

The Experience of English Speaking Anxiety and Coping Strategies: A Transcendental Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

The study investigates the speaking anxiety and strategies that second language learners use to deal with their anxiety when they speak English. The researcher conducts semi-structured interviews to collect data. There were 55 students in a state university in the Philippines who participated in the study, and the top five students with the highest level of anxiety were interviewed for data collection. Transcendental phenomenology was used as a method of the research. The results showed that learners have emotional tensions, physiological symptoms, and mental difficulties when they speak English. The fear of losing face or negative feedback was also attributed to the anxiety of the students. The researcher also found that the students use some strategies to cope with their nervousness by utilizing helpful tools such as reading books in English and consulting a dictionary. The strategies enabled the students to put their thoughts into writing, overcome their shyness, and become open-minded with the teacher's corrections or feedback.

Keywords: Emotional Tension, English Speaking Anxiety, Transcendental Phenomenology, Physiological Effects, Mental Difficulties

Introduction

Emotions have played an important role in the language education of the students. Taking into account this affective variable is very important in relation to the pressing issues on learning and academic achievement. One of the affective issues that may affect learning for decades up until today is the phenomenon of anxiety.

Anxiety is described as the “state of mind connected with the feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, or worry” (Brown, 2000). This affective domain nourishes the feeling of incompetence, reluctance, depression, and threat (Liu & Jackson, 2008). This phenomenon consequently poses negative effects on students' grades (Milan, 2019) and students' progress in their language learning journey (Huang, 2014).

Different variables promote or hamper language learning, one of which is language anxiety. Although a huge number of researches (Yasuda, 2018; Lababidi, 2016; Chinpakdee, 2015; Choi, 2013; and Wong, 2009) have dealt with students' emotional vulnerability, still language anxiety remains to be a pressing academic issue up until this modern educational system that

becomes a viable ground for research to be explored and delved into. Second language learners are still reported to be uncomfortable, unmotivated, unwilling to participate, or have low performance in their language education (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009) as a result.

In the Philippines, English is valued as a second important language. Although English has been integrated as the medium of instruction in the Philippine educational system, speaking in English is still considered the most anxiety-provoking activity in class (Atas, 2015). English is still a medium where second language learners are very anxious about (Chiu et al., 2010). For them, using the L2 in their speaking most likely induces anxiety or any undesirable feelings (Salim et al., 2017).

Without a doubt, Basic (2011) asserted that speaking anxiety affects learning a second language. Specifically, students are confined to be quiet and shy (Mwamba, 2005); they are hesitant to communicate and share what they have in mind (Faulin & Soefendi, 2013); they are uninterested in displaying their speaking ability in every classroom engagement, and they feel unconfident (Marzuki et al., 2016) and uncomfortable at all to any English classroom. This attitude has made the students feel fearful of speaking with their teachers or peers; they are afraid to interact in every learning activity; and they are anxious to participate as a whole (Bastida Jr. & Yapo, 2019). For this reason, speaking anxiety obstructs students' improvement in their second language learning and acquisition.

Hence, this critical issue has led to the construct of this research investigation. This accentuates the critical reason to understand the phenomenon deeply by viewing it based on the students' 'life world' experiences. The purpose of the study is to extract prevailing themes and underlying essences of the participants' descriptions and narratives over their English speaking anxiety.

Literature review

English Speaking Anxiety

Speaking lies the most important ability that is necessary for effective communication to happen (Zaremba, 2006). Speaking is the ability to express oneself and sharing meaning through the use of the target language (Mart, 2012). It encompasses "systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning" (Nunan, 2003), which is considered to be the most challenging skill because it is characterized with oral discourse elements that are inevitably present to any communicative expression and process like "...the use of slang and idioms, stress, rhythm and intonation, the need to interact with at least one other speaker, and many sorts of demand" (Rocio, 2012 & Brown, 1994).

Among other core skills in language learning, speaking is arguably the most affected by language anxiety in second language education (Horwitz et al., 1986 cited in Sadiq, 2017). To be exact, the fear of expressing oneself verbally using the English language is referred to as English speaking anxiety. This phenomenon is usually marked by physiological symptoms

like sweating, tension, increased pulse, and other physiological manifestations (Basic, 2011). That is why English as a Second Language (ESL) learners could no longer focus on the speaking process; instead, they are paying much attention to how these symptoms can affect their oral performance. From this point of view, different physiological and emotional reactions were encountered. These experiences have obstructed and inhibited ESL learners' ability to speak (Basic, 2011). In the end, it resulted in them feeling a psychological burden while learning any language (Ahmed et al., 2017).

Empirical studies have exemplified in length the effects of English speaking anxiety on ESL learners. Tsiplakides & Keramida (2009) declared that anxious students commonly avoided speaking activities in class. They showed unwillingness to participate in any speaking activity (Gregersen, 2003). They further abstained from voluntary answers when asked immediate questions (Elkhafaifi, 2005). Thus, speaking anxiety affects the ESL students' negatively in their oral performances.

Significant works of literature (Sadiq, 2017; & Mak, 2011) have further validated that speaking anxiety is highly stimulated and provoked when students have to communicate or express in English in front of the class. Speaking in front of others has been rated as the biggest cause of anxiety-inducing reactions from them (Rumiyati & Seftika, 2018). Not only that, other stressors like pronunciation (Qzurk & Gurbuz, 2014), fear of making mistakes (Dornyei, 2001), unattractive evaluation (Ansari, 2015; Mak, 2011; & Kondo & Yong, 2003), lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge (Mukminin, 2015), lack of preparedness (Jackson, 2002), and even teachers' attitude (Choi, 2016) in the language learning environment contribute to the debilitating and suppressing issue on language speaking anxiety.

In view of this, the philosophical assumptions of Horwitz et al. (1986) established the prime theoretical foundation of the phenomenon. Horwitz et al. claimed three (3) chief emotional attributes to support the construct of English speaking anxiety: (1) communication apprehension, (2) fear of negative evaluation, and (3) test anxiety (Toth, 2008; and MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989, 1991). Communication apprehension is the feeling of discomfort, fear, or anxiety that second language learners experience in every real or anticipated communication with other people (Cristobal & Lasaten, 2018; Del Villar, 2010; & McCroskey, 1977). As a matter of fact, fear of negative evaluation is when students inhibit themselves from interacting due to their fear of committing mistakes and that their teachers and peers or classmates will laugh at them (Al Hosni, 2014). Whereas test anxiety happens because of students' extreme stress, anxiety and discomfort during and/or before taking a test (Salend, 2012).

Furthermore, the phenomenon of English speaking anxiety is also strengthened through Stephen Krashen Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982). Krashen believed that various affective variables dynamically influence second language acquisition, one of which is anxiety. Krashen (as cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001) pronounced that "individuals learn the second language only if they get ample comprehensible input and if their affective filters are low enough to let the input get in." Consequently, when an individual affective filter is low enough, the brain is triggered to operate and learn at its best, resulting in long-term learning and

meaningful experience (Tufekcil & Demirel, 2009). However, when the affective filter is high, students become more anxious, and this feeling intervenes and impedes learning. That is why students who suffer from speaking anxiety are mostly inclined to apprehension. They are prone to feel unhappiness, discontentment, insecurity (Tiajan, 2010), frustration even anger (von Worde, 2003). Hence, “students with high anxiety perform worse than those with low anxiety” (Cao, 2011).

To a large extent, another compelling theory by Edward Thorndike’s *Law of Effect* (1932) supported the central viewpoint of this paper. Thorndike believed that learning strengthens when accompanied or followed by a satisfying state or feeling; however, it weakens when associated with unpleasant emotions otherwise (SHIFT eLearning, 2020). Nonetheless, the emotional state of the second language students is a vital element whether to strengthen or obstruct language learning. Hence, rewards and recognition should take precedence over punishments when it comes to teaching and instruction. Giving positive feedback, praising the students’ output, and providing educational guidance develop motivation for them to go the extra mile in their L2 education. However, when negative emotion predominates, learning is impaired.

This number of researches pointed to one common judgment that anxiety appeared to be an influential emotional variable to affect second language learning and acquisition. Significantly, in speaking, anxiety made learners appearing less fluent and thus disturbed the quality of verbal production they have in L2 (Horwitz, 1991). Therefore, inhibition is labeled as the worst-case scenario to happen when anxiety is not being addressed properly. Inhibition is what students felt every time they are fearful of criticism, of being mocked, of how they are being judged by others when speaking in English (Mufidah, 2017) to the point of withdrawing themselves from communicating. In this connection, speaking in English becomes threatening for them.

Coping Strategies

Coping strategies from various literature were reviewed below in consonance with the phenomenon of English language speaking anxiety. One of which is Kondo & Young’s (2004) five-dimensional coping strategies: (1) preparation, (2) relaxation, (3) positive thinking, (4) peer thinking, and (5) resignation. These were administered to the seventy-seven (77) English language learners in several universities in Indonesia and have resulted in having reduced the severity of anxiety to the participants’ speaking ability in the English language.

From their perspective, preparation is giving the students ample time to prepare for oral tasks. This gives the students the leisure to compose their outline of what to say and how they deliver their message. On the other hand, Relaxation is also another element to be very helpful to most anxious ESL students. When the learners are secured with their environment, this facilitates them to be composed and to go the extra mile in their language education. While positive thinking counts to be very influential, like appreciating students’ efforts, encouraging learners that it is fine to commit mistakes in L2, and displaying a teacher's good attitude is one way to outsource external motivation. When motivation is established, self-confidence is enkindled in

return.

In contrast, peer thinking is also one way to lighten up the load or burden to complete learning tasks in L2. This is employed through giving opportunities for students to brainstorm, discuss, exhaust ideas in teams or groupings. However, resignation as the fifth category of Kondo & Young's (2004) has not been applied by the L2 students to several universities in Indonesia, like sleeping or just giving up.

Similarly, a four-dimensional anxiety-reducing strategy was also employed by Fujii (2017) in one hundred fourteen (144) undergraduate participants at a national university in Sapporo, Japan. His research investigation has introduced two (2) student-oriented strategies: (1) cooperation with others & (2) building confidence; and another two (2) teacher-oriented strategies, respectively: (1) assistance from the teacher & (2) less-stressful teaching methods. His study disclosed that students felt less anxious when they were engaging in small group activities or cooperation with others. Students felt that their anxiety decreases once they worked together with their peers or classmates. They also experienced less anxiety when they have prepared thoroughly for any English task. This tendency builds students' confidence over the second language.

In addition, teacher-oriented strategies: assistance from the teacher and less stressful teaching methods was initiated through displaying teachers' good attitude (Lee et al., 2011) in the classroom. Promoting a learning climate to be non-threatening and friendly as part of the teacher's strategy foster ease and a comfortable English learning environment. Hence, this learning condition facilitates a persuasive impact on ESL students to become more relaxed and secure. This is in conformance with Saltmarsh's (2017) view that the "brain is shaped as it interacts with the environment..." When the learning climate is non-threatening and comfortable, students are less anxious. In a friendly environment, students have the chance to maximize their full potential because they become more willing to explore and participate.

The 'cooperative learning strategies' were also found effective as coping mechanisms in reducing English language speaking anxiety (Nagahashi, 2007). These involve learning situations like small-group, real-life, or task-based activities, which set the learning climate to be interactive and communicative. Cooperative learning strategies shift classroom situations from threatening, unrelaxed into a learning-friendly, supportive, and open learning atmosphere. Chances like students sharing what they have in mind, their points of view, what they feel and think, can create an avenue to rehearse and practice English in the interaction. Nagahashi further claimed that this mechanism capacitated the students to become accustomed and oriented with the language structure and vocabularies in English. Hence, these fundamentals build once confidence in interacting in the second language.

In the light of this, these relevant coping strategies of Kondo & Young's (2004) five-dimensional coping strategies, Fujii's (2017) four-dimensional anxiety-reducing strategy, and the cooperative learning strategies (Nagahashi, 2007) agree with the theoretical perspective of Edward Thorndike on the Law of Readiness and Law of Exercise (1932) and of Lev Vygotsky

on Social Learning Theory (1987).

According to Thorndike (1932), only when the students are ready to learn can learning happen or his Law of Readiness. It resonates with the notion that to be pressured to learn while not ready results in an unpleasant circumstance in learning (“Thorndike’s Major Laws,” n.d.). Thus, Thorndike’s view sparks motivation as a crucial component in the learning process. As a result, the coping strategies outlined above place a value on creating a language learning atmosphere that is welcoming, comfortable, and non-threatening to L2 students. It is displayed by providing adequate time for students to prepare, reflect, and speak, demonstrating a positive attitude from the teacher, such as teacher support or scaffolding, and fostering positive thinking through collaborative activities or assignments.

Thorndike’s Law of Exercise also provides another perspective of classroom learning through appropriate coping strategies. He emphasized that it weakens and fades from memory (SHIFT eLearning, 2020). Yet, when knowledge is utilized and applied, authentic and long-term learning predominates. In this case, the cooperative learning strategies (Nagahashi, 2007) and the student-oriented strategies of Fujii (2017), where students have to work in teams, to brainstorm, and to share peculiar ideas, can foster opportunities to share the burden in learning and therefore set the classroom less anxious.

Based on the Social Learning Theory of Lev Vygotsky (1987), that 'social learning precedes development' (David, 2014). This premise emphasizes the fundamental role of social interaction in the cognitive development of an individual and how the learning environment or the community itself contributes to the meaning-making of the learners (McLeod, 2018). Meaning, cognitive development is the by-product of socialization. And teachers play a pivotal role in setting the learning environment rich, interactive, and collaborative where students can most intervene. Therefore, when students are provided with enough room to exercise the target language through cooperative tasks, knowledge of language structure increases and develops their comfortability and confidence as well in L2.

Aside from this, a local study by Lucas et al. (2011) arrived with a robust conclusion that the students from the several higher education institutions in Manila, Philippines, are strongly benefited from ‘vocabulary strategy’ and has aided them to cope with their English speaking anxiety effectively. This finding is relevant to Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) in second language acquisition. Krashen argued in-depth that 'humans acquire language in only one way – by understanding messages or by receiving comprehensible input' (Cook, 2016). Thus, implementing a vocabulary strategy facilitates a learning climate to be rich and literate. Through consulting and understanding the meaning of a newly accustomed word or term is a learning habit that increases vocabulary gain and word knowledge fundamentals in most students' second language education. Yet, when the students have limited known words, they find it difficult to put their thoughts into words and find themselves anxious in speaking English. Hence, there should be a rich provision of comprehensible input in the learning environment in a low anxiety situation (Schutz, 2019).

However, some students have a negative attitude while responding with their speaking anxiety in the English language. Some students have left no choice but to keep themselves distant from the stressful situation in L2 or the 'non-active strategy.' (Lizuka, 2010 & Spielmann & Randofsky, 2001). Students adapted an 'avoidance strategy' instead of fear of the students committing mistakes and tendencies of receiving negative feedback and assessment from others (Pappamihiel, 2002). Usually, students tend to escape, avoid, withdraw, and inhibit from interacting this time.

Nevertheless, this paper argued that when teachers are capacitating their instructions to how the students have experienced anxiety in any English language classrooms can maximize the opportunity for teacher-student transactions to become profitable between them. Once students are comfortable, they are at ease and less bothered. Given this, a sound environment fosters a sound mind and prompts a sound learning pattern. In this regard, when educators reflecting on their instructional decisions based on students' physiological endowment, students' potential is maximized and best elicited to learn.

Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the following research questions were given importance:

- a) What are the participants' experiences of anxiety in expressing themselves orally in English?
- b) What strategies do they usually use to cope with their English language speaking anxiety?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

Given the assumptions of Creswell (1994) to choose the participants wisely, the fifty-five (55) students from the three (3) sections under the Marine Biology department in a state university in Misamis Occidental were selected to participate in an online survey to determine their level of anxiety in the English language. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) of Horwitz et al. (1986) was adopted and modified as the chief research instrument. The top five (5) students with the highest level of anxiety scale in English in terms of communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety were chosen as the sample participants.

Design of the Study

This research inquiry was purely qualitative. Creswell's (2007) transcendental phenomenology considered as the most viable procedure in studying the participants' life world experiences in-depth. Transcendental phenomenology has treated the phenomenon as fresh and as new as possible, emphasizing 'epoché' in length, which "requires the elimination of suppositions" from the researcher (Creswell, 2006; & Moustakas, 1994). This means that the researcher's personal claim, belief, and assumptions about the phenomenon were invalidated, disregarded, and

unrecognized in the construction of the underlying essences.

Data collection & analysis

A semi-structured interview was conducted in the data gathering. Prior to this, the interview questions underwent panel assessment for corrections and suggestions. Verbatim statements of the participants were transcribed critically. An external auditor also administered another round of validation to check whether transcriptions were well-illustrated and well-represented. A copy of the transcripts was distributed to the chosen participants for further affirmation. In the data analysis, the data domain were subjected to Creswell's (2007) modified version of Stevick-Collaizi-Keen method of Moustakas (1994) following the procedures: (1) comprehensive descriptions of experiences, (2) 'horizontalization,' (3) clustering significant statements to form themes, (4) generating of textural descriptions, (5) constructing of structural descriptions, and (6) composite description of essences.

Results/Findings and discussion

Problem 1. What are the participants' experiences of anxiety in expressing themselves orally in English?

Theme 1: Emotional tension (nervousness, fear of embarrassment, worry about what others say, lack of self-confidence, and feeling inferior)

Whenever the participants were asked to speak and express themselves in front of others, emotional tensions were developed. Among these affective manifestations were deliberately underpinned below.

Nervousness. The majority of the participants affirmed that whenever they expressed themselves in English, they usually felt more nervous in the classroom. For example, Participant 4 said, "Makulbaan ko Ma'am, basin kataw-an ko sa akung classmates nga ma-wrong grammar akung mga English..." (Transcript 4, Line 3). Similar reactions were also conveyed by Participants 1, 2, 3, and 5 parallel to the phenomenon. When interviewed, they claimed that their inadequate knowledge of the target language and their limited exposure and less practice in speaking had affected them, especially in their involvement in L2. These have triggered them to feel more nervous and anxious in presenting themselves in front of others.

This research result finds consonance with what Bailey & Savage (1994, cited in Rocio, 2012) found that this emotional reaction is commonly present when it comes to speaking English due to its complexity and dynamics. Liu (2018) acknowledged that speaking anxiety was the most extensive aspect of the phenomenon, among other areas of second language learning. Due to limited exposure to the target language, lack of practice is one of the debilitating factors of language speaking anxiety (Lui, 2006). Hence, these anxiety-inducing causes triggered and arouse nervousness among ESL students consequently. Without a doubt, the sample participants confirmed the feeling of nervousness as one of the chief affective dilemmas obvious and prevailing among them in an English classroom.

For these reasons, the research finding exemplified that the participants' feelings of nervousness were driven by their inability to express because they were so concerned with their limited vocabulary words, less exposure, and poor L2 application. These cases have made them felt so much self-restrictions. As pronounced, Horwitz et al. (1986 cited in Salend, 2012) have labeled this encounter with L2 as communication apprehension. Communication apprehension left the ESL learners quiet and remained silent (Lucas et al., 2011). They became unwilling to participate in any anticipated or real communication and to the point of inhibiting themselves (Cristobal & Lasaten, 2018) from communicating.

Fear of embarrassment. Fear of embarrassment is an emotional entity that has affected the participants significantly. The selected participants became hesitant to speak and communicate in an English classroom because they discerned that at any time, they might get embarrassed in front. When they committed errors in grammar, or their articulation was erroneous, they felt too ashamed and humiliated. Participant 4 attested, "Ma-wrong grammar ko Ma'am kay naay uban classmate na kataw-an ka, yaga-yagaan ka, maulaw na dayon ko ana" (Transcript 4, Line 42-43). And this was also true for the other participants (1, 2, 3, and 5). Most commonly, they acted more fearful when being corrected directly in the presence of their classmates. For this reason, they seemed self-conscious, closed-mouth, and fearful in the end.

The verbatim statements above have exemplified how the participants have been affected by the audience who surrounded them. When the audience burst into laughter because of their grammar mistakes or mispronunciation, they became humiliated in front. This result finds similarity with other research findings such as Anwari (2019); Ahmed & Ahmed et al. (2017), Rafada (2017); Wong (2009); and Jackson (2002), who declared that most ESL learners had engaged with speaking anxiety for the reason that their peers kept laughing at them when they were speaking.

Not only that, but the participants had also felt the fear of embarrassment when they were being corrected by their teachers in front of the class. They often exhibited this emotional tension when their teachers were correcting their errors directly. They asserted that correcting them in the presence of their classmates has resulted in great intimidation and embarrassment. In this connection, Horwitz et al. (1986 cited in Rahimi & Dastjerdi, 2012) emphasized applying error correction techniques in accordance with students' preferences. Allowing them to choose the method of feedbacking favorable to them may reduce their defensive reaction when corrected in L2 (Hashemi, 2011). In return, this may allow the second language students to appreciate making mistakes and thrive more to apply the English language.

Worry about what others say. The participants' emotional tension has been worsened because they were so much concerned about what others might say or think about their speaking performance. Participants 2, 3, and 5 have deliberately described their apprehension by narrating, "...libakon ko... Pareha ba anang kuan Ma'am, 'Unsa ba naa siya magIningles oi, mali-mali man kaayo, wrong grammar kaayo, dili kabalo,' ... Murag dili nako madawat Ma'am ba nga ingon ana-on ko." (Transcript 2, Line 24-26). The transcript highlighted how the participants had been emotionally challenged in applying the second language in the interaction.

They appeared uneasy and anxious about their capability in delivering their ideas. They were often cautious about others' perceptions about their language performance, thinking that anytime they might be adversely evaluated by their audience.

This finding echoes on fear of negative evaluation of Horwitz et al. (1986, cited in Al Hosni, 2014). Those students usually held back from speaking due to their fear of receiving negative assessments or criticism from their peers and teachers. Instead, inhibition took place as students' last resort in protecting their self-image in the classroom (Salim et al., 2017). For Park & Lee (2005), higher anxiety towards the second language results in lower performance. That ESL learners' oral performances would improve if they are more comfortable or relaxed. In this way, when the ESL students have the strong will to speak, this facilitates greater opportunity to apply the English language. Therefore, a sound soul elicits a sound language learning performance.

Lack of self-confidence. Participants 2 and 3 consistently disclosed their emotional tension through their lack of confidence. In particular, Participant 3 has reported, "...kulang pud pagsalig sa kaugalingon man ug mu-istorya ug Ininglis Ma'am...kulang bitaw sa kuan Ma'am sa self-confidence while mu-speech." (Transcript 3, Line 28-30). From this perspective, the participants admitted that having less confidence or self-doubt has led them to hold back once again in speaking. Doubting their potentials occurred when they knew that they lack the knowledge or the fundamentals of the second language like grammar, correct pronunciation, and familiarity with the meaning. This drove them to become more tense, conscious, and apprehensive. As a result, this provoked them to become withdrawn from using the English language in their expression.

Significantly, the result above also supported Krashen's (1982) theory of affective filter hypothesis and Thorndike's Law of Effect (1932). Krashen and Thorndike believed that second language acquisition has something to do with the emotional obstacles yielding within. The emotional state of the second language students is a vital element whether to strengthen or obstruct language learning, which means that when the anxiety of the ESL students is low, their self-confidence increases. Learning is not compromised. Therefore, it can be implied that the two elements, anxiety and self-confidence, were two interweaving factors that were strongly attached or attributed to the participants' success or failure in the second language education.

Feeling inferior. Oftentimes, participants 2, 3, 4, and 5 felt like they were less good or not as good as their other classmates in the English language speaking. Being silent and unable to participate in the classroom discussion or interaction has made them feel inferior to their classmates who were good speakers and interactive. This feeling of inferiority has made them even more anxious and made them looked down on themselves. Participant 2 affirmed this self-inferiority and same as true with the other participants (3, 4, and 5) by citing, "...ako mismo maglook down sa akung kaugalingon" (Transcript 2, Line 63-43). Nonetheless, not being able to comprehend the teaching materials and lecture-discussion, failure to participate in an in-class discussion, and being judged to be less competent or less intelligent have caused inferior identity among the second language students (Tavares, 2016). That is why the ESL students with inferior language proficiency consequently experienced inferior identity.

Theme 2: Physiological effects (trembling or shivering, difficulty in speaking, and stammering or stuttering)

Aside from their emotions, there were also physical or physiological effects that the participants experienced when asked to speak English.

Trembling / Shivering. All of the participants (1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) confirmed that they had experienced anxiety through some physiological symptoms, particularly trembling or shivering of the body and its body parts like the hands, mouth, and feet. As shared by Participant 4, “Kanang paistoryahon ko sa English sa tunga like pareha anang magreport, magkurog ko ana Ma’am...” (Transcript 4, Line 7-8). This had revealed the participants' abrupt physical reaction to their speaking anxiety in English. This echoes what Lababidi (2016) found that fifty-three percent (53%) of the higher education students admitted that they were trembling or shivering when they knew that they would be called to speak in English in class.

As a matter of fact, this gets worst when the participants were bound to express or communicate their thoughts on the spot. Most commonly, oral recitation, where they have to answer directly without giving them time to think and compose their thoughts, made the study's participants most anxious. Participants' narratives have affirmed this encounter by saying, “...pangutan-on bitaw ka...then dili pa ka ready...kanang ambush.” (Transcript 1, Line 58-59); and “...Labaw na gyud ko mabalaka if on the spot...” (Transcript 2, Line 75). In this connection, the participants already have the teacher would call this preconceived idea of what they would go through anytime their names to answer an unexpected question to which they are unprepared to respond.

As observed by the researcher and other faculty members handling English classes, in reporting tasks, even if students were given time to prepare and to outline their ideas, to practice and master their lines, yet during the delivery, they would start to panic and become unsettled. Other physiological reactions also include sweating. In fact, Participant 2 shared that even his or her body was sweating as a physiological manifestation of anxiety when speaking the language that he or she has little familiarity with.

Difficulty to Express. Furthermore, Participants 1 and 5 also disclosed that there were instances where they could not find words to express what they have in mind due to their emotional stress and other physiological reactions. As a result, they end up holding back from speaking and interacting using the second language. Their chances of practicing L2 or language production were suppressed and, in effect, challenged their language performance. Therefore, these anxious experiences have created drawbacks in their language learning education and achievement.

For Moneva et al. (2020), anxiety to L2 is inevitable for every ESL language learner. For him, as part of learning the language, anxiety is indispensable and predictable in the process. In fact, anxiety allowed them to feel inhibition, that they wanted to avoid any voluntary utterances in English and chose to remain silent instead (Abdullah & Rahman, 2017). More so, giving an oral presentation or any other oral activities like oral recitation and reporting tasks ranked as the highest stressor (Woodrow, 2006) to stir up students' anxiety.

Moreover, when the ESL students are overwhelmed with speaking anxiety, they were usually uncertain and doubtful in communicating with their peers (Chien-Tzu Liao, 2006). They often felt uninterested and did not wish to involve in speaking (Farooqui, 2007). They commonly gave short answers when asked questions in the second language (Condon & Sahd, 2013), and they typically escaped, avoided, and inhibited themselves from social interaction (Namaghi et al., 2015).

Difficulty in Speaking. Another manifestation that emerges from the data is their difficulty in speaking. When the participants could no longer handle their nervousness and their fear, especially in front of an on-the-spot speaking evaluation, they usually juggle with their speech, and in most cases, have difficulty in speaking during the verbal discourse. Participants 1 and 2 were transparent about their inability to get themselves to talk. Technically speaking, these participants could not find words to express themselves, or words were very difficult to come out of their mouth, resulting in them looking foolish and incompetent in front of the class. Furthermore, Participant 1 recognized that “If ever makulbaan man gani Ma’am... Instead naay nisulod sa imong utok, murag dili nimo ma speak...” (Transcript 1, Line 18-19) and Participant 2 acknowledged that “...Murag dili mugawas sa akung baba ang gusto nakong i-istorya tungod sa kahadlok.” (Transcript 2, Line 6-7). Eventually, these transparent anecdotes have dotted compromises in terms of their communicative expression and participation in class.

Stammering. Other participants had also assessed that they usually stammered or stuttered when they were overwhelmed with so much fear or anxiety. The individuals with repetition, prolongation demonstrate stuttering or stammering and blocks in speech, words, or sounds (Al Asiri, n.d.). These stubborn changes in their speech interfere with the flow of utterances to the extent that words get stuck in their mouth; that they were struggling with their sounds or word choice; using discourse fillers like ‘kanang,’ and ‘um’; and repetition and prolongation of sounds or words inevitably (SpeechEasy). Participant 3 and 5 testified, “...Murag mabulol naka kung mag-Ininglis. Murag dili naka ka speak ug ayo ug Inglis. Murag maputol-putol...dili naka katingog,” (Transcript 3, Line 10-11) and “Usahay lage Ma’am, magkanga-kanga. Usahay mayungit na. Dili na nagkaku-an ang mga words.” (Transcript 5, Line 59-60).

These experiences are related to what Craig (2000) postulated that the principal reason for these phenomena to occur is the debilitating influence of the concerned persons' emotional challenges, especially their anxiety. Sometimes, the participants just remain silent in their seats to avoid the case scenarios aforementioned above from taking place. To address this, teachers need to stimulate the students' motivation through a conducive learning environment. Aside from reinforcing students' inner motivation and interest in the second language, teachers can also provide external motivators to combat language apprehension and anxiety, as asserted by Mufidah (2017). This includes the teacher's good attitude (Lee et al., 2011) and a friendly and non-threatening learning climate to overcome negative criticism and impression in language learning (Khodadady & Khajavy, 2013).

Theme 3: Mental difficulties (having a mental block, tendency to forget what to say, difficulty to focus, to compose their thoughts, and to communicate what they have in mind)

Finally, mental obstacles were also exhibited by the participants congruent to their anxiety in speaking the English language in class. As they confessed, “If ever makulbaan man gani Ma’am, murag ma out of blank...Somewhat like murag dili naka makadumdom sa dapat nimong iistorya. Oo, dili gyud makadumdom. Mawala na.” (Transcript 1, Line 18-20). In other words, it is common among the participants to experience mental block, being unable to recall or retrieve information and prior ideas during the interaction. Having mental block further obstructed their thinking and ceased their train of thought. Eventually, although students have a lot of ideas in mind, because of their feeling of stress, nervousness, and anxiety (Tanveer, 2007), these experiences hampered their focus, and their ability to compose their thoughts, and communicate what they have in mind.

For Salend (2012), the feeling of extreme stress, anxiety, and discomfort are contributory variables to impede students in their performance in terms of their learning task, activity, or a test (Barrows et al., 2013 & Salend, 2012). In fact, Basco & Olea (2013) supported this claim when they reported that junior college students in a state university in Mandaluyong, Philippines experienced anxiety, and this has interfered with their academic focus.

Problem 2. What strategies do they usually use to cope with their English language speaking anxiety?

Theme 1: Using helpful tools (reading English books, consulting the dictionary for meaning, word usage, and the correct pronunciation)

Reading English books for leisure and academic purposes was a strategy that the participants (1, 2, and 5) utilized to cope with the phenomenon. They consistently admitted that in reading, they still got the chance to be accustomed to new vocabularies in English and be acquainted with how these terms were used in the sentences. They have encountered new ideas and points of view that they have used as references in their future classes. Indeed, reading English in printed and non-printed forms was a helpful activity used by the participants in order to minimize their perceived fear in the target language. Their self-directed reading was considered their independent learning, enabling them to choose any text based on their interest. As a result, this self-initiative has developed their motivation and enthusiasm since their learning preferences and interest was acknowledged.

Moreover, the dictionary use strategy was another activity employed by the participants in overcoming their speaking anxiety. They relied on English dictionaries in printed and online forms to consult unfamiliar and difficult words encountered when reading any selected texts in English. Participants 1, 2, and 4 reported that when they encountered an unaccustomed term, they usually took down notes and referred to the dictionary to look for the word meaning, the sentence usage, and the word pronunciation. Indeed, these two helpful tasks have assisted them so far in improving their confidence in L2. This strategy was also emphasized by Alhatmi (2019), who supported the use of dictionary strategy in consulting once unknown words for

their meaning, and this comparably fostered the opportunity for independent learning. Dictionary use was an effective mechanism for the ESL students to aid themselves in building their word knowledge and to facilitate their productive language use (Alhatmi, 2019).

In the same vein, Wilkins (1972, cited in Alhatmi, 2019) duly expressed, "Without grammar, very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed." That is why reading English materials and dictionary use strategy were two helpful tasks that have assisted the participants in becoming independent learners in L2. These strategies were employed due to accessibility and convenience. For them, these coping strategies were effective enough to deal with their English language speaking anxiety.

These strategies have further assisted the participants so far in improving their confidence in L2. When their confidence was shaped, confidence enabled them to challenge difficult situations (Murk, 2006) in an English language environment. This means that when confidence was developed among the participants, they become more willing to take risks in the communication process, whether they fail or gain skills in the process.

Theme 2: Putting their thoughts into writing (essays, recognition of the ideas that come to their minds)

Utilizing helpful tools has improved the participants' basic foundation in the target language, such as building one's word knowledge and understanding word meaning, sentence usage, and word pronunciation. Furthermore, this has facilitated their skills to put their thoughts into writing. The participants experienced great excitement to apply their new vocabularies in any writing task, particularly in composing an essay. Through this means, the chosen participants became capacitated to utilize their newfound words or terms into translating their messages in written discourse.

Writing has also given them opportunities to recognize the ideas they have in their mind from what they have read. Through this, they have channeled and recognized their acquired information and ideas into written expression. This strategy helped them in coping with their anxiety in L2, since they have expanded their vocabulary and retained new word meaning and ideas. As claimed by Participant 5, these coping strategies were found to be beneficial and advantageous, "...mabutang nako sa akung huna-huna pag nay essay-essay. Mu-feedback dayon sa akung huna-huna. Naa na koy idea." (Transcript 5, Line 104-105).

This finding echoes what Hedge (2003) asserted that ESL students were more likely to familiarize themselves with the target language structure through their writing engagement. Their writing competence was aided by their reading, which Celik (2019) considered a valuable coping mechanism for acquiring proficiency in L2. The more the students were exposed to reading, the more their writing skills were fostered and developed.

Theme 3: Overcoming shyness (practice speaking, trying to speak)

Applying helpful tools to address their English speaking anxiety has aided the participants in coping with and mitigate the consequences of their anxiety. These enabled them to overcome their shyness in speaking. The positive involvement of the participants in reading English books and in consulting the dictionary for word meaning and other language usage has resulted in them practicing speaking or trying to speak the English language in their classroom interaction. Participants 1, 2, and 5 have articulated positive feedback of overcoming shyness as the outcome when interviewed. Specifically, Participant 2 cited, "Mahinay-hinay na nako ug gawas ang mga words na English sa akung baba..." (Transcript 2, Line 115).

The narrative above reveals that when the shyness of the participants was mitigated, this consequently improved their capacity to speak and thus enhance their self-esteem. By establishing their language proficiency through utilizing helpful tools like reading English books and dictionary use strategy, this in return had reduced the amount of anxiety felt by the participants towards the English language. When confidence was established among them, they became more comfortable and at ease with the English language. Their confidence had made them more willing to practice speaking in any oral task, and they were trying to speak their thoughts instead of being silent, reserved, and unfriendly with the target language.

Theme 4: Request for constructive feedback

Across the data sets, constructive feedback was the participants' (Participants 1, 2, and 5) preference in handling errors in the target language. Undeniably, making mistakes or errors in the grammar and other areas of the second language has brought them so much concern. From their points of view, making mistakes was one of the key causes why they seemed to be uncomfortable and self-conscious in their interaction.

Literature emphasized that due to the fear of negative evaluation, ESL students who have experienced error correction did not consider it as an error treatment, yet they view it as a threat to their faces (Zhiping & Paramasivam, 2013). Park (2010) asserted that the teacher and the student's perception of correcting errors often mismatched in the classroom setup, leading to severe language disappointments. That is why teachers' and students' expectations of handling errors should meet. That teachers' constructive feedback was encouraged rather than interrupting and correcting the students directly even without finishing their attempts to communicate (Hashemi, 2011).

Participant 1 emphasized that one way to help him or her was through correcting errors in an approachable or constructive manner (Transcript 1, Line 118-120). The strict tone and approach affected his or her reaction whether to accept or ignore the feedback. For this reason, non-threatening feedbacking was what Participant 1 had recommended. This is indeed a constructive way for him/her. Additionally, for Participant 2, error treatment should be done exclusively by the teacher and the concerned student only (Transcript 2, Line 140-141). He or she preferred not to allow his or her classmates to hear the corrections made on his or her mistakes.

The students see constructive feedback to have a pivotal role in their development. That poorly done error correction and the strict attitude of the teachers would not aid the students in learning the second language at all. There is a need for constructive feedback to be done with proper timing, tone of voice, and content. In an English classroom, teachers' perception of error correction and students' expectations on how to treat their error must meet halfway. This was emphasized by Martin et al. (2017), who concluded that teachers should reinforce feedback to generate a positive feeling for the students.

This was supported by Lee et al. (2011), who said that one way to outsource external or extrinsic motivation from the learning environment is through facilitating a teacher's good attitude towards the students. When the teachers are manifesting overly strict behavior, this increases their speaking anxiety in L2 (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2018). One way to cope with this intimidating circumstance is through improving teachers' characteristics in a class by initiating the following: (a) tackling the feeling of anxiety with the ESL students; (b) discussing that making mistakes in L2 is well-taken and acknowledged in the classroom; (c) emphasizing assessment for learning and feedback (formative assessment) rather than an assessment of learning and feedback (summative assessment); and giving the feeling of success and achievement to the second language students (Hashemi, 2011).

Fontanilla (2016) reinforced this when he cited that understanding learners are crucial to an excellent and responsive English language education. Efforts must be provided in restructuring teaching instructions worth adaptable, befitting, and aligned to students' emotional states so that their affective domain is catered with the highest regard. Furthermore, when educators are reflecting on their instructional decisions, mindful of the appropriate learning climate to be set in the classroom, students' emotional and physiological endowment may be best tapped to facilitate the learning of any second language.

Essences

The participants' lived experiences on English speaking anxiety were driven by the essence of fear of negative evaluation. When the participants expressed themselves orally in English, they usually dealt with emotional tension, physiological effects, and mental difficulties as their primary reactions. These inevitable manifestations occurred due to their fear of being adversely evaluated by their peers, teachers, or audience as a whole.

Commonly, they got worried about what others might say or think about their language performance. They felt so cautious about others' perception of their grammar, pronunciation, word usage, and overall language proficiency. Oftentimes, they doubted their potential because of their inability to express and communicate. This prevented them from taking part in any classroom interaction, which made them felt so inferior. What usually occurred in an English language environment was, the ESL participants were more afraid of being judged to be less competent or less intelligent by their audience. Thus, it can be inferred that their fear of negative evaluation was the underlying cause of their speaking anxiety towards the English language.

But inherent in the participants are also the initiative through the use of helpful tools, expressing themselves in writing, overcoming their shyness, and requesting constructive feedback. The helpful tools utilized by the chosen participants have lessened their amount of anxiety or fear since these have improved their vocabulary knowledge, promoted information gain, and have increased comprehensible inputs in L2. That is why reading English books and consulting the dictionary has assisted them in developing motivation, confidence, and a good attitude towards the English language.

In addition, a huge amount of literature (Sokip, 2020; Batha et al., 2018; Prabhakaran & Yamat, 2017; Juhana, 2012; and Hashemi, 2011) argued that creating a learning atmosphere that is fun, supportive, and friendly can ease the feeling of anxiety among the ESL students. When the learning climate is non-threatening and comfortable, students become less anxious. In a friendly environment, students have the chance to maximize their full potential because they are now more willing to participate and interact with less worry and stress.

Finch (2001) cited that a learning environment to be less threatening and friendly promotes self-confidence. That a classroom climate which is favorable to the emotional condition of the ESL learners will sharply promote their extrinsic motivation. Therefore they become more willing to take risk in an English classroom. When motivation is established, second language learners now have more positive views about making mistakes and receiving teachers' corrections.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it may be inferred that the participants can overcome their anxiety by the implementation of appropriate strategies. Their anxiety, as manifested by emotional tension, physiological effects, and mental difficulties while they speak English were due to their fear of negative evaluation.

However, the exercise of their initiative by the use of helpful tools, putting their thoughts into writing, overcoming their shyness, and their request for constructive feedback enable them to cope with their English language speaking anxiety. This initiative and their open-mindedness have lessened their anxiety and have increased their confidence in developing their skills in learning English as a second language. Their self-directed strategies have improved their motivation, attitude, and self-confidence in English, which was in conformance with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982) that these chief emotional attributes: motivation, attitude, and self-confidence are strong determinants of success and achievement in second language education.

In consonance with the results of the study, the following recommendations were endorsed by the researcher; to wit:

- 1) That the School Administrators may consider equipping and training their educators with new trends in the area of teaching approaches and strategies that may adequately address the emotional needs of the 21st-century students;

- 2) That the teachers may diversify their teaching strategies and activities to cater to the different learning styles of the ESL students and structure a friendly and non-threatening learning environment to mitigate the amount of stress present in an English classroom. This can be done by the demonstration of teachers' good attitude; by increasing their sense of care, assistance, and scaffolding to the ESL learners; and by giving time for students to prepare, compose their thoughts, and construct their responses in their speaking assessments to reduce director on the spot verbal responses;
- 3) That students may consider utilizing helpful tools in building one's vocabulary knowledge, better comprehension, and information gain that are essential in developing second language proficiency; and
- 4) That future researcher may conduct a quasi-experimental study that will identify interventions on alleviating the English language speaking anxiety of most 21st-century students in their L2 production and expressions. Researchers may further explore the effects of teachers' good attitude, corrective feedback, and preparation on English language speaking anxiety among the ESL students in their inquiry.

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Biodata

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