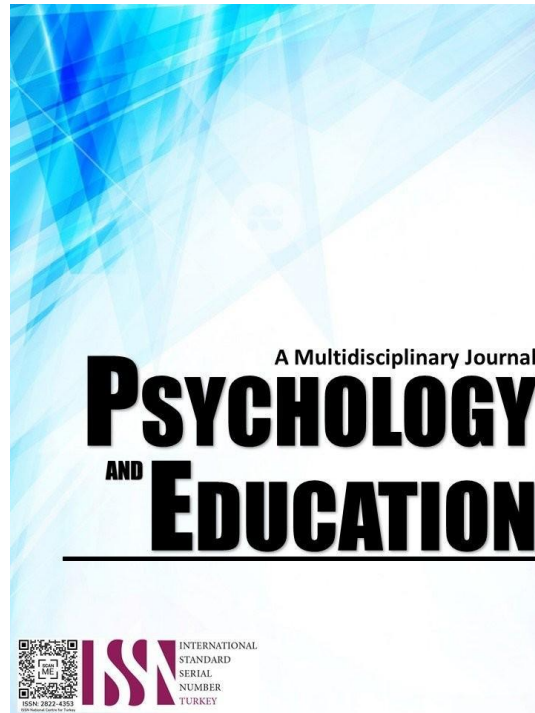


STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES AND STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING SPEAKING ANXIETY TO ENHANCE ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS



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Students' Experiences and Strategies for Reducing Speaking Anxiety to Enhance Oral Communication Skills

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Abstract

This research examined the levels of speaking anxiety and explored students' experiences and strategies for reducing or coping with anxiety's negative effects to enhance their oral communication skills. The participants were 36 Grade 11 HUMSS students from Lipay National High School, Poblacion South, Sta. Cruz, Zambales. Using a mixed-method approach, data were collected through a survey and unstructured writing. The results revealed that the majority of participants experienced moderate levels of anxiety. The speaking anxiety expressed by the participants included physical manifestations, fears of judgment, concerns about language fluency, performance anxiety, and the fear of forgetting or experiencing a mental block. Additionally, various strategies employed by students to cope with or reduce their speaking anxiety were identified, including emotional regulation, understanding and application, knowledge expansion, social engagement, confidence building, and practical techniques. The findings emphasize the need for holistic support mechanisms addressing both the emotional and practical aspects of oral communication anxiety. Effective language learning involves a combination of cognitive, emotional, and social strategies. Tailored interventions that focus on building confidence, providing language support, and fostering a supportive environment can significantly contribute to alleviating anxiety in language learning contexts.

Keywords: *speaking anxiety, oral communication skills, language fluency, mental block*

Introduction

The Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines is committed to fostering the comprehensive development of Filipino students, ensuring that each graduate is prepared for employment, entrepreneurship, or higher education. A key indicator of achieving this goal is the graduate's proficiency in professional and global communication (Official Gazette of the Philippines).

Consequently, the K–12 program places significant emphasis on the development of oral communication skills in a second language, recognizing these skills as vital for academic success and career advancement, particularly for senior high school (SHS) students.

Within the SHS curriculum, Oral Communication in Context is designated as a core subject across all learning tracks. This subject aims to provide learners with opportunities to enhance their English communication abilities. According to Lucanus (2017), the capacity to plan, organize, and deliver effective oral presentations is a key indicator of a skilled student communicator.

Teachers are expected to align with the curriculum by creating lesson plans that enrich students' proficiency in using English accurately and effectively during communication.

However, despite collaborative efforts from educational institutions and teachers, some learners continue to struggle in attaining proficiency and precision in spoken English, especially those whose exposure is primarily limited to the classroom setting.

Speaking in English is identified as a particularly anxiety-inducing activity in the classroom (Atas, 2015). Many students grapple with expressing themselves verbally, exhibiting symptoms of stage fright such as trembling, dry mouth, poor eye contact, perspiration, and mental blocks during oral communication classes.

Overcoming speaking anxiety is crucial for students to improve their second language communication skills and meet the curriculum's learning standards.

This scenario is mirrored in the experiences of Grade 11 senior high school students at Lipay National High School. The anxiety they experience when speaking negatively impacts their oral performance, affecting individual or group presentations, reports, recitations, role-plays, and interviews, ultimately leading to a decline in academic achievement.

Research Questions

This study aimed to closely examine the levels of speaking anxiety among the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand students. Additionally, the study explored the students' experiences and strategies for reducing or coping with anxiety's negative effects to enhance their oral communication skills. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of speaking anxiety among the participants?
2. What are the participants' experiences of anxiety when expressing themselves orally in English?
3. What strategies do participants use to develop communication skills and reduce or cope with the negative effects of speaking anxiety?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-method approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods to achieve the intended objectives. This research design allowed the researcher to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the topic than if a standalone quantitative or qualitative approach had been used, as it combined the strengths of both methods (George, 2021).

Respondents

A purposive sample of 36 senior high school students enrolled in the Oral Communication in Context subject participated in the study. These participants were selected from Grade 11 HUMSS students at Lipay National High School, Poblacion South, Sta. Cruz, Zambales.

Instrument

The quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire survey aimed at identifying the students' levels of speaking anxiety. The participants completed the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA), a standardized instrument developed by McCroskey (1970) to measure communication apprehension and determine speaking anxiety levels (high, moderate, or low).

The PRPSA is a Likert-scale questionnaire consisting of 34 items, where respondents indicate their level of agreement with statements using the options: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. This instrument has been validated and widely recognized as a reliable measure of public speaking anxiety.

The qualitative data were collected through unstructured essay writing, which provided students the opportunity to share their experiences and strategies for managing speaking anxiety. The participants were asked to write an essay addressing the following two questions: (1) What are your experiences of anxiety when expressing yourselves orally in English? (2) What strategies do you usually use to develop your communication skills and to cope with or reduce your English language speaking anxiety? The unstructured essay writing allowed for open-ended responses, enabling students to freely express the strategies they use to communicate confidently and effectively, and how they manage their speaking anxiety.

Procedure

Both the questionnaire and the unstructured essay writing were administered by the researcher to the target participants in November 2023.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed according to the computation guidelines suggested by McCroskey. The students' speaking anxiety levels were calculated by following three steps.

For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was employed. This method helped identify common themes within the students' responses, allowing for a deeper understanding of their experiences and strategies for reducing speaking anxiety.

Results and Discussion

The first set of data was collected through a questionnaire consisting of 34 items to identify the speaking anxiety levels of the participants. The participants' speaking anxiety scores were computed by following these steps:

Step 1: Add the scores for items 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 10, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, and 34.

Step 2: Add the scores for items 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 24, and 26.

Step 3: Apply the following formula:

$$\text{PRPSA} = 72 - (\text{Total from Step 2}) + (\text{Total from Step 1})$$

The scale interpretation was used to analyze the level of speaking anxiety, along with the descriptive rating and range score.

Interpretation on the Speaking Anxiety Level of the Participants

<i>Level of Speaking Anxiety</i>	<i>Scoring</i>
High	>131
Moderate	98-131
Low	< 98

The result shows in the table below:

Based on the result shown in the table above, out of 36 participants, there were 7 who acquired a score of >131, 21 who acquired a

score of 98–31, and 8 who acquired a score of <98. The data implied that most of the participants acquired a score of 98–31.

Table 1. *The Result of Participants' Level of Speaking Anxiety*

No	Participants	Students' Anxiety Score	Level of Anxiety
1	Student 1	105	Moderate
2	Student 2	110	Moderate
3	Student 3	109	Moderate
4	Student 4	96	Low
5	Student 5	108	Moderate
6	Student 6	136	High
7	Student 7	104	Moderate
8	Student 8	106	Moderate
9	Student 9	86	Low
10	Student 10	130	Moderate
11	Student 11	112	Moderate
12	Student 12	119	Moderate
13	Student 13	118	Moderate
14	Student 14	137	High
15	Student 15	121	Moderate
16	Student 16	92	Low
17	Student 17	96	Low
18	Student 18	104	Moderate
19	Student 19	98	Low
20	Student 20	97	Low
21	Student 21	101	Moderate
22	Student 22	133	High
23	Student 23	132	High
24	Student 24	112	Moderate
25	Student 25	118	Moderate
26	Student 26	105	Moderate
27	Student 27	120	Moderate
28	Student 28	115	Moderate
29	Student 29	117	Moderate
30	Student 30	96	Low
31	Student 31	114	Moderate
32	Student 32	117	Moderate
33	Student 33	133	High
34	Student 34	134	High
35	Student 35	94	Low
36	Student 36	133	High

Out of 36 participants, 7 or 19.44% had a high level of anxiety, 21 or 58.33% had a moderate level, and 8 or 22.22% had a low level. The data implied that the majority of the participants were at a moderate anxiety level.

Table 2. *Summary of Participants' Level of Speaking Anxiety*

Level of Speaking Anxiety	Frequency	Percentage
High	7	19.44
Moderate	21	58.33
Low	8	22.22
Total	36	100

In the study conducted by Pontillas and Talaue (2021), it was revealed that the majority of the participants also had a moderate level of speaking anxiety. It was gleaned from the findings that those who have good communication skills have low speaking anxiety. Participants attested that those who have low speaking anxiety could concentrate on the given topic and give an impressive speech since their low anxiety does not affect their overall performance. Therefore, if people want to be good speakers, they should first reduce their speaking anxieties. The manifestations of the said anxiety might destroy the overall impact of one's speech presentation. Contrary to Pontillas (2020), results show no significant relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking skills. In the researcher's study, college students who have moderate to high anxieties are the best speakers in the class. They use their anxieties as motivation to excel in different speaking activities.

The Result of the Students' Speaking Anxiety Experiences and Strategies

The second data were conducted through an unstructured essay writing to explore the experiences and strategies employed by the participants in alleviating speaking anxiety and developing oral communication skills. The researcher used a qualitative approach using

thematic analysis. The essays were carefully read several times and analyze them thematically.

The following is a discussion of the identified themes that highlights the diverse experiences of anxiety expressed by the participants and the diverse strategies employed by students to cope with or reduce their English language speaking anxiety.

Participants' Experiences of Anxiety in Expressing Themselves Orally in English

Within this question, the participants of this study shared the diverse experiences of anxiety expressed by the participants, including physical manifestations, fears of judgment, language fluency concerns, performance anxiety, and the fear of forgetting or experiencing a mental block.

Table 3.

Theme	Significant Statements	Theme Description
Theme 1. Physical Manifestation of Anxiety	<i>My heart beats very fast just as I start my speech, my hands and knees tremble, feel tense and nervous when I am giving a speech.</i> S12	The theme describes the bodily effects of anxiety, particularly in communication and public speaking situations. Participants report physical symptoms like trembling hands, perspiration, and tension, highlighting the significant impact on mental and physical well-being.
Theme 2: Fear of Judgment and Criticism	<i>"I feel nervous and most of the time, my mind went blank because I'm scared of judgmental people. I overthink a lot before my speech."</i> S4	The theme " highlights the anxiety individuals experience when public speaking, leading to symptoms like nervousness, stammering, and overthinking. This fear affects self-esteem and confidence, and research shows a correlation between fear of negative evaluation and self-concept, especially in adolescents.
Theme 3: Language Fluency Concerns	<i>"I usually have negative terms while waiting for my turn to speak publicly. I have this fear that I may forget important facts, ending up having a jumbled mind causing me to stammer and embarrass myself."</i> S17	The theme highlights anxiety and nervousness experienced by individuals in speaking English due to perceived inadequacies. Participants express shyness, fear, and physical symptoms, especially in academic settings. Research supports the need for a positive psychological approach in language teaching.
Theme 4. Performance Anxiety in Speech	<i>"Expressing myself orally makes me anxious especially if it is delivered in English. My mind went black as it turns that I don't know what to say or deliver my speech."</i> S16	This theme emphasized the heightened tension experienced during public speaking situations. Participants express physical symptoms of nervousness, leading to mental blocks and speechlessness. The anxiety is specific to delivering speeches in English, causing discomfort.
Theme 5. Fear of Forgetting or Mental Block	<i>"I feel nervous when I'm in the middle of the speech to the point that I forget what I say. In short, I'm mentally blocked."</i> S18	The theme discusses anxiety and fear in oral communication, particularly the fear of forgetting or experiencing mental blocks during speeches. They express heightened anxiety, leading to forgetfulness and mental blockage.

The analysis revealed a prominent theme: the physical manifestations of anxiety experienced by participants. Participants vividly described the tangible impact of anxiety on their bodies, highlighting the somatic toll it takes.

One Quote 1 noted, "When I communicate to others, I feel so nervous, and my hands got tremble and perspire." Another Quote 12 explained, "My heart beats very fast just as I start my speech, my hands and knees tremble, feel tense and nervous when I am giving a speech." Experiencing nervous during public speaking is the typical presentation for the majority of the participants. According to these quotations, we can understand most of the participants have the similar experiences of the physical reactions such as trembling, perspiring, accelerated heartbeat when they are in public communication (Li, 2020; Mardiani & Apriyani, 2021). These experiences underscore the intricate connection between the psychological and physiological dimensions of anxiety, and it is obvious that anxiety has an undeniable impact on cognition (Vytal et al., 2013). . These include sweaty palms, heart pounding, and intense apprehension, that can debilitate individuals when giving public speech. The Quote 19 extended this theme to a specific context, stating, "I feel anxious while speaking in front of the panelist during our title defense. I stammered and forgot what I am going to say especially when the panelist asked a question."

These physical symptoms, including trembling hands, perspiration, rapid heartbeat, and feelings of tension, collectively depict the bodily impact of anxiety on individuals engaged in oral communication (Spielberger, 2010). This aligns with the existing literature, as Hunt and Eisenberg discussed the somatic aspects of mental health problems and the physical manifestations of anxiety among college students.

Theme 2: Fear of Judgment and Criticism

The participants' fear of judgment and criticism emerged as a central theme, significantly contributing to their anxiety during oral expression.

Participants expressed a fear of being judged by others, which led to a range of psychological and behavioral responses. Quote 4 sums up the participant's experience of having blank thoughts and overthinking before speaking, driven by their anxiety about being perceived by "judgmental people." This apprehension about external evaluation is further illustrated another participant Quote 5, where the

participant articulates their fear of being "laughed at" and "judged" by the audience, fostering a sense of self-consciousness and hesitation. This demonstrates a deep-seated concern about the potential for negative evaluation from peers and instructors, which in turn fuels anxiety and undermines their confidence in expressing themselves effectively (Maher & King, 2023).

The pervasive nature of the fear of judgment is further highlighted, where the participant Quote 17 stated, "I usually have negative terms while waiting for my turn to speak publicly. I have this fear that I may forget important facts, ending up having a jumbled mind causing me to stammer and embarrass myself." This reflects the participant's internal dialogue, which is dominated by the fear of forgetting important facts and the potential for embarrassment, ultimately leading to stammering. This theme underscores the psychological impact of external perceptions on the participants' anxiety levels during oral expression. Furthermore, some people actively distrust social situations where they must interact or perform in front of others in the target language, anticipating scrutiny and embarrassment (Oxford, 2017).

The findings are supported by the study of Alkhazrajy et al. (2020), which explored the relationship between fear of negative evaluation and self-concept in adolescents. This research illustrates how the apprehension of being judged by others can have a detrimental impact on an individual's self-esteem and self-perception, as expressed by the participants in the current study.

Theme 3: Language Fluency Concerns

Language fluency concerns emerged as a significant issue, highlighting the participants' anxiety related to their proficiency in English. This theme was evident across multiple quotes. The apprehension and unease experienced by individuals when learning or using a second language, known as language anxiety, can significantly impede the learning process and overall communicative competence (Ahsan et al., 2020; Jugo, 2020). Psychologists have long recognized the potential for anxiety to interfere with language learning, with the concept of anxiety itself being multifaceted, encompassing various types such as trait anxiety, state anxiety, achievement anxiety, and facilitative-debilitative anxiety (Jugo, 2020).

In Quote 6, narrates "'I'm shy to speak English because my English is not fluent.'" The participant expressed shyness in speaking English due to the perception of inadequate fluency. This sentiment was further reinforced in Quote 14, "Honestly, when I heard English, I feel so nervous already because you know why? When I speak English, my tongue gets twisted." This is where the participant emphasized the fear associated with linguistic challenges, such as tongue-twisting, contributing to their anxiety. Further, it was deepened in Quote 23, where the participant linked their language fluency concerns to specific academic settings. In these situations, the fear intensified in the presence of authority figures, such as teachers, who required them to speak English. Language anxiety is a common phenomenon among language learners, particularly when they are required to speak in front of others (Oxford, 2017). The distress of participants due to their linguistic challenges is significant, potentially impacting their academic performance, self-confidence, and overall well-being (Maher & King, 2023).

Further, Dewaele et al. (2019) discussed in their study the positive psychology perspective in language teaching, addressing the emotional challenges faced by learners, including language fluency concerns. Linking language fluency concerns to specific academic settings further emphasizes the complex relationship between language proficiency and anxiety in oral communication.

Theme 4: Performance Anxiety in Speech

Performance anxiety in speech was a prominent theme that reflected students' apprehensions related to public speaking situations. Public speaking anxiety, also known as glossophobia, is a prevalent condition characterized by fear and worry during speeches, with symptoms ranging from nervousness to panic attacks (Li, 2020).

The narratives captured the heightened physical and psychological tension experienced during speech performances. Participants described feeling very nervous, with their bodies becoming tense and their hands shaking uncontrollably due to the nervousness elicited by the idea of giving a speech.

Quote 7: "I feel very nervous because of speech performances. When I heard the word "speech" my body feels very tense and my hands can't stop shaking because of nervousness." The quote reveals the immediate physical manifestations of anxiety, emphasizing the tangible impact of nervousness on motor control. According to studies, public speaking anxiety is "the most common lifetime social fears." Almost 25% of people have reported feeling anxious when giving a public speech (Li, 2020). It was also quoted by 16 and 21, : "Expressing myself orally makes me anxious especially if it is delivered in English. My mind went black as it turns that I don't know what to say or deliver my speech." and "I feel I'm not comfortable when I speak English and I feel nervous."

This anxiety was especially heightened when the speeches were delivered in English, a non-native language for the participants. (Amiri & Puteh, 2021). Speaking English orally triggered significant anxiety for the participants, often leaving them feeling stuck and unsure of what to say or how to deliver their speech. They also expressed general uneasiness and nervousness when speaking in English. The study participants' experiences align with research indicating a negative correlation between anxiety and speaking performance (Mardiani & Apriyani, 2021).

Theme 5: Fear of Forgetting or Mental Block

Students often get mental blocks during speeches, which is a temporary state of mental block that makes it hard for them to express

their thoughts and ideas clearly (Montag, 2023). These blocks have been identified as a negative element that affects the entire process, especially for students, academics, and other writers (GÜLAY & Ungan, 2021).

Quote 8 stated, "I feel anxious while waiting my turn to give speech during oral presentations. I'm so nervous leading me to forget facts I really know." This highlights the anxiety induced while waiting to speak, leading to the potential forgetting of important facts. This speaks to the cognitive challenges participants face in the lead-up to their oral communication. Lots of people get nervous about public speaking - anywhere from 20% to 85% of folks feel anxious when they have to speak in front of others (Mardiani & Apriyani, 2021).

Quote 20 adds depth to this theme, "I feel nervous when I'm in the middle of the speech to the point that I forget what I say. In short, I'm mentally blocked." Describing the mental block experienced during the middle of a speech, resulting in forgetfulness. Mental blocks can occur at any time, but they're especially noticeable when students have to give oral presentations (Li, 2020; Powell, 2004). Which Quote 24 links this fear of forgetting to the days leading up to a speech, where the anticipation of forgetting contributes to heightened anxiety levels. This suggests that the fear of forgetting pervades not only the speech itself, but also the preparation and anticipation stages.

This highlights the cognitive complexity of oral communication anxiety, with participants facing challenges in both remembering their prepared content and maintaining cognitive control in the moment. (Maher & King, 2023). This aligns with research by Wang et al. (2017) and Smith and Jones (2018), which has emphasized the impact of cognitive processes on anxiety in public speaking and the experience of mental blocks resulting in forgetfulness.

Strategies that Develop Communication Skills to Cope with or Reduce English Language Speaking Anxiety

Within this question, the participants of this study revealed the diverse strategies employed by students to cope with or reduce their English-speaking anxiety. The themes include emotional regulation, understanding and application, knowledge expansion, social engagement, confidence building, and practical techniques.

Theme 1: Emotional Regulation

Emotional regulation is all about how people handle their feelings. People use different ways to control how intense, long-lasting, and outward their emotions are. These strategies can be conscious or unconscious and can involve changing how we think about a situation, what we do, or even how our bodies react (Cisler et al., 2009).

Participants described conscious strategies to shift their emotional states from negative to positive. For instance, Quote 25 exemplifies the effort to transform nervousness into excitement by associating the similar feeling, with the notion that "no one cares about me." This suggests a cognitive reappraisal of the emotional experience. Emotional regulation is key to mental health, social interactions, and it is about having control over the intensity and type of emotions felt and expressed (Doré & Ochsner, 2015).

Furthermore, Quote 33 stated "I have to clear my mind with negativity and fill it with positivity to deliver my message effectively." This aligns with the idea of using emotion regulation to improve communication effectiveness. The practice of controlled breathing, as highlighted in Quote 43, demonstrates a physical technique employed to relax and self-regulate before a speech. Emotional regulation involves actions designed to influence which emotions we have, when we have them, and how we experience and express them (Cisler et al., 2009).

Collectively, these quotes underscore the pivotal role of emotions in influencing public speaking performance. This finding resonates with the work of Pekrun and Perry (2014) who have emphasized the significance of emotion regulation in academic settings. Their research underscores the conscious effort to shift from negative emotions to positive ones, contributing to enhanced overall performance.

Theme 2: Understanding and Application

This theme reflects the participants' emphasis on understanding the essence of communication skills and applying that knowledge effectively. The data extracts provide insight into the cognitive processes involved in effective communication. Quote 26 highlights the participant's focus on grasping the core concepts underlying communication skill development: "I can develop it by understanding fully the essence of developing my communication skills and learning to apply it." This suggests an intentional, analytical approach to skill development. The participant recognizes that theoretical knowledge is insufficient and emphasizes the importance of practical application (Thornby, 2006).

Similarly, Quote 32 reflects a proactive, strategic mental preparation: "I prepare myself about what to say first before I communicate." This strategic approach to communication is further reinforced by Quote 40, which emphasizes the significance of familiarity with the subject matter as a means to alleviate nervousness: "Learn the lesson or topic you have and familiarize. It is the best way to not be nervous." The participant is advocating a deep understanding of the subject, so they can clearly articulate the ideas, thereby increasing confidence and reducing anxiety (Boothroyd & Best, 2003).

These data extracts show that effective communication involves intentional thinking, like preparing strategically and understanding

key communication concepts. This matches research by Lomas et al. (2017) on the role of intentional mental processes in communication effectiveness.

Theme 3: Knowledge Expansion

Bringing together knowledge from different fields is a key part of today's academic and research work. This helps spark new ideas and gives a more complete picture of complex topics. Language learning strategies play a crucial role in the success of language teaching and learning, and are determined by effective choices (Giang & Tuấn, 2018).

The quotes employing a range of strategies, including:

Reading the English dictionary to expand their knowledge of the language

Engaging with English literature and media, such as books and movies, to enhance their English vocabulary

Seeking online resources, such as YouTube videos, to improve their communication skills

These findings suggest a proactive approach to language acquisition and skill enhancement, contributing to increased confidence in communication. As Wilkins aptly stated, "Without grammar, very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed." The participants recognized the importance of these linguistic components and adopted strategies, such as reading English materials and using the dictionary, to become more independent learners in their second language (L2). Speaking, involving two or more individuals, stands as a fundamental communication skill in everyday life. Learners often view speaking as the most vital language skill to master, given English's prominent role as a medium for (Hutabarat & Simanjuntak, 1970). Various strategies can be used to address speaking anxiety, including relaxation, preparation, peer support, and positive thinking (Mardiani & Apriyani, 2021).

Further, the accessibility and convenience of these coping strategies were cited as factors contributing to their effectiveness in addressing the participants' English language speaking anxiety. The thematic analysis highlights the participants' commitment to personal growth and their resourcefulness in utilizing a variety of methods to improve their English language skills

Theme 4: Social Engagement

Speaking in a foreign language, particularly English, can be a daunting task for many learners, often triggering anxiety that hinders their ability to communicate effectively. The quotes, underscores the importance of real-world interactions in improving communication skills. Speaking, as a fundamental mode of human interaction, constitutes a vital component of daily life, facilitating communication between individuals. Recognized by English learners as a pivotal language skill to be cultivated, speaking holds considerable importance due to the widespread influence of English as a medium for global communication (Nga & Hương, 2023).

The quote 30, "'Engage in frequent conversation with English native speakers or language learners." Seeking opportunities to speak in public or class settings, and applying learned communication skills in discussions. (Alawiyah, 2018). This theme highlights the experiential aspect of language learning and skill development through active social participation. The Quote 34 said "Gain speaking experience. Take the opportunity to speak in public or in class. I volunteer also to give presentations for groups I'm involved." Effective communication hinges on the ability to speak, particularly in the educational context, where oral language assumes a central role in teaching and learning (Vartabedian & Klinger, 2018). Practically applying the communication skill methods they learned from their teachers' discussions, which makes them feel that it is easy to communicate with other people

Overall, the thematic analysis reveals that social engagement, practical application, and experiential learning are key strategies that participants employ to develop their communication skills and cope with or reduce English language speaking anxiety.

Theme 5: Confidence Building

Building confidence is a crucial strategy for overcoming English language speaking anxiety. Oral communication is a key aspect of learning English as a Foreign Language, necessitating specific focus and teaching approaches (Mardiani & Apriyani, 2021). Confidence in speaking English can be fostered through various techniques, including positive self-talk, visualization, and focusing on past successes.

As highlighted in Quote 31, "'I have to build confidence and improve my fluency skills." Participants emphasized the need to actively cultivate confidence and fluency in their communication skills. This is further exemplified in Quote 41, "'I practice at home and imagine that I was in the room full of audience so I can put control to myself when I feel a little pressure and nervous." It illustrates the use of visualization techniques, such as practicing at home while imagining a larger audience, to manage pressure and nervousness. Building confidence involves a multifaceted approach that combines psychological strategies with practical language skill development (Islam & Rabbi, 2024).

Additionally, Quote 38 extends this theme by underscoring the positive impact of topic familiarization on confidence, enabling participants to express themselves more clearly in front of an audience. Overcoming speaking anxiety often involves enhancing students' oral communication and bolstering their confidence through targeted strategies (Mahdi, 2015).

Collectively, these confidence-building strategies contribute significantly to overcoming the anxiety barriers encountered in oral

communication, aligning with Bandura's self-efficacy theory, which emphasizes the role of confidence in overcoming barriers.

Theme 6: Practical Techniques

Addressing speaking anxiety among English as a Foreign Language learners necessitates a multifaceted approach, incorporating strategies that target both the affective and cognitive dimensions of language acquisition.(Ahsan et al., 2020). Creating a supportive and encouraging classroom environment is paramount, where students feel comfortable taking risks and making mistakes without fear of judgment (Rahimi & Katal, 2012).

This can be achieved through various activities that promote collaboration, such as group discussions, pair work, and role-playing, which reduce the pressure on individual performance and foster a sense of community (Mahdi, 2015). As Quote 29 emphasized "I need to avoid distractions and stay focused, avoid unnecessary body languages or gestures." Through this, students can find their peace and overcome the anxiety they are dealing with. Meanwhile from Quote 37, "I write down my ideas in an intelligible or easier way. Writing it down is helpful in order to not forget my ideas and not to embarrass myself." Incorporating relaxation techniques, such as mindfulness activities, can help students manage their anxiety symptoms before and during speaking tasks. Mindfulness exercises can help students regulate their emotional responses by focusing on the present moment and reducing negative thoughts (Lee et al., 2020).

Practical techniques include various strategies that participants use to improve communication effectiveness. Avoiding distractions and staying focused are environmental adjustments. Writing down ideas is a practical tool to prevent forgetfulness and embarrassment. These techniques offer tangible, actionable steps for participants to systematically address communication challenges.

Finally, the theme indicated corresponds with the practical recommendations for effective communication outlined by Beebe and Mottet (2016). These connections highlight the comprehensive and multidimensional nature of participants' strategies for reducing speaking anxiety.

Conclusions

The findings emphasized the need for holistic support mechanisms addressing both the emotional and practical aspects of oral communication anxiety. Educators and language practitioners should recognize the interconnectedness of psychological and physiological elements in students' anxiety experiences. Tailored interventions focusing on building confidence, providing language support, and creating a supportive environment can significantly contribute to alleviating anxiety in language learning contexts.

The study suggests that effective language learning involves a combination of cognitive, emotional, and social strategies. Educators and language facilitators can leverage these findings to design comprehensive language programs that foster emotional resilience, build linguistic competence, and encourage active social participation. Moreover, promoting self-awareness among learners about the efficacy of diverse strategies empowers them to navigate language challenges more effectively.

Based on the summary of the investigations conducted and the conclusions arrived at, the researcher has offered the following recommendations: (1) Develop language programs that integrate emotional intelligence training, linguistic competence building and social engagement strategies. This holistic approach can address the multifaceted nature of language learning and reduce anxiety. (2) Create a supportive and inclusive learning environment that encourages students to express themselves without fear of judgment. Establishing a positive classroom culture can significantly contribute to reducing anxiety levels. (3) Incorporate mental health resources into language learning programs to provide students with tools to manage anxiety. This could include workshops, counseling services, or online resources focused on emotional well-being. (4) Implement targeted language proficiency support, especially for students facing language fluency concerns. Extra resources, workshops, or language practice sessions can enhance linguistic skills and boost confidence. (5) Offer communication skills workshops that encompass understanding, application, and practical techniques. These workshops can equip students with the necessary tools to navigate diverse communication scenarios confidently. (6) Promote peer learning and collaboration through group activities, discussions, and language exchange programs. Social engagement strategies contribute to practical language learning experiences, reducing anxiety in real-world communication situations. (7) Encourage students to reflect on their learning experiences, identify effective strategies, and build self-awareness. This reflective practice can empower students to take ownership of their language learning journey. (8) Incorporating these recommendations into language education programs can contribute to a more supportive, inclusive, and effective learning environment, ultimately fostering enhanced oral communication skills and reducing anxiety among students.

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