly beneficial by the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training (2020b). This is apparent through the fact that English is one of the three core subjects in the curriculum through elementary and lower secondary school (The Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2020b). Due to this, Norwegian students uses a second language quite a lot through their lifetime and are prone to experiencing foreign language anxiety. The Education Act (1998) §9 A-2 states that all educators and employees at Norwegian schools have the duty to prioritize the students' mental and physical well-being. Because of this, one could argue that the Norwegian schools should work towards a less anxiety-inducing environment when learning a foreign language.

With all this in mind, this study will focus on foreign language anxiety among ESL students. The two research questions guiding this study are: 1) *What main factors contribute to ESL learners speaking anxiety?* (literature review) And 2) *How can teachers work with the students' anxiety to improve the overall experience of speaking English in a foreign language classroom?* (semi-structured interviews).

Background and context

This part will give an overview of three areas relevant to the study of speaking anxiety in the Norwegian ESL classroom. Firstly, anxiety will be defined and put in a second language context where the effects of anxiety on ESL learners will be looked at. Secondly, the difference between English as a second language and English as a foreign language will be discussed, to reflect on the role of English in various research/educational contexts. Further on, this will be seen in connection with English language learners in Norway as a way to understand the practices used here. Lastly, the Norwegian school system and its curriculum will be introduced, where the practices and teachings in the English classroom are highlighted.

Anxiety

In the following section, I will present some information on anxiety in general, how prominent it is and how it manifests. In addition, information on foreign language anxiety and its importance in the classroom will be outlined. Feeling anxious in stressful situations is very common and often beneficial because it is our brain telling us we are in danger and need to get away from the stress inducing situation (American Psychological Association, 2017). Anxiety disorder on the other hand is defined as a psychological issue or disorder of the brain, and “differs from normal feelings of nervousness or anxiousness, and involve excessive fear or anxiety” (APA, 2017). The term *anxiety disorder* is an umbrella term for all disorders related to anxiety and these include, but are not limited to, panic disorders, social anxiety, phobias, separation anxiety and generalized anxiety (Anxiety & Depression Association of America, 2021). Knowing how and why anxiety manifests could be important when dealing with students with speaking anxiety. This can provide an understanding of what the student is going through, which then could result in the teacher providing them with support and accommodation.

In the 1980s the term *foreign language anxiety* was introduced and described manifestations of anxiety similar to stage fright and test anxiety (Horwitz, 2010, p. 1). There have been several studies that reported anxiety having a negative role in the process of learning L2 (Teimouri et al., 2019, p. 364), and Horwitz (2001) specified that these studies focus on a number of target languages, not just English (p. 116). A substantial finding from Teimouri et al. (2019) revealed that the effects anxiety has on students’ achievements are more severe in the perspective of foreign/second language learning (p. 377). Due to these findings, EFL and ESL teachers should have knowledge on second language anxiety and its

effects on students. Therefore, this research will not only examine the main factors of speaking anxiety, but also present a qualitative study on how teachers can work with their students' anxiety in order to improve their overall experience in the ESL classroom.

EFL vs ESL

As the world is becoming increasingly more globalized, English has become the foremost global language, in addition to functioning as a global lingua franca (Rindal, 2019, p. 336). People who use the English language are often divided into three groups, wherein one group contain the native speakers of English and the remaining two contain the people who use it as a foreign or second language (Galloway & Rose, 2015, p. 14). Galloway and Rose (2015) present definitions of both terms and interpret English as a Foreign Language (EFL) as “the use of English in a context where it has no official status and is not widely used in the local community, and thus is limited to special contexts like the classroom” (p. 253). This meaning that there are very few if any opportunities for the English language learner (ELL) to engage in and use the language outside of the already set learning environments. ESL on the other hand is explained as the following: “The use of English in a context where it is an official second language spoken alongside other mother tongue learners” (Galloway & Rose, 2015, p. 253).

Keeping these definitions and explanations of EFL and ESL in mind, I would argue that ELLs in Norway are learning English as a second language. Rindal (2014) states that English being a foreign language in Norway might not be correct, due to increased exposure through travel and communication, as well as its frequent appearance in higher education (p. 314). English is a mandatory subject for all students in Norway all through elementary school and lower secondary school. It is not only mandatory, but one of the three core subjects in the Norwegian curriculum. English appears in several other contexts than just education, some being entertainment and social media, and through this “increased out-of-school exposure and English proficiency, English no longer feels foreign to Norwegians” (Rindal, 2019, p. 336). A study published by The Norwegian Media Authority (2020) showed that Norwegian children from 9-18 years old, encounter more English through entertainment platforms, such as YouTube, Netflix and gaming, than they do Norwegian (p. 5). Due to the extent of English influences outside of the classroom and its importance in the Norwegian curriculum, I would argue that ESL is the most appropriate term to use regarding this topic. This ties into RQ1, due to settings of the empirical studies. Most of the literature specifies that they are researching within an EFL context, and thus these distinctions between ESL and EFL are useful to be aware of.

The Norwegian School system and English education

This section will provide information on the Norwegian school system and give input into the English curriculum and the core curriculum. Norwegian schools are divided into three parts whereas the first two are the only compulsory parts of the education. These obligatory years are at elementary school (grades 1-7) and lower secondary school (grades 8-10). English is a mandatory subject through 1-10, and also at some fields of education at upper secondary school.

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2020a) presents English as an important part of students' education regarding communication and developing an understanding towards others. They also specify that with the growing global use of English, it will only become more important for students to be able to communicate and comprehend the language in the future. The basic skills, oral skills, writing, numeracy, reading and digital skills have been implemented to ensure that all subjects throughout the Norwegian curriculum focus on including them as they have been deemed the most important for students to master (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020b).

The core curriculum also presents principles regarding education and the school's practices where they specify the importance of an inclusive learning environment, "School shall develop an inclusive environment that promotes health, well-being and learning for all" (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020b). This principle is statutory according to the Education Act (1998) §9 A-2, which further specifies the schools' requirement to create environments where the students' health and well-being is at the highest importance, and this specification includes both physical and mental health. This applies to all levels of lower education in Norway, elementary school, lower secondary school and upper secondary school.

Theoretical framework

In the following section I will give an overview of the main theory used for this study, the Affective Filter Hypothesis. This theory has been chosen on the basis of its implications that teachers' pedagogical practices should create a more stress-free environment and highlights the importance of feelings of anxiety in language learning (Krashen, 1982, p. 31). The hypothesis will be outlined, as well as the understanding of second language acquisition with focus on the difference between learning and acquiring language.

Affective filter hypothesis

This next part will give an overview and explanation of the Affective Filter Hypothesis, affective filters and why the hypothesis is relevant to the ESL classroom. The Affective Filter Hypothesis is a part of the five hypotheses about second language acquisition presented by Stephen Krashen. The Affective Filter Hypothesis provides insight into how affective factors, such as motivation, self-confidence and anxiety can affect our language acquisition. In order to fully grasp the meaning of the hypothesis, it is important to know what the affective filter is and what it does. The affective filter acts as a barrier keeping language input away from the part of our brain that acquires language, also called the language acquisition device (Krashen, 1982, p. 31). Motivation, self-confidence and anxiety are variables defining what Krashen (1982) presents as attitudes towards second language acquisition. By having low motivation, low self-confidence and high anxiety your predisposition toward language acquisition will be less optimal (p. 30). This predisposition is connected to the affective filter, and by having a strong or high filter the input aimed towards the acquirers will not make it to the language acquisition device. The same process is applied to the opposite attitude and affective filter. Having an optimal attitude towards second language acquisition often means that the person has high motivation, good self-confidence and low anxiety. This leads to the person having a low or weak affective filter, which means the barrier will not be as strong. The input will then more easily reach the language acquisition device (Krashen, 1982, p. 30-31).

One could argue that the Affective Filter Hypothesis should be an important part of every language classroom. In order to create an effective language classroom, the language teacher should be someone who can give the appropriate input to their students, make that input comprehensible and simultaneously create low filter situations (Krashen, 1982, p. 31). Consequently, teachers should work towards a less anxiety-inducing environment in the classroom, as well as utilize techniques to accommodate and help students who are more prone to experiencing anxiety during their language learning.

Methodology

The primary goal of this study was to better understand how speaking anxiety affects students, and what teachers can do to help them. In order to achieve these goals, two forms of research methods were utilized. First of all, a small literature review of eight empirical studies was employed as a way to research the first research question *what main factors contribute to ESL learners speaking anxiety?* A literature review is a type of research that summarizes and

evaluates a body of writings about a specific topic (Knopf, 2006, p. 127). By using a literature review, information from previous research is evaluated and utilized as a way to answer and support new research, and thus providing an overview over the already existing research that has been made. Secondly, two semi structured qualitative research interviews were conducted with ESL teachers in order to look into the second research question: *how can teachers work with the students' anxiety to improve the overall experience of speaking English in a foreign language classroom?* Qualitative interviews are a way of having factual conversations about a research topic, structured as a seemingly normal way of conversing (Kvale, 1997, p. 21). In other words, a qualitative research interview is based on an ask-and-listen approach where the overall purpose is to gain explicit knowledge on a topic (Kvale, 1997, p. 21). By using qualitative interviews as a research method, I have the ability to collect a lot of data expressed through words and a small number of participants, instead of numbers. Due to the lack of research on this topic in a Norwegian context, I am interested in the insights and experiences Norwegian ESL teachers have to offer, and therefore qualitative interviews were used in this research.

Literature review

The data to be analyzed consists of eight research articles. All of the literary sources are empirical studies (Bani Younes & Albalawi, 2016; Daud et al., 2019; Effiong, 2016; Kayaoğlu & Sağlamel, 2013; Khusnia, 2016; Rahayu, 2016; Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020; Sjaifullah, 2019). The empirical studies have used a variety of methods. However, a combination of qualitative interviews and questionnaires were the most common and used in three of the studies (Daud et al., 2019; Rahayu, 2016; Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020). Two of the empirical studies used primarily interviews as their data collection method (Kayaoğlu & Sağlamel, 2013; Khusnia, 2016). Other method combinations were observation and interview (Effiong, 2016) questionnaires and observation (Bani Younes & Albalawi, 2016), and lastly one study used questionnaires as their only data collection tool (Sjaifullah, 2019). All of the reviewed literature are from other non-English speaking countries whose relationship with the language are very different from the one we have in Norway. Most of the articles have studies set in an EFL setting (Japan, Indonesia, Turkey & Saudi-Arabia). This could result in the studies not being applicable to language learning in Norway.

Selection criteria

I started my search for literary articles by using the database Google Scholar and looked for articles that contained the keywords, *Speaking anxiety, ESL, EFL, English foreign language*

classroom, student perspective and anxiety factors. Khusnia (2016) was the starting point for the literature review. The tailing method was used in order to find more relevant literature on the topic. I read the abstract of the articles that included the relevant keywords, especially *speaking anxiety, student perspective, ESL and EFL* in the titles. This was done through all of the articles found through Google Scholar and Bibsys. However, not all articles of relevance were accessible.

The limitations for the selection of studies were as follows: The literature I chose was only written in English. I delimited the search to studies written after the year 2000 that focused on ESL/EFL students for the sake of relevance. Literature chosen had to include research which examined factors contributing to speaking anxiety through the students' own perspective. In addition, only peer-reviewed studies were utilized to assure the validity and suitability of the chosen literature.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed qualitatively in themes. This method of analyzing data is referred to as content analysis which is "a type of qualitative research that systematically examines a body of material to identify patterns, themes and meanings" (Berg, 2009 as cited in Mahan & Norheim, 2021, p. 79). The empirical studies were organized into tables and noted the main points of each article. This includes which factors they found to be most contributing to speaking anxiety, but also which factors may positively influence the students regarding their oral participation. The negative factors from each article were then compared and the common components from the articles were put into a new table. This made it possible to find common themes among the articles and sort them into four broader topics. This is qualitative research due to the nature of the collected data and because the method is focused on finding patterns within a defined area (Johannessen, Tufte & Christoffersen, 2016, p. 95).

Qualitative interviews

Two qualitative interviews were conducted to gain insight into teachers own reflections and experiences with speaking anxiety in the ESL classroom. The following sections will give insight into the participants of the interviews, how the data were collected and the interview protocol that was used. Lastly an outline of the data analysis method will be presented, as well as how the data was handled after collection.

Participants

The interviews were conducted at a 1-10 school in Norway and the participants were two English teachers in 8th-10th grade. The teachers interviewed were two Norwegians, one male

and one female, who both had between 15 and 20 years of experience as an English teacher. They teach 8th and 9th grade English. Both interviews were conducted during the same week, and I gave them the topic of the interview beforehand. We had a small conversation about what I expected from the process and what type of questions they could expect. They have both been given pseudonyms and will be referred to as Kari (woman, 9th grade) and Ola (man, 8th grade).

Data collection and instrument

The collection of data took place through two semi-structured qualitative interviews which were based on an interview protocol. The protocol is provided in Appendix 1. The interview protocol was compiled by the author and consisted of four main questions, 1) *In your experience as a teacher, how have you experienced having students with speaking anxiety in class?* 2) *From your experience as a teacher, how do the students express themselves about being orally active in class?* 3) *Which factors do you believe affect the students speaking anxiety the most?* 4) *What kind of activities do you use in class to avoid speaking anxiety?* All questions were supplemented with follow-up questions to clarify their answers. The reasoning behind the chosen questions is rooted in the theoretical framework and the background information. The Education Act (1998) presents through §9 A-2 that all employees in Norwegian schools must prioritize the students' mental and physical health. Q1 and Q2 were added to address how the teachers understand students' mental health and their perspective of speaking anxiety. Krashen (1982) presents the idea that the affective factors, motivation, self-confidence and anxiety, affect the students' ability to learn and acquire language (p. 30). Due to this Q3 and Q4 were added in order to gain insight into the teachers' perception regarding affective factors.

Both interviews were done in person at the school during workhours and were approximately 45 minutes each. Two – three pages of notes were produced by the researcher for each interview.

Data analysis

In order to analyze the data collected from the qualitative interviews, a similar method to the literature review were utilized. The data were examined systematically through content analysis in order to identify possible patterns, themes or meanings (Berg, 2009 as cited in Mahan & Norheim, 2021, p. 79). I sorted through the observation notes from the interviews and pin-pointed various ideas and statements each teacher made during their interview. They were then put into two tables, one for each teacher. I then color-coded each point into six general themes both of the teachers' answers had in common. These themes were then further

put into three broader topics that incorporates the main ideas from the data collection.

Research ethics and credibility

The research has been conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Norwegian National Research Ethical Committee (2019). The participants of the interviews were informed both in writing and orally about the scope and topics of the research, who have access to the data and what the data would be used for. Their identities have been kept private through the use of pseudonyms, and the interviews were not recorded (Norwegian National Research Ethical Committee, 2019). During qualitative research one must evaluate its validity (Johannessen, et al., 2016, p. 233). Due to the amount of participant in the semi-structured interviews, one could argue that the results might not be representative of all ESL teachers in Norway. This fact threatens the validity of the research as it might not be applicable in other settings (Johannessen, et al., 2016, p. 233). However, through semi-structured interviews larger amounts of unique data is collected which could provide new information on the topic.

The literature review has both strengths and weaknesses, which both are important to highlight. The strengths are that I have used only empirical studies, in order to stay consistent with the type of data I am analyzing as well as I have used only newer articles from the years 2013-2020. A weakness of this review is that only international studies were available, and most are in an EFL setting and not ESL. There is very little empirical research done on this topic in a Norwegian context, which I would argue should be taken into consideration regarding future research. The empirical methods used in the empirical studies are vastly different and their results might not be suited for comparison. In addition, the sample of studies used in this research is on the smaller side and could therefore not be representative. This must be taken into consideration when evaluating the results from the literature review.

Results

This section will present the results. Overall, the literature review suggested that students' speaking anxiety could be triggered from several different factors. In terms of the interviews, the ESL teachers expressed their opinion on how they accommodated students with speaking anxiety through three different categories. The following sections will give a more in-depth description of each theme.

Literature review

This following part will look closer at the data I collected from the literature review, in order to answer research question number one; *What main factors contribute to ESL learners*

speaking anxiety? The literature review provided a great deal of data on possible factors that could contribute to students' speaking anxiety. The data were analyzed and sorted into four broader categories: lack of linguistic knowledge, feelings of self-worth and self-esteem, social demands from peers and pedagogical factors.

Lack of linguistic knowledge

This linguistic category represents the how students might feel anxious when speaking due to the lack of understanding, comprehension and knowledge of the language. Six out of eight articles presented some form of lack of linguistic knowledge in their research (Bani Younes & Albalawi, 2016; Daud et al., 2019; Kayaoğlu & Sağlamel, 2013; Khusnia, 2016; Rahayu, 2016; Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020). The students in these studies mentioned how their lack of vocabulary affected their ability to confidently contribute to discussions or other class activities. Not knowing what is being said or not knowing how to respond due to a lack of vocabulary was one of the more anxiety-inducing factors found in these studies. Daud et al. (2019) found that “[Some participants] worried to speak up in case they can not keep the communication going due to their limited vocabulary” (p. 419). Language comprehension were also a big talking point through these five studies. However, the lack of vocabulary seemed to be the most apparent cause of comprehension issues among these students. This was one of the main findings from Khusnia (2016) where they mention that “the inability to comprehend what was being said in the classroom provoked considerable anxiety” (p.45).

Feelings of self-esteem and self-worth

This category explains factors that lead to students experiencing anxiety during speaking situations. These factors are considered mostly internal, as they are rooted in the feelings and psyche of the student. Four of the studies reported a variety of personal factors that affected their participants negatively in speaking situations (Bani Younes & Albalawi, 2016; Rahayu, 2016; Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020; Sjaifullah, 2019). A reoccurring factor throughout the studies was a lack of self-esteem or confidence when speaking English. The issues they mention are a fear of making mistakes when speaking. However, it is not related to their language proficiency. Sjaifullah (2019) states that “students' anxiety in speaking is rooted from their poor self-esteem” (p.45). Some of their participants mentioned that the feeling of not being confident in a foreign language is an obstacle when trying to produce something orally. Both Rajitha & Alamelu (2020) and Rahayu (2016) found similar findings through their research, where both state that the students lack confidence with their own abilities holds them back from participating and evolving as English speakers, due to the amount of anxiety they feel when in speaking situations (p.1057; p. 45).

Social demands from peers

This category represents anxiety-inducing factors when interacting with their peers. The students' relationship with each other and their attitude towards making mistakes when speaking have a great impact on students' anxiety, according to six of the studies (Daud et al., 2019; Effiong, 2016; Kayaoğlu & Sağlamel, 2013; Khusnia, 2016; Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020; Sjaifullah, 2019). The fear of making mistakes has been mentioned previously but, in this case the fear of making mistakes is only present if the students fear they will be laughed at or ridiculed by their peers. The negative feedback they fear of getting from friends and peers if they make a mistake plays a significant part in their willingness to participate in oral activities. Some participants reported that they feel confident when speaking or practicing English alone, but when they have to speak in front of people, they feel anxious and afraid that they will not understand them or laugh at their mistakes (Daud et al., 2019, p. 417; Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020, pp. 1056-1057). Effiong (2016) found that several of their participants reported a higher level of anxiety if they had to speak to someone of the opposite gender (p. 148). However, this was the only study who mentioned this particular finding. Some students also reported anxiety if they had to speak to native English speakers (Khusnia, 2016, p. 46).

Pedagogical factors

The category *pedagogical factors*, examines types of activities, management of the classroom and the teacher as prominent factors. Of the six studies that mention some type of pedagogical factor, all of them present unprepared oral activities specifically as highly anxiety-inducing (Bani Younes & Albalawi, 2016; Daud et al., 2019; Effiong, 2016; Kayaoğlu & Sağlamel, 2013; Khusnia, 2016; Sjaifullah, 2019). Some participants stated that even though they knew they had to speak and was prepared to say something out loud, they still felt anxious. This was apparently due to the waiting time (Khusnia, 2016, p. 45-46). Several studies had responses that focused on the teacher as an anxiety-inducing factor where both their appearance, way of speaking and classroom management was mentioned (Effiong, 2016; Kayaoğlu & Sağlamel, 2013; Khusnia, 2016; Sjaifullah, 2019). Effiong (2016) noted that the participants found older teachers more anxiety-inducing as well as teachers who dressed formally as they "seemed scary, unapproachable, and less friendly" (p. 141), they also specify that "their FLA level was higher in classes taught by NES (native English speaker) teachers" (p. 153). The teacher has an important job when managing the classroom and ensuring a positive learning environment, as well as they have to include learning models that are efficient and work for their students (Sjaifullah, 2019, p. 45). Several teachers were deemed

unfriendly and strict because they corrected errors their students made before they have a chance to correct them themselves. This was not only seen as frustrating to the students, but also scary as they were met with negativity whenever they made mistakes (Khusnia, 2016, p. 46).

Qualitative interview

This following part will look closer at the results from the interviews. The interviews were focused on the second research question of this study; *How can teachers work with the students' anxiety to improve the overall experience of speaking English in a foreign language classroom?* Three main categories were derived from content analysis: classroom environment, adaptation and creativity, and authentic tasks.

Classroom environment

Both interviewees expressed that they believed creating a safe and supportive learning environment for their students would hopefully reduce some anxiety in speaking situations. Kari illustrated with an example: some of her students commented on and made fun of their peers during presentations and other oral activities. These actions had affected her students' oral activity greatly, and she needed to come up with a solution as they would not stop with the comments. The most effective method was to have the students evaluate each other during oral activities. They were put in small groups and were only allowed to provide positive feedback; Kari would provide constructive criticism. After she started doing presentations like this she had much less of negative comments in her class. This ties in with both the teachers comments on creating a safe environment for their students to express themselves.

Ola mentioned that in order to create a more welcoming space, he does not feel the need to force the students to speak English all the time, as this can put unnecessary stress on them to always have to perform. He encouraged them to be orally active in class regardless of the language they use. He specified that "even though they answer in Norwegian they still answer my question, and then I know that they understood what I was saying". He talked about how more of his students started answering questions, both in Norwegian and English, as they realized he appreciated both answers. Having a positive attitude towards their students, being open with them and encourage their language learning were also some talking points the two teachers had in common on this topic.

Adaptation and creativity

A section of discussion that appeared fairly quickly with both participants was the importance of creativity and being adaptive in their teaching. Both teachers emphasized that they

preferred using their own sources rather than the textbook when teaching. They justified this by mentioning the importance of variety in their teaching. Kari disliked the books' "boring and very much not creative" stance, as it was very old and was mostly grammar related. She talked about not liking those types of tasks herself and would not give them to the students because of this. She preferred finding online sources, such as short films, animation tools, crosswords and "just more fun ways of learning". Ola also mentioned ways he included creativity into his teaching. He liked to focus on the platforms the students themselves often use, such as social media, gaming, music or just their hobbies. He talked about the importance of making English a fun subject and not a part of the week they would dread having to do. By using the students' own platforms and hobbies he experienced a higher percentage of oral activity, and especially from the students who often keeps quiet during class. These techniques are both creative and adaptive, and they also specified that they are very flexible regarding their assessment. Both were very open to the students choosing the assessment method and having an open communication with them regarding their wishes. They found that even though the students could choose assessment method themselves, most of them chose a variety of methods. They realized quickly that their students preferred tests for more structural and grammar related topics, and presentations or "fagsamtaler" when assessing more historical or political topics. Ola believed that due to their flexibility with group size when presenting, more students prefer it over a longer written test.

Authentic tasks

As mentioned under adaptation and creativity, both teachers liked using alternative sources when teaching. One of their justifications for this was due to authenticity. Kari argued that the most important part of learning English was to learn to communicate, and that this was best learned through authentic tasks. They both mentioned that presenting in front of a larger group was a very unnatural way of doing presentations, as the students might never be in such a situation later in life. Due to this they preferred having smaller groups when presenting. Using topics the students liked and current situations were also argued as a way of including more authenticity in their teaching. Kari experienced more spontaneous talking when the students were able to talk about something they enjoyed. Discussing with other students before giving an answer to class was also found to be a very effective way of creating spontaneous conversations and increasing oral activity in their classrooms. Ola spoke about using current situations during his teaching, because his students found it very interesting to learn about. He also mentioned that his students' interest in current events was only a bonus, because he would still include it in his teaching as a way of having more authentic tasks.

Discussion

This research paper has explored student and teacher perspectives on speaking anxiety in the ESL classroom. The findings from the literature review suggests that students' speaking anxiety is affected by several factors. However, the results from the qualitative interviews show that the teachers are more aware of the pedagogical implications affecting speaking anxiety than the psychological implications. This is in contrast to Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which suggests that factors such as self-confidence have an important part in our language acquisition process (p. 31). In this section, I will discuss my findings regarding what teachers should focus on in order to improve their practice and understanding of speaking anxiety in the ESL classroom, through the findings in the literature review and interviews. These findings will also be addressed in connection with the Affective Filter Hypothesis.

The Affective Filter Hypothesis presents three factors that contribute to the severity of our affective filter, motivation, self-confidence and anxiety (Krashen, 1982, p. 30). Our affective filter is the barrier keeping input from reaching our language acquisition device and having a high affective filter will only make the barrier stronger (Krashen, 1982, p. 31). The affective factors motivation and anxiety were implicitly mentioned by the interviewees. Increasing motivation was mentioned through the use of authentic tasks and by using topics and platforms the students take interest in. Reducing anxiety was the main topic of the interviews and the teachers argued that all their ideas and suggestions could, in their opinion, reduce anxiety in some cases. Increasing self-confidence was the only affective factor not mentioned during the interviews, and ties directly into the assumption that the teachers might not be aware of the psychological implementations of language acquisition. This suggestion was made apparent when comparing the findings from the literature review and the interviews. A low feeling of self-worth or self-esteem was one of four main findings from the literature review, and it can be directly connected to the affective factor, self-confidence. Several of the studies in the literature review argued that many students feel anxious when speaking English due to their lack of self-confidence (Rahayu, 2016; Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020; Sjaifullah, 2019). However, their lack of self-confidence was not a result of low linguistic ability, but merely a low opinion of their own self-worth. Following the ideas of the Affective Filter Hypothesis, an effective language classroom cannot be achieved if the participants are experiencing high affective filters. With this being said, in order for the teachers to improve their language teaching classroom, they should implement strategies that

could improve their students' self-confidence, consequently reducing their affective filter. This could be done through activities that highlight the importance of making mistakes and does not focus on their ability achieve a grade. The fear of making mistakes reoccurred in several studies and by challenging this fear through activities, the students might become more willing to try even though they might make mistakes later (Bani Younes & Albalawi, 2016; Rahayu, 2016; Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020; Sjaifullah, 2019).

Both the literature review and the qualitative interviews gave suggestions on which pedagogical factors induce students' speaking anxiety in the ESL classroom. However, the interviews focused more on what the teachers could do to improve the situation or help their students. The findings from the literature review suggested that unprepared oral activities were some of the more anxiety-inducing activities that students face. The teachers seemed aware of this fact as they mentioned how they preferred giving the students time to answer questions or time to discuss with peers beforehand. It might be less scary to speak during class and perhaps give the wrong answer if the students discuss with a partner prior to answering a question. By doing this they are not alone in being wrong, and this might ease the situation. One could see this in connection with the affective factor, anxiety, where the ultimate goal is to reduce the amount of anxiety the students feel during their language learning (Krashen, 1982, p. 30). The second finding in pedagogical factors category were the teacher as an anxiety-inducing component in the language classroom. The teachers themselves did not mention their own presence as a contributor, but this contrast might be due to differences between teaching in Norway versus the other countries. One of the studies that focused on the teachers' involvement were from Japan (Effiong, 2016), and their teachings are very different from in Norway. These cultural differences could be the reason why this were not mentioned during the interviews. However, one study presents ideas around the teachers' involvement very similarly to how Krashen (1982) suggests language teaching should be done, as they mention that the teacher should ensure a positive learning environment, as well as including learning models that are efficient and work for their students (Sjaifullah, 2019, p. 45).

Conclusion

This research paper has explored student anxiety in the ESL classroom by reviewing studies on how students express what triggers their anxiety, and interviews from ESL teachers who express how they deal with these issues in the classroom. The literature revealed four main categories for student speaking anxiety: lack of linguistic knowledge, feelings of self-esteem and self-worth, social demands from peers and pedagogical factors. The semi-structured interviews resulted in three broader topics: classroom management, adaptation and creativity and authentic tasks. These topics contain the teachers' ideas of how they accommodated their students who suffer from speaking anxiety.

One of the more apparent findings from the research was the teachers' lack of focus on psychological factors affecting their students speaking anxiety. This finding might suggest that teacher education in Norway could focus more on psychological factors in the ESL classroom. There is a lack of research on this topic in the Norwegian context, thus further research might look more in-depth into Norwegian students' and their opinions and experiences on the matter. Connecting those findings with teacher experiences could result in findings giving teacher education more information on how to further improve teaching practices.

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APPENDIX 1

Intervju guide

Mål: Finne ut mer om læreres erfaring med elever med snakkeangst i engelskklasserommet, og undersøke hvordan lærere kan hjelpe disse elevene for å forbedre situasjonene der de må snakke.

Tidsgrense: Ca. 40 min

Skolenivå: Ungdomsskole

Hvem skal intervjues: 2 lærere

Q1: I din erfaring som lærer, hvordan har du opplevd å ha elever med snakkeangst i engelsktimene?

(med snakking menes diskusjoner, presentasjoner, å svare på spørsmål høyt, lese høyt, fagsamtaler)

Potensielle oppfølgingsspørsmål:

- Kan du fortelle om en situasjon eller en elev du husker?
- Hvilken snakke-situasjon dreier det seg om? (presentasjon, svare på spørsmål, lese høyt osv.)
- Har du hatt flere lignende situasjoner med andre elever? Har de noe til felles?
- Vet du om disse elevene vegrer seg for å snakke høyt i andre fag også? (andre språkfag, norsk, fremmedspråk – tysk, fransk, spansk)

Q2: Ut ifra hva du har opplevd som lærer, hvordan uttrykker elevene seg om det å snakke høyt i timen?

Potensielle oppfølgingsspørsmål:

- Hvorfor tror du de opplever det slik?
- Hvordan er kroppsspråket deres?
- Endrer ansiktsuttrykket og stemmen seg?
- Følelsesmessige reaksjoner?

Q3: Hvilke faktorer rundt eleven tror du påvirker elevenes snakkeangst mest?

(med faktorer menes forhold rundt eleven, dagsform, engelskferdigheter, gruppeinndeling, snakkesituasjon, kunnskapsferdigheter, publikum, vurderingssituasjon, klassemiljø osv.)

- Du nevnte ... kan du utdype mer om det?
- Hvorfor tror du ... har en så stor innvirkning?

Q4: Hva slags aktiviteter gjør dere i engelsktimene for å unngå snakkeangst?

Potensielle oppfølgingsspørsmål:

- Du nevnte ... kan du utdype mer om det?
- Er det noen aktiviteter som har fungert bedre enn andre?
- Er det noe som ikke har fungert så bra?

