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## SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS' LANGUAGE SPEAKING ANXIETY: BASES FOR ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed at determining the senior high school learners' language speaking anxiety. Based on the result of the study, emergent themes were drawn. The learners' language speaking anxieties included fear of negative evaluation, physical and emotional reactions, and classroom pressure and performance demands. And as observed by teachers were lack of confidence or self-esteem, lack of experience or exposure, physiological factors, behavioral or psychological reaction, and fear of making mistakes. Contributing factors experienced by learners were fear of being judged, lack of preparation and practice, low perceived language competence, and previous negative experiences. Contributing factors as observed by teachers were lack of language practice and fear of negative evaluation. To cope with challenges, learners employed relaxation and stress management, preparation and practice, and positive self talk and confidence building. Teachers' coping strategies to the observed learners' language anxieties were creating supportive classroom environment and using of interactive and engaging activities. Enhancement program were proposed as a result of the study.

**Keywords:** *Senior High School Learners, Language Speaking Anxiety, Enhancement Program*

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## INTRODUCTION

Developing oral proficiency is a fundamental aspect of mastering a new language, though it frequently serves as a major source of stress for students. Within the context of ESL education in the Philippines, learners are expected to navigate both scholarly discussions and everyday social interactions using English. However, many senior high school students struggle with language speaking anxiety. This affective factor negatively affects their confidence, performance, and class participation.

Language speaking anxiety—frequently identified as communication apprehension or foreign language anxiety—is characterized by feelings of unease, tension, or dread experienced when an individual communicates or anticipates communicating in a secondary language. This anxiety is common among language learners and may cause physical symptoms such as sweating or trembling, mental blocks, fear of making mistakes, self-consciousness, or reluctance to participate in conversations.

Communication is considered a vital skill that students are required to master, particularly given the essential role of English as a global language (Pardede, 2020). Its importance in international exchange makes it a primary focus for those seeking to participate in a connected world.

However, studies suggest that speaking anxiety can significantly undermine a student's verbal output and overall performance. This apprehension often triggers behavioral responses that interfere with a learner's capacity to communicate effectively and with confidence (Yoskapela et al., 2022; Kenoh, 2021).

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As a Senior High School teacher teaching Literature, Oral Communication, and other language classes for both Grade 11 and Grade 12 students at one of the private universities here in Iloilo City for nearly nine years, the researcher has personally observed the challenges students encounter with language speaking anxiety. Many learners, even when they know the correct answers or have good ideas, hesitate to speak in class. The researcher has witnessed how this anxiety can restrict participation, hinder fluency, and diminish students' willingness to engage in discussions or express their thoughts; encouraging these learners to speak up has often been difficult.

These experiences have highlighted the importance of understanding students' language speaking anxiety. The researcher noted numerous occasions where students experienced anxiety and distress while trying to communicate during English lessons. When prompted by the instructor to formulate questions, deliver presentations, or express their viewpoints in English, the students typically responded with silence. This sense of apprehension can interfere with their ability to explain concepts and perform well. Furthermore, such anxiety acts as a barrier that prevents them from fully comprehending the English language. With these incidents prevailing, there is a need to conduct this research.

This research aimed to discover the language speaking anxieties as experienced by the students and observed by the teachers, the factors that contribute to their anxieties, the strategies they use to overcome these anxieties, and the enhancement program that can be proposed as a result of the study.

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## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Methodology

This chapter details the study's methodological framework, encompassing the research design, the selection of participants, and the sampling approach. Furthermore, it explains the tools used for the investigation and their reliability, along with the specific protocols for gathering and interpreting the data.

### Research Method

This investigation utilized a qualitative research methodology, employing an in-depth interview guide as the primary tool for data collection. Rather than relying on numerical data, qualitative research focuses on the meanings participants assign to their experiences.

According to Sirisilla (2023), descriptive research method design is an effective approach for scientist ans researchers to collect detailed information about a specific group of phenomenon.

### Research Design

Employing a phenomenological framework, this study utilized observations and thorough interviews to collect data. The use of in-depth, open-ended interviews facilitated a discovery-based process, gathering rich

details that allowed the researcher to identify commonalities among the participants' experiences.

Aligned with the methodology outlined by Martinez (2021), this phenomenological research sought to explore and clarify how individuals personally experience a specific

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phenomenon. This approach aims to distill the core meaning of these lived experiences while ensuring the researcher maintains objectivity and avoids projecting personal assumptions onto the findings.

Thus, this study used such approach to identify the language speaking anxiety of senior high school learners as experienced by them and as observed by their teachers, the contributing factors, coping strategies, and its proposed enhancement program.

### Participants of the Study

This is referred to as a "selective strategy," in which particular settings, individuals, or tasks are intentionally picked to provide unique insights that are unavailable through other alternatives.

The participants in the study were ten (10) senior high school learners who exhibited language speaking anxiety, as determined through a pre-assessment standardized questionnaire adopted and modified from Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986) "Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale".

Total population of two (2) English teachers teaching English language classes, for a total of 12 participants in one of the private universities in Iloilo City.

Only learners who were chosen based on the result of the per-assessment were included as specific participants of the study. This sampling design ensures that the research focuses on participants who can provide rich, relevant, and meaningful information about their experiences with language speaking anxiety. To the study, the informants were assigned

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pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity as research participants. They were named Participant 1 and 2 for teachers; and as of learners named Participant 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12.

### Sampling Design

Participants for this investigation were chosen using a purposive sampling strategy to ensure specific selection criteria were met.

As for students, ten (10) participants were senior high school learners who exhibit language speaking anxiety, as determined through a pre-assessment standardized questionnaire adopted and modified from Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986) "Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale".

As for teachers, the total population of two (2) senior high school English teachers teaching English language classes for 5-10 years in one of the private universities in Iloilo city.

The selection of the participants in this study was based on the following criteria: as to learners:

(1) Currently enrolled as Grade 12 Learners in one of the universities in Iloilo City (2) Those who were identified as highly anxious when it comes to speaking based on the pre-assessment using a standardized questionnaire adopted and modified from Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, (1986) "Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale".

As to the Teachers: (1) English Teacher teaching English Classes. (2) Having 5-10 years teaching experience.

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## Research Instrument

The data collection tool employed for this research was a self-developed in-depth interview guide.

This guide featured a six-item questionnaire, specifically partitioned into three questions for educators and three for students, all designed to address the study's core objectives.

The structure of the interview guide consisted of two distinct sections. The first part gathered brief demographic profiles of the participants, while the second part presented the primary questions. These items centered on the personal experiences of both teachers and learners regarding speaking anxiety, identifying its underlying causes and the methods used to manage it.

## Validity of the Research Instrument

The self-constructed in-depth interview guide was presented to the research adviser for critical evaluation and subsequent refinement. This guide included questions aimed at examining participants' experiences in language speaking anxiety, factors contributed to it, and coping strategies they use to reduce or eradicate their speaking anxieties. Once the initial corrections were addressed, the interview guide was submitted to a panel of experts for content and face validation. The instrument was deemed valid following their review, and the researchers incorporated all recommended adjustments and refinements into the document. After the final version was re-submitted and approved by the panel, it was formatted and printed for use in the data collection process.

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## Data Gathering Procedures

The researcher adhered to the following protocols during the execution of this study. Once the questionnaire had been validated, it was formally encoded. Following this validation, a letter requesting permission to carry out the research was drafted and signed by the researcher, the thesis adviser, and the Dean of the Graduate School. The researcher then visited the school in person, coordinating with the principal's office to obtain the necessary approval to proceed with the investigation.

When permission was granted, the researcher conducted a pre-assessment to the learners, after which, the assessment was checked. The 10 learners that were considered as highly anxious based on the assessment were chosen as the ten (10) needed participants of the study.

After identifying the ten (10) participants, since learners are still minor; parent consent was given as a proper procedure stating that the purpose of the interview was for research purposes only and assured that all information gathered were treated with strict confidentiality, that the participants' name and personal identity was disclosed in any part of the research.

With the approval of the parent or guardian, the researcher conducted an in-dept interview in each participant. As to the teachers, the total population of English teacher teaching English classes also underwent individual interview with the researcher. After selecting the 12 participants, individual interviews were conducted in a quiet setting.

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Data collection was conducted between January and February 2026. The primary instruments were a survey questionnaire aimed at examining experiences in language speaking anxiety, factors contributed to it, and coping strategies they used to reduce or eradicate their speaking anxieties.

## Data Analyses

A thematic approach was employed to examine the collected data, allowing for the identification and detailed discussion of recurring themes within the participants' narratives. The interview data were processed through thematic analysis, a systematic qualitative technique used to recognize, evaluate, and interpret significant patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2023). This approach allowed the researcher to detect recurring themes, patterns, and insights related to the language speaking anxiety experienced by Senior High School learners and as observed by their teachers, contributing factors, and coping strategies they used to overcome such anxiety.

The identified themes were then used to summarize, interpret, and make sense of the data, providing bases for developing an enhancement speaking fluency program that addresses the language speaking anxiety of learners (Majumdar, 2024).

The qualitative data analysis was conducted using the six-phase reflexive thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke. This rigorous yet adaptable framework includes (1) data immersion through thorough transcript review, (2) the development of preliminary codes and the identification of significant patterns, (3) the grouping of codes into potential themes, (4) the assessment of themes for data alignment, (5) the formal definition and naming of

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themes to capture the participants' perspectives, and (6) the final report generation through narrative synthesis. This approach was chosen for its structured flexibility.

The process began with the collection and transcription of all participant feedback to identify emerging concepts. The researcher then coded the responses to isolate key factors related to the English speaking anxiety experienced by senior high school students and teachers. Because this framework is recursive, the researcher was able to revisit and adjust codes and themes throughout the process, ensuring the reliability and coherence of the final thematic structure (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The objective of this research was to investigate the nature of speaking anxiety, its underlying causes, and the management techniques used by senior high school students, drawing from both student experiences and teacher observations to inform a future enhancement program.

The study's participants included two English instructors and ten intentionally selected students from a private university in Iloilo City.

Adopting a qualitative approach, the study utilized an in-depth interview guide developed by the researcher. This instrument underwent a validity assessment, which confirmed it was appropriate and effective for data collection. The resulting data were then analyzed and interpreted through thematic analysis.

The study yielded the following results:

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The language speaking anxieties experienced by senior high school learners were fear of negative evaluation, physical and emotional reactions, and classroom pressure and performance demands.

Regarding the language speaking anxieties of senior high school learners as observed by their teachers, the themes identified were lack of confidence or self-esteem, lack of experience or exposure, physiological factors, behavioral or psychological reactions, and fear of making mistakes.

As to the factors that contribute to the language speaking anxieties of senior high school learners, the themes identified were: fear of being judged, lack of preparation and practice, low perceived language competence, and previous negative experiences. In terms of the factors that contributed to the language speaking anxieties of senior high school learners as observed by teachers, the themes identified were: lack of language practice and fear of negative evaluation.

With regard to how senior high school learners cope with the language speaking anxieties that they encounter, the themes identified were relaxation and stress management, preparation and practice, and positive self-talk and confidence building.

Also, in terms of how teachers cope with the observed language speaking anxieties of the senior high school learners, the following themes were identified: creating a supportive classroom environment and using interactive and engaging activities.

To assist students in lowering their speech-related nervousness and to provide English educators with the necessary tools and expertise to support them, a specialized initiative was

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developed. This proposal, titled the "ISOG Program: Interactive Speaking for Oral Growth," is an enhancement program specifically designed to mitigate language speaking anxiety.

## Conclusion

Drawing from the results of the research, the following insights were established:

Many senior high school learners experience language speaking anxiety when required to speak in English during class. This anxiety often arises from the fear of being negatively judged, criticized, or laughed at by teachers and classmates. Students commonly feel nervous, hesitant, and pressured, which may lead them to avoid participating in class activities despite knowing the correct answers. Physical and emotional responses, including trembling, sweating, a racing heartbeat, and mental blocks, further hinder their ability to communicate confidently. Classroom- related stress and expectations tied to performance also contribute to anxiety. Learners often feel pressured to answer correctly, meet teachers' standards, and maintain a good academic image, especially during recitations, oral reports, or group presentations.

Teachers observe similar signs of anxiety, noting that students often display low self-confidence, behavioral hesitation, physiological reactions, and a fear of making mistakes. Limited exposure to English and a lack of speaking practice further intensify their anxiety.

Regarding the factors that contribute to language speaking anxiety among Senior High School learners based on their own experiences, these include apprehension about being judged, insufficient preparation and practice, low self-perceived language ability, and prior negative experiences.

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From the teachers' perspective, the factors contributing to students' speaking anxiety were mainly limited opportunities for language practice and concerns about negative evaluation.

To cope with language speaking anxiety, learners use various strategies. These include relaxation and stress- reduction strategies, preparation and rehearsal, and encouraging self-talk to bolster confidence. Teachers support students by creating a safe and encouraging classroom environment and using interactive, engaging activities to reduce fear and promote participation.

Overall, both learners' personal experiences and teachers' observations highlight that language speaking anxiety is influenced by emotional, behavioral, and physiological factors, as well as classroom pressures, past experiences, and perceived language ability. Coping strategies and supportive teaching practices are essential for helping learners manage anxiety and communicate more effectively in English.

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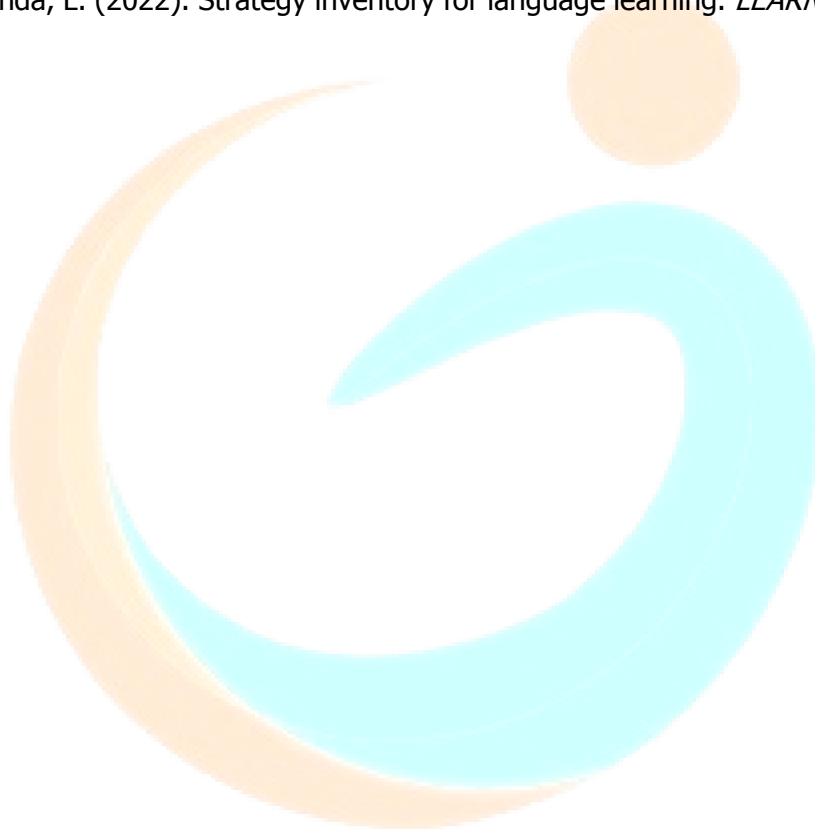


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