

The Interrelationships of Instructional Feedback Quality, Critical Audience Awareness, Speaking Anxiety and Public Speaking Skills

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Abstract

Effective public speaking is widely recognized as an essential 21st-century skill that enables learners to communicate ideas clearly, engage audiences, and participate actively in academic and social contexts, yet limited empirical evidence explains how cognitive, instructional, and affective factors interact to influence students' public speaking performance, particularly among junior high school learners. Anchored on Social Cognitive Theory, Scaffolding Theory, and Fear of Negative Evaluation Theory, this study examined the influence of critical audience awareness, instructional feedback quality, and speaking anxiety on the public speaking skills of Grade 10 students. Using a descriptive-correlational research design, the study involved 137 randomly selected students from a public secondary school in Cagayan de Oro City, determined through the Taro Yamane formula. Data were collected using three adapted questionnaires and a performance-based public speaking rubric, all of which underwent expert validation and pilot reliability testing. Descriptive statistics and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) were employed. Results indicate that critical audience awareness, instructional feedback quality, and speaking anxiety were all high, while public speaking skills remain generally fair across confidence, content, organization, language use, and delivery. The findings further revealed that instructional feedback quality significantly affects critical audience awareness and speaking anxiety. The study concludes that enhancing public speaking development is shaped by interacting instructional, cognitive, and affective conditions rather than by any single direct predictor. It is suggested to implement structured speaking programs that combine repeated oral performance, guide audience analysis, and immediate teacher feedback.

Keywords: Critical Audience Awareness, Instructional Feedback Quality, Public Speaking Skills, Speaking Anxiety, Structural Equation Modeling

1. Introduction

Public speaking is a vital academic skill because it enables students to express ideas clearly in classroom discussions, oral reports, and presentations while preparing them for future professional and social communication demands (Urena-Rodriguez et al., 2025). Despite its importance, many students continue to experience difficulty in speaking before an audience due to fear, low confidence, and limited instructional support (Grieve et al. (2021); Rafada & Madini, 2020). The present study examines how instructional feedback quality, critical audience awareness, and speaking anxiety are associated with students' public speaking skills, with the goal of clarifying how these factors operate together in classroom-based speaking performance.

Public speaking remains a persistent concern in educational settings because many students struggle to perform effectively in front of an audience. Recent evidence shows that public speaking anxiety continues to be widespread, with Ahmed et al. (2025) reporting moderate anxiety among 45% of students and high anxiety among 11.5%, while Gallego et al. (2022) found that half of their student participants reported high public speaking anxiety. In the Philippine context, Pike and Raymundo (2024) also established that classroom public speaking anxiety is prevalent among senior high school students and is closely related to oral language performance. Alongside anxiety, two other learner-related factors appear relevant: critical audience awareness, which helps students organize and adjust their message to listeners, and instructional feedback quality, which provides clear and specific guidance for improvement (Liu et al, 2021; Nadolski et al. (2021); Waluyo and Rofiah (2021)). These concerns make public speaking an important area of inquiry, particularly in school settings where students are regularly expected to present, explain, and justify ideas orally.

The literature presents public speaking skills as multidimensional, teachable, and observable rather than fixed abilities. Public speaking has been described in terms of topic and purpose, supporting material, organization, language use, verbal and nonverbal delivery, and audience adaptation (Blevins et al., 2025; Zhang et al. (2020); Bylkova et al., 2021). Studies also indicate that performance is shaped by language control, confidence, preparation, and repeated speaking opportunities, and that practice-based activities can improve fluency, coherence, grammar, pronunciation, content delivery, and

engagement (Pham et al. (2022); Phan et al. (2022); Al-Khresheh (2024); Urena-Rodriguez et al. (2025)). However, the literature also shows that students often struggle with vocabulary, grammar, fluency, confidence, and delivery, and that these dimensions interact rather than operate independently (Tsang (2020); Waluyo and Rofiah (2021); Dordevic (2025)). A second theme in the literature is that critical audience awareness is central to effective oral performance. It involves attention to who the listeners are, what they already know, what they need, and how they may respond to the message (Liu et al., 2021). Related studies show that audience awareness begins during planning through audience-centered content selection and framing, then continues during delivery through tone adjustment, engagement, questioning, and real-time response monitoring (Qiu and Jiang (2021); Chiang et al. (2022); Reinsch (2024)). This awareness can be strengthened through peer modeling, peer feedback, reflection, and exposure to real audiences, all of which are associated with better presentation performance and stronger adaptation to listeners (Liu et al. (2021); Skar et al. (2022); Lee and Liu (2022); Krocze & Mühlberger (2023)). A third theme concerns instructional feedback quality and speaking anxiety. Feedback is most valuable when it is clear, specific, understandable, applicable, and connected to future performance opportunities (Nadolski et al. (2021); Jin and Ruan (2023); Xu & Chen (2021); Liu and Aryadoust (2022); Brandmo and Gamlem (2025)). In speaking tasks, feedback is especially important because students process it together with confidence, anxiety, and audience-related judgments. At the same time, speaking anxiety is consistently described as an affective barrier involving fear of error, negative judgment, self-doubt, and discomfort during speaking tasks (Papi & Khajavy (2023); Demir and Kan (2025)). Studies further show that speaking anxiety remains common even among academically capable learners and is influenced by fear of negative evaluation, classroom pressure, and language-related concerns (Ahmed et al., 2025; Jugo, 2020; Aricheta et al., 2024).

Globally, the problem of public speaking remains evident as many students continue to experience moderate to high levels of anxiety when speaking before an audience (Ahmed et al., 2025; Gallego et al. (2022)). Nationally, Philippine-based evidence likewise confirms that public speaking anxiety is a real classroom concern and is associated with language performance and fear of evaluation (Pike and Raymundo (2024); Jugo, 2020; Aricheta et al., 2024). Locally, the present study is situated among Grade 10 students in a public school in Cagayan de Oro City during School Year 2025–2026, where public speaking was examined through classroom-based speeches and presentations assessed using teacher-created rubrics. This setting makes the inquiry context-specific and directly relevant to normal teaching environments where oral performance is a regular curricular demand.

This study is anchored in Social Cognitive Theory of Bandura (1986), Scaffolding Theory of Vygotsky (1978), and Fear of Negative Evaluation Theory of Watson and Friend (1969). Social Cognitive Theory explains public speaking performance as the product of interaction among environmental, personal, and behavioral factors, making instructional feedback quality the environmental factor, critical audience awareness and speaking anxiety the personal factors, and public speaking skills the behavioral outcome. This perspective is supported by Hao and Chen (2024), who linked self-efficacy and self-regulation with English oral presentation performance. Scaffolding Theory further explains how high-quality feedback can function as temporary instructional support that helps students identify standards, correct weaknesses, and improve content, language, confidence, and delivery (Wood et al. (1976); Jin and Ruan (2023)). Meanwhile, Fear of Negative Evaluation Theory provides a basis for including speaking anxiety, since students may fear judgment from teachers and peers during oral performance, a condition supported by Downing et al. (2020) and Gallego et al. (2022). Taken together, these theories justify a framework in which instructional feedback quality influences critical audience awareness and speaking anxiety, which in turn shape public speaking skills.

Although existing studies affirm the relevance of public speaking skills, audience awareness, feedback, and anxiety, the literature remains fragmented in explaining how these variables operate together within a single structured model. Prior studies have often examined these factors separately and suggest that they may influence speaking performance, but they do not sufficiently clarify their direct and indirect interrelationships (Liu et al., 2021; Xu et al., 2021; Urena-Rodriguez et al., 2025). The literature also indicates that public speaking has received less sustained conceptual and empirical attention than other areas of language learning (Hao & Chen, 2024), that audience adaptation remains underdefined in communication teaching (Reinsch Jr. (2024)), and that few studies have specifically examined how audience awareness can be developed to improve oral presentation effectiveness (Liu et al. (2021); Qiu and Jiang (2021)). In relation to feedback, recent studies likewise note uncertainty regarding which forms of teacher feedback are most beneficial and under what conditions they shape speaking outcomes most strongly (Brandmo and Gamlem (2025)). These gaps, together with limited local evidence on factors affecting students' public speaking, justify the need for a context-specific study that integrates instructional feedback quality, critical audience awareness, speaking anxiety, and public speaking skills in one explanatory framework.

This study primarily aligns with SDG 4 – Quality Education because it focuses on strengthening a core learner competency needed for meaningful participation in academic and social settings. The manuscript emphasizes that quality education is not limited to access, but also includes helping learners develop useful skills that allow them to communicate ideas, participate effectively, and succeed in authentic educational situations. By identifying factors that strengthen or hinder

public speaking, the study supports the development of clearer feedback practices, more responsive classroom strategies, and safer speaking environments for students.

The study contributes most directly to educational sustainability and institutional sustainability. In educational terms, it helps clarify how schools and teachers can strengthen students' communication competencies through better feedback, stronger audience awareness, and reduced speaking-related fear. In institutional terms, the findings can guide teaching strategies, school interventions, professional development, and communication skills policies that improve classroom support for learners. The study is also relevant to student well-being within learning environments because it recognizes that anxiety and evaluative pressure affect participation and performance. By informing more supportive and responsive oral communication practices, the study contributes to the long-term sustainability of learner development, instructional quality, and school-based communication education.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. This design was appropriate because the study sought to determine whether critical audience awareness, instructional feedback quality, and speaking anxiety were factors that could explain Grade 10 students' public speaking skills. As described in the manuscript, descriptive-correlational research examines naturally occurring relationships among variables without manipulating them, allowing the researcher to determine the magnitude and direction of such relationships in natural settings (Saro et al., 2023). In the study, critical audience awareness, instructional feedback quality, and speaking anxiety were treated as exogenous variables, while public speaking skills served as the endogenous variable. The design also supported the use of descriptive statistics, canonical correlation, multiple regression, and Structural Equation Modeling to examine both direct and indirect pathways among the variables.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in a public institution in Cagayan de Oro City during the School Year 2025–2026. The investigation was limited to one school and focused on classroom-based speaking tasks assessed in a normal teaching environment. The manuscript did not expand the locale beyond this institutional and geographic context, but it emphasized that the setting was appropriate because students regularly engaged in speeches, oral presentations, and other curriculum-based speaking activities.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents were Grade 10 students. They were chosen because they were frequently exposed to classroom-based speaking tasks such as oral recitations, class reporting, and school program participation, making them appropriate participants for examining factors related to public speaking skills. The study involved 137 learners, and all analyses were anchored on their measured levels of critical audience awareness, perceived instructional feedback quality, speaking anxiety, and public speaking skills.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample consisted of 137 Grade 10 students randomly selected from the target public institution in Cagayan de Oro City. Random sampling was employed using the Taro Yamane formula to ensure proper representation from the school population. The study was limited to Grade 10 only, excluding other grade levels whose developmental experiences might differ, and the sample was confined to one school during School Year 2025–2026.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study used three adapted questionnaires and one performance-based rubric. The first instrument measured critical audience awareness and focused on how students considered audience knowledge, monitored audience reactions, adjusted word choice, changed speed or tone when needed, and reflected on audience response to improve later presentations. The second instrument measured instructional feedback quality. It was based on Dawson et al. (2023), whose work on feedback literacy behavior emphasized how learners seek, understand, use, and respond to feedback. In this study, the items focused on students' perceptions of teacher feedback during speaking activities, particularly its transparency, concrete usefulness, improvement usefulness, timeliness, and supportive character. The third instrument measured speaking anxiety level and was adapted from Mortberg et al. (2018). Its items addressed fear of negative assessment, nervousness, physical tension, and difficulty concentrating before and during speaking tasks. The fourth instrument was a performance-based rubric used to assess public speaking skills through a short speech based on a given speaking prompt. Student performances were evaluated in terms of content, organization, language use, delivery, and confidence, and the rubric was aligned with existing oral communication and speech evaluation models used in communication studies. To establish validity, the questionnaires and rubric were submitted to a panel of experts in English and communication studies. Their feedback was incorporated to improve clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study constructs, supporting the content validity of the instruments

(Roebianto, 2023). A pilot test was then conducted among thirty (30) Grade 10 students who were not included in the final sample but shared similar characteristics with the target population. Internal consistency was examined through Cronbach's alpha, yielding 0.856 for critical audience awareness, 0.772 for instructional feedback quality, and 0.847 for speaking anxiety level. These values were interpreted as acceptable to good and were considered sufficient because values above 0.70 are regarded as acceptable in social science research (Izah, 2023). For the performance-based rubric, inter-rater reliability was established using Krippendorff's alpha with three raters. The resulting coefficients were 0.7621 for confidence, 0.7750 for content, 0.8898 for organization, 0.7633 for language use, and 0.8800 for delivery, indicating acceptable to high agreement and stable ratings (Limgomolvilas & Sukserm, 2025). The study also applied scoring guides in which the questionnaires used a five-point scale from Never to Always, while the public speaking rubric used a five-point scale from Poor to Outstanding.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher followed formal procedures and protocols during data collection. Ethical clearance was first secured from the LC Research Ethics Committee (REC) through the issuance of a research approval certificate. After this, a letter of intent was sent to the school principal of the research site. For minor participants, parents signed a letter of assent, while parents or legal guardians of participants of legal age were provided with a letter of consent. Once permission was granted, the researcher coordinated with the class adviser and distributed the questionnaires to the students in printed form. The data gathering process therefore proceeded only after institutional and participant-related permissions had been properly secured.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The study used descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to determine the levels of critical audience awareness, instructional feedback quality, speaking anxiety, and public speaking skills. Canonical correlation analysis was used to examine the association between the predictor variables and the dimensions of public speaking skills. Multiple regression analysis was applied to determine whether the independent variables significantly influenced public speaking skills. Structural Equation Modeling was employed to identify the model that best fit participants' public speaking skills and to evaluate the direct and indirect relationships among the study variables. The adequacy of the structural model was assessed using established fit indices, including Chi-square, CFI, TLI, GFI, AGFI, RMSEA, and SRMR.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical safeguards were integrated into the study through prior ethics clearance, formal school permission, and the use of assent and consent procedures for participants and their parents or legal guardians. These steps helped ensure that participation was properly authorized and that the conduct of the study followed approved research protocols during data collection.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Descriptive Findings on the Major Variables

3.1.1 Critical Audience Awareness

The participants demonstrated a high level of critical audience awareness, with an overall mean of 3.55 and a standard deviation of 0.63. Most respondents were in the High category (50.36%) and Moderate category (40.15%), while only a few were in the Very High, Low, and Very Low groups. The strongest indicators were post-speech reflection on audience reaction, adjustment of word choice for audience understanding, and critical reflection on what to change next time. The weakest indicators were pre-speech consideration of what the audience already knows, anticipation of possible questions or misunderstandings, and inclusion of examples or stories relevant to the audience. These results indicate that students are already capable of reflecting on audience response and adjusting language after speaking, but they are less consistent in applying audience analysis during the preparation stage. This suggests that their strengths are stronger in reflection and language adjustment than in advance planning for audience needs. Such a pattern supports the view that audience awareness improves communication quality when speakers actively adapt to listeners, yet inadequate pre-speech audience analysis may still reduce engagement and effectiveness (Le, 2025; Hao (2024); Cohen (2021); Murali et al. (2021); Bartolucci (2023)).

3.1.2 Instructional Feedback Quality

The participants assessed their teachers' instructional feedback quality as high, with an overall mean of 3.79 and a standard deviation of 0.57. Most respondents fell under the High category (64.23%), followed by Moderate (26.28%), Very High (6.57%), and Low (2.92%). The strongest indicators were applying the teacher's suggestions in the next speech, carefully reviewing teacher feedback, and seeing feedback as helpful rather than personal criticism. The least observed indicators were comfort in asking for clarification, teacher availability for follow-up discussion, and regular feedback beyond the end of the grading period. These findings show that students generally perceive teacher feedback as useful, supportive, and

worth applying, which reflects positive student receptivity to feedback. However, the weaker indicators suggest that feedback interaction and accessibility remain less developed, especially when students need clarification or more regular feedback exchanges. This means that while feedback practices are already functional, they can still be strengthened through more open communication and more consistent feedback opportunities, consistent with the argument that feedback becomes effective when learners can understand, access, and use it well (Hattie and Clarke (2020); Carless and Boud (2020); Winstone et al. (2021); Lakkala (2021); Carreno (2024)).

3.1.3 Speaking Anxiety

The participants exhibited a high level of speaking anxiety, with an overall mean of 3.97 and a standard deviation of 0.70. More than half were classified under the High category (55.47%), while 22.63% were Very High and 18.25% were Moderate. The most evident indicators were nervousness accompanied by rapid heartbeat, worry about making mistakes, and anxiety about being judged by the audience. The least evident indicators were anxiety despite preparation, stress from using English or another language, and anxiety caused by evaluation or grading. These findings suggest that students' speaking anxiety is driven more strongly by internal emotional and cognitive reactions than by external speaking conditions alone. Physiological tension and fear of judgment appear to be central features of their speaking experience, showing that anxiety affects both body and mind during oral performance. This aligns with prior work showing that public speaking anxiety is often manifested through emotional, physiological, and evaluative concerns in classroom communication (Gallego et al. (2022); Taschereau-Dumouchel et al. (2022); Rahmat (2022); Salihoglu (2024); Duru (2023); Murali et al. (2021); Ankori (2022)).

3.1.4 Public Speaking Skill in Terms of Confidence

The participants' public speaking skill in terms of confidence was at a fair level, with a mean of 2.09 and a standard deviation of 0.66. Most participants were categorized as Fair (48.18%) or Poor (35.77%), and none reached the very high categories. This shows that many students had difficulty maintaining self-assurance, eye contact, voice projection, and audience connection during speech delivery. This result indicates that confidence remains underdeveloped among the participants and continues to constrain oral performance. The dominance of fair and poor ratings suggests that hesitation, nervousness, and lack of control are visible during speaking tasks, and these may be reinforced by anxiety and fear of being judged. The pattern is consistent with the view that confidence is a major factor in oral communication and that emotional barriers may weaken performance-based speaking outcomes (Grieve et al. (2021); Puli Quito (2023); Su (2021); Kangwa et al. (2024); Zeb (2025)).

3.1.5 Public Speaking Skill in Terms of Content

The participants' public speaking skill in terms of content was also fair, with a mean of 2.27 and a standard deviation of 0.66. Most respondents were under the Fair category (59.12%) and Poor (22.63%), while only 18.25% reached the Good level. These findings show that many students struggled to structure ideas, explain them clearly, and provide sufficient support for their main points during speeches. This indicates that content development remains a major area of difficulty for the participants. Weaknesses in idea generation, planning, and evidence support reduce the quality and clarity of oral presentations, and emotional barriers such as low confidence and anxiety may further weaken students' ability to express ideas fully. These findings support previous claims that oral presentations suffer when students have difficulty developing clear, meaningful, and well-supported content (Chavula et al. (2024); Bean and Melzer (2021); Archbell and Coplan (2022)).

3.1.6 Public Speaking Skill in Terms of Organization

In terms of organization, participants likewise obtained a fair level, with a mean of 2.04 and a standard deviation of 0.67. Most were rated Fair (56.20%) and Poor (32.85%), while only 10.95% reached the Good level. This shows that many students had difficulty arranging ideas logically, maintaining coherence, and producing a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. These results suggest that organization is a major weakness in students' public speaking performance. Disorganized thinking, weak sequencing, and interrupted flow reduce message clarity and overall effectiveness. The findings further imply that both cognitive and emotional factors contribute to this weakness, since nervousness and low confidence may divide attention between managing anxiety and structuring the speech itself (Simpson (2025); Mardiningrum and Ramadhani (2022); Bean and Melzer (2021); Archbell and Coplan (2022); Dansieh (2021)).

3.1.7 Public Speaking Skill in Terms of Language Use

The participants' public speaking skill in terms of language use was also fair, with a mean of 2.03 and a standard deviation of 0.65. Most respondents were categorized as Fair (55.47%) and Poor (33.58%), while only 10.95% were at the Good level. This suggests that many students had difficulty choosing appropriate words, producing grammatically correct sentences, and expressing their ideas clearly during oral performance. This finding indicates that language use remains a substantial challenge in public speaking, particularly in achieving clarity, accuracy, and audience comprehensibility. The result also suggests that language difficulties are not purely linguistic, since anxiety and communication apprehension may interfere with word retrieval and sentence production during speaking tasks. This interpretation is supported by literature

emphasizing that oral communication requires strong language ability and that anxiety may weaken language performance in presentations (Mardiningrum and Ramadhani (2022); Dewan and Sharma (2025); Chahrazad and Kamel (2022); Amiri and Puteh (2021)).

3.1.8 Public Speaking Skill in Terms of Delivery

In terms of delivery, the participants again obtained a **fair** level, with a mean of 1.96 and a standard deviation of 0.60. This was the lowest mean among the five dimensions of public speaking skills, indicating that delivery posed a particularly serious difficulty for the participants. This result implies that students had notable difficulty in vocal quality, pacing, expression, and other observable delivery behaviors during speech performance. Since delivery is the most visible aspect of public speaking, weakness in this area likely reflects the combined influence of low confidence, anxiety, and insufficient practice. The finding is consistent with the literature emphasizing that effective oral communication depends not only on message quality but also on performance quality, especially in delivery behaviors (Blevins et al., 2025; Zhang et al. (2020); Tsang (2020); Urena-Rodriguez et al. (2025); Al-Khresheh (2024)).

3.2 Structural Equation Modeling and Best-Fit Model

3.2.1 Model 1

Model 1 demonstrated an acceptable to excellent fit to the data, with $Cmin/df = 1.803$, $CFI = 0.974$, $SRMR = 0.038$, $RMSEA = 0.077$, and $PCLOSE = 0.147$. These results indicate that Model 1 was already a reasonably good structural representation of the variables. However, the model showed only weak explanatory strength for some direct paths, including the small correlation between critical audience awareness and speaking anxiety ($r = 0.16$) and the almost negligible direct effect of speaking anxiety on public speaking skills ($r = 0.04$). The discussion of Model 1 suggests that although the structure was acceptable, it did not sufficiently demonstrate strong direct predictive effects of the major variables on public speaking skills. The measurement structure of public speaking skills appeared stronger than the direct structural effects of the three predictors. This implies that awareness, feedback, and anxiety may belong within the overall process of speaking development, but not all of them function as strong direct determinants of actual public speaking performance. This interpretation is supported by the view that meaningful speaking development requires practice-based and supportive instructional conditions (Irons and Elkington (2021); Hsu and Goldsmith, (2021)).

3.2.2 Model 2

Model 2 showed a stronger fit than Model 1, with $Cmin/df = 0.899$, $CFI = 1.000$, $SRMR = 0.030$, $RMSEA = 0.000$, and $PCLOSE = 0.844$. In this model, instructional feedback quality functioned as the exogenous construct, while critical audience awareness and speaking anxiety served as intervening constructs, and public speaking skills were the final endogenous construct. The strongest path was from instructional feedback quality to critical audience awareness ($\beta = 0.69$), followed by the path from instructional feedback quality to speaking anxiety ($\beta = 0.34$). In contrast, the direct effects of critical audience awareness on public speaking skills ($\beta = 0.15$), speaking anxiety on public speaking skills ($\beta = 0.04$), and critical audience awareness on speaking anxiety ($\beta = -0.07$) were weak. The regression weights further showed that instructional feedback quality significantly predicted critical audience awareness (estimate = .756, $p < .001$) and speaking anxiety (estimate = .416, $p = .003$), while critical audience awareness (estimate = .114, $p = .091$) and speaking anxiety (estimate = .028, $p = .642$) did not significantly predict public speaking skills. These findings indicate that instructional feedback quality plays a more substantial role in shaping students' internal speaking-related conditions than in directly improving observable public speaking performance. In other words, feedback appears to influence how students think about their audience and how they experience anxiety, but these internal processes do not immediately translate into stronger performance in confidence, content, organization, language use, and delivery. This interpretation is consistent with Social Cognitive Theory and Scaffolding Theory, which explain how instructional input may first affect cognitive and affective processes before influencing observable behavior, and it also aligns with Fear of Negative Evaluation Theory in explaining why anxiety remains present even when its direct effect on performance is weak (Liu et al. (2021); Liu & Aryadoust, 2024; Irons and Elkington (2021); Maher et al. (2022)).

3.2.3 Comparative Evaluation of Models

Initial canonical correlation and multiple regression analyses revealed no significant direct relationship between the predictor variables and public speaking skills. The canonical correlation yielded one function with $R_c = .212$, eigenvalue = .047, Wilks' $\lambda = .955$, $F = 1.239$, and $p = .295$, while the regression analysis was likewise non-significant, with $R = .161$, $R^2 = .026$, adjusted $R^2 = .004$, $F = 1.19$, and $p = .318$. These findings indicate that critical audience awareness, instructional feedback quality, and speaking anxiety did not directly predict public speaking skills when tested using conventional multivariate procedures. In view of this, Structural Equation Modeling was applied to determine whether a more integrated and theoretically grounded model could better explain the relationships among the variables. Both structural models satisfied the recommended cut-off criteria, but Model 2 consistently produced stronger fit indices than Model 1. Model 1 obtained $Cmin/df = 1.803$, $CFI = 0.974$, $SRMR = 0.038$, $RMSEA = 0.077$, and $PCLOSE = 0.147$, while Model 2 obtained $Cmin/df = 0.899$, $CFI = 1.000$, $SRMR = 0.030$, $RMSEA = 0.000$, and $PCLOSE = 0.844$. Thus, Model 2 was identified as the best-fitting model for participants' public speaking skills. The comparison confirms that public speaking skills are

better explained through an integrated model in which instructional feedback quality operates as an initial instructional factor that influences audience awareness and speaking anxiety, and only indirectly contributes to speaking performance. The stronger fit of Model 2 supports the theoretical position of the study that public speaking performance is best understood as the product of interconnected instructional, cognitive, and emotional processes rather than as the direct effect of any single variable. In practical terms, this means that improving public speaking requires not only good feedback, but also structured practice, audience-focused preparation, and opportunities to strengthen actual speaking performance dimensions, especially organization, confidence, and delivery (Bandura, 1986; Ding et al., 2025).

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concludes that critical audience awareness, although evident among the participants, is better understood as an enabling cognitive condition rather than a direct basis for strong public speaking performance; instructional feedback quality serves as a meaningful and supportive formative input that shapes students' preparation, reaction, and adaptation more than their immediate speaking output; speaking anxiety remains a significant emotional barrier in public speaking classrooms; and the generally fair level of public speaking skills across confidence, content, organization, language use, and delivery indicates the need for more intensive, structured, and sustained performance-based development. Overall, public speaking performance is best understood as the result of interconnected instructional, cognitive, and affective conditions rather than any single direct factor, consistent with the Social Cognitive Theory.

Based on the conclusions of the study, students should be given direct and repeated speaking practice and more opportunities to participate in formal speaking activities such as presentations and recitations; English teachers should provide step-by-step instruction on key speaking components, regular and high-quality feedback, regular practice sessions on speaking fundamentals, and strategies such as video recording, self-reflection, and peer feedback; school administrators should provide professional training for teachers, focus on rubrics, assessment, and scaffolded speaking activities, and prioritize instructional design with repeated speaking practice; and future researchers are encouraged to examine additional variables, use larger and more diverse samples, and apply mixed-methods approaches for deeper understanding of public speaking skills.

The study was limited to 137 Grade 10 students from one public school in Cagayan de Oro City during School Year 2025–2026 and focused only on classroom-based public speaking tasks assessed through survey questionnaires and performance assessments. It did not include other grade levels, other schools, debates, casual conversations, extracurricular speaking events, extended periods of data collection, or external factors such as previous public speaking experience, family variables, and socio-economic status, and the instruments could not fully capture the internal emotional processes underlying public speaking performance.

Compliance with ethical standards

This study complied with institutional ethical standards and was approved by the LC Research Ethics Committee (REC). Participation was voluntary, with assent and consent procedures properly observed, and confidentiality was protected through anonymization, coding, and secure data storage. A possible conflict of interest due to the researcher's prior teaching relationship with some participants was disclosed and managed through neutral administration and blinded evaluation, and all reported outputs remained the responsibility of the researcher.

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