

Original Article

English Language Anxiety and Factors Influencing Speaking Performance in Relation to English Speaking Skills among Grade 11 Students in Davao City

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between English language anxiety, factors influencing speaking performance, and English speaking skills among Grade 11 students in Davao City. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was employed among 277 students from three Catholic schools selected through stratified random sampling. Data were gathered using validated self-report instruments measuring English language anxiety, factors influencing speaking performance, and speaking skills. Descriptive results indicated high English language anxiety ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.78$), high factors influencing speaking performance ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.43$), and high English speaking skills ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.62$). Pearson correlation showed that English language anxiety was not significantly related to English speaking skills ($r = -0.030$, $p = 0.614$), and factors influencing speaking performance were also not significantly related to speaking skills ($r = -0.080$, $p = 0.182$). The findings suggest that high school learners may maintain functional speaking competence despite experiencing anxiety and perceived performance constraints. Implications highlight the importance of strengthening speaking support mechanisms while addressing anxiety as a parallel classroom experience rather than a direct determinant of competence.

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1. Introduction

Oral communication remains a critical indicator of second language competence, particularly in senior high school contexts where learners are expected to participate in academic discussions, presentations, and performance tasks. Speaking is widely regarded as one of the most complex language skills because it requires real-time processing of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and discourse strategies while responding to social expectations and evaluation (Burns, 2019; Goh & Burns, 2012). In English as a second language environments such as the Philippines, students often learn English within multilingual settings that place additional cognitive and affective demands on speaking performance (Cabigon, 2015).

A major factor frequently linked to speaking outcomes is foreign language anxiety. Horwitz et al. (1986) conceptualized foreign language classroom anxiety as a situation-specific affective construct that includes communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. This anxiety is often associated with avoidance of oral participation, reduced willingness to communicate, and weaker speaking performance, particularly when classroom practices emphasize accuracy and public correction (MacIntyre, 2017; Teimouri et al., 2019). Anxiety has been described as both a direct emotional barrier and an indirect factor that influences learning opportunities through avoidance and reduced practice (Krashen, 1982; Zhang, 2021).

However, anxiety does not always predict language performance in a consistent way. Some studies report that anxiety shows weak or non-significant relationships with speaking outcomes when learners have stable coping strategies, strong instructional scaffolds, or a supportive classroom climate (Khajavy et al., 2017; Lee & Kim, 2014). In these cases, anxiety may persist as a psychological experience while competence remains relatively stable. This perspective aligns with contemporary research on classroom emotions that treats anxiety as one part of a broader emotional system where negative emotions may coexist with achievement and progress (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele et al., 2018).

Speaking performance is also shaped by instructional and contextual factors. Teaching strategies such as task-based speaking, guided interaction, pronunciation modeling, and structured feedback can strengthen speaking development (Goh & Burns, 2012). Learners' internal and external conditions also influence speaking performance, including motivation, self-confidence, exposure to English, peer interaction, and opportunities for authentic practice (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021; Lindo & Cutad, 2024; Saito et al., 2018). In addition, learners' perceived difficulties and needs may shape how they approach speaking tasks and how they evaluate their own competence.

In the Philippine senior high school setting, the demand for oral performance has intensified through competency-based curricula and communication-focused assessment practices. Yet students often experience pressure related to public speaking tasks and classroom evaluation. Understanding whether anxiety and performance-related factors are linked to speaking skills can guide more targeted instructional

responses. Despite extensive research on foreign language anxiety, evidence remains mixed across contexts, particularly in high school populations where developmental, academic, and socio-cultural variables may operate differently from university settings (Teimouri et al., 2019).

This study examined English language anxiety and factors influencing speaking performance in relation to English speaking skills among Grade 11 students in Davao City. It aimed to determine the level of English language anxiety, the level of factors influencing speaking performance, and the level of English speaking skills, and to test whether anxiety and performance-related factors are significantly related to speaking skills. The findings contribute to understanding how affective and contextual dimensions operate in senior high school speaking development and provide evidence that can support instructional planning and learner support programs.

2. Methodology

This study used a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. Descriptive analysis was applied to determine the levels of English language anxiety, factors influencing speaking performance, and English speaking skills. Correlational analysis examined the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable without manipulation of conditions, consistent with established approaches for examining associations in educational research (Apuke, 2017; Cantrell, 2011).

The participants were 277 Grade 11 students from three Catholic schools in Davao City, selected through stratified random sampling. Stratification ensured representation across relevant school groupings and reduced sampling bias. Respondents were enrolled during the study period and were actively participating in English-related speaking tasks as part of their academic requirements.

Data were collected using structured survey instruments that measured English language anxiety, factors influencing speaking performance, and English speaking skills. English language anxiety was measured across anxiety of English classes, test anxiety, communication apprehension, and fear of negative evaluation. Factors influencing speaking performance were measured through strategies to teach speaking skills, internal and external factors, and difficulties and needs. Speaking skills were assessed through self-reported competence in pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary. The instruments underwent validation and reliability procedures prior to administration.

Data gathering followed institutional permissions and ethical requirements. Respondents were oriented on the study purpose, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw. Questionnaires were administered and retrieved within the agreed schedule. Weighted mean and standard deviation were used to determine levels of the variables, and Pearson correlation tested relationships at the 0.05 significance level.

3. Results

3.1 English Language Anxiety

English language anxiety among Grade 11 students was high ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.78$). Communication or speech apprehension recorded the highest category mean ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.98$), followed by fear of negative evaluation ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 0.93$) and test anxiety ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.87$). Anxiety of English classes registered a moderate category mean ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 0.78$).

Table 1. Level of English language anxiety.

| Indicator | Category Mean | SD | Description |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|------|-------------|
| Anxiety of English Classes | 3.10 | 0.78 | Moderate |
| Test Anxiety | 3.45 | 0.87 | High |
| Communication/Speech Apprehension | 3.63 | 0.98 | High |
| Fear of Negative Evaluation | 3.53 | 0.93 | High |
| Overall | 3.43 | 0.78 | High |

3.2 Factors Influencing Speaking Performance

Factors influencing speaking performance were high ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.43$). Strategies to teach speaking skills obtained the highest category mean ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 0.57$), while external and internal factors were also high ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.47$). Difficulties and needs were moderate ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 0.68$).

Table 2. Level of factors influencing speaking performance.

| Indicator | Category Mean | SD | Description |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|------|-------------|
| Strategies to Teach Speaking Skills | 4.17 | 0.57 | High |
| External and Internal Factors | 3.92 | 0.47 | High |
| Difficulties and Needs | 3.37 | 0.68 | Moderate |
| Overall | 3.82 | 0.43 | High |

3.3 English Speaking Skills

English speaking skills were high overall ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.62$). Pronunciation recorded the highest mean ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.76$), while grammar obtained the lowest mean ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.77$), though still high. Fluency ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 0.79$) and vocabulary ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.72$) remained high.

Table 3. Level of English speaking skills.

| Indicator | Mean | SD | Description |
|------------------|-------------|-----------|--------------------|
| Pronunciation | 3.91 | 0.76 | High |
| Fluency | 3.66 | 0.79 | High |
| Grammar | 3.60 | 0.77 | High |
| Vocabulary | 3.67 | 0.72 | High |
| Overall | 3.71 | 0.62 | High |

3.4 Relationship between Anxiety, Performance Factors, and Speaking Skills

Correlation results indicated that English language anxiety was not significantly related to English speaking skills ($r = -0.030$, $p = 0.614$). Factors influencing speaking performance were also not significantly related to speaking skills ($r = -0.080$, $p = 0.182$).

Table 4. Correlation of variables.

| Variables Paired with English Speaking Skills | r | p-value | Remark |
|--|----------|----------------|-----------------|
| English Language Anxiety | -0.030 | 0.614 | Not Significant |
| Factors Influencing Speaking Performance | -0.080 | 0.182 | Not Significant |

4. Discussion

The present findings offer an important contribution to second language speaking research by demonstrating that Grade 11 students can report high speaking competence even when anxiety remains elevated. English language anxiety in this cohort was high overall, with communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation emerging as the most salient dimensions. This pattern is consistent with the core structure of foreign language classroom anxiety described by Horwitz et al. (1986), where speaking-related vulnerability becomes the dominant source of discomfort. Adolescents are particularly sensitive to peer evaluation, which can intensify anxiety during oral tasks that require public performance and immediate feedback (MacIntyre, 2017).

At the same time, students reported high levels of English speaking skills, with pronunciation scoring highest and grammar lowest among the indicators, though all remained within the high range. This profile suggests functional competence in core speaking components, which aligns with models of communicative competence that emphasize intelligibility and fluency as primary determinants of successful oral interaction rather than strict grammatical accuracy alone (Burns, 2019; Saito et al., 2018). The high pronunciation mean may reflect classroom emphasis on oral clarity,

exposure to English media, and repeated rehearsal through performance tasks, which are common features of senior high school instruction.

The study also found high levels of factors influencing speaking performance, particularly the strategies to teach speaking skills. This result suggests that students perceive substantial instructional support. Research indicates that structured speaking instruction, such as guided planning, task-based interaction, and feedback cycles, can raise speaking confidence and performance outcomes (Goh & Burns, 2012). When learners experience predictable speaking routines and supportive teacher facilitation, anxiety may persist as a personal feeling but becomes less disruptive to competence development.

A central empirical contribution of the study is the absence of significant relationships between English language anxiety and speaking skills and between performance-related factors and speaking skills. The non-significant correlation between anxiety and speaking competence contrasts with meta-analytic evidence that typically reports a moderate negative relationship between second language anxiety and achievement (Teimouri et al., 2019). Yet this inconsistency is not unusual across contexts. Studies have documented cases where anxiety does not significantly predict speaking performance among high school learners, particularly when other variables such as motivation, self-efficacy, and learning strategies exert stronger effects (Khajavy et al., 2017; Lee & Kim, 2014). In such contexts, anxiety may function as a background emotional condition rather than a performance determinant.

The weak relationship may also reflect measurement and construct alignment. The present study measured speaking skills through self-reported perceptions of pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary. Self-perceived competence often differs from performance measured through standardized oral proficiency tests, particularly in adolescent populations where social comparison influences self-evaluation (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Learners may report high competence when they compare themselves with peers in the same setting, even when anxiety remains high due to evaluative pressure. This produces a plausible scenario in which anxiety and competence coexist without a strong statistical link.

Another plausible interpretation concerns restricted variance. The mean levels for speaking skills were consistently high, suggesting limited spread in scores. When most learners cluster at similar competence levels, correlations weaken because statistical relationships depend on variability across participants. This may partially explain why both anxiety and speaking performance factors yielded near-zero correlations. In similar studies, stronger relationships often appear when proficiency levels vary more widely or when participants include both low and high proficiency groups (Teimouri et al., 2019).

The absence of correlation between factors influencing speaking performance and speaking skills may appear counterintuitive, given that instructional strategies and contextual supports are widely considered essential for speaking development. One explanation is that the measured factors represent conditions perceived by students as present across classrooms, resulting in minimal between-student differentiation. If

instructional strategies are consistently applied in the participating schools, the variance needed to explain differences in speaking skills becomes limited. Another explanation is that the instrument captured broad conditions rather than specific features of instruction most closely tied to skill growth, such as feedback quality, interaction time, and task complexity. Speaking development depends on sustained opportunities for output, negotiation of meaning, and corrective feedback that targets both accuracy and fluency (Goh & Burns, 2012; Lindo & Panes, 2024; Saito et al., 2018). Broad measures may not capture these micro-level processes sufficiently.

Although the correlations were not significant, the descriptive results still carry strong educational implications. Communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation remain high. This implies that many students experience psychological strain during speaking tasks even when competence appears adequate. From an instructional perspective, anxiety still matters because it can reduce participation frequency, encourage avoidance behaviors, and lower willingness to communicate over time, even if current competence remains stable (MacIntyre, 2017). Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis remains relevant because anxiety can restrict engagement with input and willingness to produce output, which are essential for long-term language development.

The findings support a more nuanced view of anxiety in senior high school classrooms. Anxiety may not always suppress competence directly, but it may shape the emotional cost of participation. This distinction is critical for teachers and school leaders. Programs that focus only on skill development without addressing classroom emotional climate may leave learners competent yet psychologically constrained. Interventions that promote supportive peer norms, low-stakes speaking practice, and process-oriented feedback can reduce fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension while preserving high competence levels (Dewaele et al., 2018; Zhang, 2021).

Finally, the results suggest that speaking competence among Grade 11 learners may be influenced by variables not included in the present model. The thesis itself notes that increased speaking skills may be linked to other factors outside anxiety and the measured performance influences. Contemporary second language research identifies self-efficacy, willingness to communicate, motivation, and language exposure as powerful predictors of speaking development (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021; Khajavy et al., 2017). Future research should examine these constructs alongside anxiety to build a more comprehensive explanatory model.

5. Conclusion

Grade 11 students in Davao City reported high English language anxiety, high levels of factors influencing speaking performance, and high English speaking skills. English language anxiety was not significantly related to English speaking skills, and factors influencing speaking performance were also not significantly related to speaking skills. The results indicate that anxiety may remain present as a classroom

emotion without functioning as a direct predictor of perceived speaking competence in this cohort. Instructional supports and speaking practice opportunities may have contributed to maintaining high competence levels despite anxiety. Educational interventions should therefore address anxiety as a parallel learner experience that can influence participation and well-being, while continuing to strengthen structured speaking instruction. Future studies should incorporate objective speaking performance assessments and examine additional predictors such as self-efficacy, willingness to communicate, and exposure to English to clarify the mechanisms that sustain speaking competence among senior high school learners.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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