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Research Article

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# Social Strategies in Language Learning for Promoting Speaking Skills

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the use of social strategies in language learning to promote speaking skills. The study was designed in the survey model. The participants of the study were divided into three groups in a sample lesson. They were asked the question of “Why should we learn foreign language?” and were required to prepare and present a poster as a group. During the implementation phase, students were observed by the researcher through the “Speaking Skills Group Observation Form”. The results of the research showed that all three groups exhibited sufficient speaking effort, participation in activities, involving in poster presentations, and peer interaction. The results of the research revealed that social strategies tend to improve speaking skills and increase willingness to speak. It was also revealed that students were aware of the significance of foreign language education as a crucial skill in today's modern world. They associated foreign language learning with the following words: culture, democracy, education, empathy, friendship, intercultural learning, job opportunity, love, peace, open-mindedness, relationship, religion, respect, tolerance and trust. Furthermore, it was concluded that social strategies in language learning can be effectively employed in foreign language classes to reduce speaking anxiety.

## Key Words

Foreign language learning • Speaking skills • Social strategies • Speaking anxiety

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## Introduction

In the ever-changing and evolving world, continuous efforts are made to make educational activities more effective and efficient. The aim of these efforts is to enhance effectiveness and improve success in education and teaching. In the contemporary world, education, mainly foreign language learning, plays a crucial role in responding to the requisites of globalization (Akpınar Dellal & Balkaya, 2022). Hence, the development of efficient methods, techniques, and strategies is a pivotal factors to enhance learning efficiency.

During the 1960s, a considerable transformation occurred in psychology and education. This era witnessed a notable transition from behaviorism to cognitivism (Hişmanoğlu, 2000; Wiliams & Burden, 1997) and this led to the explanation of the effect of cognitive processes that in second language acquisition and foreign language learning on learning process and behaviors (Zare, 2012). The concept of strategies began to be associated with the efforts of proficient language learners to derive meaning from context (Solak & Çakır, 2015). Then learning strategies, particularly language learning strategies become a significant subject of educational research. Language learning strategies were first introduced to the literature in 1975 with Rubin's article and have remained a subject of research, frequently investigated and adapted to various learning contexts. Rubin (1975) provided a definition for strategies, referring to them as the methods or instruments that a learner can employ in order to gain knowledge. On the other hand Oxford specified (1990) language learning strategies as specific actions that students undertake to make the learning process more enjoyable, self-directed, and transferable across different situations, thereby facilitating and expediting it. Besides O'Malley and Chamot (1990) described language learning strategies as actions to cope with effective information processing. Otherwise Wenden (1998) characterized language learning strategies as the mental steps or processes, that learners use to organize their efforts to acquire a new language. Language learning strategies alleged to be more than 100 in number (Lee, 2010), were subjected to attempts at definition by many scholars and researchers, however, it is not possible to mention a specific definition of the term language learning strategies. They serve as a good indicator of how students approach tasks or challenges encountered during the language learning process (Hişmanoğlu, 2000).

Although the literature presents an ambiguity in language learning strategies' definitions, it can be seen that the efforts to define revolved around three indicators that refer to cognitive learning theory: (1) conscious actions, behaviors, and techniques used by good language learners to improve their own learning processes, involving internalization, storage, retrieval and usage of foreign language acquisition or second language acquisition (Rubin, 1975; Oxford, 1990) (2) active self-directed engagement tools used to improve foreign language or second language acquisition communication skills (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Wenden, 1991), (3) and metacognitive, cognitive and social affective learning processes, which is the combined upper categorization of these two (Chamot & O'Malley, 1987). In particular, Dörnyei (2005) argued for abandoning the term 'strategy' and adopting the concept of self-regulation. He contended that the theoretical foundation of language learning strategies should be questioned because it is impossible for strategies to be cognitive, emotional, and behavioral simultaneously. He further contended that language learning strategies emerge without the practical guidance that students need from their instructors. On the other hand Gu (2012) argued that replacing the concept of language learning strategies with the structure of self-

regulation, as the latter extends beyond the development of linguistic knowledge in defining the conceptual boundaries of foreign language learning or second language acquisition processes and outcomes, might not be a sound indication. He further contended that language learning strategies emerge without the practical guidance students need from their instructors. Hence, language learning strategies are adaptable behaviors that vary across various learning contexts and environments. Language learning strategies constitute a toolkit for the foreign language learner to engage in active, conscious, purposeful, and attentive learning, with the aim to pave the way for greater competence, autonomy, and self-regulation (Hsiao & Oxford 2002). It has been argued that rather than focusing on specific behavioral habits, attention should be directed towards elements encompassing general learner characteristics (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Language learning strategies encompass specific actions, behaviors, or techniques that play a facilitative role in acquiring the desired language proficiency (Oxford, 1990).

Despite various definitions and classifications of language learning strategies, the classification proposed by Oxford (1990) is the most preferred by foreign language educators. Oxford's strategies consist of two main categories: direct and indirect strategies, each further divided into three subcategories, resulting in a total of six categories. Memory strategies enable language learners to store verbal material and retrieve it when needed for communication, aiding them in coping with challenges. Cognitive strategies form the foundation of learning a new foreign language, allowing language learners to comprehend and produce the language in various ways. Compensation strategies enable language learners to use the foreign language despite gaps in their knowledge. However as indirect strategies metacognitive learning strategies are essential for successful language learning as they enable students to regulate and control their own cognitive processes. Affective strategies enable students to become aware of their own emotions and cope with these feelings and provide control over affective factors influencing learning. Social strategies facilitate the process of learning a new language through interaction and communication. These strategies such as increased communication among friends, language practice, and group activities can improve speaking skills (Oxford, 1990). In the realm of social strategies, students collaborate collectively. Consequently, they had opportunities to converse and learn from each other. These tactics prove effective for deliberating and refining task solutions, which can subsequently be showcased to the entire group. As evident, social strategies are steps that facilitate learning and enhance success in foreign language education. They assist learners in acquiring a new foreign language and in communicating in that language. Furthermore Oxford's classification is valuable for its applicability in teaching the four fundamental language skills: reading, listening, writing and speaking making it widely used in foreign language education. It is a well-known fact that employing effective methods and strategies in language instruction by helping to optimize learning processes and enables learners to enhance their language skills. These strategies also enable learners to understand course content more effectively and help them know how to plan and manage the learning process. Therefore, focusing on language learning strategies in language teaching is a crucial step to enhance success (Hişmanoğlu, 2000). In conclusion, it can be said, that taking advantage of learning strategies in foreign language lessons plays a significant role for effective and efficient foreign language lessons.

In contemporary foreign language teaching the aim is to develop and promote the four fundamental language skills equally. However, researches indicate that in the foreign language education speaking and listening skills tend

to develop more slowly than reading and writing skills. The speaking skill is a complex skill in which multiple dimensions of linguistic action interact. It is an essential building block for interpersonal interaction and for establishing and maintaining relationships (Barkowski & Krumm, 2010). In speaking skill, various components such as accurate pronunciation, suitable discourse behavior, and appropriate speaking pace must be balanced (Henrici & Riemer, 1996). This skill is an essential aspect of foreign language instruction and relies on previously acquired subskills, such as vocabulary and grammar knowledge (Çakır, 2017). In this skill learners are expected to be able to comprehend everyday situations and interact communicatively by acquiring communication abilities and express themselves adequately (Akol & Asutay, 2011; Storch, 2009). This can be achieved through continuous communication and conversation and it can be improved through the actual practice of speaking the target language (Huneke & Steinig, 1997). In conversation, there is a continuous exchange of roles where one communication partner switches between the roles of listener and speaker, often in a rapid succession, during direct oral information exchange with one or more other participants (Storch, 2009). This constant role-switching becomes a significant issue for learners who do not feel sufficiently proficient in target foreign language. Because attempting to comprehend what is being said and providing appropriate responses requires multifaceted thinking skills.

In addition, it is known that there are certain internal factors originating from the learners and external factors from the environment that negatively affect the speaking skills. Such as emotions are difficulties, which arise during speaking, impact not only on the foreign language learning process but also the learner's success (Rösler, 1994). One of these emotions is speaking anxiety. Incorrect pronunciation, making mistakes that lead to misunderstandings, and struggling to find the right words are some of the fears experienced by foreign language learners, which contribute to speaking anxiety (Apeltauer, 1997). Learners hesitate to speak because they fear making mistakes and using incorrect expressions (Yalçın, 2021). For this reason speaking is regarded as the most anxiety-inducing skill among the four language skills (Young, 1991). By utilizing suitable activities, methods, strategies, and resources, teachers can create a conducive environment and a pleasant atmosphere, awakening students' interests and bolstering their self-confidence. This motivates them to speak and enhance their speaking skills (Erdrova, 2015). Communication in the classroom can be encouraged through various sources and the opportunities based on students' issues or topics of interest enhance their willingness to speak (Storch, 2009). For this reason, communication topics should be created based on the learners' attitudes and needs (Huneke & Steinig, 1997). Exactly, choosing content and activities that engage students, arouse their interests and desires, and encourage them to speak will not only alleviate speaking anxiety but also improve their speaking skills.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Upon reviewing the literature, there are studies that investigate learning strategies (Akıllılar & Uslu, 2011; Akol Göktaş & Köksal, 2022; Balkaya, 2022; Balkaya & Çelikkaya, 2022; Bekleyen, 2006; Çelikkaya, 2012; Karamanoğlu, 2005; Ünal, Ayırır, & Arıoğlu, 2011). Similarly, various studies on foreign language speaking anxiety are encountered (Balkaya, Arabacıoğlu, & Çakır, 2020; Duman, Görel, & Bilgin, 2017; Enez, 2017; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Süleymanova, 2011; Şahin Toptaş & Koçak, 2021; Yılmaz & Sakarya Maden, 2016; Zengin & Şahin Toptaş, 2023). However, studies simultaneously addressing learning strategies and speaking anxiety are rare

(Oflaz, 2019). It was observed in conducted studies that foreign language learners experience speaking anxiety. Based on this view, the primary aim of this research is to investigate whether foreign language speaking anxiety can be reduced through social strategies. As a natural consequence, it aims to develop speaking skills, and it is believed that this study will make significant contributions to the field of German language teaching. In line with this primary aim, answers were sought for the following questions:

1. Can speaking anxiety be reduced through social strategies in language learning?
2. How will social strategies in language learning affect speaking skills?
3. What are the effects of social strategies in language learning on foreign language lessons?

Additionally, in order to encourage students to engage in conversations, findings from the posters they prepared to answer the question "Why should we learn a language?" are included in the results section, as these posters contain essential data from both the posters and the presentations.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

This study was designed within a survey model. A survey model aims to describe the subject of research, event, individual, or object of interest, either in the past or in the present, within its own conditions and as it exists (Karasar, 2013). In this study, the survey model was chosen to reveal the existing condition as it is.

### **Research Group**

The participants of this study consisted of 1st-year students of German Teaching at Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University Faculty of Education. A total of 24 students participated in the research. These students were randomly divided into three groups to form the study group for the research.

### **Research Instruments and Processes**

In this study, data collection was provided by a group observation form during poster preparation and presentation. The research data were acquired through the observation method. Observation provides the researcher with an in-depth and valid opportunity to examine the desired subject (Karasar, 2013). "Speaking Skills Group Observation Form" prepared by the researcher for the purpose of determining the students' speaking skills, was used as the data collection tool in this study. In this developed group observation form, main themes were categorized into four themes: speaking effort, participation in activities, involving in poster presentation and peer interaction. A rubric form prepared through rating has three sub-dimensions: weak, can be improved, and sufficient. In the table 1, the dimensions and sub-dimensions of the group observation form are presented.

Table 1.

*Speaking Skills Group Observation Form*

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Sub-dimensions</b>
speaking effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• willingness</li> </ul>
participation in activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• put forth their ideas</li> <li>• preparation of the poster</li> <li>• speaking comfort</li> </ul>
involving in the poster presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• present the poster</li> <li>• answer questions</li> <li>• speaking comfort</li> </ul>
peer interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• engage in discussions with peers</li> <li>• exchange of ideas with peers</li> </ul>

As a second data collection method, posters prepared by group members were used as part of the social strategies employed.

### **Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics were used in the analysis of the data. While measuring speaking skills, the performances displayed by the students within the given task context were taken into consideration for evaluation. During the implementation of teaching model, the teacher shifted away from the instructional role and took on the role of a guide by observing students. The researcher's recorded observation notes and the "Speaking Skills Group Observation Form" were analyzed using descriptive statistics. To ensure validity and reliability, the forms of the co-observer were compared.

### **Teaching Model Implementation**

Social strategies recommended by Oxford (1990) were examined within the context of the subject area. Firstly, a teaching plan was developed by the researcher for these strategies. The activities in this study are organized according to the stages of the foreign language course in the curriculum. Subsequently, a sample lesson model was constructed based on this teaching plan, incorporating expert opinions. Finally, the refined teaching model was implemented to students. The teaching model was implemented to students in the following manner:

To pique students' interests and activate their prior knowledge, in the previous week's class, students were assigned research the benefits of learning a foreign language for individuals. Since students have been involved in foreign language education for about 7-8 years, the topic "importance of foreign language learning" was chosen. Additionally, every student has an opinion on this subject, making it a topic for students to think about critically and engage with. The designed teaching model was applied as follows:

*Introduction Phase:* The teacher entered the classroom, greeted the class, and asked if there were any issues or problems. Due to the low number of students in the classroom, the teacher divided the class into three groups. While doing so, the teacher counted the students as 1-2-3, starting over after each count.

After completing the counting process, the teacher instructed students who were assigned the number 1 to gather on the left side, students with the number 2 to gather in the middle, and students with the number 3 to gather on the

right side. The purpose of this arrangement was to enable students who communicate less with each other to participate in activities together, and by allowing these students the opportunity to get to know each other, to minimize their social anxieties. Subsequently, the teacher gave each group a colored cardboard and pencils and then asked the research questions:

“Why should we learn foreign languages?”

“What benefits provide us learning a foreign language?”

The students were asked to reflect on this topic and express their thoughts on the colored cardboard. While preparing these cards, they were instructed to communicate only in German with each other. It was emphasized that everyone must express their opinion and persuade their group mates about their thoughts. Additionally, students were informed that they could use online or printed dictionaries if needed.

*Presentation Phase:* In this phase, it was observed that students approached each other with reluctance and shyness. To encourage students who were reluctant to participate in the activity and typically had limited communication with each other, the teacher went to the groups and asked, “Why do you learn German?” Some students responded with reasons like for work, while others mentioned wanting to go abroad. The teacher then remarked, "See, that's a good starting point. So, learning a language brings us what?" and the students mentioned job opportunities. The teacher used this as a starting point and guided other groups as well.

*Semantization Phase:* Seeing that the groups were engaging in communication, writing on the cardboard, and drawing shapes, the teacher continued to go around to each group, observing what they were doing. The teacher asked the students what they were doing. The students explaining their work helped their group mates in find the words they couldn't remember and correct grammar mistakes. And during this process, they found new concepts, shapes, and expressions to add to the cardboard while enhancing each other's ideas. As a result, the cardboard they prepared became enriched. While preparing their own cards, they also engaged in short dialogues with close friends from other groups about what they were doing. Additionally, there were friendly exchanges like "Our poster turned out better" during the activity. Sufficient time was given for the students to finish their posters. When all the posters were completed, the students were told to present them to other groups. Then break was taken.

*Practice Phase:* In this phase, the students introduced their prepared posters to their peers in other groups. Each student in the group shared information about the poster. Students from other groups asked questions to the students presenting, and in return, they received answers from the group members.

## Results

The primary aim of the research is to seek an answer to the question: "Can speaking anxiety be reduced through social strategies in language learning?" When the group observation forms were examined, it was evident that all three groups showed in four dimension of form generally sufficient speaking effort, participation in activities, involving in poster presentations, and finally, levels of peer interaction. Furthermore, when individual assessments were conducted rather than group assessments, it was observed that only the sub-dimension of responding to questions needed improvement. This was due to the fact that only some students in the group responded to the

questions, while others remained silent. In addition to this, when the sub-dimensions of the group observation form were examined, it was observed that some students' speaking comfort in, involving in poster presentations, was lower compared to speaking comfort in participation in activities.

The research also forms the other sub-problem: How will social strategies in language learning affect speaking skills? The research results generally revealed that social strategies tended to enhance speaking skills. Additionally, it was observed that these strategies increase the willingness to speak; even leading students who wouldn't typically speak in class or less speak to engage in conversations among themselves. Furthermore, when comparing student' conversations in small groups while preparing posters to speaking in front of the whole class during poster presentations, it was observed that speaking anxiety was lower and the speaking comfort were higher in small groups' conversations. Additionally, students were more inclined to speak comfortably during poster preparation because they were engaged in a task and felt a sense of belonging to the group. In conclusion, based on these observations, it can be said that social strategies had a positive impact on speaking skills.

The final research question: What are the effects of social strategies in language learning? were grouped under several headings: First of all social strategies can improve speaking skills. Following the random grouping of the class, it was observed that students who didn't communicate much with each other initially were not eager or willing to work together and hesitated to collaborate. Later, with the encouragement of the teacher, when they began to work, it was observed that they started communicating with each other, listening to each other's ideas, and helping each other recall difficult words. It was also observed that they supported each other's ideas and made efforts to persuade others when they had different opinions or viewpoints. It was also observed during the presentation that a sense of belonging within the group developed, and they effectively introduced and defended the poster they had prepared. Additionally, it was noticed that students who were normally hesitant and reluctant to speak in class were observed to participate in discussions within their groups actively. Furthermore, it was observed that students divided tasks within the group for actions like drawing pictures and writing, with each individual leveraging their skills to contribute to the posters. This way, they actively engaged in the learning process. Due to the allowance of using dictionaries during the preparation and presentation of the posters, students had the opportunity to learn new words and enhance their vocabulary as well. Additionally, by correcting each other's mistakes, they identified their grammatical shortcomings and underwent peer assessment. In summary, in the research showed that every student actively participated in the process, students were able to engage in meaningful exchanges of ideas with each other, and they effectively presented their prepared posters.

Furthermore, since significant findings were obtained from the designed sample lesson, these findings were also presented. First, the posters created by students were introduced. Second, the intentions and messages conveyed by students through the writing, symbols, and images they used during their poster presentations to the class were analyzed. In other words, the expressions and discourses used by the groups while presenting these posters constituted the second finding of the study. It was revealed what messages the group members intended to convey through the images and symbols used in the posters. The poster prepared by the first group is shown in figure 1.

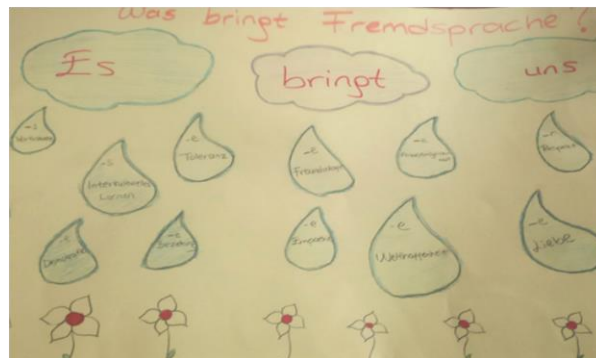


Figure 1.

*The Poster of the First Group*

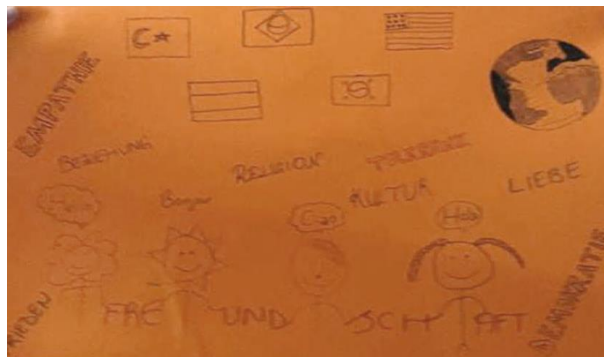
As can be seen from the figure 1, the students focused on emphasizing that foreign language education will provide learners with intercultural learning. They depicted people from different nations carrying the flags of their respective countries on top of the world atlas image, and they wrote “hello” in various languages. Additionally, they reflected symbols of different religions and currencies and the figure carrying a puzzle piece by incorporating images on their posters. The poster prepared by the second group of students is shown in figure 2.

Figure 2.

*The Poster of the Second Group*

As seen in figure 2, the students from the second group wrote the question “What bring to us foreign language?” and underneath, they wrote "it brings us" and added descriptions within raindrop-shaped symbols they created. They wrote the following words in the raindrop-shaped symbols: Trust (-s Vertrauen), education (-e Bildung), democracy (-e Demokratie), intercultural learning (interkulturelles Lernen), tolerance (-e Toleranz), relationship (-e Beziehung), empathy (-e Empathie), friendship (-e Freundschaft), job opportunity (-e Arbeitsmöglichkeit), open-mindedness (-e Weltoffenheit), respect (-r Respekt), love (-e Liebe), peace (-r Frieden). They draw flowers beneath the raindrops. Lastly, the figure 3 depicting the poster of the third group was presented.

Figure 3.

*The Poster of the Third Group*

As can be observed in figure 3 as well, the students from the third group illustrated the flags of various nations at the top of the poster they prepared. They placed a world atlas on the right side of the poster and wrote the following words in the middle of the poster: peace (-r Frieden), relationship (-e Beziehung), empathy (-e Empathie), religion (-e Religion), culture, (-e Kultur), tolerance (-e Toleranz), love (-e Liebe), democracy (-e Demokratie). At the bottom of the poster, they wrote the syllabic form of the word “Friendship” carried by people saying “hello” in different languages.

Secondly, the messages that the students aimed to convey through the written content, symbols and visual elements on the posters during the presentation were emphasized. In Figure 1, students emphasized that, thanks to learning a foreign language, intercultural understanding takes place, showcasing the coexistence of different nations and languages in the world. Additionally, they indicated to highlight the presence of various currencies and draw attention to the existence of people from various religions worldwide. Lastly, they conveyed the idea that the figure carrying a puzzle piece symbolizes how differences come together to form a whole. They argued that the coming together of differences creates a cultural mosaic, and they contend that this represents a magnificent whole. During the presentation, a student from another group asked how they established a connection between language learning and currency. The students mentioned that currency is a cultural element and also pointed out that they included it in the poster because they believed learning language would provide job opportunities and enable them to earn money. Another student also mentioned that in the phrase intercultural learning (*das interkulturelles Lernen*) [The correct version is as follows: *interkulturelles Lernen /das interkulturelle Lernen*], students made an adjective phrase error. The students from the group mentioned that they didn't notice this mistake and thanked their friends for the correction.

In the second poster, the students expressed that they wrote “What bring to us foreign language?” on the poster, and in response, they articulated what they wrote as “It brings us” the following things: Trust, education, democracy, intercultural learning, tolerance, relationship, empathy, friendship, job opportunity, open-mindedness, respect, love and peace. They indicated that they associated people with the flowers they drew on the bottom part of the poster. They expressed that by writing words inside the shapes they drew for raindrops, they wanted to draw attention to the idea that just as rain nurtures and develops flowers, and these concepts also develop people. They stated that through

foreign language, all the mentioned concepts thrive, and individuals who are proficient in language are more enlightened, more tolerant towards different perspectives, and capable of empathy. When a student from the other group inquired about how job opportunities relate to personal development, the students responded that job opportunities allow individuals to communicate with different people, engage in teamwork, and facilitate the exchange of ideas. In this group, a student also pointed out that the students made a grammatical mistake. "It brings us (Es bringt uns)", [the correct version is as follows: Sie (Fremdsprache) bringt uns]. The students from the group mentioned that they didn't notice this mistake and thanked their friends for the correction. It could be said that they made this pronoun error because they directly transferred the features of the English language, which they had previously learned, to the German language.

In the third poster, the students expressed that through the flags of different nations, they wanted to convey that individuals can have the opportunity to closely familiarize themselves with the characteristics of other countries through foreign languages and show respect for these attributes. They indicated with the image of the world atlas that foreign language provides the opportunity to get to know people from different parts of the world. Furthermore, they stated that with the image representing the syllabic form of the word "Friendship" carried by people saying "hello" in different languages, they wanted to emphasize that learning a foreign language can provide the opportunity for individuals to establish friendships with people from different nations. This way, people can get to know each other more closely and contribute to a more peaceful world. They mentioned that foreign language also increases the possibility of learning about and getting to know other cultures.

According to these findings, it can be observed that the primary objective of the research, which is to develop speaking skills by alleviating speaking anxiety through social strategies, was confirmed.

### **Discussion, Conclusion & Suggestions**

In this research, the aim was to reduce speaking anxiety and consequently enhance speaking skills through the utilization of social strategies in foreign language learning. The research revealed that all three groups were generally sufficient in all of the four dimensions of the "Speaking Skills Group Observation Form". However, when individual assessments were conducted, the sub-dimension related to responding to questions needed improvement since only some students in the group responded to the questions while others remained silent. Additionally, it was observed that the speaking comfort of some students during poster presentations was lower compared to their speaking comfort during participation in activities. Both of these findings confirmed the notion that social strategies can reduce speaking anxiety. It is known that social strategies enhance success by facilitating group interaction (Oxford, 1990). It was observed that students are less anxious and less reserved in group activities, they feel more comfortable with their group mates, and they have a greater willingness to speak. Özalp and Merç's study (2022) showed that speaking anxiety had a significant effect on willingness to communicate, and that willingness to communicate also has an effect on speaking anxiety. For this reason it is necessary to eliminate speaking anxiety in foreign language learning and teaching, or at least it should be reduced. There are also studies indicating that speaking anxiety negatively affects foreign language speaking skills (Balkaya et al., 2020; Duman et al., 2017; Şahin Toptaş & Koçak, 2021; Yılmaz & Sakarya Maden, 2016). To enhance speaking skills, it is essential to conduct

research and undertake studies aimed at preventing or at least reducing negative emotions such as anxiety. The research revealed that students who are normally afraid, reluctant or shy to speak German in class are speaking German with their friends and fulfilling their assigned tasks within the small groups. It is thought that students' self-efficacy beliefs develop by fulfilling these tasks. Self-efficacy, as one of the most crucial emotional resources, is a significant intrinsic motivating factor affecting learning (Tanır, 2023a). Therefore, it can be said that using social strategies in foreign language learning and teaching reduces speaking anxiety and develop self-efficacy.

Learning a language is a collaborative endeavor, and effective social strategies play a crucial role in facilitating this process (Oxford, 1990). Before the posters were prepared, it was observed that the students were reluctant to work together with their classmates, with whom students do not communicate much in normal circumstances. Therefore, it can be said that social strategies both increase the willingness to learn and provide communication. When examining the relationship between students' end-of-term grades and the language learning strategies they employed, a connection was discovered between their success levels in speaking lessons and the use of various strategies (Bekleyen, 2006). Furthermore, students' speaking skills in small groups during poster preparation were better compared to poster presentations. Hence, it can be concluded that speaking anxiety was lower, and the level of speaking comfort was higher in small group conversations. In the study of Arslan Buyruk et al. (2018), students stated that they had more opportunity to speak in teaching techniques in which they were more active. Additionally, students were more inclined to speak comfortably during poster preparation because they were engaged in a task and felt a sense of belonging to the group. In conclusion, based on these observations, it can be stated that social strategies had a positive impact on speaking skills.

Upon reviewing the existing literature, it can be observed that there are various studies in the frame of language learning strategies in Turkey's foreign language education context (Çelik Korkmaz, 2013; Ünal et al., 2011). Furthermore, when the literature was analyzed, it was found that the relationship between academic achievement and learning strategies had been frequently investigated. Demirel (2012) conducted a study to determine whether there were significant differences in language learning strategy use among university students based on gender and academic achievement. The study revealed that language strategy use was directly related to language achievement. In the studies conducted by Solak and Çakır (2015) and Balkaya (2022), a positive relationship between language learning strategies and academic achievement in language learning was demonstrated. Similarly, in the studies by Lee (2010) and Kean (2018), it was shown that successful language learners frequently use learning strategies, while less successful students are often unaware of these strategies. Language learning strategies not only enhance language skills but also assist in regulating learning processes, enabling students to manage them more independently.

Although not originally one of the main objectives of the research, another finding obtained from the study was that students could become aware of each other's mistakes. In the study of Memduhoğlu et al. (2014) it was seen that, with cooperative group techniques students realize their own mistakes and choose how to correct them. Some students made mistakes as they were influenced by the English they had previously learned. One could argue that they made this pronoun error because they directly transferred features from the English language to the German

language. This finding is consistent with study of [Tanır \(2023b\)](#). In this study, it was revealed that students learning German as a third language made morphological mistakes. While preparing and presenting posters, students had the opportunity to compare themselves with their peers and become aware of the areas they were lacking in through correcting each other's mistakes. This was achieved by students correcting each other's errors, even though it wasn't originally one of the main objectives of the research. Furthermore, students realized that they could communicate with their classmates beyond just a few close friends, and they had the opportunity to work together to create a valuable outcome and defend it. As a result, their sense of group belonging also developed. Similarly in the study of [Batdı \(2013\)](#) concluded that cooperative learning directs students to interaction and communication and provides social development. Thanks to social strategies, students learned new words by asking the teacher or their peers or by looking them up in the dictionary. In their study [Çelikkaya \(2012\)](#), [Demirel \(2012\)](#) and [Biçer and Polatcan \(2015\)](#) determined that, students used language learning strategies to learn new words to enhance their vocabulary sufficiently. Students were able to use these words during their presentations actively. In this frame advised [Cesur and Fer \(2011\)](#) based on their study results teachers to practice the students to use the newly learned word in sentences. Students also experienced engaging in different viewpoints and respecting these perspectives during the process. The most significant finding of the research was that all students had actively participated to prepare and present to the posters throughout this process.

The research showed that students are aware of the significance of foreign language education as a crucial skill in today's modern world. Furthermore, it is known that learning a language provides individuals with new perspectives and enhances their worldview ([Akpınar Dellal, 2013](#)). In support of this view in the research, it was observed that students associated foreign language learning with the following words: culture, democracy, education, empathy, friendship, intercultural learning, job opportunity, love, peace, open-mindedness, relationship, religion, respect, tolerance and trust. [Arabacıoğlu and Balkaya \(2023\)](#) asserted that the incorporation of cultural elements into the study of a foreign language can enhance learner's expressive skills, communicative proficiency, and intercultural competence. Learning a new language exposes individuals to different cultural contexts, allowing them to engage with diverse ideas and viewpoints. As they interact with speakers of that language individuals gain insights into various ways of thinking, living, and understanding the world. This fosters open-mindedness, empathy, and a boundless world across cultures and societies ([Balkaya & Akpınar Dellal, 2017](#)). In addition, the research indicated that students could use their imagination and associate words and pictures with what they wanted to express.

In short, it was concluded that social strategies can be successfully employed in foreign language classes to alleviate speaking anxiety. It is an inevitable fact that through these strategies, speaking skills will also inevitably improve. Social strategies are recommended not only for improving speaking skills but also for creating a better classroom atmosphere and fostering camaraderie among students. Furthermore, investigating the impact of social strategies on other basic language skills will make significant contributions to the field. In addition, the long-term impact of these strategies could be the subject of other studies.

### **Ethic**

I declare that the research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all individuals participants included in the study.

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