

English-Speaking Anxiety and Performance among Senior High School Learners

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between English-speaking anxiety and English-speaking performance among Senior High School learners. Anchored on Foreign Language Anxiety Theory, MacIntyre and Gardner's Processing Model of Language Anxiety, Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, and Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System, the study focused on communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety as dimensions of English-speaking anxiety. A descriptive-correlational research design was used. Data were gathered from Senior High School learners using an adapted 15-item Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale and learners' English subject grades in Effective Communication. Mean, standard deviation, and Pearson product-moment correlation was used to analyze the data. Findings showed that learners experienced a very high level of English-speaking anxiety, with an overall mean of 3.35. Communication apprehension recorded the highest mean of 3.37, followed by fear of negative evaluation at 3.35 and test anxiety at 3.34. Despite this, learners showed high English-speaking performance, with a mean grade of 89.50. Correlation results revealed a significant moderate negative relationship between English-speaking anxiety and performance, $r = -0.521$, $p = 0.023$, indicating that higher anxiety is associated with lower performance. The study concludes that English-speaking anxiety is an important affective factor influencing learners' confidence, participation, and communicative competence. It recommends supportive learning environments, learner-centered instruction, constructive feedback, language enrichment activities, and further studies on related variables and interventions. The study supports SDG 4 – Quality Education, SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being, SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, and SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals. Its sustainability impact lies in promoting educational, institutional, socio-economic, and learner well-being sustainability through evidence-based strategies for improving English communication.

Keywords: Communication Apprehension, English-Speaking Anxiety, English-Speaking Performance, Foreign Language Classroom, Anxiety Scale, Test Anxiety

1. Introduction

English proficiency is essential for academic success, career preparation, and effective communication, especially in the Philippines where English is an official language and a common medium of instruction. Despite sustained exposure to English instruction, many Senior High School learners continue to struggle with oral communication because of English-speaking anxiety, which involves fear, nervousness, and apprehension when speaking in a second language. This study examines English-speaking anxiety among Senior High School learners, focusing on communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety, and determines its relationship with learners' English-speaking performance.

In school settings, many learners hesitate, avoid participation, or show discomfort during English class discussions, recitations, presentations, and other speaking tasks. Although students may possess vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, anxiety can prevent them from using these skills effectively. Factors such as fear of mistakes, fear of negative evaluation from teachers and peers, limited speaking opportunities, and low self-confidence contribute to this difficulty. This concern is especially relevant among Senior High School learners, who are expected to demonstrate higher communicative competence in preparation for higher education and future employment. When anxiety remains unaddressed, learners may underperform, avoid speaking opportunities, and experience reduced motivation and confidence in English communication.

The literature consistently identifies foreign language anxiety as a major affective factor in language learning. Foreign language anxiety is a situation-specific form of anxiety that occurs in language learning contexts and is distinct from general anxiety because it is tied to speaking, listening, classroom interaction, and second-language performance. Speaking is often described as one of the most anxiety-inducing language skills because it requires real-time processing, spontaneous production, and exposure to evaluation. Zuhri et al. (2023) explained that speaking anxiety often results in reduced participation, low confidence, and poor communication performance among learners. The major dimensions of language anxiety are communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Communication apprehension involves fear or nervousness in oral interaction; fear of negative evaluation refers to concern over being judged or criticized;

and test anxiety involves pressure during graded or evaluative speaking tasks. These dimensions explain why learners may struggle to perform orally even when they have sufficient linguistic knowledge. Recent literature also emphasizes the cognitive effects of anxiety. Hajiyeveva (2024) noted that anxiety can disrupt learners' ability to process input, organize thoughts, and produce language accurately. Abdullah et al. (2022) found that language anxiety negatively affects learners' performance, particularly in speaking tasks. Andrea (2022) likewise confirmed that anxiety adversely affects students' achievement levels and overall learning outcomes. Internal and external factors also shape speaking anxiety. Nugroho et al. (2023) identified self-confidence, motivation, language proficiency, classroom environment, teaching strategies, and peer interaction as contributing factors. Teacher-centered instruction and highly evaluative classroom settings may increase anxiety, while supportive and interactive learning environments may reduce it. Khalik (2025) further highlighted the potential of technology-supported preparation, such as chatbot-assisted learning, in reducing anxiety and improving confidence. Simbolon (2025) suggested that continuous exposure and supportive learning experiences can help learners manage anxiety and improve performance.

In the Philippine educational context, English is integrated into the curriculum and used as a medium of instruction, yet many learners still experience difficulty speaking confidently in English. This gap shows that language instruction must address not only grammar and vocabulary but also the emotional and psychological factors that influence oral performance. At the broader level, studies show that English-speaking anxiety affects learners across different educational contexts. Cabansag et al. (2025) found that English-speaking anxiety exists at a high level among Senior High School students and significantly affects grammar, pronunciation, and meaning construction. Quthbi (2023) reported that most students experience anxiety when speaking English because of communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Zou (2024) similarly found that Senior High School students experience relatively high levels of speaking anxiety, while Wang (2023) identified lack of speaking opportunities, low language proficiency, and unfamiliarity with speaking topics as key contributing factors. Empirical studies further confirm the relevance of this issue. Ruin (2024) found that secondary school students experienced varying levels of speaking anxiety influenced by confidence, fear of mistakes, and classroom environment. Borisova et al. in 2024 found that second language speaking anxiety significantly affects speaking performance, communication strategies, and proficiency. Crosby in 2025 confirmed the usefulness of FLCAS in measuring anxiety and emphasized that anxiety varies depending on learners' experiences and confidence. Le (2024) identified fear of negative evaluation, lack of preparation, unfamiliar speaking tasks, classroom practices, and teacher behavior as major triggers. Razkane et al. (2026) emphasized that anxiety hinders willingness to communicate and negatively affects performance, while Jabbar (2025) noted that language anxiety appears through hesitation, stuttering, and code-switching and can impede academic performance.

This study is anchored on the Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) Theory, which explains anxiety as a situation-specific construct in language learning. It identifies communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation as central dimensions of language anxiety. These dimensions are directly related to the experiences of Senior High School learners during oral recitations, presentations, and performance-based assessments. The study is also supported by MacIntyre and Gardner's Processing Model of Language Anxiety, which explains that anxiety can interfere with input, processing, and output stages of language use. This model clarifies why learners may struggle to organize ideas and produce accurate spoken responses even when they possess adequate vocabulary and grammar knowledge. Stephen Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis also supports the study by explaining how anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence influence language acquisition. A high affective filter caused by anxiety can prevent language input from being processed effectively, while a low affective filter supports acquisition and performance. Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System further explains the role of self-perception and motivation in language learning. When learners experience a gap between their actual self and their ideal L2 self, anxiety may arise, particularly in speaking situations where performance is visible to others. The conceptual basis of the study treats English-speaking anxiety as the independent variable with three dimensions: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. English-speaking performance is the dependent variable and is measured through learners' English subject grade. The framework assumes that higher levels of anxiety may reduce participation, increase hesitation, and negatively affect speaking performance.

Although many studies have examined foreign language anxiety, much of the existing research focuses on university students, leaving a need for more studies involving Senior High School learners, particularly in the Philippine context. The reviewed studies confirm that speaking anxiety affects communication, participation, and academic achievement, but local evidence is still needed to understand how this issue appears among Grade 11 learners in public secondary schools.

This study addresses that gap by examining the level of English-speaking anxiety among Senior High School learners in terms of communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. It also determines the learners' English-speaking performance based on their English subject grade and tests whether a significant relationship exists between anxiety and performance. The study is justified by the need to help teachers and schools design supportive interventions that reduce anxiety, strengthen confidence, and improve learners' communicative competence.

This study aligns most directly with SDG 4 – Quality Education because it focuses on improving English-speaking performance, classroom participation, and communicative competence among Senior High School learners. By identifying how anxiety affects speaking performance, the study supports efforts to create more inclusive, responsive, and learner-centered English instruction. The study also relates to SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being because it addresses anxiety as an emotional and psychological factor affecting learners' school experience. Although the study is educational in scope, its concern with confidence, emotional well-being, and anxiety reduction connects language learning with learner welfare. It also supports SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth in a limited but relevant way, since English communication skills are important for higher education, employability, and future professional interaction. Strengthening learners' speaking confidence can contribute to better preparation for academic and career pathways. SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals is also relevant because the study identifies DepEd, schools, teachers, learners, local government units, and future researchers as stakeholders who can use the findings to support educational programs, language interventions, and evidence-based improvements in instruction.

The study contributes to educational sustainability by supporting improved English instruction, learner-centered classroom practices, and evidence-based interventions that address both language performance and affective barriers. It emphasizes that sustainable learning requires attention not only to curriculum content but also to learners' confidence, participation, and emotional readiness. It also contributes to public health and well-being sustainability within the school context by recognizing anxiety as a factor that can affect students' academic participation and communication behavior. Reducing English-speaking anxiety may support healthier classroom experiences and improve learners' willingness to engage. The study has socio-economic sustainability relevance because English-speaking competence can support students' future academic mobility, employability, and professional communication. It also contributes to institutional sustainability by providing DepEd, schools, teachers, and local education stakeholders with data that may guide programs, policies, and interventions for improving communicative competence among learners.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive–correlational research design to determine the level of English-speaking anxiety among Senior High School learners and examine its relationship with their English-speaking performance. This design was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to describe existing conditions and measure the degree of association between variables without manipulating them.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in selected public secondary schools offering the Senior High School curriculum under the supervision of the Schools Division Office Nueva Vizcaya, of the Department of Education. These schools implemented the K to 12 Basic Education Program and provided formal English instruction as part of the curriculum. The setting was suitable because learners regularly engaged in English-speaking activities such as oral recitations, presentations, and class discussions. Specifically, the study involved enrolled Senior High School respondents from Bintawan National High School in Villaverde, Nueva Vizcaya.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents were Senior High School students enrolled at Bintawan National High School, Villaverde, Nueva Vizcaya. They were selected because they were exposed to English as a subject and were required to participate in speaking-related academic tasks, making them appropriate participants for examining English-speaking anxiety and performance.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The methodology section identifies the respondents as Senior High School learners but does not provide a detailed separate discussion of the sampling procedure. The study focused on learners who were enrolled during the conduct of the research and whose English-speaking anxiety and English subject performance could be measured through the research instrument and official school records.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study used a two-part research instrument. The first part gathered data on learners' English-speaking performance through their grade in Effective Communication, which was obtained from official school records with permission from school authorities. This grade served as the quantitative indicator of learners' performance in speaking-related tasks such as oral presentations, recitations, and class participation. The second part measured English-speaking anxiety using a 15-item questionnaire adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. The questionnaire covered three dimensions: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety, with five items assigned to each dimension. Responses were measured using a four-point Likert scale and averaged to

determine the learners' level of English-speaking anxiety. The instrument underwent validation and pilot testing before data collection to ensure reliability and suitability for the respondents.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher first secured official permission from the Schools Division Superintendent of Nueva Vizcaya. After approval, coordination was made with school heads to schedule the survey administration without disrupting regular classes. The respondents were oriented about the purpose, scope, and significance of the study, and they were given instructions on how to answer the questionnaire accurately. The questionnaire was personally distributed to the learner-respondents. Sufficient time was provided for completion, and the researcher remained present during administration to answer questions and ensure that completed questionnaires were collected and checked for completeness. The learners' English subject grades were then obtained from official school records with proper authorization.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and correlational statistics. Mean and standard deviation were used to summarize the learners' English-speaking anxiety and English-speaking performance. English-speaking anxiety was interpreted using mean ranges from very low to very high, while English-speaking performance was interpreted based on grade ranges from did not meet expectation to outstanding. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the degree and direction of the relationship between English-speaking anxiety and English-speaking performance. This statistical test was appropriate because the study aimed to identify whether a significant relationship existed between the two variables.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was secured, and respondents' privacy and confidentiality were protected. The gathered data were reported in aggregate form to safeguard individual identities, and the results were intended to support evidence-based improvements in instructional practices.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Main Findings on English-Speaking Anxiety and Performance

3.1.1 Level of English-Speaking Anxiety

The findings showed that Senior High School learners experienced a very high level of English-speaking anxiety, with an overall mean of 3.35. Among the three dimensions, communication apprehension recorded the highest mean of 3.37, indicating that learners were especially anxious when speaking English in front of classmates, answering questions, or speaking without preparation. Fear of negative evaluation followed with a mean of 3.35, showing that learners were strongly concerned about making mistakes, being laughed at, or being judged by others. Test anxiety also registered a very high mean of 3.34, suggesting that learners felt nervous and pressured during oral examinations and graded English-speaking tasks. These findings indicate that English-speaking anxiety is a major affective barrier among the respondents. High communication apprehension may limit learners' participation in class discussions, while fear of negative evaluation may reduce confidence and increase hesitation during speaking activities. Test anxiety may further affect performance by creating pressure during formal assessments. The results emphasize the need for supportive classroom practices, constructive feedback, collaborative activities, and sufficient preparation time to help reduce anxiety and improve learners' confidence in English communication.

3.1.2 Level of English-Speaking Performance

The learners generally demonstrated a high level of English-speaking performance, with a mean grade of 89.50 and a standard deviation of 3.77. Most respondents achieved outstanding performance, as 32 out of 50 learners, or 64 percent, obtained grades of 90 and above. Twelve learners, or 24 percent, reached the very satisfactory level, while five learners, or 10 percent, were rated satisfactory. Only one learner, or 2 percent, fell within the fairly satisfactory range. These results suggest that despite experiencing very high English-speaking anxiety, the learners were still able to achieve commendable academic performance in English. The relatively low standard deviation shows that their grades were closely clustered around the mean, indicating consistency in performance. This may imply that learners possess adequate English knowledge and skills, although anxiety may still affect specific speaking experiences, participation, and confidence rather than completely preventing academic success.

3.1.3 Relationship Between English-Speaking Anxiety and English-Speaking Performance

The results revealed a significant moderate negative relationship between English-speaking anxiety and English-speaking performance, with a correlation coefficient of $r = -0.521$ and a p -value of 0.023. Since the p -value was lower than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that as learners' English-speaking anxiety increases, their English-speaking performance tends to decrease. This finding shows that anxiety is a meaningful factor influencing learners' performance, although it is not the only determinant. Even though the learners generally performed well, the

negative relationship indicates that they could potentially perform better if their anxiety were reduced. This result is supported by Abdullah et al. (2022), who found that language learning anxiety significantly affects learners' oral performance, with higher anxiety leading to poorer speaking outcomes. It also agrees with Cabansag et al. (2025), who reported a negative relationship between English language anxiety and students' academic performance. Similarly, Zuhri et al. (2022) emphasized that speaking anxiety negatively affects students' learning processes, particularly in oral communication tasks. Overall, the findings confirm that reducing English-speaking anxiety is important for improving learners' confidence, participation, and communicative competence.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concluded that English-speaking anxiety has a significant relationship with English-speaking performance among Senior High School learners. Learners experienced very high anxiety in communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety, yet generally attained very satisfactory to outstanding English performance. However, the moderate negative correlation between anxiety and performance indicates that higher anxiety is associated with lower speaking performance, confirming that anxiety remains an important affective factor influencing learners' confidence, participation, and communicative competence.

DepEd, schools, school heads, teachers, learners, and future researchers should work toward reducing English-speaking anxiety and strengthening communicative competence. DepEd should support curriculum-based programs and teacher training on anxiety-reducing strategies, while schools and school heads should promote supportive environments, language enrichment activities, and learner-centered instruction. Teachers should use interactive and collaborative strategies, provide constructive feedback, and maintain a non-threatening classroom atmosphere. Learners should actively participate in speaking activities and practice coping strategies, while future researchers should examine related variables such as motivation, self-efficacy, and teaching strategies, or conduct intervention-based studies in other contexts.

The study was limited to selected Grade 11 Senior High School learners and focused only on English-speaking anxiety and English-speaking performance as measured through an adapted FLCAS questionnaire and English subject grades. Since grades may reflect other language competencies beyond speaking, they may not fully capture specific speaking skills. The study was also limited to the conditions of the identified school year and educational setting, and because it used a descriptive–correlational design, it could determine relationships between variables but could not establish cause-and-effect conclusions.

Compliance with ethical standards

This study was conducted in accordance with institutional research standards and ethical procedures, with official permission secured from the appropriate school authorities before data collection. Participation of the Senior High School learners was voluntary, informed consent was observed, and all responses and academic records were treated with strict confidentiality and used only for research purposes. The identities of the respondents were protected, and the data were reported in aggregate form. The researcher acknowledges the guidance of the adviser, school officials, and respondents who contributed to the completion of the study. The researcher declares no conflict of interest, and copyright ownership of the thesis remains with the researcher and the institution in accordance with applicable academic policies.

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