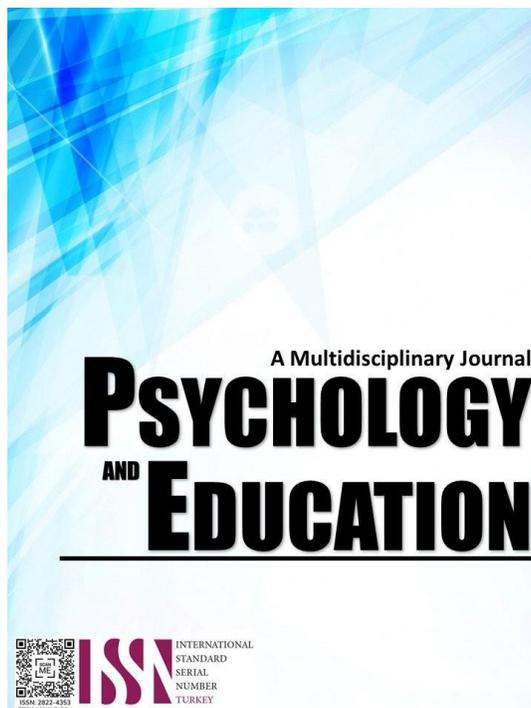


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Level of Speaking Proficiency of ESL Pre-Service Teachers When Grouped According to Sex, Age, and Year Level

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Abstract

This study was conducted to determine the level of speaking proficiency of English pre-service teachers in one of the Higher Education Institutions in Midsayap and to know if there is a significant difference and relationship between their sex, age, and year level in terms of their speaking proficiency. A descriptive correlation design was used in this study. First, it covered the demographic profile of the respondents. The researchers used the frequency and percentage distribution of fifty-seven respondents. Second, it discussed the respondents' level of speaking proficiency. Third, their level of speaking proficiency by grouping them according to their sex, age, and year level. Their proficiency level is measured through an impromptu speaking test. They are rated by the three inter-raters using a rubric. The rubric contains five speaking components: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Findings reveal that BSED English students are superior in speaking the English language. There is also a significant difference between males and females in terms of their level of English-speaking proficiency. The male respondents are more proficient in speaking English than the female. There is no association between their sex, age, year level, and their level of speaking proficiency. Therefore, the study recommends that students improve their speaking proficiency, especially in the fluent component, which needs more attention. Teachers may give speaking activities such as impromptu, extemporaneous class, debate, picture analysis, public speaking, and oratorical speech that could help students enhance their English speaking skills. Also, the researchers recommend making another study related to this study but with additional variables to make it more substantial.

Keywords: *speaking proficiency, speaking components, ESL pre-service teachers*

Introduction

One of the essential skills that ESL pre-service teachers should have is speaking. It helps them to communicate effectively for professional and personal use. To avoid miscommunication, speaking proficiently allows them to explain or share ideas with clarity or conciseness. Thus, BSED-English students are expected to be proficient and effective future teachers.

According to Syakur (2018), for students to be proficient in speaking, they must master a number of speaking-related skills, including vocabulary, fluency, grammar, comprehension, and pronunciation. According to the research conducted by Hanafiah et al. (2022), students are able to communicate and understand one another when they have a large vocabulary. As a result, they need to pay attention to the language the students use when interacting. The only way for speakers to express their aims and goals is through language. Based on Newton and Nation (2020), developing fluency in speaking requires creating speaking tasks that allow students to use language in a natural way to accomplish specific communicative objectives (as opposed to demonstrating language knowledge), especially when they are pushed to perform at a faster than normal pace.

Based on the study of Kusumawardani and Mardiyani (2018), learning a foreign language requires a precise understanding of linguistic structure. Every language has to have some rules. In English, we refer to it as grammar. According to the study's underlying assumptions, grammar is a science of rules that governs how words, phrases, and sentences are arranged to express meaning. Knowing grammar facilitates the use of useful expressions in writing and speaking. Bohari (2020), for a topic to respond to speech and begin it, the speaker and listener must have strong comprehension when communicating. Understanding and gaining knowledge requires comprehension, which is crucial. Based on the study of Danapoc et al. (2020), to communicate effectively, one must pronounce words clearly so that others may understand the speaker. Pronunciation is the primary source of understanding, making pronunciation instruction extremely crucial. During the researchers' action plan, students at Bestlink College of the Philippines scored lowest in special words whose spelling differs from their pronunciation. Following the speech lesson, the students demonstrated the ability to distinguish between words based on both their spelling and meaning.

As Rao (2019) discussed, Improved job opportunities largely depend on effective communication. Consequently, it is evident that learners' speaking skills are essential and need to be developed. Learning English as a Second Language (ESL) helps students become more globally competitive and shapes them accordingly. However, mastering a speaking skill is challenging. Speaking is regarded by EFL contest participants as the most difficult skill to master, and this is also true in Nepal. The study results show that learners typically face four main speaking challenges: social, environmental, linguistic, and personal issues. Some common issues students encountered when speaking in English were lack of confidence, poor vocabulary, hesitation, anxiety when speaking, fear of making mistakes, lack

of a suitable environment to practice English in, and lack of strong teacher motivation (Chand, 2021). According to Torreces and Brillantes (2022), Learning a second language requires effort. Even fluent speakers occasionally make grammatical errors. The most frequent mistakes made by pre-service teachers at a state university in Iloilo, Philippines, are related to preposition usage, verb tenses, and subject-verb agreement. When someone wants to be proficient in speaking, there are many factors to consider, including comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. According to the study findings by Gatcho and Hajan (2019), the two main factors contributing to Filipino college students' fear of evaluation were the teacher's questions, for which they were ill-prepared, and their perception that their classmates' English was better than theirs.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic increased students' struggle to speak English proficiently. During the pandemic, BSED-Mathematics students of Notre Dame of Midsayap College agreed that shyness, lack of confidence, fear of committing errors, and anxiety affected their ability to speak proficiently. When students speak in public, they become self-conscious, lose confidence, and doubt their proficiency in English communication. The students struggle to give a speech because they fear that people will make fun of them if they make mistakes when speaking English. (Licaros et al., 2022). There are instances where the researchers observed that students, particularly BSED-English students, sometimes have poor speaking skills when answering questions. Students cannot formulate sentences well and fast; there are mispronounced words, repetition of words, and grammatical errors. Based on the study of Pinongpong et. (2020), students from Notre Dame of Midsayap College disclosed that the learners are afraid to speak in English. The main cause of learners' fear of speaking English as a second language is a lack of confidence.

Unlike the study of Rao (2019), which used questionnaires to assess speaking proficiency, the researchers' study assessed the students' actual performance. All five components of speaking skills were used to know the student's proficiency level. Also, this study was focused on something other than the BSED-Mathematics students. Its respondents are ESL pre-service teachers.

Thus, the researchers deemed it necessary to conduct this research to know the proficiency level of ESL pre-service teachers from first-year to third-year students in speaking English and to compare the proficiency level according to sex, age, and year level. It is a must to know their level of proficiency as it will indicate their readiness as future English teachers. In this way, they can also be aware of what skills are already good and maintain them and what skills still need improvement so that they can work on them. They must first be proficient so they can be effective and efficient teachers in the future. The aims of this study were threefold: first, to know the respondents' demographic profile in connection to their ability to speak proficiently. Second, to evaluate respondents' level of speaking proficiency. Third, to assess whether there is or is not a significant difference and relationship in the respondents' speaking proficiency level when grouping according to sex, age, and grade level.

Research Questions

This study aimed to determine the speaking proficiency level of the Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English students from the first year up to the third year of college. Specifically, this undertaking attempted to answer the following:

1. What is the respondents' demographic profile regarding sex, age, and year level?
2. What is the level of speaking proficiency of the respondents in terms of (a) pronunciation, (b) fluency, (c) grammar, (d) vocabulary, and (e) comprehension?
3. Is there a significant difference in the respondents' speaking proficiency level when grouped according to sex, age, and year level?
4. Is there a relationship between the respondents' speaking proficiency level when grouped according to sex, age, and year level?

Literature Review

Speaking as a Skill

There are various definitions of speaking from different authors and researchers. Speaking is one of the four macro skills. The other macro skills are listening, reading, and writing. Speaking is an expressive skill a person needs to communicate for personal or professional use. Similarly, speaking distinguishes people from other species in the world and gives them an advantage (Geetha & Karthiga, 2022). Language has skills that are integrated. Speaking as a skill is essential for language teaching and learning, just like one of four language skills.

Speaking generates vocal sounds used to carry on a conversation or communicate ideas and feelings through spoken language. Language is an instrument of communication. Effective speaking is a vital life skill that is significant in the workplace and in the classroom for success in many aspects of life. Speaking and writing are the other two productive skills that must be combined to create effective communication, but reading and listening are considered responsive skills in language learning. Speaking requires more than just uttering words, making it more complex than other skills. (Ooi et al., 2021). Speaking is an activity that involves uttering words or sentences, which are people's thoughts that are spoken out. Speaking is vital in any language, whether first or second (Kaur & Aziz, 2020).

Speaking is considered the most important of the four English as a Second Language (ESL) skills. However, ironically, it is also the

most undervalued because ESL teachers frequently use drills and memorization to teach speaking skills. Oral skills are not usually taught comprehensively (Aprianto, 2019). According to Jezhny and Bapir (2021), among other pillars, the most crucial part of obtaining while learning a second language (L2) is the speaking skill. It is the most difficult of other skills, requiring a person to express ideas spontaneously. A person has little time to think about what to say and how to say it at a particular moment (Rao, 2019). Similarly, according to Madzlan et al. (2020), speaking competence is an essential linguistic skill for learning English. For ESL learners, mastering this skill can be difficult because it requires a variety of linguistic and non-linguistic aspects when expressing thoughts, and it is typically linked to fear

Furthermore, based on Alonso (2018), focusing on speaking ability in a second language is tricky because it is one of the most challenging skills to measure in second language data. It is arguably the most complicated talent to teach, the hardest to assess, and the hardest to research when compared to receptive skills and textual creation. The capacity to communicate with others, including speaking abilities, is the key to effective communication. Speaking is a valuable oral skill that involves creating and delivering well-organized oral expressions. Additionally, speaking occurs in real time. As a result, learning to plan, process, and produce language takes much work. The most common language for international communication is English. It is a language that two people from two different cultures can understand. Thus, technical college students need not just to speak but also proficient in the language. Multinational corporations use English as a communication tool among the workforce in this cutthroat job market. Consequently, if students want to participate in globalization (Khatib et al., 2021).

In addition, based on Idayani (2019), speaking is to achieve the desired outcome complex skill because when we interact with others, we need this primary objective to express our thoughts and desires, deal with conflicts through negotiation, or form and maintain friendships and social connections. Speaking skill is the focus of educational specialists among the other language learning skills (Dirjal & Ghabanchi, 2020). It plays a vital role in making a student learn effectively as it helps communicate well. Of the four English language, speaking has a higher status than other abilities. As a result, when teaching, it should be given utmost importance. Despite its significance, teaching Arabic speakers of English speaking skills has always been challenging for Arabic teachers because Arabic is not a commonly spoken language or utilized in daily interactions. Thus, Arab English teachers must consistently use innovative teaching techniques to address speaking competency issues in the classroom (Alsobhi & Preece, 2018).

Components of Speaking

According to Syakur (2018), for students to become proficient in speaking, they must master several speaking components. Those components are the following:

Vocabulary

The list and collection of terms used in conversation is called a vocabulary. One can show affection, thoughts, and insights quickly and effectively when they have a large enough vocabulary. Without vocabulary, there is no communication, and to be able to speak English, you must first develop your vocabulary. Vocabulary becomes an indicator of speaking ability for a communicator. A person who uses a more extensive vocabulary can express more concepts (Uchihara & Clinton, 2020). Vocabulary knowledge is vital in speaking the English language. Students who are lacking in vocabulary cannot expound his or her answers. Gaining and maintaining oral proficiency requires a variety of skills, including vocabulary (Ishtiaq et al., 2018). According to the research conducted by Hanafiah et al. (2022), with a strong vocabulary, people can understand one another and communicate their thoughts. Thus, we must recognize the language used by the pupils in their interactions. Speakers are only able to communicate their objectives and goals with vocabulary. In addition, according to the study of Prayiwata and Bacus (2021), vocabulary is one of the essential components that supports oral activity, and it has to do with choosing the appropriate and proper words.

Vocabulary is one component of language knowledge seen as essential to developing a language (Dewi & Jimmi, 2018). Their ability to speak is based on the students' vocabulary. For students to become better speakers of English, they must have a wide vocabulary. Students need a vast vocabulary in English to improve their speaking abilities. A vocabulary is a group of words or phrases that are typically translated and organized in a certain order. Prior to becoming proficient in the four skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing, vocabulary development is crucial. We need to acquire proficient English vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. A vocabulary is a list of terms that one uses when speaking with people in groups, individually, or while working in a field that requires knowledge. Vocabulary is one of the most important parts of English. It is thought that teaching English to pupils as a foreign language is of utmost importance. They are unable to respond to or articulate their thoughts in response to the questions and statements made by their participants due to their limited vocabulary. Vocabulary mastery is the process of becoming proficient in a language and being able to use words both orally and in writing. The ability to communicate and receive information more easily is facilitated by a large vocabulary, and vocabulary can even be used as a measurement of intellect, so mastering it is essential (Taslim et al., 2019).

Pronunciation

Pronunciation plays a vital role in making communication easy to understand. Based on Darcy (2018), the importance of pronunciation in verbal communication by stating that "Spoken language is sound—and sound gives life to grammar and vocabulary." One cannot

bring the rest of the language to life without sound, phonology, or pronunciation. Pronunciation is the ability to pronounce words clearly when speaking a particular language. According to the study by Fang (2022), correct pronunciation aids in building confidence. Also, since pronunciation changes the meaning of a word, it helps convey the exact meaning.

According to the study of Danapoc et al. (2020), to communicate effectively, you must pronounce words clearly so that others may understand you. Pronunciation is the primary source of understanding and making pronunciation instruction extremely crucial. Learners cannot effectively communicate if they cannot pronounce the term correctly. Learning proper pronunciation increases learners' comprehension of native speakers and their capacity for precise, efficient communication. Proper pronunciation, which aids in better comprehending word associations and usage, is the key to efficient communication in every language (Prashant, 2018).

Fluency

Fluency becomes the main component to measure one's speaking skills. Santos and Barcelos (2018) stated that one of the most challenging steps for students is improving spoken fluency. To be fluent means to be able to carry on a conversation on equal level with a native speaker (Lawless, 2018). Based on Newton and Nation (2020), Developing fluency in speaking requires creating tasks that allow students to use language in a natural way to accomplish specific communicative objectives (as opposed to demonstrating linguistic knowledge), especially when they are pushed to finish more quickly than usual. Fluency is when someone can do something well (Foster, 2020). Proficient learners and speakers of a language are thought to be those who can speak and understand that language (Chand, 2021).

Grammar

Grammar is one of the foundations of language proficiency. It will not be easy to understand one another without grammar. Appropriate grammar can save us from misunderstandings and help us improve our communication. According to Fikroni (2018), the role of grammar is to deliver meaning within a message. If the message is delivered with a grammatical error, the real meaning behind the message might be misunderstood. For many students of foreign languages, mastering grammar frequently entails learning its rules and acquiring an in-depth understanding of grammar that improves communication (Daloglu, 2020). In addition, based on the study of Kusumawardani and Mardiyani (2018), accurate comprehension of linguistic structure is essential for learning a foreign language. There must be a rule in every language. We refer to it as grammar in English. This study assumed that grammar is a science of rules that guides the arrangement of sentences, phrases, and words to convey meaning. Understanding grammar helps us use practical expressions in speaking and writing.

Comprehension

According to the study of Bohari (2020), for a topic to respond to speech and begin it, the speaker and listener must have a strong comprehension when communicating. Understanding and gaining knowledge requires comprehension, which is crucial. When the other person cannot understand what you are saying, the translation will be lost. The ability to understand is frequently more crucial than the act of communicating. Students who need more comprehension of a specific topic require constant repetition and rephrasing (Aprilla & Zuraini, 2021).

Even if we do everything possible to prepare and polish our message, it will only matter if the other party understands what we are trying to say. How we learn and remember information depends on our ability to comprehend it. An Oxford University Press publication featured a team that discussed knowledge and comprehension as critical components of individual health text comprehension. Scientists and medical professionals strive to ensure that their audience can understand their message because the health field can be complicated for some people. Humans learn and comprehend information through comprehension. After carefully writing and polishing them for others to hear, they need to step back and think about how people will understand our messages. Based on what you say, think about how you will impact someone's learning and understanding. People must assess their comprehension when they are on the comprehension side of the table to ensure that we truly understand. If not, we must consider how to express our questions and gaps. Every participant in a conversation teaches something new (Knight, 2020).

Problems in Speaking

Being proficient in speaking, especially in English, has a significant advantage. However, according to Islam (2022), developing a skill is always challenging as there are always challenges and obstacles, making it more difficult for learners to understand. Learners across the world struggle with speaking issues. According to studies done thus far, learners' encounter many speaking issues. Despite the importance of speaking abilities, it is widely acknowledged that learning to speak English in many countries has been unsuccessful despite years of study (Kassem, 2018). According to Rukmaryadi et al. (2020), the most common speaking difficulties the students' discovered in their study were grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. When responding to questions, the students needed better language vocabulary, which hindered them. In addition, according to Chui (2019), various problems make it hard for students to master them. In the study, they reported that the difficulties experienced by students speaking English are the following: environmental issues (such as a lack of learning context for English conversation), linguistic issues (such as insufficient vocabulary, grammar,

expressions, and organization of short sentences), and psychological issues (such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and lack of confidence). In a Chinese university, it was determined that learners' inadequate grammatical and vocabulary knowledge is a clear obstacle to their progress in spoken proficiency. Learners need more linguistic resources as well as their limited knowledge of a variety of subjects. They seem to have trouble retrieving information from their long-term memory about the topic when they attempt to speak (Xie, 2020).

Similarly, based to Mulyono et al. (2019), one of the issues that EFL students encounter with communication is anxiety. Speaking anxiety is a common problem that dramatically affects students, the speaker, or even mastering speaking skills. What stops the students from speaking in English class is the following: shyness, nervousness, insecurity, and fear of making mistakes. Students can learn English as a second language in the twenty-first century in a variety of ways. Students, however, require assistance in acquiring the English language. Students face challenges both internal to themselves and external to the language they are learning. The primary barrier is the need for increased drive. Grammar is often the subject of students' attention to such an extent that they become anxious and never bother learning English. Many students tend to give up before even trying because they do not want to risk getting ridiculed by others (Azar, 2020).

In Gustina's (2022) study on Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Speaking English in the Third Semester of English Language Education of FKIP UIR, fluency and linguistic obstacles are the students' difficulties in speaking English. Sixty-five percent need help with fluency, which means that students need help to speak English fluently due to the emergence of mistakes. Students speak with fear, make pauses, and repeat words that lead them to become eloquent speakers of English. When speaking English, sixty-three percent of students encounter grammatical mistakes due to linguistic obstacles. Therefore, students' common problems are fear of making mistakes and grammatical errors, which hindered them from speaking English proficiently. The student's speaking difficulties have been researched by Mukarromah (2022). Most students experience speaking language difficulties due to a lack of vocabulary. Students also frequently mispronounce words and must learn how to utter other words. The challenge in linguistics is weak grammar understanding, where students need help recognizing which sentence should be used based on the context and time.

According to the study conducted by Aprillia and Zuraini (2021), based on the examination of the students' speaking tests, the researcher stated that the average percentage of the speaking test is 36.8%, indicating that the students had difficulties. Students had difficulties in pronunciation since they had to think about how to pronounce some words correctly. The students were almost incorrect except for in-stock phrases and struggled to use excellent grammar in communicating. Due to a limited vocabulary and the need for further vocabulary mastery, students are unable to communicate in English. Students cannot communicate in English because their vocabulary is limited and they need more vocabulary mastery. Students are also slow and inconsistent in speaking English

According to the study of Rosdiwana and Candraloka (2019), students' problems and difficulties in speaking English are the components of speaking skills, including vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency. In their study, students need more vocabulary (100%), mispronounce words (100%), commit grammatical errors (83.9%), and fluency (96.7%). The result showed that students need to improve their speaking English as they have problems and difficulty speaking skills. Learning a second language is very challenging. Even native speakers of a language make errors. Pre-service teachers' typical mistakes at a state university in Iloilo, Philippines, involve subject-verb agreement, verb tenses, and preposition usage. Anxiety about verbal communication is the primary cause of students' speaking anxiety. In other words, people experience anxiety or fear when they believe others are judging them. These worries are a significant factor in language anxiety. Speaking in front of others is uncomfortable for students who struggle to speak when interacting in the target language (Torreces & Brillantes, 2022).

The need for proper vocabulary to be used in speaking is one of the many issues with English language education students' ability to communicate in the language. Students could not easily articulate English words. Second, they do not master the proper use of grammar, which leads to many grammatical errors while speaking. Third, they mostly mispronounce the words they are uttering. It makes them unclear when speaking and needs to be clarified for the listener. Fourth, they are exposed to limited input outside the class, where they could acquire much information to utilize. Fifth, they need more confidence which is very hard for a student to speak English, which means they are afraid of speaking English. Lastly, they need to improve English-speaking curriculum development, which means that their curriculum is meant to develop their competence in speaking English (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020).

Based on the study of Daud et al. (2019), the factors to blame for the speaking problem of students are the following: First, writing and listening elements are combined in speaking. It requires us to use our grammar knowledge in real-time and calls for much more in-depth knowledge of grammar. For someone to speak English well, they need to have a complex linguistic component. Second, Indonesia's lack of exposure to spoken English is probably to blame. Therefore, it is challenging for language learners to practice their English in a natural environment. Most students spend very little time practicing English in class, only using it occasionally. Most of them never use it outside of class because they do not live in a culture where speaking English is expected of them. Third, an English speaker may also experience anxiety related to another factor. When required to speak in English, such as when presenting in front of a class, an English speaker must deal with various states of nervousness, sweating, and anxiety. This uneasy feeling often affects the speaker's frame of mind before they begin.

Furthermore, the massive COVID-19 pandemic added to the challenges of the students to master speaking skills. Students in the Philippines are just a few of the pandemic victims that greatly affected how they learn. Based on Nurwahyuni (2020), the established teaching - learning system has been switched to online learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The students felt more nervous to speak English in synchronous learning mode using teleconference apps like Zoom and Google Meet as a result of the researcher's study. When using teleconference tools like Zoom and Google Meet for synchronous learning, the students experienced increased anxiety when speaking English. Some claimed that using blended learning presented additional difficulties, including slow internet connections, time commitment, and a lack of experience. (Aji et al., 2020).

English Language Proficiency of Second Language Learners

English is spoken by over one billion people in the world as a First, Second or Third Language. It is the universal tongue for communication, commerce, politics, and entertainment. The English language is often taught as a foreign language in many nations for various reasons, including meeting, educational requirements, gaining access to more opportunities for employment, enhancing English language skills and others (Daif-Allah & Aljumah, 2020).

According to Arisman (2020), language proficiency is a person's ability to use a language in terms of vocabulary command, reading, writing, conversation and understanding. Linguistic competence refers to an individual who can use language for various communication purposes. The level of ESL teachers' language proficiency is important for them (Faez et al., 2019). English language teachers are more competent in teaching English when they are proficient in using it. A competent user must have a good command of the language. Understand language without difficulty, articulate various ideas orally and in writing, and communicate easily with another speaker (Renandya et al., 2018). They claim that people with advanced language skills allows to convince other people in syncing cultures, which is necessary in creating universal globalized society (Devi & Rao, 2018). Advanced language skills at the tertiary level are essential for the student, especially those majoring in English. It is a great foundation for academic success and better opportunities later in life. English language proficiency tells how well students use English as a second language. Students can communicate and express ideas using English language (Domingo, 2019).

Language proficiency enables the speaker to thoroughly express what they want to say. If the speaker does not have enough knowledge of the language, they will not be able to use words appropriately. Also, the medium of instruction is the only viable way to help students learn effectively. Therefore, teachers must master it to give meaning to their teaching (Bella et al., 2022). English Foreign Language teachers' mastering their target language knowledge will make their teaching more effective. An effective English language teacher must have a good mastery of the English language, one of the salient qualities to have by EFL teachers. The same with Filipinos who are English language teachers. To effectively teach students the English language, English language teachers must be proficient in using the language. Therefore, students can learn and acquire the English language effectively with proficient teachers (Nugroho, 2018). Linguistic competence is one of the critical components that make up the professional knowledge of a foreign language teacher. A professional language teacher should have at least sufficient content knowledge (knowledge of English), pedagogical knowledge (knowing how to teach English), and sufficient language knowledge to teach effectively in the target language (Renandya et al., 2018).

In addition, this is especially true when applying for teaching positions (Castro et al., 2022). The study by Islam and Stafa (2021), in the private universities of Bangladesh found that students are less competent in spoken English because of their teacher's lack of proficiency in speaking English language. A study by Renandya, Hamied, and Nurkamto (2018) also states that Indonesian English teachers are not very fluent and have lack of confidence in using the English language inside and outside of the classroom. In the area of teaching English language, there are many aspects that should be considered in a person's ability to teach an English subject which is known as ESL proficiency and it was claimed by many scholars that teachers were being required to acquire numerous complex skills for teaching English subjects effectively using the English language (Purwati, 2021). Students proficient in speaking English do so effectively in class because they can express agreement or refusal, explain the materials taught, and transmit meanings. It will also lead to individuals having better qualifications in the future, which will help them obtain decent jobs as lawyers, legislators, educators, company managers, motivators, and other occupations. A solid speaking ability will serve as a bridge to strengthen relationships with clients, students, employees, or other interlocutors (Erlina et al., 2019).

Level of Proficiency in Speaking English Language of Male and Female

Based on the study of Erdiana et al. (2019), the first grade students of SMA Labschool Banda Aceh, Indonesia, took a speaking test, and the result showed that female students have better speaking abilities than male students. The female students performed better in comprehension and pronunciation. The female students outperformed male students in pronunciation category. Majority of male students used 128 vocabulary items, while majority of female students used 134. Furthermore, according to Yolanda (2019), the analysis, the researcher deduces that the majority of students, both male and female, had speaking abilities that were rated as good. It means that there is little difference in speaking ability among male and female students. Based on the data analysis and discussion, the researchers concluded that male students do not speak English language more fluently than female students. Only one of them. Male and female students slightly differ in speaking ability, with former receiving a lower speaking level. However, the researchers observed male and female students (Jusmawati, 2020). Similarly, based on the study of Dinasa et al. (2022), the researchers discovered no prof

of a meaningful connection between the speaking techniques employed by male and females to develop their speaking abilities. It is unlikely that a student's sexual orientation will influence the speaking strategies they use to practice oral communication. Moreover, based on the study of Dinasa et al. (2022), the researchers discovered no proof of a meaningful connection between the speaking techniques employed by male and females to develop their speaking abilities. It is unlikely that a student's sexual orientation will influence the speaking strategies they use to practice oral communication.

Level of Proficiency in Speaking English Language of Age

Based on Serquina and Batang, (2018) and Gomez and Gomez, (2021), the students' English proficiency is not influenced by their age. Generally, the findings indicate that there is lack of significant association between the age of the respondents and the level of speaking English proficiency. To summarize, literature and studies about the level of proficiency in speaking English language of ESL pre-service teachers provided clearer perspective of the study. Speaking proficiency is undeniably essential and a must for every English teacher. The literature and studies have essential factors in determining the components they use in speaking. The components of the speaking skill that are mentioned are the following: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and comprehension. Furthermore, students encountered different problems achieving proficiency in each component of speaking skill. There is also related literature on the comparison of level of proficiency in speaking English language with regards to sex. However, as for year level, researchers were not able to find existing related literature that are current and connected to this study. Thus, researchers explored this study to determine the readiness of BSED-English students and their English-speaking proficiency.

Methodology

This study uses a descriptive-correlation design. According to Atmowardoyo (2018), descriptive research is a design to explain current phenomena accurately. The primary goal of descriptive research is to define current phenomena studied systematically. It is descriptive because it describes the respondents' level of speaking English proficiency with regards to sex, age, and year level. According to McCombes (2019), correlational research design examines the relationship of two variables without involving the researcher in their manipulation. It is correlational because it determined the significant difference and relationship between the respondents' demographic profile (sex, age, and year level) and respondents' level of speaking proficiency.

Participants

This study was conducted at a private school in Midsayap, North Cotabato. The purposive sampling method was used in selecting the respondents of the study. According to Foley (2018), purposive sampling is a nonprobability sampling technique in which researchers select participants from the population according to their judgment. The respondents are the 1st to 3rd-year students taking up BSED-English. There are 43 females and 14 males, with 57 respondents enrolled in academic year 2022-2023.

Instruments of the Study

In this study, the researchers created the opinion-based collection of questions, and a selected English specialist evaluated and validated the questions. The researchers' prepared opinion-based set of questions to be answered by the respondents. Each respondent picked one question, and they had the freedom to express their thoughts and ideas about the question asked to them. The respondents are not given time to think before they answer, as this assessment is impromptu. The researchers recorded the respondents' answers using an audio recorder. The inter-raters rated the respondents' recorded speaking performances using the modified analytic rubric adapted from Brown (2004). It was graded based on the five levels: Novice ranges from 1.79 – 1.00 points, Intermediate ranges from 2.59 – 1.80 points, Advanced ranges from 3.39 – 2.60 points, Superior ranges from 4.19 – 3.40 points, and Distinguished ranges from 5.00 – 4.20 points. The five levels were adapted from ACTFL proficiency guidelines 2012 by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (2012) and modified by the researchers. Upon the modification, the researchers cited the source to convey probity. There were five areas in which students' speaking proficiency was measured: (1) pronunciation, (2) grammar, (3) vocabulary, (4) fluency, and (5) comprehension. Each criterion had a maximum score of five points; therefore, the maximum score for the test was 25 points. The rubric was based on speaking components, such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

Procedure

The researchers acquired permission to conduct the study through a letter checked and signed by their research adviser. After completing the needed document, the letter was sent to the Dean's Office of the College of Education of school. Upon approval, the authorization letter was used by researchers in conducting their study. The researchers asked the names of all ESL pre-service teachers from 1st year, 2nd year, and 3rd year enrolled in second semester of academic year 2022-2023. A letter of permission to conduct the study was given to the assigned teacher/s of the respondents from BSED English 1st year up to 3rd year. The researchers selected three credible English teachers as inter-raters. They were informed about the rubric validated by the researchers' selected validators. There are sets of questions prepared for them, and they only need to pick and answer one question. They have no time to think as this assessment is impromptu. The respondents' answers were recorded. The recorded answers of the respondents were sent to the inter-raters. The inter-raters rated each respondent's proficiency level of speaking the English language using the provided analytic rubric by



Brown, 2004. After rating each respondent, the researchers gathered all the data. The gathered data was given to the researchers' statistician for tabulation and analysis.

Results

This section contains the findings of the statistical treatment of the data and its interpretation in relation to the research problems pursued, including the profile of the ESL pre-service teachers from 1st year to 3rd year, the respondents' level of proficiency in speaking English, and the significant difference and relationship between their sex, age, and year level in their level of proficiency.

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

This part presents the frequency and percentage distribution of fifty-seven respondents according to sex.

Table 1. *Demographic Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Sex, Age, and Year Level*

<i>Profile of the Respondents</i>		<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>
Sex			
Male		14	24.56
Female		43	75.44
Total		57	100
Age			
18		3	5
19		9	16
20		24	42
21		11	19
22		9	16
24		1	2
Total		57	100
Year Level			
1st year		14	25
2nd year		25	44
3rd year		18	32
Total		57	100

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents' profiles regarding sex, age, and year level. Regarding sex, out of 57 student respondents, 75.44 percent are female (43), and 24.56 percent are male (14). In terms of age, out of 57 respondents, 42 percent are 18 years old (24), 19 percent are 21 years old (11), 16 percent are 19 years old (9) and 22 years old (9), 5 percent are 18 years old (3), and 2 percent are 24 years old (1). In terms of year level, out of 57 respondents, 44 percent are 2nd-year students (25), 32 percent are 3rd-year students (18), and 25 percent are 1st-year students (14).

Table 2. *Level of Speaking Proficiency of the Respondents in Terms of Pronunciation, Fluency, Grammar, Vocabulary, and Comprehension*

<i>Variables</i>		<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Description</i>
a. Pronunciation		3.53	0.51	Superior
b. Grammar		3.40	0.49	Superior
c. Vocabulary		3.59	0.63	Superior
d. Fluency		3.28	0.68	Advanced
e. Comprehension		4.04	0.56	Superior
Overall		3.57	0.64	Superior
Scale	Range	Description	Verbal Interpretation	
5	5.00 – 4.20	Distinguished	Proficient in using words with correctness, efficiency, and effectiveness. Language users who are well-educated and articulate.	
4	4.19 – 3.40	Superior	Capable of communicating accurately and fluently in order to fully participate effectively in various types of conversations.	
3	3.39 – 2.60	Advanced	Engage in a clearly participatory conversation in order to share information (on a range of subject matter).	
2	2.59 – 1.80	Intermediate	When discussing common issues from their daily lives, they can ask simple questions while utilizing sentence-level English language.	
1	1.79 – 1.00	Novice	Are able to deliver brief messages on very predictable, daily topics.	

Table 2 presents the weighted mean and standard deviation of fifty-seven respondents according to the components of speaking, which are the following: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Table 2 reveals the respondents' proficiency level

in speaking English, with a maximum range of 5.00 – 4.20 and a minimum range of 1.79 -1.00. It reflects that the 57 respondents are at the Superior Level in comprehension, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar, with scores ranging from 4.19 – 3.40. Among these components, the highest mean is on comprehension, with 4.04, followed by vocabulary, with a 3.59 mean; next is pronunciation, with a mean of 3.53; and lastly, grammar, with a mean of 3.40. The lowest mean is on fluency, with 3.28, although the respondents are still at the advanced level on this component. Generally, the mean gain is 3.57 and a standard deviation of 0.64, meaning that the respondents are at a superior level of proficiency.

Difference in the Level of Speaking English Proficiency of the Respondents When Grouped According to Sex

This section contains the T-test result of the respondents' speaking English proficiency when grouped according to sex.

Table 3.1 *Difference in the Level of Speaking English Proficiency of the Respondents When Grouped According to Sex*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Indication</i>	<i>Decision</i>
Male	14	3.80	0.50	55	0.045	S	Reject the Null Hypothesis
Female	43	3.49	0.50				

NS – Not Significant at 0.05 level of significance

This table indicates the gap in English proficiency between male and female respondents. Using the t-test, the p-value of male and female respondents is 0.045, which is smaller than the substantial level. Based on the data, the decision is to reject the null hypothesis since the result of the p-value is below the significance level, which is 0.05. As a result, there is a substantial difference in English proficiency between male and female respondents.

Difference in the Level of Speaking English Proficiency of the Respondents When Grouped According to Age

This part presents the T-test result of the respondents' speaking English proficiency when grouped according to age.

Table 3.2 *Difference in the Level of Speaking English Proficiency of the Respondents When Grouped According to Age*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Indication</i>	<i>Decision</i>
18	3	3.27	0.37	56	0.39	NS	Accept the Null Hypothesis
19	9	3.44	0.63				
20	24	3.50	0.45				
21	11	3.82	0.49				
22	9	3.69	0.58				
24	1	3.40	0.00				

NS – Not Significant at 0.05 level of significance

This table indicates the difference between the age of the respondents and the level of speaking English proficiency. Using the t-test, the p-value of respondents' age is 0.39, higher than the significance level. Based on the data, the decision is made to accept the null hypothesis because the p-value is greater than 0.05. As a result, there is no substantial difference between the respondents' age regarding their English-speaking proficiency.

Difference in the Level of Speaking English Proficiency of the Respondents When Grouped According to Year Level

This part presents the T-test result of the respondents' speaking English proficiency when grouped according to year level.

Table 3.3 *Difference in the Level of Speaking English Proficiency of the Respondents When Grouped According to Year Level*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Indication</i>	<i>Decision</i>
1 st year	14	3.33	0.38	56	0.006	S	Reject the Null Hypothesis
2 nd year	25	3.49	0.51				
3 rd year	18	3.87	0.49				

NS – Not Significant at 0.05 level of significance

Relationship in the Level of Speaking English Proficiency of the Respondents When Grouped According to Sex

This section contains the Chi-square test result of the respondents' speaking English proficiency when grouped according to sex.

Table 4.1 *Relationship in the Level of Speaking English Proficiency of the Respondents When Grouped According to Sex*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Chi-Square Value</i>	<i>Degrees of Freedom (df)</i>	<i>Significance (2-sided)</i>
Sex			
Level of Speaking Proficiency	26.417	31	0.701

This table indicates the relationship between sex and level of speaking English proficiency using the Chi-square test. It resulted in a chi-square value of 26.417 with 31 degrees of freedom. The p-value associated with this test is 0.701, which is greater than the typical significance level of 0.05. Therefore, there is no statistically significant association found between sex and the level of speaking proficiency among the respondents.

Relationship in the Level of Speaking English Proficiency of the Respondents When Grouped According to Age

This section contains the Chi-square test result of the respondents' speaking English proficiency when grouped according to Age.

Table 4.2 *Relationship in the Level of Speaking English Proficiency of the Respondents When Grouped According to Age*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Chi-Square Value</i>	<i>Degrees of Freedom (df)</i>	<i>Significance (2-sided)</i>
Age			
Level of Speaking Proficiency	130.235	155	0.927

Relationship in the Level of Speaking English Proficiency of the Respondents When Grouped According to Year Level

This section contains the Chi-square test result of the respondents' speaking English proficiency when grouped according to Year Level.

Table 4.3 *Relationship in the Level of Speaking English Proficiency of the Respondents When Grouped According to Year Level*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Chi-Square Value</i>	<i>Degrees of Freedom (df)</i>	<i>Significance (2-sided)</i>
Year Level			
Level of Speaking Proficiency	59.449	62	0.568

This table indicates the relationship between year level and level of speaking English proficiency using the Chi-square test. It resulted in a chi-square value of 59.449 with 62 degrees of freedom. The p-value associated with this test is 0.568, which is greater than the typical significance level of 0.05. Therefore, there is no statistically significant association found between year level and the level of speaking proficiency among the respondents.

Discussion

The section explains the results of the data's statistical treatment findings, literature, and studies support, conclusions, and recommendations based on the research problems pursued, which included the profile of ESL pre-service teachers in terms of sex, level of speaking proficiency of the respondents in terms of (a) pronunciation, (b) fluency, (c) grammar, (d) vocabulary, and (e) comprehension, difference in the level of speaking proficiency when respondents are grouped based on sex, age, and year level, and relationship between the respondents' speaking proficiency level when grouped according to sex, age, and year level.

Profile of the Respondents

The respondents are ESL pre-service teachers from 1st to 3rd year enrolled for the second semester of the academic year 2022-2023. Their proficiency in speaking English is necessary to evaluate as they are expected to be excellent in this skill. They need it to be effective teachers in the future. Based on the result, the pre-service teachers have a higher level of speaking English proficiency. The respondents managed to be at the superior level. The result is supported by Erlina et al. (2019). The researcher asserted that students proficient in speaking English do so effectively in class because they can express agreement or refusal, explain the materials taught, and transmit meanings. It will also lead to individuals having better qualifications in the future, which will help them obtain decent jobs as lawyers, legislators, educators, company managers, motivators, and other occupations. A solid speaking ability will serve as a bridge to strengthen relationships with clients, students, employees, or other interlocutors.

In terms of sex, the majority of the respondents are female. Based on the result, in terms of sex, males are more proficient than females. On the contrary, based on Yolanda (2019), the researcher deduces that most male and female students had speaking abilities that were rated as good. It means there is little difference in speaking ability comparing the male and female students. The researchers came to a conclusion based on their data analysis and discussion that male students speak English less fluently than female students based on the analysis and discussion of the data. In terms of age, most respondents are 20 years old. The findings favored 21-year-old respondents as better in speaking English as they are seen to be able to speak very well.

The Level of Speaking Proficiency of the Respondents in Terms of Pronunciation, Fluency, Grammar, Vocabulary, and Comprehension

The data showed the respondents' speaking proficiency in terms of the following speaking components: vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and comprehension. Syakur (2018) stated that students must master several speaking components to be proficient. These components include vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and comprehension. The data showed that the respondents are at a superior level in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. It means that the respondents can communicate accurately and fluently to totally participate and effectively in a conversation with various theme. They are effective future teachers in terms of speaking skills.

Similarly, as stated by Domingo (2019), having advanced language skills at the tertiary level is essential for the student, especially those majoring in English. It is an excellent foundation for academic success and better opportunities later in life. English proficiency tells how well students use English as a second language in communicating and expressing their ideas. In addition, based on Devi and Rao (2018), the researchers claim that individual's advanced spoken English proficiency allows them to entice others in syncing cultures, which is necessary for creating a universal global society. English language teachers are more competent in teaching English when they are proficient in using it. A competent user must have a good command of the language. Understand language without difficulty, articulate various ideas orally and in writing, and communicate easily with another speaker (Renandya et al., 2018). To evaluate the speaking proficiency of the respondents, the researchers used a speaking assessment aligned to the theory of Martin Bygate's Theory of speaking (1972). There are two factors to consider when speaking to attain a communicative purpose. The first is language knowledge, whereas the second is language skill. It is not enough to simply know the language; a native speaker should be able to use it in a variety of settings. This study relates to this theory as the data were collected through impromptu speaking.

Comprehension

Among all the components at the superior level, the highest mean is comprehension. Comprehension means understanding the questions and relating answers to the given questions. The result means that the respondents can easily understand the questions and relate their answers to the questions. It also shows that they are naturally exposed to English as this is their course's instruction and communication medium. Within the scope of their experience, the respondents can understand any conversation. They can easily understand the question as they can understand it in their native language, which is proved by the Iceberg Model of Language Theory of Cummins (1981). They master their first knowledge to understand or comprehend the second language. It means a foundation is established for developing the first and second languages, so learning additional languages will be easier. In addition, the respondents' first language contributed to their comprehension skills. Understanding the question using their first language helps them formulate a comprehensive answer, so they gain the highest mean in comprehension among the speaking components. This result is supported by Aprilla and Zuraini (2021), who stated that the students could answer different topics without constant repetition and rephrasing when they have the skill of comprehension in speaking. According to the study by Bohari (2020), to respond and begin a conversation, the speaker and listener must have a strong comprehension when communicating. Understanding and gaining knowledge requires comprehension, which is crucial. People must assess their comprehension when they are on the comprehension side of the table to ensure that they truly understand it. If not, they must consider how to express their questions and gaps. Every person in a conversation imparts new knowledge (Knight, 2020).

Vocabulary

Following the comprehension is the vocabulary. Vocabulary knowledge is essential in speaking, as it allows speakers to become more

effective communicators and convey ideas and thoughts to others. During the speaking task, which was impromptu, the respondents used appropriate words when they decoded their answers. It means that the respondents usually use the correct usage of words based on their meaning and context in a spoken language. Respondents can understand and participate in any discussion within their experience range with a high level of vocabulary precision. Also, a person who learns one language develops abilities and knowledge to use to their advantage when learning another. They have a wide range of knowledge of words as well as its meaning. In connection to the findings, according to Prayiwata and Bacus (2021), vocabulary is one of the essential components that supports verbal activity, and it has to do with choosing the appropriate and correct words. It connects to the findings as the respondents answered the questions with a good choice of words connected to the topics they picked. In addition, for an interlocutor, vocabulary predicts speaking skills. A person who uses a more extensive vocabulary can express more concepts (Uchihara & Clenton, 2020). Mastery of vocabulary is essential since the greater one's vocabulary knowledge, the easier it is to express and receive details, and vocabulary can even be used to test intelligence level. (Taslim et al., 2019). However, according to the research conducted by Hanafiah et al. (2022), people need a solid vocabulary to understand one another or communicate their thoughts. Thus, we must recognize the language used by the pupils in their interactions. Speakers are only able to communicate their objectives and goals with vocabulary. Their limited vocabulary hinders them from communicating or expressing their ideas to reply to or answer the statements and questions of their interlocutors.

Pronunciation

Next to vocabulary is pronunciation. Pronunciation affects how well the listener can understand and interpret what the speaker is saying. Respondents were able to articulate words properly while answering the questions. The respondents also accurately produced the sounds of words, delivered their answers well, and appropriately used stress and intonation. It means that errors in pronunciation were relatively rare. With the results, a person must pronounce words clearly to communicate well so that others may understand. Pronunciation is the primary source of understanding, making pronunciation instruction extremely crucial. Learners cannot effectively communicate if they cannot pronounce the term in its proper form (Danapoc et al., 2020). It relates to the finding as the respondents answered the questions with minimal pronunciation errors.

Grammar

Last is the grammar. One of the essential components of speaking is to have good grammar. It is vital to use appropriate word order and sentence structure to convey the message effectively and avoid misunderstandings. The respondent's answers to the given questions were conveyed clearly. It means that the respondents used the correct structure of the spoken language uttered. They could use language accurately, and grammar errors were relatively rare. It is supported by the study of Kusumawardani and Mardiyani (2018). Based on their study, accurate comprehension of linguistic structure is essential for learning a foreign language. There must be a rule in every language, and we refer to it as grammar in English. This study assumed that grammar is a Science of rules that guides the arrangement of sentences, phrases, and words to convey meaning. Understanding grammar helps us use practical expressions in speaking.

Fluency

Moreover, the lowest mean is on fluency, although the respondents are still at the advanced level on this component. Some of the respondents were hesitant to produce their answers with the use of the English language. The respondents also used fillers, and sometimes they code-switch. Fluent speakers produce language quickly and efficiently without overthinking it. The result showed that the respondents need more improvement in fluency compared to other components. Still, it suggests that they are engaged in a participative conversation in order to share knowledge (on various topics). Jeremy Harmer's Theory on Speaking (2001) identifies two aspects of speaking, "language features" and "mental/social processing," that are required for fluency and oral production. However, there are rare instances when they need clarification on what they will say, affecting their fluency. The result is supported by Santos and Barcelos (2018), who believe that one of the most challenging steps for students is improving spoken fluency. It supports the result as the fluency component is the only component in the advanced level, which is lower compared to other components in the superior level.

Generally, the respondents' speaking proficiency, based on the findings, is at a superior level. It means the respondents can communicate accurately and fluently to participate fully and effectively in various topics. The superior level is second to the highest level, which implies that respondents are closer to the distinguished level, meaning they can use language skillfully, accurately, efficiently, and effectively. They are educated and articulate users of the language. It also shows that the level of proficiency in speaking the English language of BSED English students is high. Respondents to their chosen specialization in speaking as they are good in all the components. They have minor issues to enhance to be at the distinguished level. It is supported by the study of Schmidgall (2018), who stated that as for the Common European Framework Reference (CEFR), speakers at the lowest levels (such as novice and intermediate) are generally expected to produce a limited amount of speech that is appropriate for situations that are familiar or predictable. In contrast, speakers of distinguished, superior, and advanced levels are expected to produce longer speeches appropriate for various situations and communicative tasks. Based on the study results, the respondents meet the higher level of speaking proficiency at the superior level. Furthermore, although the respondents are among the students affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, it does not affect their speaking skills in contrast to the study of Nurwahyuni (2020), who argued that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the set-up teaching

and learning system been changed to online learning. As an outcome of the study, the students were more nervous to speak English in synchronous learning mode using teleconference tools such as Zoom and Google Meet.

Difference in the Level of Speaking Proficiency When Grouped According to Sex

The data showed that male respondents were more proficient in speaking English than the female respondents. The male respondents showed a higher mean than the female respondents. Generally, the findings favored male respondents as better at speaking English than female respondents. In contrast to the result, based on the study of Erdiana et al. (2019), the first-grade students at SMA Labschool Banda Aceh, Indonesia, took an oral test, and the findings demonstrate that female students outperform male students in terms of speaking ability. The students who are female perform slightly better in comprehension and pronunciation. Female students outperformed male students in the pronunciation category. The majority of male students used 128 vocabulary items, while the majority of female students used 134. Another study opposing the result is based on Yolanda (2019). The researcher deduces that the majority of students, both male, and female, had speaking abilities that were rated as good. It means there is little difference in speaking ability between male and female students. In addition, according to the study of Jasmawati (2020), there is a slight difference in speaking ability between male and female students, with the former receiving a lower speaking level. However, both male and female students were observed by the researchers.

Difference in the Level of Speaking English Proficiency When Grouped According to Age

The data showed that the 21 years old respondents were more proficient in speaking English since they got a higher mean than the 18, 19, 20, 22, 24 years old respondents. Generally, the findings favored 21-year-old respondents as better in speaking English as they are seen to have the ability to speak very well in terms of the speaking components, which are the following: grammar, fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Difference in the Level of Speaking Proficiency When Grouped According to Year Level

The data showed that third-year students' proficiency level in speaking English is the highest among all the year levels. It implies that they are less likely to make speaking mistakes compared to other year levels in their specialization. They proved they were more advanced in their lower years and more competitive in speaking. However, they do not significantly differ in their responses to the level of their speaking proficiency.

Relationship in the Level of Speaking Proficiency When Grouped According to Sex

The data showed that there is no relationship between the respondents' sex and their level of speaking proficiency in English. Their sex has no influence on the respondents. It means whether the respondents are male or female, it will not matter their level of proficiency in speaking. In connection to the result, based on the study of Dinasa et al. (2022), the researchers found no evidence of a significant relationship between the speaking strategies used by males and females to acquire speaking skills. The speaking techniques students employ to practice oral communication are unlikely to be affected by their sexual orientation.

Relationship in the Level of Speaking Proficiency When Grouped According to Age

The data showed that the relationship between the age of the respondents and the level of speaking English proficiency is not statistically significant. This means that age alone is not a significant determinant of English-speaking proficiency among the respondents. It is supported by the findings of Serquina and Batang (2018) and Gomez and Gomez (2021); based on their findings, the student's English proficiency is not influenced by their age. Generally, the findings indicate that there is lack of significant association between the age of the respondents and the level of speaking English proficiency.

Relationship in the Level of Speaking Proficiency When Grouped According to Year Level

The result shows that the respondents' year level and speaking proficiency level have no significant relationship. It means that the respondents' speaking proficiency is not strongly predicted or indicated by their grade level. Whether a student is a freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior, their speaking proficiency doesn't significantly vary based solely on their academic year. This outcome indicates that other factors beyond year level play a more substantial role in determining a student's speaking proficiency, such as individual learning styles, prior experience, or the consistency of teaching methods across different academic levels.

Conclusion

The study's findings concluded that the ESL pre-service teachers from 1st to 3rd-year students are superior in speaking English. It indicates that they are accurate and fluent communicators who can engage completely and productively in a range of issues. They are fit for their chosen speaking course as they showed excellent results in the speaking assessment. They managed to be at a higher level in all the components. Also, based on their sex and age, they significantly differ in their responses to the level of speaking English proficiency. The male respondents are more proficient in speaking English than the female. However, in terms of year level, they do not significantly differ in their responses to the level of their speaking proficiency. There is no strong evidence to support a significant

relationship or association between the variables of sex, age, and year level with the level of speaking proficiency among the respondents in the given study. Therefore, the study recommends that students improve their speaking proficiency, especially in the fluent component, which needs more attention. Teachers may give speaking activities such as impromptu, extemporaneous class, debate, picture analysis, public speaking, and oratorical speech that could help students enhance their English speaking skills. Also, the researchers recommend making another study related to this study but with additional variables to make it more substantial.

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