IMPLEMENTATION OF A HUMANISTIC LEARNING THEORY TO FOSTERING SPEAKING SKILLS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS GRADE 5 IN LEARNING ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

This mini-research aims to describe the implementation of a humanistic learning theory in English learning to develop the speaking skills of grade 5 elementary school students, as well as understanding students' perceptions of the implementation of this learning theory. This mini-research uses a qualitative approach carried out in one elementary school in South Tapanuli, North Sumatra. The mini-research participants consisted of six students who were selected based on their academic achievement categories, two students were in the high category (high-achiever), two were medium (middle-achiever), and two were low (low-achiever). Data was collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. The research results show that the implementation of humanistic learning theory is successful in creating a safe, comfortable classroom atmosphere, and supports students to be more confident in speaking English. The teacher acts as a facilitator who rewards each student's efforts, does not emphasize mistakes, and encourages active participation in learning. Students stated that they felt appreciated, were more enthusiastic about learning, and began to show courage in speaking up even though some still experienced anxiety and lacked interaction with peers. The implementation of humanistic learning theory has proven effective in building students' self-confidence and involvement, so it is recommended for wider application in English language learning at the elementary school level.
Keywords: Humanistic Learning Theory, English Language Learning, Primary School Students' Speaking Skills.

INTRODUCTION

English is an international language which is a must to master, especially in the world of education. In the context of learning English, one of the main and important skills that students must master is the ability to speak English. By mastering speaking skills, it allows students to not only communicate, but also express their ideas and feelings, as well as to interact with their social environment. For elementary school students, speaking skills are an essential skill for building their self-confidence so that in learning English they can participate actively (Nematov et al., 2022; Utami & Wahyudin, 2022).

English speaking skills, in the Indonesian context, are not a skill that students can naturally master, especially at the elementary school level. English speaking skills include mastery of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, as well as psychological readiness such as self-confidence and motivation (Sudarmo, 2021). However, in practice, many students experience obstacles when speaking English due to lack of self-confidence or feeling embarrassed, fear of making mistakes, low internal motivation, and a less conducive learning environment (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021; Riadil, 2020, Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020).

Apart from that, the feeling of anxiety that arises when students are asked to practice speaking in English also has a big influence on their speaking performance. This is because students often feel afraid of negative responses that will be given by their teachers and classmates, and also the pressure of learning makes them passive in learning English, especially in learning speaking (Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020). Then, traditional teaching methods that emphasize mastery of grammatical structures also have an influence in that they provide less opportunity for students to express themselves through speaking English freely (Zuhriyah et al., 2024).

To deal with such problems, there is a learning theory that offers a relevant learning approach to be applied in English language learning, especially at the elementary school (SD) level, namely humanistic learning theory. Humanistic theory in learning emphasizes that the learning process must be centered on the learner or students by paying attention to their individual emotional, psychological and social needs (Lozada, 2020). The influential figures in the development of this learning theory include Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, where they emphasized that self-actualization and appreciation in the learning process are very important (Maslow, 1954; Rogers & Freiberg, 1994).

According to Maslow (1954), an individual will have the motivation to learn and develop if their basic needs, starting from physiological needs to self-actualization, are met. In the learning context, especially in learning English, students will have the courage to express and explore their potential if they are facilitated with a sense of security, acceptance and respect. This is also in line with Rogers and Freiberg (1994) who emphasize that "unconditional positive regard" is also important in order to make students feel comfortable and open to learning and developing themselves.

The implementation of humanistic learning theory in learning not only creates a more positive learning atmosphere, but also plays a role in fostering students' self-confidence, empathy and self-awareness (Khoiruman et al., 2023). The application of humanistic learning theory principles can help students reduce anxiety, increase intrinsic motivation, and participate more actively in learning English, especially in speaking skills (Cao & Deris, 2023). Because speaking in English is a skill that requires courage and social interaction, a supportive learning environment is very important (Nematov et al., 2022).

In Indonesia, although the implementation of humanistic learning theory in English language learning is not something new, its systematic application in learning English at the elementary school (SD) level is still limited. The majority of teachers still use conventional approaches which are more teacher-centred and linguistic knowledge alone (Zuhriyah et al., 2024). In fact, using an approach based on humanistic learning theory in teaching English can help provide greater space for students to express themselves, understand problems contextually, and build critical awareness through dialogue (Lozada, 2020).

Likewise with academic studies, previous studies discussing the application of a humanistic approach in learning English at the elementary school (SD) level in Indonesia are also still limited. Most of the available research discusses humanistic implementation in character education (Kharismawati, 2023), social studies learning (Arzfi & Jamna, 2024), or in higher education (Lozada, 2020).

Thus, this research aims to describe how to implement a humanistic learning theory in learning English to develop the speaking skills of grade 5 elementary school students, as well as explaining students' perceptions of their learning experience using this approach. By using a qualitative approach, this mini-research is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of English language learning models in elementary schools. Theoretically, this mini-research expands the study of the implementation of humanistic education at the basic education level. Meanwhile, practically, this mini-research provides insight for English teachers to implement a learning approach that is more student-centered and humanizes them as unique individuals..

DISCUSSION

This section contains discussions that include literature review that serve as the basis for this mini-research, the location and implementation of the mini-research, as well as discussions that describe and explain the results of the mini-research.

1. Literature Review

In this section, the theories used as a basis for carrying out this mini-research will be explained, which include speaking skills in learning English, humanistic learning theories in learning, as well as previous research which discusses the implementation of the humanistic learning theory in elementary schools in Indonesia.

Speaking Skills in English Language Learning

Speaking skills are an important component in mastering English. Speaking is the ability to convey ideas, thoughts and feelings orally which requires mastery of vocabulary, grammar and the courage to interact. In the context of foreign language learning, speaking is considered the most difficult skill to master because it requires integration of linguistic and non-linguistic aspects simultaneously (Nematov et al., 2022). Apart from that, speaking skills are a real representation of students' language abilities which support two-way communication, both in academic contexts and everyday life (Sudarmo, 2021).

In practice, effective speaking teaching requires students to do more than just understand theory. They must be able to use English in real situations. Therefore, the learning process should involve authentic activities that integrate contextual use of language (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020). In this case, learning based on communication, direct experience and constructive feedback plays a very important role.

In the process of learning and mastering speaking skills in English, there are several challenges faced by elementary school (SD) students. The most significant challenge is that psychological factors such as anxiety, shyness, and lack of motivation have a significant impact on students' low participation in speaking. Apart from that, a learning approach that is too teacher-centred and the lack of communication-based activities also has the effect of providing additional obstacles in mastering speaking skills (Lozada, 2020). A learning environment that is not supportive and a one-way approach often worsens this condition, making students afraid to express themselves freely.

Humanistic Learning Theory in English Language Learning

Humanistic learning theory was born as a form of criticism of behavioristic and psychoanalytic approaches which were considered too mechanistic and did not humanize students. Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow were the two main figures in the development of this theory. Rogers emphasized the importance of student-centered learning, where the teacher acts as a facilitator, not as the main source of knowledge (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994).

Maslow (1954) in his hierarchy of needs explains that humans will be motivated to learn if their basic needs have been met, starting from physiological to self-actualization. In a learning context, a safe and supportive learning environment will encourage students to develop and explore their potential. This is the basis for humanistic learning which seeks to form a complete individual both cognitively, affectively and psychomotorically. Humanistic learning theory emphasizes that the learning process should not only be directed at results, but also at the process of actualizing individual potential (Putri et al., 2024). In this approach, students are encouraged to become individuals who are responsible, independent and have high self-awareness.

In the context of English learning, the humanistic approach focuses on creating a positive learning environment, encouraging students to be active and reflective in the learning process. Khoiruman et al. (2023) explained that humanistic learning in English supports students to develop their communicative abilities through exploring personal experiences, social interactions, and respect for differences.

Lozada (2020) added that a humanistic approach is able to encourage increased speaking competence because students feel emotionally safe and supported by the teacher. Involving emotions and personal experiences in the learning process helps students

internalize the material better and reduces anxiety when speaking English.

Furthermore, Wahyuningsih and Afandi (2020) emphasized the importance of integration between a humanistic approach and speaking curriculum development. Curriculum designed by taking into account students' individual needs and integrating media and technology has been proven to encourage significant improvement in speaking skills.

Implementation of Humanistic Learning in Elementary Schools in Indonesia

The implementation of a humanistic learning theory at the elementary school level has begun to receive greater attention in recent years. A study by Arzfi and Jamna (2024) states that this approach encourages the development of creativity, independence and self-confidence in elementary school students. Teachers act as facilitators who help students discover their interests and potential through flexible and adaptive learning.

In addition, Putri et al. (2024) stated that in practice, the application of humanistic theory in elementary schools includes giving students freedom in choosing learning topics, carrying out self-reflection, and involving personal experiences in the learning process. This approach is very suitable for teaching speaking skills, because it creates learning conditions that support courage and freedom of expression.

On the other hand, Putri et al. (2024) also stated that the integration of humanistic psychological theory into education helps students understand themselves, as well as develop self-confidence and responsibility in learning. Thus, the humanistic approach not only develops academic aspects but also the student's personality as a whole.

Although the humanistic approach has been widely applied at the higher and secondary education levels, empirical studies regarding its application to English language learning at the elementary school level, especially in developing speaking skills, are still very limited. Most of the existing research only discusses humanistic approaches in general learning or in character development, not specifically in language skills. Therefore, this research is important to make a new contribution to the literature, with a focus on how the humanistic approach is applied in the context of speaking learning for 5th grade elementary school students.

2. Location and Implementation of Research

This mini-research was carried out at an elementary school located in South Tapanuli, North Sumatra. The total participants in this mini-research were 23 students. However, for data analysis purposes, only data from six students will be used. The six students are representatives of students with high, middle and low achievements.

By using a qualitative research approach, this mini-research aims to dig deeper into the application of a humanistic approach to developing the speaking skills of grade 5 elementary school (SD) students in learning English (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Sugiyono, 2013). The data for this research was collected using two instruments, namely observation sheets and interviews with students.

Observation sheets are used to record student activities and behavior during the humanistic approach-based learning process. Observations were carried out in a participatory and non-participatory manner in two English learning meetings. This observation was carried out to identify changes in behavior, student involvement, verbal expression, and their level of activeness in speaking.

On the other hand, interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner with 6 selected students. This technique allows researchers to explore students' personal perceptions, emotions and experiences regarding English language learning with a humanistic approach. Interviews are conducted in a comfortable and non-intimidating atmosphere, so students feel free to express their views. Interview data was recorded and recorded and then transcribed and analyzed.

Data analysis in this mini-research was carried out inductively through three stages, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. In the first stage, data from observations and interviews were reduced to select relevant information according to the research focus. In the second stage, the data is presented in the form of narratives and thematic category tables. Finally, researchers draw conclusions from consistent and meaningful patterns of findings.

In relation to research ethics, the entire mini-research process pays attention to the principles of research ethics by ensuring the confidentiality of participants' identities, obtaining approval from the school and parents, and ensuring that participation is voluntary. Researchers also ensure that interview and observation activities do not interfere with the students' teaching and learning process.

3. Discussion of Mini-Research Findings

This min-research aims to describe how the implementation of a humanistic approach can develop 5th grade elementary school students' speaking skills in learning English and understand students' perceptions of this approach. The mini-research was conducted in one of the elementary schools in South Tapanuli, with the main participation of six students selected based on academic categories, namely two high achievers, two middle achievers and two low achievers. Based on the results of class observations and in-depth interviews with the six students, it was found that the humanistic approach had a positive influence on students' courage and comfort in speaking English.

In creating a learning atmosphere, the teacher has applied one of the principles of humanistic learning theory by creating a safe and comfortable atmosphere. Before learning begins, the teacher always asks about the students' condition and builds emotional closeness with them. The results of observations and interviews show that students feel happy learning English because the teacher does not scold them even if they make mistakes. For example, low achiever students stated,

"The teacher does not get angry even though we make mistakes when speaking English."

A class atmosphere like this is in accordance with Maslow's theory (1954), which states that fulfilling the need for security and esteem is a prerequisite for achieving self-actualization, including in this case the courage to speak up.

Apart from that, giving praise is also an important part of the learning process. Teachers often say positive words such as "Good job!", "Smart!", or "Good!" when students try to speak in English. The students' response to this praise was very positive. In interviews, high achiever students stated that they felt more enthusiastic about answering questions after receiving praise. Likewise, middle achiever students revealed that they were more enthusiastic about learning because

"The teacher always teaches until you can."

This practice shows that appreciation for students' efforts, although imperfect, plays a major role in increasing their intrinsic motivation (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). Praise is not only a form of positive evaluation, but also a form of empathetic communication that strengthens the emotional relationship between teachers and students.

Student participation in speaking also increases during learning. Teachers give all students a fair opportunity to speak, including those who are usually passive. Some students stated that they felt like they were talking more than before. One of the middle achiever students said,

"Today I talked more than yesterday's lesson."

This increase shows that applying a humanistic approach can increase students' courage to express ideas and opinions orally, an important aspect of English speaking skills.

Even so, many students still feel nervous and afraid of making mistakes. Low achiever students stated that they were afraid of making mistakes and being laughed at by their friends. This shows that speaking anxiety is still a challenge that needs to be considered, as also stated by Rajitha and Alamelu (2020).

Interaction between students during speaking activities in English is still relatively low. Observations show that most students focus more on responses to teachers rather than interactions with peers. Low achiever students revealed that when study groups were determined by themselves, they were often "both confused." However, when students are given guidance and support by teachers, they feel happier and more confident. This indicates that the application of a collaborative approach with appropriate direction still needs to be strengthened in learning speaking (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020). This lack of interaction can also be attributed to uneven levels of self-confidence, as well as learning habits that are still dominated by interactions between teachers and students rather than between students.

Student reflections on the learning experience also show the positive impact of implementing a humanistic approach. All students expressed a desire to be more courageous and fluent in speaking English in the future. They also show enthusiasm to continue learning. High achiever students stated that they wanted to be "more brave in speaking English in front of the class," while middle achiever students hoped to be able to speak like a teacher. This increase in enthusiasm shows that the humanistic approach gradually forms a learning environment that empowers and supports students' self-actualization process (Maslow, 1954; Putri et al., 2024). In this case, the humanistic approach not only has an impact on students' cognitive aspects, but also on the formation of learning character, courage and self-awareness.

Overall, the research results show that the implementation of humanistic learning theory is effective in creating a supportive and inclusive learning atmosphere. This approach is not only able to reduce students' anxiety, but also increases their engagement, motivation and confidence in speaking English. This is important for the primary education context, where the role of emotions and social relationships is very strong in shaping students' learning experiences. However, teachers need to continue to develop strategies to strengthen interactions between students and foster courage equally among all students, especially those who still tend to be passive. With ongoing training and professional development, teachers can broaden the application of humanistic approaches to become more adaptive to the needs of diverse students.

CONCLUSION

This mini-research concludes that the implementation of humanistic learning theory in learning English can have a positive impact on the development of speaking skills in grade 5 elementary school students. This approach succeeds in creating a learning environment that is safe, comfortable, and supports students' courage in expressing themselves. Teachers who act as facilitators have built positive emotional relationships with students, give appreciation to each student's efforts, and do not emphasize mistakes excessively. The interview results showed that students felt appreciated, more enthusiastic, and gradually more confident in speaking English. In addition, students stated that the flexible, friendly and encouraging learning methods used by teachers helped them to be more actively involved in the learning process. Although interaction between students still needs to be improved, in general the humanistic approach is able to build a strong foundation for the development of students' speaking skills at the basic education level.

Based on the findings of this mini-research, it is also recommended that English teachers at the elementary school level consider implementing a humanistic approach as an

effective learning strategy to improve students' speaking skills. Teachers can continue to build a supportive learning atmosphere, provide constructive praise, and provide a safe space for students to try without fear of making mistakes. To increase the success of this approach, teachers also need to design more varied and collaborative speaking activities to encourage more active interaction between students. Apart from that, training and mentoring for teachers regarding humanistic strategies in the context of teaching English also needs to be further developed by schools and education policy makers. Future researchers are advised to conduct broader studies with a larger number of participants or use a mixed-method approach to enrich understanding of the effectiveness of the humanistic approach in different contexts.

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