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Identifying the Needs of Reticent Pre-Service English Teachers for Remediation Course Development

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Abstract

The development of any intervention to remedy student reticence should be based on students' real needs. This is to avoid the risk of making generalisation and hasty decision in designing course contents. This study investigated reticent pre-service English teachers' needs with the view of developing a remedial course to alleviate reticent behaviour and to improve oral participation in English for Academic Purposes classrooms. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, this study employed a survey, a semi-structured interview and a focus group discussion to collect data from pre-service English teachers and English instructors in a Malaysian state university. The findings revealed that the pre-service English teachers' reticent behaviour was caused by virtual of their negative beliefs towards oral participation, lack of discussion skills and fear of negative evaluation. Additionally, the findings also implied that training in oral participation skills alongside

relevant linguistic knowledge is needed for remediation of reticence as the reticent pre-service teachers encountered difficulties in asking questions, contributing ideas and providing connected utterances during open-class discussions. This study highlights the needs for further research in this domain in order to inform the development of intervention to remedy student reticence.

Keywords: reticent behaviour, needs analysis, pre-service teacher, oral participation

Introduction

The ability to participate orally in class has been associated with the success of students in language learning. When students orally participate in class, they are required to engage with their teachers or peers, which in turn develops the students' communicative competence in class (Chang & Goswami, 2011; Richards, 2006). This implies that active oral participation helps students to enhance their ability to express and clarify intentions, thoughts and opinions towards the subject matter in class (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Operating from this assumption, students are always encouraged and expected to contribute to classroom discourse, especially in English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms that operate within the communicative approach (Soo & Goh, 2017). Nonetheless, despite the students being aware of the importance of oral contribution and knowing that oral participation is encouraged, compulsory and sometimes graded, the reality observed occurring in the classrooms reveals that only some students are ready to engage in using the target language whilst some are greatly hesitant to do so (Liu, Zhang & Lu, 2011; MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei & Noels, 1998). The latter situation is typically termed 'student reticence', which is a phenomenon common in the ESL/EFL classrooms in Asia.

Reticent students are reluctant to express ideas, ask questions and engage with others in whole-class discussion (Karas 2017; Shea, 2017). This phenomenon is claimed to have negative

effects on students' efforts to learn, motivation, and general attitude towards the courses undertaken (Cieniewicz, 2007). In ESL/ EFL classrooms, it can be extremely frustrating for teachers whenever students remain reticent, and when only a small number of them actually participate during lessons. This is because students' reticent behaviour disrupts not only the planned instructional activities, but also causes difficulty for teachers to facilitate active learning among students. This would become a major obstacle for students to develop language skills, especially the development of oral proficiency (Jenkins, 2008). In the context of ESL/EFL teacher education, reticent behaviour would affect not only pre-service teachers' attainment of language competencies and oral communication skills, but also their preparation as teachers (Green, 2008).

As the phenomenon of student reticence in ESL/EFL classrooms has regularly been noted as a source of frustration and failure for both teachers and students (Jackson, 2002; Zhang & Head, 2009), it has become a challenge for educators to develop strategies that cope with the problem (Jenkins, 2008; Liu, 2005; Savaşçı, 2014). Though many studies have addressed the issue of student reticence in various language learning contexts (Delima, 2012; Jackson, 2002; Liu, et al. 2011; Tsui, 1996), and there were some attempts to offer suggestions to solve the problem, many teachers and students still feel helpless whenever this phenomenon occurs in class (Liu, 2005). This is largely due to the reason that previous studies have mostly focused on identifying factors causing student reticence, and there is still a lack of studies on the remediation of reticence (Tsou, 2005). This shortcoming has become a real handicap for many ESL/EFL teachers who intend to help reticent students in their classrooms.

Although students' oral participation has always been a major emphasis in the effort of transforming the traditional classroom into a more interactive one, the effort to motivate reticent students to participate more is always a daunting task. Many teachers or instructors are still found dominating the classroom talk for most of the lesson while students are quiet and

completing their assigned tasks (Fisher, Frey & Rothenberg, 2008). With our experience as ESL teachers and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instructors, we and our colleagues have constantly encountered difficulties and expressed a deep concern over our students' evident reticent behaviour in class. We have struggled in finding ways to break the uncomfortable silence while interacting with students. For many instructors, despite having many years of teaching, they still find it difficult to understand the reticent behaviour of their students and work out suitable strategies that could encourage their students to talk more in class.

Therefore, finding way(s) to alleviate students' reticent behaviour and to improve their classroom oral participation is deemed a critical issue that merits an investigation. However, the present study argues that tertiary students require self-directed and transferable learning skills which could help them to be successful in classroom oral participation. Due to this compelling reason, the present study suggests that reticent students require a remedial course that could help them to alleviate their reticent behaviour. However, before a remedial plan could be formulated, it is pertinent to put forward a research to examining the patterns of student reticence and reticent students' needs for a remedial course. On account of this issue, the present study carried out a needs assessment to examine pre-service English teachers' needs for remediation of reticence in EAP classrooms.

Literature Review

In a study to explore university students' reticence in Chinese EFL context, Liu (2005) found a discrepancy between students' willingness to communicate and the actual use of the target language in classroom oral participation. The same situation was also reported in Zuraidah's (2007) qualitative study in which she found that ESL students in a Malaysian university were reluctant to speak in the classroom, though they expressed strong willingness to learn the language. This situation clearly shows that the reticent students encountered self-confrontation.

As illustrated in Keaten and Kelly's (2000) model of reticence, reticent individuals are aware of the importance of oral communication but they are reluctant to take initiatives to engage with others due to certain reasons.

Besides that, Liu's (2005) study also revealed that the advanced-level students were more active than those at a lower level in responding to their teachers and engaging with others in group discussions. Although this finding was further supported in her later study (Liu & Jackson, 2009), it contradicts with those of Wen and Clement's (2003), Green's (2008) and Savaşçı's (2014), in which advanced-level students were also found to be passive in classroom oral participation. This implies that linguistic knowledge is not the only main determinant of students' reticent behaviour in class. Jenkins (2008), based on interviews and focus group discussions with English majors at a Taiwanese university, claimed that personal, situational and cultural factors were all related to the students' reticence to participate in classroom discussions. This claim is also generally in line with those of Hamouda's (2013) and Tong's (2010) studies.

Multiple studies have also been conducted to investigate pre-service English teachers' reticent behaviour in language classrooms. In a study to examine pre-service EFL teachers' oral participation in an Argentine university, Green (2008) reported that most of the students were, in fact, aware of their reticent behaviour. Nonetheless, due to various reasons such as low self-confidence, fear of negative evaluation, perceived value of participation and comparison with other students, they refrained from oral participation in class. These results imply that both cognitive and affective factors could influence students' oral participation in class. In another research conducted in a Malaysian university context, Soo and Goh (2017) reported that the pre-service English teachers' passivity in classroom oral participation was related to their 'reticent beliefs' such as negative kiasuism, saving competence face and the mindset of unnecessity of oral participation. It can be drawn from these studies that reticence is a common phenomenon in ESL/EFL classroom, and

students' reticent behaviour is caused by interplay between both internal and external factors.

Needs Assessment for Remediation of Reticence

The development of any remediation to alleviate reticent behaviour should be based on the needs of reticent students. This is to avoid making any generalisation and hasty decision in designing remediation contents, be it a short or long-term remedial course. For this reason, a systematic needs assessment or needs analysis is required for gathering information about targeted students' needs and preferences for remediation, interpreting needs assessment information, and then making remedial course decisions. As needs assessment is a cyclical process that will influence the entire course design (Graves, 2000), the accuracy of the input can be increased by incorporating a relevant theoretical model in the needs assessment tools. In this regard, the assessment on reticent students' needs for remediation can be conceptualised following the behavioural, cognitive and affective dimensions of reticence (Keaten & Kelly, 2000; Phillips, 1984).

The behavioural dimension of reticence is related to a reticent individual's problem of having inadequate communication skills (Keaten, Kelly & Phillips, 2009). Reticent individuals may be incompetent in one or more of rhetorical processes that could influence a competent act of communication such as invention, disposition, style, delivery and memory (Keaten & Kelly, 2000; Phillips, 1984, 1997). The cognitive dimension of reticence refers to the faulty belief system which justifies the reticent individuals' avoidance of communication (Keaten & Kelly, 2000). For instance, instead of real ineptitude, people's 'perceived ineptitude' towards oral communication would also cause them to be reticent. As for affective dimension, reticent individuals have the tendency to alienate themselves from engaging in communicative activities by remaining silent as they are 'afraid' of the threat of negative evaluation by others. For this, Keaten and Kelly (2000) advocated that "people avoid communication because they believe it is better

to remain silent than to risk appearing foolish" (p. 168). A study which investigated reticent learners' beliefs about reticence revealed that when compared to non-reticent learners, reticent learners possessed elevated levels of fear of negative evaluation and a heightened sensitivity to the opinions of others (Keaten, Kelly & Finch, 2000).

Approaches to Needs Assessment

Designing a remedial course for reticent students is a demanding task which involves various procedures, sources and information. On top of these processes, needs assessment is considered the cornerstone of the whole design pathway. Although findings from a needs assessment is not absolute, the fluctuation can be, at least, minimized when it is conducted via a suitable approach. For this, the theoretical foundation for undertaking needs assessment can be based on the present situation analysis (PSA) and target situation analysis (TSA) approaches (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). Following these two approaches, the discussion into reticent students' needs for remediation can be addressed from three aspects: (i) the nature of students' reticent behaviour, (ii) the perceived difficulty in oral participation tasks, and (iii) the required oral competencies for active classroom oral participation. For the first aspect, the nature of reticent behaviour is examined in terms of behavioural, cognitive and affective dimensions (Keaten & Kelly, 2000; Phillips, 1984). The result obtained from this aspect helps to determine the patterns of student reticence and the focus of remediation. As for the second and third aspects, they determine the types of oral participation tasks that engender reticence, and oral participation competencies that need to be enhanced.

To be specific, the TSA approach focuses on the students' needs at the end of a course and target-level performance. In this study, it takes into account reticent students' oral participation needs in a classroom situation in order to develop a needs profile that informs the design of the intended remediation. This profile can then be converted into a communicative competence

specification and subsequently into a syllabus (Jordan, 1997). In relation to this, the TSA needs profile in the present study consists of a specification of classroom oral participation competencies in the forms of skills, knowledge and linguistic aspects required by reticent students in EAP classrooms.

On the other hand, present situation analysis (PSA) can be posited as a complement to the TSA. If needs assessment is viewed as a continuum, the two distinctive ends of the continuum can be represented by these two approaches. At one end, PSA attempts to identify what the learners are like (e.g. current level of oral participation ability) at the beginning of a course; and at the other end, TSA attempts to establish what the learners are expected to perform by the end of a course. In short, as Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) remark, "PSA estimates strengths and weaknesses in language, skills, learning experiences." (p. 125). In a logical term, the process of needs assessment starts with defining the desired learning outcomes (TSA) and then followed by analysing learners' strengths and weaknesses in the desired learning outcomes (PSA).

As described above, both TSA and PSA are two ends of a continuum. The practical way of conducting these two analyses in this study is first to determine reticent students' required oral participation competencies using the procedures set out in TSA, and then measure their ability in these competencies. In PSA, the students' current level of oral participation competencies in terms of their knowledge, skills and motivation set out in TSA is examined. Apart from that, the students' reticent experience in the EAP classroom is also investigated via the PSA approach from the behavioural, cognitive and affective dimensions (Keaten & Kelly, 2000; Phillips, 1984). The gap between the TSA and PSA information helps to determine the remedial course contents. In short, both TSA and PSA are interdependent when carrying out needs assessment.

Once the needs assessment information is obtained, analysed and interpreted, the goals, objectives and contents of the remedial course can be formulated. However, all information gathered in needs assessments is subjected to interpretation

before it can be applied directly in course planning (Richards, 2001). This implies that reticent students' needs for remediation will have to be prioritised as not all of them may be practical or suitable to be addressed in a course. Thus, needs assessment is not a value-free or a flexible process (Kathpalia & Heah, 2007). In the context of this study, the decision made for remediation is also influenced by the researcher's view of what the course is about, the institutional constraints, and the students' perception of what they need.

Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods design, which involved essentially the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data over two research phases, namely quantitative needs assessment (Phase I) and qualitative needs assessment (Phase II). Mixed-methods design is deemed the most appropriate approach to address the aim of the study as multiple source of data is required for a holistic analysis of the pre-service English teachers' needs for remediation of reticence.

Contexts and Participants

This study was carried out in a Malaysian state university, and involved both Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL) students and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instructors. 144 Students in the first and second year of a Bachelor of Education (TESL) programme participated in Phase I. The participating students had completed at least one of the EAP courses offered by the university during the study. This implies that the students had experienced oral participation in open class discussion, and thus suitable as participants. In addition, these 144 students were also identified as having a high level of reticence in a diagnosis using the Reticence Scale (RS) designed by Keaten, Kelly and Finch (1997). In Phase II, 24 reticent TESL students were invited from the intense samples in Phase I to participate in focus group discussions. To be specific, a 'random purposeful' sampling scheme (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007) was

employed here. Additionally, Phase II also included semi-structured interviews with nine instructors who had taught EAP courses for Bachelor of Education (TESL) programme. Since the instructors possessed at least seven years of EAP teaching experience, they were able to provide opinions pertaining to the TESL students' reticent behaviour and competencies required for classroom oral participation.

Instruments and Data Collection

In Phase I, a questionnaire named Needs Assessment for Oral Participation (NAFOP) (Soo, 2019) was used to elicit information about the reticent TESL students' ability and needs for various academic oral participation tasks. The items in the NAFOP questionnaire covers 15 oral participation tasks (see Tables 1 and 2) required for EAP classes. These items were adapted from Ferris and Tagg's (1996a; 1996b), Jordan's (1997) and Kelly, Phillips and Keaten's (1995) studies. The questionnaire contains two sections, one for PSA and another one for TSA. Items for PSA seek to tap academic oral participation tasks which pose difficulty to the reticent students in the EAP classroom, and items for TSA elicit information on the types of academic oral participation tasks that the students perceive as important in EAP classroom. The responses obtained from the questionnaire were tabulated by means of the descriptive statistics.

The focus group discussions in Phase II aim to investigate the TESL students' reasons for being reticent, required competencies for classroom oral participation, specific areas in need of improvement (e.g. cognitive, affective or oral participation skill deficits), and their predispositions (e.g. expectancies, goals and needs). The students were divided into four groups, and discussion with each group lasted one and a half hours. The decision as to its group size and duration were guided by recommendations offered by various researchers (Denscombe, 2007; Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Morgan, 1997; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). During the conversational-style focus group discussions, the students were invited to respond to open-ended

questions that were developed based on a list of broad topics which were parallel to the NAFOP questionnaire.

During the semi-structured interviews, the EAP instructors were invited to give opinions pertaining to reticent TESL students' problems in oral participation and competencies that the students should possess for classroom oral participation. As the interviews aimed to explore whether the opinion of the instructors was similar or different from that of the students, the interview topics were constructed in alignment with the NAFOP questionnaire. Furthermore, in order to avoid subjectivity and bias when conducting interviews (Cohen, et al., 2007), each EAP instructor was asked the same pre-determined questions, and essentially these questions were sequenced and worded in a consistent manner (Patton, 2002). To ease this procedure, a list of pre-determined questions was provided to the EAP instructors during the interview.

Findings

PSA: Difficulties faced by reticent TESL students in oral participation

The results of the survey (see Table 1) revealed that the reticent TESL students encountered more difficulty when participating in whole class or large-group discussions, as compared with small-group discussion and classroom seminar. This is evidenced as more than half of the students (54.9 percent) either often or always faced obstacle in this mode of classroom participation. Besides that, the majority of the reticent students also encountered problems in responding to lecturer's questions and in asking questions about course content to lecturers. Also notable is that most of the students had difficulty in the four tasks related to contribution of ideas in class. Among these, expressing criticisms, comments or arguments to points raised by lecturers was topped the list with 81.9 percent of students who often and always faced difficulty. Additionally, results show that more than two-third of the students had difficulty in another two types of oral participation tasks – indicating non-comprehension about subject

matters and facilitating or leading whole-class for discussions or activities.

Table 1: Frequency of having difficulty in various oral-participation tasks in class (N=144)

Categories & types of tasks	**Percentage (%)**			
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Category 1: Mode of participation				
1. Participating in whole-class/ large-group discussion	0.7	44.4	47.3	7.6
2. Participating in small-group discussion (e.g. doing tutorial)	18.8	50.0	26.4	4.9
3. Participating in classroom forum or seminar	4.2	50.0	28.5	17.4
Category 2: Question and answer				
4. Asking questions about course content to lecturers during class discussion	-	43.1	45.8	11.1
5. Asking questions about course content to classmates during class discussion	37.5	25.7	22.2	14.6
6. Responding to lecturer's questions during class discussion	0.7	29.2	51.3	18.8
7. Responding to classmates' questions during class discussion	25.7	28.5	26.4	19.4
Category 3: Contribution of ideas				
8. Expressing agreement and disagreement in class	-	39.5	43.1	17.4
9. Expressing criticisms, comments or arguments to points raised by lecturers	-	18.1	25.0	56.9
10. Expressing criticisms, comments or arguments to points raised by classmates	0.7	18.1	39.5	41.7
11. Offering suggestions to the class	1.4	25.7	50.7	22.2
Category 4: Self-disclosure				
12. Indicating non-comprehension about subject matters	-	29.2	49.3	21.5
13. Indicating likes and dislikes about subject matters	21.5	50.0	16.7	11.8

Category 5: Conduct oral activities				
14. Facilitating or leading whole-class for discussions or activities	2.8	19.4	48.6	29.2
15. Presenting formal oral reports/ giving speeches	8.3	56.9	25.7	9.1

Key: 1 = never; 2 = sometimes, 3 = often; 4 = always

The reticent TESL students' responses in the survey were also ascertained by the EAP instructors' feedback in the interviews. They unanimously attributed the students' reticent behaviour to failure in applying oral participation skills. They commented that the students were weak in asking questions, volunteering ideas, giving comments and seeking clarification in class. For instance, the instructors reported that some students had difficulty to expand discussion points and ended up speaking only a little during discussion. This is illustrated in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 1

"many students like to say something short like 'I agree' but after that they just stop there. This is not enough. At least they have to explain why they agree. Also, very seldom they will say disagree. They just agree all the time…you know, really not shiok (exciting) sometimes".

Besides that, some reticent TESL students were not able to interrupt an ongoing conversation and missed the chance to take a speaking turn in class. One of the instructors commented that:

Excerpt 2

"one of the most glaring weaknesses of these students I think is they don't know how to join in or cut through whenever a discussion is going on…they just look at people speaking. Every time when I signal them to open their mouth to say something, they just smile at you".

To conclude, the reticent students' difficulties in classroom oral participation are associated with their weaknesses in applying oral participation skills required for open class discussion, such as indicating intention to speak, stating a divergent view, asking questions and giving feedback to others' ideas.

PSA: Factors causing reticence

Consistent with the EAP instructors' remarks, the students revealed in the focus group discussions that their reticent behaviour in class, especially during open class discussion, was predominantly caused by a number of factors. Four themes emerged from the qualitative analysis of the interviews and focus group discussions: negative beliefs, lacking of discussion skills, fear of evaluation and past experience.

Negative beliefs

First, some students viewed oral participation as not necessary because their classmates would somehow contribute to class discussion. For example, a student (RS-5) responded that "for big group discussion like the whole class one, there are many students in the class already so it is Okay if I don't talk...". Within the same dimension, some students were found having perceived incompetency towards their ability to participate in classroom discussion. As one student (RS-11) expressed, "my ideas are not as good as others so I better let others to speak." This scenario clearly explains the students' low motivation in oral participation which was caused by their negative belief. Besides that, the students' negative attitude was another reason for their reticence.

Lacking discussion skills

Lacking discussion skills to engage in open class discussions was another identified factor. Some EAP instructors perceived that the reticent students were clueless about how to grasp turn-taking opportunity whenever there was an open discussion in class. They failed to join in the discussions because they required more time to think and make decision, and

consequently failed to participate because others took away the speaking turn. This is further demonstrated in the following student responses.

Excerpt 3

"some of my classmates are very fast and their ideas just pop up like that. They are very spontaneous and I have to think first before I can speak. Sometimes, before I could open my mouth other people already start talking. It is difficult to follow them. So I just watch and listen to them talking most of the time, and take down some notes." (RS-5)

Excerpt 4

"I wouldn't get the chance because others always have something to say. Sometimes, I don't know how to even continue from what they say. I don't know how to join in." (RS-10)

Fear of Evaluation

Fear of negative evaluation is another frequently mentioned reticence-inducing determinant among the students. They experienced fear whenever they wanted to say something publicly in class because they were afraid of making mistakes. The following extracts provide evidences for this factor.

Excerpt 5

"I feel nervous because I am not fond of attention. I am worried that if my answers are wrong, because some of the classmates are very bad, they like to laugh at people." (RS-6)

Excerpt 6

"Although lecturers will always tell us "no worry, just try, just say it", but I just don't like that kind of feeling when some people comment later. I am scared of being judged." (RS-12)

Besides that, some reticent students were apprehensive of giving feedback or opinions to their classmates as it might cause uneasy feelings to others. As a result, they chose to be reticent in order to avoid this situation. This is shown in the following extracts.

Excerpt 7
"I am scared to question people's points like when we disagree with something. Seriously, I don't know people will like it or not. So better just don't say anything and don't criticise anyone." (RS-10)

Excerpt 8
"Some people can be very sensitive so if we say something against what they say, they might not like it. Basically, I just agree with everything, better this way." (RS-18)

Similarly, most of the instructors believed that the students' reticent behaviour in class was predominantly triggered by their fear of being evaluated by others and losing dignity in class. They were perceived as being afraid of the risk of making mistakes due to a high sense of self-esteem. Thus, in order to protect their dignity and 'face' from being challenged by others, they chose to limit their oral participation behaviour by remaining reticent. This can be understood as a strategy to minimise the risk of making mistakes and devaluing one's dignity in front of others in class.

Past Experience

The focus group discussion findings also revealed that the reticent students' fear towards oral participation was associated with their previous communicative experience. For instance, a student who once suffered from dyslexia at the young age, and whose communication ability was also subsequently impacted, could not get rid of the previous negative experience. This has caused her to behave reticently in class. As she (RS-4) expressed, "I am afraid that I get stammered and my dyslexia comes in while

talking. Yes, I used to have dyslexia". The above results suggest that any remediation designed to alleviate reticence should address the three factors.

TSA: Perceived important oral participation tasks

The results obtained from the NAFOP survey revealed discrepancies between the reticent TESL students' perceived difficulty (PSA) and perceived importance (TSA) in a number of oral participation tasks. These tasks are required to be addressed when planning for remediation. For instance, while a large majority of the students (more than 90 percent) regarded oral participation in whole–class discussion being both important and very important, they also regarded this task as the most difficult for them. This implies that the remediation should focus on helping students in performing this task. Furthermore, results for the category of 'question and answer' revealed that all of the students unanimously perceived the tasks 'responding to lecturer's questions during class discussion' and 'asking questions about course content to lecturers during class discussion' being the most important, and yet the most difficult to attempt. As for contribution of ideas in class, two specific tasks were notably perceived as being both important and also difficult, namely 'expressing criticisms, comments or arguments to points raised by lecturers' and 'offering suggestions to the class'.

Table 2: The perceived importance of various oral-participation tasks in class (N=144)

Categories & types of tasks	**Percentage (%)**			
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Category 1: Mode of participation				
1. Participating in whole-class/ large-group discussion	-	-	68.8	31.2
2. Participating in small-group discussion (e.g. doing tutorial)	-	2.8	59.0	38.2
3. Participating in classroom forum or seminar	5.6	1.4	88.9	4.1

Category 2: Question and answer				
4. Asking questions about course content to lecturers during class discussion	-	2.1	79.8	18.1
5. Asking questions about course content to classmates during class discussion	-	48.6	45.8	5.6
6. Responding to lecturer's questions during class discussion	-	-	67.4	32.6
7. Responding to classmates' questions during class discussion	-	30.6	57.6	11.8
Category 3: Contribution of ideas				
8. Expressing agreement and disagreement in class	-	55.6	35.4	9.0
9. Expressing criticisms, comments or arguments to points raised by lecturers	-	6.3	60.4	33.3
10. Expressing criticisms, comments or arguments to points raised by classmates	-	68.8	29.8	1.4
11. Offering suggestions to the class	-	12.5	75.0	12.5
Category 4: Self-disclosure				
12. Indicating non-comprehension about subject matters	-	57.6	32.6	9.8
13. Indicating likes and dislikes about subject matters	-	38.2	49.3	12.5
Category 5: Conduct oral activities				
14. Facilitating or leading whole-class for discussions or activities	6.9	58.3	18.8	16.0
15. Presenting formal oral reports/ giving speeches	-	-	58.3	41.7

Key: 1 = not important at all; 2 = not very important, 3 = important; 4 = very important

TSA: Required oral participation competencies and student expectation

The analysis of the qualitative data further revealed the EAP classroom contexts that require active oral participation and competencies reticent students should acquire.

Required competencies for active classroom oral participation

The participating students and instructors' responses demonstrated that the reticent students need to acquire two types of competencies, namely idea-generating and structuring, and critical-questioning, in order to participate actively in teacher-led and student-led open class discussions. As suggested, the students could acquire these competencies by learning a number of skills. First, in order to acquire the competency for idea-generating and structuring, reticent students need to learn the skills for expressing disagreement, supporting others' views, maintaining discussion, rephrasing points and organising points. As for the competency of critical-questioning, most of the instructors perceived that it is important for the reticent students to learn questioning techniques for seeking clarification, obtaining information and exchanging views in open class discussions. These suggestions are reflected in the following instructor's response.

> Excerpt 9
> *"As it is now, many of them cannot ask proper questions. So, they end up in short conversation. So, they need to know how to ask different types of questions for different purposes, only then they can join the class discussions actively with the rest. And one more thing, they also need to learn how to state their opinions, at least to make a stand, then elaborate their points. They always give you short answers, and that is it. At the end, we have to elaborate and add in more explanations for them."*

Reticent students' expectation for remediation

As part of the requirements for needs analysis, the reticent TESL students were also asked about what they expected to learn in a remedial course to alleviate reticent behaviour and to improve oral participation. Generally, many of them possess the intention to learn phrases or vocabulary which could help them to engage in class discussion. In addition, some of them hoped that the

remedial course could help them cope with the fear of speaking in public. Lastly, they suggested a component on oral participation skills training which include the skills of initiating conversation, elaborating points, giving comments or ideas and giving oral presentation. This is demonstrated in the following responses.

> Excerpt 10
> *"I want to learn skills that can overcome my anxiety. I always feel scared to say out something in public..."* (RS-12)

> Excerpt 11
> *"I hope I can learn more vocabs and oral communication skills so that I can speak more in discussion. I easily get stucked whenever I lost my words..."* (RS-8)

Discussion and recommendation for remediation

The potential oral participation holds for learning is undeniable as it offers students practice in expressing views, appreciating diversified ideas, developing listening and critical thinking skills, and offering them feedback of their learning ability (Hollander, 2002). Principally, in this study, the high reticent TESL students did recognise this potential, and in fact regarded whole-class or large-group discussion as the most important mode of oral participation activity in the EAP classroom. Nonetheless, it was also identified as the most difficult activity for them to do.

The present situation analysis (PSA) on the reticent TESL students' oral participation performance further discovered their major difficulties in two oral participation tasks. First, most of them encountered problems in asking questions during whole-class discussion. In the ESL/EFL classroom, the student's ability to ask question is one of the key elements to determine success of class discussion. As Hollander (2002) postulates, the student's verbal contribution should involve not only expression of views but also asking 'useful questions' in class. The phrase 'useful questions' here could be understood as questioning for various purposes. In this regard, a number of questionings suggested by

Brookfield (2011) such as questions to seek evidence, questions to clarify, extension questions and synthesis questions are important to be included in the remedial course. It is also important to teach the students to use various vocabulary or interrogative forms to construct questions for different functions (Jordan, 1997), such as "how might", "suppose…how would" and "what if". Besides that, they should also be trained to ask more divergent questions during discussion as this is a good way to help them to sustain in an open class discussion.

In order to enhance the teaching of question-asking, it is important to use a classroom activity that could promote questions (Kelly, et al. 1995). To fulfil this need, instructors could incorporate 'Socratic seminar' in the remedial course as a platform for reticent students to practise and enhance their learning of various questionings. This allows the students to explore ideas or issues in a particular text/ media via a student-led open class discussion, which was deemed the most difficult mode of participation. Through the skilful use of various questionings, discussions among classroom members could be deepen and sustained (Brookfield, 2011).

Second, the reticent students encountered difficulty in contributing ideas. They hardly volunteered to offer comments, arguments or suggestions towards topics being discussed in class. The EAP instructors attributed this phenomenon to the students' lack of knowledge in applying relevant oral-participation skills such as expanding discussion, volunteering ideas, giving comments and seeking clarification. Furthermore, some of the reticent TESL students encountered problems in giving logically ordered responses and using limited or repeated phrases and vocabulary whenever they attempted class discussion. These results propound the idea of teaching reticent students oral participation skills alongside relevant linguistic knowledge such as interjections, social expressions, and fillers.

'Indicating desire to speak', one of the suggested oral participation skills, is deemed important to help reticent students to engage in classroom discussion. This is also one of the key

abilities required for efficient turn-taking (Bygate, 1987). Since this skill involves more 'active' techniques from students, it is important to train the students to use various linguistic techniques (Heinel, 2017). To do this, reticent students need to learn various language expressions, discourse markers or lexical knowledge to signal their desire to participate. This could be done by teaching the students the use of 'interjections' to signal a request for speaking turn such as "Mm-hmm", "Yeah" and rising intonation (Heinel, 2017; Richards, 1990). Apart from this, teaching the students to use phrases for interrupting, similarly, could help them to enter into a class discussion.

Besides that, teaching reticent students to use pause fillers could help them to hold a speaking turn. As revealed in the findings, reticent students' utterances tend to be short. One of the reasons could be that their speaking turns might have been taken over by others. Thus, if students could use pause fillers or expressions like "Actually…", "You know…", "Well…", "What I am trying to say is…" and "Another thing…", they would be able to indicate to others that they are not finished and have more to speak (Richards, 1990). Furthermore, it allows the students to expand their utterances as these kinds of fillers are useful for giving the students time to construct their thought and plan what to say next (Heinel, 2017).

Moreover, with reference to the reticent students' difficulty in giving logically ordered ideas, it could be deduced that they lacked listening skills which had caused them to speak only a little and produce disconnected utterances during discussions. Findings indicated that their responses were limited and not built on others' utterances. Besides, they were more concerned about getting their thoughts delivered rather than listening to and exchanging views with others. This finding clearly puts forward the importance of listening being an oral participation skill because effective discussion participation requires not only students to speak but also to listen and think (Hollander, 2002). If students are able to pay close attention to each other, they would be able to follow the views of other speakers and not just stating

their own views. Therefore, there is a strong need to incorporate the teaching of concentration and active listening skills when designing a course to remedy students' reticent behaviour.

The active listening skill suggested here involves more 'passive' techniques as students need to recognize the right moment to get a speaking turn (Heinel, 2017). In this regard, students should, first, learn the technique of holding concentration as this is a way to help them to enhance listening skills and building coherent discussion. For this purpose, the 'concentration sheet' technique can be used to guide reticent students to evaluate their listening performance as a way to monitor concentration in class. Whenever students realise that their concentration lapses and begin to think of other things, they have to quickly put down a 'mark', such as three exclamation marks (!!!) or a signature, on the concentration sheet in order to pause their out-of-class thinking and bring themself back to the class discussion. After class, they should evaluate their concentration sheet and reflect what cause their mind to wander in the class, and lastly check if they mange to bring themself back to the discussion.

For further practice of maintaining concentration and active listening, instructors may incorporate other activities alongside the concentration sheet training. For instance, instructors may orally describe the details in a picture, and pause in between lines to allow students to sketch the picture based on their understanding. The instructor then re-describe the picture for the second time for the students to check their drawing. Lastly, the original picture is shown to the students and let them to compare with theirs.

The need to incorporate skills-training in remediation for reticence, as described above, is definite in consideration of the students' oral participation skill deficits and performance deficits. Unlike any sophisticated psychological therapy for communication disorder, skills-training is appropriate because it is easily amenable to an EAP classroom situation. It may be proposed that skills-training in the remediation should include the teaching of

communication processes, rather than specific component behaviour alone. This implies that the proposed remedial course should not only help the students to alleviate their reticent behaviour, but also guide them to experience successful oral participation performance.

To this point, the teaching of oral participation skills to reticent students should be the focus of any remediation programme. This is different from the remediation approaches suggested in the existing literature on remedying reticent behaviour, such as the 'rhetoritherapy' approach advocated in the Penn State University Reticent Programme. 'Rhetoritherapy' largely gears towards generalised communication contexts such as social conversation, talking to authority figures, job interviewing and public speaking (Kelly, Phillips & Keaten, 1995). There is little emphasis given to skills or techniques which are suitable for mediating classroom oral participation. Therefore, including oral participation skills in the remediation offers a different approach to alleviating reticent behaviour and improving oral participation among students in classroom contexts.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicated both the TESL students and EAP instructors' expectation for a remedial course focus on improving reticent students' classroom oral participation 'competency'. In their view, the course not only should expose the reticent students with relevant knowledge about reticence and oral participation, but also should include practical skills to improve the both. This expectation indicates the needs for a remedial course that taps into 'competency-based instruction' whereby the remediation outcomes are in terms of a set of 'competencies', which include knowledge, skills and behaviours required for oral participation (Richards, 2013). This is deemed very relevant as the phenomenon of reticence in ESL/EFL classrooms is related closely to students' competence to orally participate in class (Hashemi, et al., 2013; Keaten & Kelly, 2000). In brief, what reticent students need to learn in a remedial course is not just declarative

knowledge, but also procedural and conditional knowledge that could help them to attain classroom oral participation competency (Schunk, 2012).

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