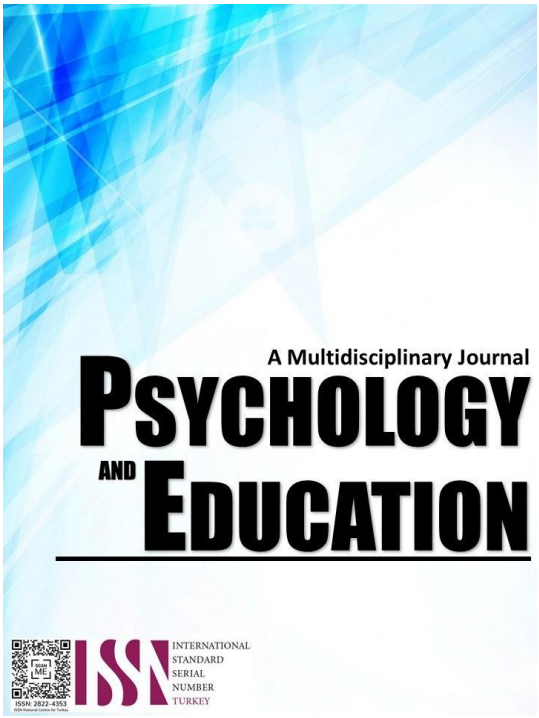
LEVEL OF SPEAKING ANXIETY OF FIRST YEAR EDUCATION STUDENTS AND THEIR PREFERRED PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES



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Research Article

Level of Speaking Anxiety of First Year Education Students and Their Preferred Pedagogical Strategies

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the level and the factors that cause English speaking anxiety, and the preferred pedagogical strategies among first-year education students. Employing a descriptive quantitative research approach, a researcher-devised questionnaire was administered to 80 participants. Analysis involved frequency distribution, percentages, weighted mean, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Results unveiled a prevalent experience of speaking anxiety among the majority of first-year education students. Linguistic factors emerged as the most influential contributor to this anxiety, followed by psychological and environmental factors. The findings highlighted that students' apprehension stemmed from their lack of proficiency in English, leading to hesitancy in speaking before the class. Notably, anxiety was attributed to inadequate English skills, grammatical errors, disorganized sentences, poor pronunciation, and limited vocabulary. Furthermore, the study revealed a preference among students for pedagogical strategies aimed at enhancing their speaking abilities. Specifically, learners expressed a desire for teachers to create an environment fostering free expression without inhibition, believing this approach would ultimately bolster their English speaking skills. These findings underscore the significance of addressing linguistic proficiency and implementing supportive pedagogical methods to alleviate English speaking anxiety among students.

Keywords: *English speaking anxiety, pedagogical strategies, second language*

Introduction

English has become obligatory at all levels of education. Many countries have made it a point to make their students master English at various levels (Aydin, 2008 & Miskam, 2018). English proficiency is often regarded as one of the crucial components in adjusting to this progress. As a medium for communication, English connects individuals across nations and spans numerous industries such as business, education, technology, engineering, finance, tourism, and others. According to Shabani (quoted in El-Sakka, 2016), speaking is an ability that English learners consider the most difficult to master. It is also considered a severe problem and one of the most challenging issues in the teaching-learning process. Many studies have confirmed that most students experience speaking anxiety when asked to speak in front of their teachers and classmates in English, and even students with high levels of English ability can also experience significant speaking anxiety. There are contributing factors to the language anxiety of learners, such as participating in speaking activities, inability to understand the lessons, and evaluation. In contrast, inhibiting factors are peer affiliation or a feeling of communal connectedness, classroom set-up, and the teacher's role.

The factors influencing English competency, particularly the learning of non-native English speakers, have been the topic of numerous and varied studies. Although there is sufficient literature about foreign language learning anxiety, there is still a scarcity of available and published written materials investigating the status of speaking anxiety of first-year education students in the Philippines.

In addition, COVID-19 made education jump online to secure campuses and keep the semesters from being canceled. While many teachers and students took classes online for the first time, anxiety naturally increased. Our stress levels increased as we faced the uncertainty of a worldwide pandemic, the uncharted area of a midterm transition to totally distance learning, and the unknown impacts of the circumstance on the institution of learning made the students' anxiety higher. In the recovery of education after the pandemic, there has been a transition from online education delivery to face-to-face classes. For this reason, students encountered challenges regarding their learning & performance, and communication skills. A study found that learners' level of anxiety in online speaking classes (48.41%) is lower than their anxiety in face-to-face speaking classes (60.96%) (Yaniafari & Rihardini, 2021; Rodrigues & Vethamani, 2015). Now that schools have implemented face-to-face classes again, teachers might consider reshaping their teaching strategies, especially for first-year college students who transitioned from high school (online/modular class) to college (face-to-face class). Teachers must concentrate on fostering those skills that will enable students to become excellent speakers.

Any English teacher's goal in the educational setting should be to improve student's confidence in speaking in front of a group by

creating a stimulating educational environment where they are interested in participating. Thus, this study aims to fill the gap in speaking anxiety and pedagogical strategies used to help students. This study would give valuable insights to help educators, especially English teachers, design effective teaching strategies for learners who have speaking anxiety and want to improve their speaking skill.

Research Questions

The primary objective of this study is to investigate various aspects related to English-speaking anxiety and preferred pedagogical strategies among first-year education students. Specifically, the research aims to address the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
   1.1 Course, and
   1.2 Dialect?
2. What is the level of the English-speaking anxiety of the respondents?
3. What are the factors that affect the English-speaking anxiety of the respondents?
4. What are the preferred pedagogical strategies of the respondents?
5. Is there a significant difference on the preferred pedagogical strategies of the respondents when they are grouped according to their course?
6. Is there a significant difference on the preferred pedagogical strategies of the respondents when they are grouped according to their dialect?

Literature Review

Speaking Anxiety

There are several types of anxiety, but the most prevalent one student's face is speaking anxiety, a prevalent concern primarily in active classroom setups and daily interactions, stemming from the complexity of communication and paralinguistic aspects like body language and facial expressions. This anxiety, as defined by Mandela (2021), involves tension and nervousness tied to the autonomic nervous system, significantly affecting academic performance by reducing engagement, prompting hesitation, and limiting participation. Thus, students, particularly second language learners, often opt for silence out of fear of failure associated with speaking anxiety (Karnine et al., 2022).

For English language learners, especially in places like Malaysia, achieving fluency takes approximately 14 years from primary to tertiary education, with many struggling to attain proficiency due to speaking anxiety, particularly impacting oral communication skills (Karnine et al., 2022). Similarly, in Sri Lanka, where English is taught as a second language, speaking anxiety poses a significant barrier in college classrooms, affecting even advanced learners with years of language study, leading to uneasiness and reluctance to speak in front of their peers (Wijenwantha, 2021). This anxiety impedes oral proficiency critical for students' success in specialized areas, becoming a recurring challenge for language instructors.

Level of Speaking Anxiety

Speaking is an essential skill for effective communication in various contexts. Insufficient English proficiency among learners highlights the necessity of mastering English as a second language (Alwis, 2020). In the Philippines, where English is an official language, moderate levels of English language anxiety and average proficiency exam performance have been reported (Kabigting et al., 2020; Jugo, 2020).

Studies by Bordios et al. (2022) and Rumiyati and Seftika (2018) uncovered notable anxiety among college students and prepared language class respondents, impacting performance in communication-based classrooms. Furthermore, Hasibuan and Irzawati (2020) observed heightened speaking anxiety among advanced-level students, resulting in reduced participation due to fear of errors. This anxiety aligns with research by Oktavia and Syahrul (2021) and Suriya et al. (2022), highlighting increased difficulty in English communication and fostering self-consciousness and nervousness among learners. Despite students' aspiration to enhance oral proficiency, a significant majority (73%) avoid speaking tasks in class due to fear, nervousness, and a lack of confidence in their language abilities (Hardacre & Guvendir, 2020). This anxiety impedes their involvement in spoken activities, despite acknowledging the importance of language fluency.

Factors that Cause English Speaking Anxiety

Most students are nervous about speaking English as a second language, stemming from various factors identified in research. Because of the enormous disparities in opinions based on their backgrounds, each person's experience with this subject is unique. Fagsao's (2019) research highlights a concerning increase in depression, anxiety, and stress among higher education students, particularly among those engaged in presentations and oral communication tasks. Furthermore, because speaking is more spontaneous than writing, which can be edited or revised, students conveyed concern about their inability to clearly express their ideas and be the center of attention in class discussions (Indrianty, 2016; Hasibuan & Irzawati, 2020). Shen and Chiu (2019) in their study reported that difficulties in speaking English faced by students were psychological factors, linguistic factors, and environmental factors.

Psychological Factors

Speaking anxiety, as highlighted by Habiburrahim et al. (2020), profoundly affects English learners' emotions and self-confidence, leading to reduced performance marked by anxious behaviors like sweating, forgetfulness, and increased heart rate, resulting in avoidance of classes and delayed assignments (Hasibuan, Irzawati, 2020). Studies by Rajitha, Alamelu (2020) and Toubot et al. (2018) reinforce the correlation between high speaking anxiety and diminished achievement, emphasizing its link with students' confidence.
Moreover, Habiburrahim et al. (2020) reference Tsiplakides and Keramida's work, noting students' discomfort with direct criticism in public settings, preferring private feedback to avoid feeling inadequate among peers. Fear of negative evaluation during speaking and error correction among Filipino learners, as revealed by Jugo (2020) and supported by Es-Saikh (2020), originates from shyness, fear of errors, and lack of confidence, leading students to remain silent in class to avoid criticism (Khudobina et al., 2019). Negative thoughts and peer assessment escalate anxiety levels, dissuading students from participating in speaking activities due to the fear of ridicule or risk exposing themselves in front of others (Balemir, 2009; Özturk and Gürbüz, 2014).

Linguistic Factors

Language is one of the primary causes of anxiety. A lack of English knowledge might be a barrier, causing fear or anxiety. Rajitha and Alamelu's (2019) study highlighted students expressing concerns about incomplete sentences and vocabulary limitations, stating an inability to articulate thoughts properly and a struggle with English fluency. Similar concerns were echoed in studies by Ridwan and Eva (2018), Muslem et al. (2019), Amiri and Puteh (2018), and Mulyono et al. (2019), citing issues like inadequate vocabulary, fear of mistakes, and insufficient language competence as key contributors to speaking anxiety among students in various contexts. Furthermore, students' hesitance to participate fully in class discussions stems from a perceived need for better grammar knowledge, as revealed in Harris's (2019) study. The studies by Liu (2007) and Harris (2019) also emphasized the significant impact of vocabulary and grammar on students' oral English anxiety, reinforcing the notion that language deficiencies, particularly in vocabulary and grammar, contribute substantially to students' anxiety surrounding speaking English.

Environmental Factors

The current learning approach for students, as highlighted by Karatas & Tuncer (2020) and Milan (2019), predominantly emphasizes reading and writing skills over listening and speaking abilities, leading to heightened speaking anxiety among Filipino students. The anxiety arises from various factors, including inadequate language training, mismatched instructional materials, and fear of criticism. Hakim's (2019) study reinforces this, noting that limited access to speaking resources impedes learners' communicative capability, affecting their confidence.
Moreover, speaking anxiety intensifies during spontaneous speaking situations, as noted by Habiburrahim et al. (2020), leading to significant nervousness during impromptu discussions or unexpected questions from teachers, particularly concerning unfamiliar material, as emphasized by Asysyifa et al. (2019). The lack of preparation time for such situations exacerbates anxiety among students.

Pedagogical Strategies

Anxiety linked with speaking English is one of the most challenging difficulties in education and learning. It has been discovered that second or foreign language anxiety substantially influences second language performance and attainment. As a result, considerable efforts have been dedicated to devising solutions to assist students in coping with this complex issue. However, diverse learning methods among students emphasize the need for teachers to understand factors contributing to anxiety sources and reasons. Scholars such as Davila (2019) emphasize the importance of prioritizing students' meta-linguistic awareness and fostering group cohesion to mitigate learning stress. Understanding anxiety origins and supporting learners affected by classroom factors, as highlighted by Hidayat (2021), proves crucial, with the practical use of tools like Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) for pre-academic year assessments.

Effective classroom management, inclusive activities, and collective support for anxious students, advocated by Inada (2021), alongside strategies promoting a comfortable learning environment and positive reinforcement (Keramida, 2009), are vital in reducing

anxiety and building confidence. Additionally, employing various tactics like visualization, goal-setting, and incorporating social media platforms and flipped classrooms, as suggested by Al-Murtadha (2019), Hutabarat & Simanjuntak (2019), fosters vocabulary expansion

and improves speaking skills. Furthermore, seeking teacher guidance, providing in-class practice opportunities, and engaging with English literature, highlighted by Rajitha & Alamelu (2020), Samad et al. (2020), Nasir et al. (2019), and Pabro et al. (2021), significantly contribute to reducing anxiety and nurturing natural communication development in students learning English as a second language. These studies offer crucial insights into both the triggers and effective strategies to mitigate students' speaking anxiety in language learning contexts.

Methodology

This section presents the methods employed in the study. It covers the research design, locale, and respondents of the study, sampling technique, instrumentation, validity, and reliability of the instrument, data gathering procedure, and statistical treatment and analysis.

Research Design

In this study, a descriptive research design was utilized. Descriptive research, as defined by McCombes (2022), aims to accurately and systematically describe a population, situation, or phenomenon. The researchers chose this approach to create a survey that was used to collect comprehensive information about the respondents' demographics, specifically their course and dialect, level of English-speaking anxiety, factors influencing this anxiety, and their preferred pedagogical strategies. This information was then evaluated and compared based on their course and dialect. This helped determine whether there is a significant difference in the preferred pedagogical strategies of the respondents in coping with speaking anxiety when they are grouped according to their course and dialect.

Participants

The study was conducted at a private Higher Educational Institution in the Municipality of Midsayap, Province of North Cotabato. The respondents in this study were 80 first-year education students enrolled in the second semester of the academic year 2022-2023 from the College of Education.

Instruments

The researchers used a researcher-made questionnaire to collect the necessary data. This method was chosen as it allows respondents to provide information comfortably without the need for face-to-face interaction with the researchers, which could potentially trigger anxiety and affect the reliability of their responses. The use of this tool resulted in more accurate and valid data as respondents were able to respond quickly. The questionnaires incorporated Likert Scales, which offer more than just a binary yes/no response, allowing for a range of opinions or even a lack of opinion. The final version of the Likert scale used was a six-point scale, enabling respondents to express their level of agreement with a given statement (Christy et al., 2021).

Results and Discussion

This section reports and describes the findings of the study. It covers the profile of the respondents, level of English-speaking anxiety, factors affecting English-speaking anxiety, preferred pedagogical strategy in coping with speaking anxiety, and the significant difference in the respondents' preferred pedagogical strategies when grouped according to course and dialect. Table 1. *Demographic*

Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents that consists of the course, and dialect of the respondents with an overall frequency of 100 percent.

Course and Dialect of the Respondents

Table 1 presents that out of 80 respondents, the largest group of students (f=13 or 16.2%) belong to BPED; followed by the BSED-FILIPINO (f=12 or 15.0%) while the smallest group (f=5 or 6.2%) is comprised of BTLE – HE students. In terms of dialect, table 1 shows that the majority of the respondents (f=31 or 38.8%) are Ilonggo followed by Cebuano (f=25 or 31.2%), and the smallest groups,

each with an equal number of respondents (f=4 or 5.0%) are Tagalog and Iranon.

Table 1. *Profile of the Respondents according to course and dialect*

Characteristics	*F*	*%*
Course		
BSED-Science	10	12.5
BSED-English	10	12.5
BSED-Filipino	12	15.0
BSED-Social Studies	10	12.5
BSED-Mathematics	10	12.5
BEED	10	12.5
BPED	13	16.2
BTLE-HE	5	6.2
Total	80	100.0
Dialect		
Cebuano	25	31.2
Maguindanaon	16	20.0
Tagalog	4	5.0
Ilonggo	31	38.8
Iranon	4	5.0
Total	80	100.0

Level of English-Speaking Anxiety of the Respondents

Table 2 presents the level of English-Speaking Anxiety of first-year education students, with an overall mean of 4.23 based on the data gathered. It means that first-year education students are Anxious about speaking inside the classroom. Moreover, the results revealed that the item which states, Even if I am very well prepared, I feel anxious about speaking English, had the highest mean (M=4.53), followed by the statement I tremble when knowing that I am going to be called on to speak English with a mean of 4.43. At the same time, I dislike using my voice and body expressively while speaking English had the lowest mean of 3.79.

Table 2. *Level of English-Speaking Anxiety of the Respondents*

Statement	*Mean*	*SD*	*Description*
1. I never feel quite of myself while I am speaking English.	4.15	1.03	Anxious (A)
2. It embarrasses me to volunteer first to speak English.	4.15	1.18	Anxious (A)
3. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while speaking English.	4.19	0.97	Anxious (A)
4. I dislike using my voice and body expressively while speaking English.	3.79	1.26	Anxious (A)
5. Even if I am very well prepared, I feel anxious about speaking English.	4.53	1.15	Very Anxious (VA)
6. I tremble when knowing that I am going to be called on to speak English.	4.43	1.17	Very anxious (VA)
7. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English.	4.28	1.14	Anxious (A)
8. I start to panic when I have to speak English without a preparation in advance.	4.30	1.15	Anxious (A)
9. I feel very self-conscious while speaking English in front of other students.	4.36	1.05	Very Anxious (VA)
10. The more speaking tests I have, the more confused I get.	4.08	1.21	Anxious (A)
Overall Mean/SD	4.23	1.13	Anxious (A)

Factors that Affect English-Speaking Anxiety of the Respondents

Table 3 shows the factors affecting first-year education students' English-speaking anxiety.

Table 3 indicates that the respondents Agree (OM=4.38) with regard to Psychological Factors. The results revealed that item number 2, which states, I worry that if I speak, my classmates or teacher will react negatively to what I say, has the highest mean (M=4.71), followed by item number 1, which states, I tend to speak fast or stutter because of nervousness with a mean of 4.58, while the statement, I want to speak less because it takes me a long time to overcome my shyness had the lowest mean of 3.99.

The respondents also Agree (OM= 4.52) in terms of Linguistic Factors. The statement, I get anxious in speaking activities because I am not fluent in English got the highest mean (M=4.70), followed by I am worried about having grammatical mistakes while I speak with a mean of 4.68. In contrast, I get nervous about speaking because my vocabulary is limited, that I cannot understand some terms had the lowest mean of 4.30.

In addition, the respondents Slightly Agree (OM= 3.79) regarding Environmental Factors. Moreover, the statement with the highest mean is I often speak because my teacher provides the least opportunities to speak English in class (M=3.93), followed by I am not exposed to English learning resources, which limits my capability to speak, with a mean of 3.90. At the same time, I have less support from my teachers and classmates when learning English had the lowest mean of 3.41.

Table 3. *Factors that Affect English-Speaking Anxiety of the Respondents*

Statements	*Mean*	*SD*	*Description*
Psychological Factors			
1. I tend to speak fast or stutter because of nervousness.	4.58	0.96	Agree (A)
2. I worry that if I speak, my classmates or teacher will react negatively to what I say.	4.71	1.15	Agree (A)
3. I feel as though someone is making fun of me when I speak.	4.40	1.13	Agree (A)
4. I do not volunteer to speak because I assume others will provide better responses.	4.24	1.21	Slightly Agree (SlA)
5. I want to speak less because it takes a long time for me to overcome my shyness.	3.99	1.21	Slightly Agree (SlA)
Overall Mean/SD	4.38	1.13	Agree (A)
Linguistic Factors			
1. I get nervous to speak because my vocabulary is limited that I cannot understand some terms.	4.30	1.02	Slightly Agree (SlA)
2. I feel worried and uncomfortable when I speak that I cannot pronounce words precisely.	4.48	1.02	Agree (A)
3. I cannot organize my sentences straightaway when I am requested to speak.	4.44	1.05	Agree (A)
4. I am worried about having grammatical mistakes while I speak.	4.68	1.19	Agree (A)
5. I get anxious during speaking activities because I am not fluent in English.	4.70	1.18	Agree (A)
Overall Mean/SD	4.52	1.09	Agree (A)
Environmental Factors			
1. I often speak because my teacher provides least opportunities to speak English in class.	3.93	1.25	Slightly Agree (SlA)
2. I am not fully engaged to English discussion.	3.81	1.33	Slightly Agree (SlA)
3. I often participate in speaking activities.	3.88	1.14	Slightly Agree (SlA)
4. I am not exposed to English learning resources which limits my capability to speak.	3.90	1.26	Slightly Agree (SlA)
5. I have less support from my teachers and classmates when learning English.	3.41	1.26	Slightly Agree (SlA)
Overall Mean/SD	3.79	1.25	Slightly Agree (SlA)
Grand Mean	4.23		Slightly Agree (SlA)
Grand SD		1.16	

Scale	Range	Description
1	1.00 to 1.833	Strongly Disagree (SD)
2	1.833 to 2.666	Disagree (D)
3	2.666 to 3.499	Slightly Disagree (SlD)
4	3.499 to 4.332	Slightly Agree (SIA)
5	4.332 to 5.165	Agree (A)
6	5.165 to 6.0	Strongly Agree (SA)

Preferred Pedagogical Strategies of the Respondents

Table 4 presents the pedagogical strategies that first-year education students preferred to use by their teachers inside the classroom.

Table 4 shows that the respondents have preferred pedagogical strategies for reducing their speaking anxiety inside the classroom. Moreover, the highest mean is My teachers would encourage us to speak openly without hesitation (M=5.41), followed by My teachers would offer opportunities for students to speak, with a mean of 5.39. In contrast, My teachers offer individual guidelines to improve my speaking skills had the lowest mean of 5.03.

Table 4. *Preferred Pedagogical Strategies of the Respondents*

Statements	*Mean*	*SD*	*Description*
1. My teachers provide tips to improve my confidence in speaking.	5.35	0.64	Always Preferred (AP)
2. My teachers offer individual guidelines to improve my speaking skills.	5.03	0.93	Often Preferred (OP)
3. My teachers would let me connect learnt concepts in improving my speaking skills.	5.15	0.89	Often Preferred (OP)
4. My teachers would require us to read and watch different materials in class to improve our speaking ability.	5.21	0.92	Always Preferred (AP)
5. My teachers would require us to accomplish tasks that can improve our speaking skills.	5.31	0.77	Always Preferred (AP)
6. My teachers would implement class practice-oriented session/drill to improve our speaking skill.	5.04	0.93	Often Preferred (OP)
7. My teachers would offer opportunities for students to speak.	5.39	0.74	Always Preferred (AP)
8. My teachers would encourage to speak openly without hesitation.	5.41	0.72	Always Preferred (AP)
9. My teachers would give feedback on my speaking performance.	5.05	0.95	Often Preferred (OP)
10. My teachers should expose us to group activities to have interaction.	5.20	0.91	Always Preferred (AP)
Overall Mean/SD	5.21	0.84	Always Preferred (AP)

Scale	Range	Description
1	1.00 to 1.833	Strongly Disagree (SD)
2	1.833 to 2.666	Disagree (D)
3	2.666 to 3.499	Slightly Disagree (SlD)
4	3.499 to 4.332	Slightly Agree (SlA)
5	4.332 to 5.165	Agree (A)
6	5.165 to 6.0	Strongly Agree (SA)

Significant Difference on the Preferred Pedagogical Strategies

Tables 5 and 6 present the significant difference on the preferred pedagogical strategies of the respondents when grouped according to course and dialect.

Table 5. *Significant Difference on the Preferred Pedagogical Strategies of the Respondents when they are Grouped According to their Course*

Variables	*N*	*Mean*	*SD*	*P-value*	*Interpretation*	*Decision*
Bsed-Science	10	5.19	0.601			
Bsed-English	10	4.95	0.542			
Bsed-Filipino	12	5.33	0.424			
Bsed-Social Studies	10	5.27	0.405			
Bsed-Mathematics	10	5.04	0.829	0.012	S	Reject Ho1
BEED	10	5.08	0.601			
Bped	13	5.47	0.368			
Btle-He	5	5.34	0.549			

NS = Not significant at .05 level (2 – tailed)
S = Significant at .05 level (2– tailed)

Table 6. *Significant Difference on the Preferred Pedagogical Strategies of the Respondents when they are Grouped According to their Dialect*

Variables	*N*	*Mean*	*SD*	*P-value*	*Interpretation*	*Decision*
CEBUANO	25	4.116	0.875			
MAGUINDANAON	16	4.513	0.661			
TAGALOG	4	4.050	0.310	0.566	NS	Accept H02
ILONGGO	31	4.219	.878			
IRANON	4	3.950	1.047			

NS = Not significant at .05 level (2 – tailed)
S = Significant at .05 level (2– tailed)

The analysis in Tables 5 and 6 examines the computed p-values for preferred pedagogical strategies concerning both the respondents' course and dialect. The p-value for the course variable is 0.012, signifying a significant difference between the two variables and leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H01). This implies that there is a significant difference in the preferred pedagogical strategies based on respondents' courses.

Conversely, for the dialect variable, the p-value of 0.566 indicates no substantial difference between the variables. As this value is higher than the significance level of 0.05, the study accepts the null hypothesis (H02), suggesting no significant distinction in preferred pedagogical strategies among respondents grouped by dialect.

Discussion

This chapter presents an overview of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations based on the responses given by the respondents and the research problems pursued. The study was designed to explore the demographic profile of first-year education students, their course and dialect, level of English-speaking anxiety, factors affecting English-speaking anxiety, preferred pedagogical strategies, and the significant difference in the preferred pedagogical strategies according to respondents' course and dialect.

Profile of the Respondents

The list of respondents was taken and identified from the Learner Information System (LIS) record of Notre Dame of Midsayap College, consisting of first-year education students enrolled for the second semester of 2022-2023. There was a total of 134 students enrolled across eight education courses, with varying numbers per course. The researchers requested respondents from each course, with different number of respondents from each course since the numbers of students per course are different, where Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) has the highest number of students, followed by Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED), while Bachelor of Technology & Livelihood Education (BTLE) major in Home Economics (HE) has the fewest students.

Meanwhile, the most used dialect by first-year education students is Ilonggo, followed by Cebuano. In fact, Ramos (2022) estimated that there are at least fifteen million Cebuano speakers and 9.1 million Ilonggo speakers, making it the second-used language in the Visayas and SOCCSKSARGEN region and the fourth largest dialect spoken in the country. It implies that a majority of the respondents

are Cebuano and Ilonggo speakers.

Level of English-Speaking Anxiety

The study's findings indicate that most first-year education students are Anxious when speaking or communicating using the English language. Many students either refrain from speaking entirely or show hesitation to participate in language-related activities. Jugo's (2020) research revealed Filipino learners reporting a moderate level of English language anxiety, often not recognizing or denying their uneasiness with the language.

Moreover, in the Philippine education system, despite English being a longstanding medium of instruction, speaking the language remains a stress factor for students. The pressure to communicate well in English, particularly in front of teachers and peers, contributes to distress among second language learners. Similar to findings by Rumiyati and Seftika (2018), students express anxiety stemming from vocabulary limitations, pronunciation issues, grammar proficiency, shyness, and a lack of opportunities for everyday English conversation.

Meanwhile, highlighting the statement with the highest mean: Even if I am very well prepared, I feel anxious about speaking English and is described as Very Anxious. Bordios et al.'s (2022) study among college students highlighted substantial anxiety when speaking English publicly, persisting despite extensive preparation. Learners feared potential discrepancies between their prepared speech and actual delivery, dreading negative reactions from peers or teachers and anticipating embarrassing situations during presentations, indicating that preparation alone doesn't guarantee exceptional English-speaking performance. Similar findings by Bhatti and Memo (2016) emphasize students' persistent anxiety about participating in discussions despite extensive preparation for language classes. Thus, fostering an environment encouraging free expression, patience, and a positive attitude toward speaking anxiety becomes crucial. Encouraging students to accept mistakes as part of learning and nurturing gradual improvement in communication skills remains vital for teachers in these scenarios.

Factors that Affect English-Speaking Anxiety

Three factors affect the speaking anxiety of first-year education students; these are psychological factors, linguistic factors, and environmental factors.

Psychological Factors

Results reveal that the respondents Agree in terms of their Psychological Factors, and they signified the highest mean on the statement: I worry that if I speak, my classmates or teacher will react negatively to what I say. It is supported by Jugo's (2020) research on language anxiety among Filipino learners, highlighting anxiety during speaking, error correction, and English communication. This fear of negative judgment affects first-year education students, hindering their willingness to speak due to anticipated negative feedback. Learners' fear of making mistakes contributes to silence and disengagement, a correlation found in Balemir (2009) and Özturk and Gürbüz (2014), where negative thoughts and peer evaluation heightened anxiety levels. This anxiety extends beyond the classroom, impacting social interactions, family relationships, and professional settings. Additionally, Horwitz et al.'s (1986) theory links speaking anxiety to negative emotions in learning English, which not only affects social skills but also hampers communication, leading to loneliness and reduced self-esteem.

Furthermore, they signified the lowest mean on the statement: I want to speak less because it takes a long time for me to overcome my shyness and is less considered as a factor that increases the speaking anxiety of first-year education students. The findings suggest that while shyness might pose challenges in classroom speaking activities, respondents can overcome it, minimizing its impact on their speaking anxiety and the delivery of their ideas. This contrasts with Ordulj and Grabar's (2014) assertion that shyness significantly contributes to speaking anxiety, and Es-Saikh's (2020) identification of shyness as a common obstacle, diverging from this study's results. Since, the respondents in this study indicate that shyness does not heavily trigger their anxiety, hinting that learners has effective anxiety-management strategies and has achieved language communicative competence.

Linguistic Factors

Results reveal that the respondents Agree in terms of the Linguistic Factors and is thought to be the main factor that makes first-year education students fear speaking in front of the class. English is a complex language, and its grammatical rules must be consistent, making the students uncomfortable using it. It is consistent with the theory of Horwitz et al. (1986), where students often experience speaking anxiety when they are conscious of the demand to perform tasks, they have less command or control.

Here, the students signified the highest mean on the statement: I get anxious in speaking activities because I am not fluent in English. It was highlighted in Harris's (2019) study, that students' confidence is impacted by their English proficiency, particularly in grammar, leading to speech hesitancy and uncertainty. This aligns with Muslem et al.'s (2019) findings that internship students' speaking anxiety roots from poor skills including inaccurate fluency, inappropriate vocabulary, grammar application, insufficient material preparation, and poor pronunciation. Students fear judgment based on an ideal of perfect English proficiency. Thus, to ease anxiety, several strategies are suggested, including listening to native speakers, reading English literature, active use of English in class, utilizing audio dictionaries, among others.

Moreover, the respondents signified their lowest mean on the statement: I get nervous to speak because my vocabulary is limited, and I cannot understand some terms. In the case of the students in this study, while they lack fluency in English, their anxiety isn't triggered by vocabulary limitations. This suggests they have sufficient vocabulary for classroom communication. Rather than vocabulary, issues with grammar and pronunciation might contribute to their speaking anxiety, contrary to findings by Akkakoson (2016) and Liu (2007) who associated oral English classroom anxiety with inadequate vocabulary. The fear of making mistakes or feeling awkward while speaking arises from the inability to express thoughts due to limited vocabulary. However, students recognize the importance of vocabulary for language development, prioritizing vocabulary over grammar rules, as noted by Schmitt (2010). Thus, teaching vocabulary assists students in mastering English for their objectives and communicating with others in English.

Environmental Factors

The results reveal that the respondents rated the Environmental Factors as Slightly Agree and is considered the less factor affecting the students' speaking anxiety. However, it still implies that some respondents sometimes meet or experience environmental issues. This aligns with Horwitz et al.'s (1986) concept of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), where respondents experience anxiety while speaking in specific situations. It coincides with the theory, as participants felt anxious sharing ideas in English in front of the class, reflecting environmental factors.

Precisely, they signified the highest mean on the statement: I often speak because my teacher provides the least opportunities to speak English in class. Milan (2019) emphasized Filipino students' speaking anxiety due to limited English-speaking opportunities and inadequate training, advocating for a welcoming environment that encourages English practice among classmates, thereby boosting self-confidence. Providing straightforward topics and materials, as suggested by Sakai & Kikuchi (2009), can enhance students' self-assurance. Hakim's (2019) study further supports this by stating that limited access to speaking resources impedes communicative development, stressing the need for increased English conversation opportunities and teachers' guidance in overcoming speech hesitancy.

Furthermore, the respondents signified the lowest mean on the statement: I have less support from my teachers and classmates when learning English. It means that encouragement from professors and peers lowers anxiety, fostering a positive student-teacher relationship and increasing motivation. Dweck (1999) confirmed the effectiveness of compliments in reducing anxiety, highlighting the need for teachers to be kind, attentive, and promote independence. Additionally, building relationships among classmates enhances free English conversation (Liu & Jackson, 2008). Thus, teachers should create a positive learning environment by encouraging classroom interaction and collaborative independence among students.

Preferred Pedagogical Strategies of the Respondents

The study revealed that the respondents Always Preferred pedagogical strategies to overcome their English-speaking anxiety. It means students want changes and improvements regarding teacher techniques during discussions. Moreover, they signified the highest mean on the statement: My teachers would encourage us to speak openly without hesitation. ESL teachers should emphasize speaking skills' value and encourage students to use the target language freely. Creating an environment where students feel comfortable participating without fear of interruption fosters confidence in speaking English. Also, teachers should focus on positive reinforcement and learning from mistakes (Noon-ura, 2008; Kitano, 2001 cited in Keramida, 2009), aiming to reduce anxiety and boost students' willingness to communicate. Encouraging uninterrupted speaking opportunities can create a positive and effective language learning environment.
Meanwhile, the respondents also signified the second highest mean on the statement: My teachers would offer opportunities for students to speak. Samad et al. (2020) confirmed the positive impact of providing students opportunities to practice speaking in class, which notably boosted their confidence and reduced anxiety. Educators who encourage verbal expression through tasks are valued by students, emphasizing the importance of fostering peer conversations. This emphasis on student interaction and collaborative English practice, like group discussions, resonates with Brown's (2001) assertion that speaking activities enhance student expression within a supportive classroom environment, promoting participation for all students.

However, the respondents signified the lowest mean on the statement: My teachers offer individual guidelines to improve my speaking

skills. This suggests a preference for alternatives to personalized instructional materials, perhaps due to underestimating their abilities and fearing failure to meet teachers' expectations. They feel more comfortable working with peers during oral tasks, apprehensive about individual evaluation or critique in class. To alleviate this anxiety, teachers should initiate discussions with students about their concerns (Crookall & Oxford, 1991 in Fujii, 2016). Additionally, Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Anxiety theory underscores that addressing speaking anxiety involves tailoring teaching methods to individual learning styles and preferences. Understanding students' backgrounds, strengths, weaknesses, and preferred learning strategies is crucial for teachers to adapt their approach, facilitating skill improvement and reducing anxiety.

Significant Difference on the Preferred Pedagogical Strategies of the Respondents According to their Course

Results reveal that when respondents are categorized according to course, there is a significant difference in preferred pedagogical strategies. It means that each course preferred different strategies from other courses This disparity arises from students undertaking diverse fields, leading to varying levels of speaking anxiety and preferences for strategies to alleviate anxiety and enhance speaking skills. For instance, BPED students exhibit higher English-speaking anxiety than BSED-English students, likely influenced by a focus on performance tasks over speaking activities. Pranoto & Suprayogi's (2020) study aligns with this, highlighting the inadequacy of English skills among PE students who prioritize writing skills despite needing improvement in grammar.

As a result, proficiency in English becomes crucial for students' professional development and future prospects, especially for BPED students aspiring to advance internationally in athletic careers as coaches or referees. Conversely, BSED-English students are more accustomed to speaking activities and possess higher English proficiency due to daily language use and discussions about the language itself, in line with Armea et al.'s (2022) findings showing proficiency in vocabulary and grammar among English major students.
The findings underscore the importance of enhancing speaking skills among all education students, not only for those in BSED majoring in English but across all courses. This emphasis aims to foster linguistic abilities and elevate language proficiency at the tertiary level, complementing students' textual knowledge, conceptual understanding, and literary reading abilities.

Significant Difference on the Preferred Pedagogical Strategies of the Respondents According to their Dialect

When respondents are classified according to dialect, the results show no significant difference in their preferred pedagogical strategies, indicating alignment among various dialects in preferred strategies. This suggests that using various dialects does not significantly influence students' preferred teaching approaches. The educational institution provides equal opportunities to all tertiary students regardless of their dialect, underlining the importance of recognizing dialectal variations in educational settings for fair language learning opportunities. Educators in a multicultural, multilingual educational landscape face the challenge of addressing speaking anxiety, necessitating an understanding of students' backgrounds, especially those who speak languages other than English. Teachers must employ suitable strategies catering to various learning styles among students with different dialects to effectively meet educational objectives and reduce their fear of using English. Implementing scaffolding techniques, allowing translation into students' dialects for better understanding, proves to be an effective approach. Studies by Jorgensen and Pedersen (1989) and Cheshire (2007) stress the positive impact of valuing dialects in classrooms on academic achievement. Establishing an emotionally secure learning environment, irrespective of dialect or cultural background, is essential for successful English language acquisition.

Conclusion

English is a required subject in higher education in the Philippines. Teaching English is not just confined to written skills but also to communication competency in the English language. As a result, this study was conducted to evaluate the student's level of speaking anxiety in the classroom, the factors that influence their speaking anxiety, and their preferred pedagogical strategies. It has been determined that speaking anxiety prevents the students from speaking, which interferes with their ability to communicate effectively, and the primary factor that contributes to that is their linguistic competence. The study further found that students with English-speaking anxiety preferred opportunities to speak English in the classroom while also getting encouragement and motivation from their teachers. Therefore, the findings of this study contribute to ESL teaching and learning, notably providing significant insights for curriculum building and instructional techniques to help students develop speaking abilities. Furthermore, future researchers may utilize the findings of this study as one of the starting points for future investigations on similar variables.

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