

# **Experiences of Students toward Language Speaking Anxiety in Transitioning to Face-to-Face Classes: A Sequential Explanatory Study**

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**Abstract**— This sequential explanatory study was conducted in two distinct phases: a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase. In the initial phase, 295 Grade 11 HUMSS students completed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to measure their level of language speaking anxiety across three components: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation, as well as their overall level of language speaking anxiety. Statistical tools, including frequencies, percentages, and mean calculations, were used to analyze the data. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine participants to explore their lived experiences toward language speaking anxiety during the transition to face-to-face classes. Using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, five major categories with corresponding themes emerged: language speaking anxiety challenges, language speaking anxiety contributors, coping mechanisms for language speaking anxiety, language speaking motivation, and institutional support for language speaking anxiety. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings reveal that students experienced moderate levels of language speaking anxiety in communication apprehension and test anxiety, but a high level of anxiety in fear of negative evaluation. Overall, their language speaking anxiety was at a moderate level. Significantly, this study resulted in the creation of a Language Skill Development Plan aimed at monitoring and improving teachers' methods and approaches in language instruction.

**Keywords**— language speaking anxiety, FLCAS, language skill development plan.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Due to globalisation, international languages such as English become ever present in activities – requiring strong articulation to better express oneself, especially for the workforce. Moreover, English has become regarded as a prerequisite criterion for employment. Durga (2018) noted that employers constantly seek employees with strong verbal and written communication skills. Employees should be interactive and communicative in teamwork because companies have a multicultural and multilingual workforce (Anwer & Gill, 2020; Tran et al., 2022).

In the Philippines, 'The 1987 Policy on Bilingual Education,' a directive issued by the Department of Education, outlines the use of Filipino and English as the mediums of instruction and communication within the educational system (Department of Education, 1987). It is crucial to recognize that the demand to learn English, specifically how to speak it, stems from its adaptability, productivity, utility, and universality. However, Gatcho and Hajan (2019) asserted that language educators find teaching English daunting due to several factors, including students' anxiety when learning the target language.

In December 2019, CoViD-19, a novel coronavirus occurred in China and rapidly became a pandemic; spreading across the globe (Sohrabi et al., 2020). Due to the abrupt and drastic pedagogical changes brought about by the pandemic, students' anxiety about learning foreign languages, particularly English, intensified (Liu & Yuan, 2021; Valizadeh, 2021; Ying et al., 2021). Yusuf et al. (2022) examined how the COVID-19 pandemic affected students' use of English in online presentations. The findings revealed that students continue to struggle with linguistic issues like a limited vocabulary, pronunciation errors, poor grammar, and lack of self-confidence (Fitriani & Zulkarnain, 2019; Nisyakh, 2022). Additionally, psychological factors like shyness, anxiety, and nervousness make it difficult to speak English in online presentations (Noviyanti, 2022; Nur et al., 2021). Similar findings by Suwartono et al. (2020) showed that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students encounter five fundamental oral communication issues influenced by psychological factors, including lack of motivation, confidence, shyness, anxiety, and fear of making mistakes. These findings suggest that speaking issues extend beyond linguistic challenges and are significantly influenced by psychological factors (Nijat et al., 2019; Pratiwi, 2021; Qureshi, 2020).

Anxiety is one of the psychological factors EFL students face when communicating in English. This anxiety, known as foreign language anxiety (FLA), pertains to the fear and negative emotions associated with learning or using a language that is not one's native tongue (Woffindin, 2022). Over the past few decades, FLA has been recognized as a fear and negative emotional reaction when learning or using a second or foreign language (Hayasaki & Ryan, 2022; Zheng & Cheng, 2018). Many earlier studies have suggested definitions to better understand the concept of FLA. Despite the abundance of definitions, it is crucial to underscore that they are all based on the theory originally conceptualized by Horwitz et al. (1986), which introduced FLA as situation-specific anxiety caused by a particular situation or event (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Another significant contribution of Horwitz et al.'s model is the development of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which measures a learner's level of foreign language anxiety based on subjective feelings, perceptions, unfavorable attitudes toward foreign language classes, and avoidance behaviors (Horwitz et al., 1986). Given that speaking is the primary focus of the current study, it is essential to note that the FLCAS primarily addresses anxiety associated with learning to speak a foreign language (Gao, 2022; Nan & Haoda, 2020; Occhipinti, 2009).

Considering that FLA is defined as situation-specific anxiety triggered by a specific situation or event (Djafri & Wimbari, 2018), the context in which language anxiety is prevalent should also be taken into account. One specific situation where FLA has an unfavorable effect is during oral presentations (Bergquist, 2020; Kabigting & Nanud, 2020).

In the context of the Philippines' new curriculum, the Department of Education emphasizes meeting the needs of learners and ensures a holistic approach to learning the English language (Enderun Colleges, 2022; Cruz, 2019). One of the English-related courses designed to encourage students to perform oral presentations and participate in activities requiring them to speak in English is 'Oral Communication in Context.' This course aims to develop listening and speaking skills, along with strategies for effective communication in various situations, as outlined in the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum Guide (2013). In response to this need, the Senior High School (SHS) Program introduced the core subject of Oral Communication in Context for Grade 11 students. The new curriculum

allow students to select from three tracks (i.e., Academic; Technical-Vocational-Livelihood; and Sports and Arts) and go through immersion, giving them relevant exposure and real-world experience in their selected track (Philippine Qualifications Framework, n.d.).

One of the strands under the Academic Track is the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS). This strand focuses on strengthening a student's reading, writing, and speaking skills since people who choose this strand aspire to be members of a society that will interact with a large number of people (Miguel, 2021). In line with this, most subjects under this strand are concerned with communication, language, and speech (De Vera & De Vera, 2018; Rosalia, 2016). Students who enrolled in HUMSS are expected to be "excellent English speakers," so strong articulation must be honed as early as possible to prepare them for future studies or careers following graduation from High School. However, as previously discussed, FLA obstructs language learning and is regarded as a major concern in psychology and education (Horwitz, 2001). Therefore, it is imperative for researchers to investigate this phenomenon among students in this strand.

Eddraoui and Wirza (2019) investigated the speaking difficulties and anxiety levels experienced by Moroccan and Indonesian high school students, along with the causes of their anxiety. A Likert scale-based questionnaire revealed that Indonesian students had higher levels of English speaking anxiety compared to Moroccan students. The main causes of EFL speaking anxiety among these groups were pronunciation, fear of making mistakes, and fear of negative evaluation.

Lababidi (2016) carried out a study in a Higher Education Institution in the UAE to explore students' perceptions and experiences regarding FLA. The results showed that some participants reported moderate to high levels of anxiety in second language classrooms. Additionally, focus group interviews indicated that various factors could contribute to foreign language anxiety, including teacher qualities, pedagogical practices, fear of making mistakes, test-taking, and prior experience with learning an additional language (Cortez & Real, 2021; Drakulić, 2015).

In the Philippines, Labicane (2021) investigated foreign language anxiety experienced by Filipino learners in a remote learning setup. The findings showed that participants experienced the highest level of anxiety during speaking activities. However, fear of making mistakes and negative evaluation were evident across all four macro-skills. Participants also struggled to improve their skills due to intermittent internet access, limited resources, and minimal interaction with teachers and peers.

On the bright side, motivation is one of the most crucial and influential factors in the learning process (Filgona et al., 2020). Keblawi (2020) identified certain teacher practices likely to boost the motivation of Arab English learners. The findings reported that students prefer strategies promoting communicative language use over grammar or text-based learning. Furthermore, students claimed that using technology increased their interest in studying English (Cox, 2022; Putra, 2021). Restiana (2019) covered several ways students improve their English speaking skills, such as sharing with others, studying with peers, and thinking positively.

Scrutinizing all the information above, it is noteworthy that ample literature and research address language anxiety among learners. However, limited research specifically explores students' experiences with Language

Speaking Anxiety (LSA) in the Philippines, particularly among those in the HUMSS strand. The current study focuses on the HUMSS strand because, as aforementioned, they are more inclined towards communication and social endeavors. This strand also emphasizes sharpening students' reading, writing, and speaking skills (Ronquillo, 2017). Thus, enhancing these skills is crucial for them to establish effective communication with others.

After two years of implementing distance-learning due to the pandemic, Philippines' schools are expected to transition to limited face-to-face classes (Magsambol, 2022); inspiring the research to explore factors contributing to students' language speaking anxiety as the transition to face-to-face classes ensue.

Consequently, this conveys a framework emphasizing potential qualitative factors contributing to language speaking anxiety. An additional interest of this research is to identify motivational strategies to consider; and encouraging students to overcome their language speaking anxiety.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

This study determined the students' level of language speaking anxiety based on the three main FLCAS components, as well as their overall level of language speaking anxiety. Furthermore, by exploring the students' experiences, this undertaking aimed to develop educational or intervention programs to help students overcome language speaking anxiety.

Specifically, this study focused on these questions:

#### ***Phase 1: Quantitative Approach***

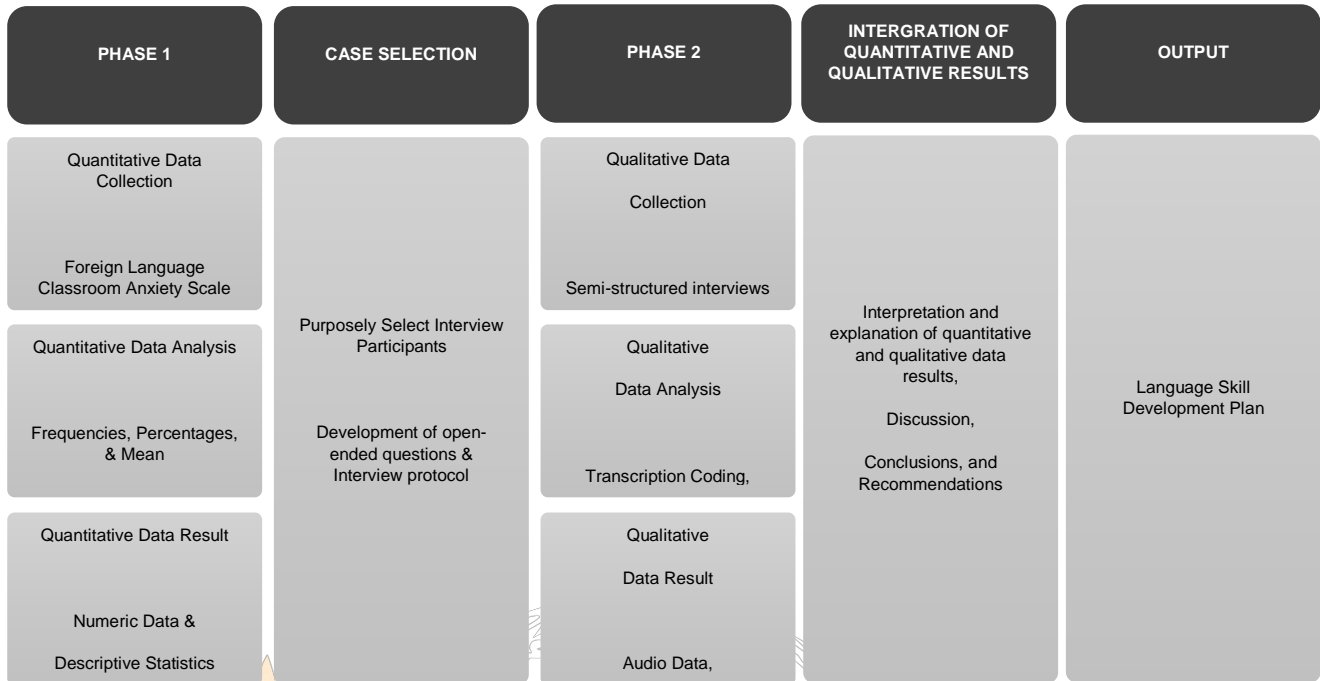
1. How may the participants level of language speaking anxiety be described according to:
  - a. communication apprehension
  - b. test anxiety
  - c. fear of negative evaluation
2. How may the participants be described in terms of their overall level of language speaking anxiety?

#### ***Phase 2: Qualitative Approach***

1. What are the participants' challenges toward language speaking anxiety in Oral Communication class?
2. What are the factors that contribute to the participants' anxiety in speaking the English language?
3. How do participants cope with the challenges they experience toward language speaking anxiety?
4. What are the motivational strategies considered by the participants for speaking in the English language?
5. How could the school help or offer support systems to the participants in overcoming their anxiety of speaking English?

#### ***Process Framework***

This process framework outlined the stages, steps, and methodologies involved in this research study, which consisted of two distinct phases: a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase.



**Figure 1. The Process Framework of the data gathering procedure for mixed methods sequential explanatory design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007)**

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study will be significant to the following:

**Administrative Officials.** To provide leadership and outline positive goals for the institution, the findings of this study will guide school administrators in conducting capacity-building trainings and seminars for teachers.

**Curriculum Developers.** This study will be beneficial for curriculum developers in designing curricula, reviewing educational materials, recommending textbooks, creating new pedagogical strategies, and mentoring teachers to meet the educational standards of the school or district.

**English Teachers.** The study's results will enlighten language teachers concerning students' experiences toward language speaking anxiety for face-to-face classes' transition. This will give them the versatility to transform or develop innovative teaching approaches, strategies, and techniques suitable for their learners.

**Second Language (L2) Learners.** The findings of this study will benefit second language learners to be informed of the experiences encountered by the participants of this study. That being said, they will become more understanding of their peers, promoting an inclusive learning environment with a climate of trust and respect.

**Future Researchers.** Given the scarcity of studies exploring the experiences of Senior High School students toward language speaking anxiety in transitioning to face-to-face classes, the results of this study will serve as a foundation and reference for future researchers who wish to pursue the same topic for further development and improvement.

### ***Scope and Delimitation***

This study narrowed its scope by employing a mixed-method sequential explanatory design, which had limitations due to the extensive time and resources required for collecting and evaluating both types of data. The study focused on Senior High School students in one educational institution in Angeles City during the academic year 2022-2023. It investigated their overall level of anxiety and their anxiety levels across the three FLCAS components, examining their experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and motivational strategies for speaking English during the transition to face-to-face classes. The study also identified factors contributing to their anxiety and suggested ways the school could provide support. Limitations included potential issues with online survey administration, such as lack of supervision, misinterpretation of questions, and compromised result reliability due to the inability to clarify ambiguities immediately.

## **METHOD**

### ***Type of Research***

This study employed Creswell's mixed-method approach; anchored in the philosophical worldview of pragmatism. Pragmatism, as a research paradigm, is based on the premise of utilizing the best methods to investigate real-world problems, allowing for the use of multiple sources of data and knowledge to answer research questions (Morgan, 2014). Specifically, a mixed-method sequential explanatory design, commencing with a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase, was utilized in this study. The fundamental tenet of this methodology is that integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches can help understand the topic area in greater depth (Bullock, 2017; Othman et al., 2020). It can increase confidence in findings by providing more evidence while mitigating potential weaknesses associated with using a single approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Caruth, 2013; Dawadi, 2021).

### ***Participants and Sampling Technique***

#### ***Phase 1: Quantitative Approach***

The total enumeration technique was initially employed to select participants during the first phase of the study. This technique, as described by Glen (2021), involves examining the entire population with a specific set of characteristics, offering a comprehensive understanding and reducing guesswork and bias in sample selection (Lavrakas, 2008). Out of a total population of 415 Grade 11 HUMSS students, 71% (295 students) participated and completed the questionnaire. Consisting of 60% female and 40% male. Upon processing and organizing the data, 76 out of 295 students met the eligibility requirements to proceed to the second phase. Comprising of 52 females and 24 males.

#### ***Phase 2: Qualitative Approach***

Selection standards are purposefully set for participants capable of providing comprehensive information about the phenomenon under study. Participants were chosen based on the criteria: (a) being a bona fide Grade 11 HUMSS student at one educational institution in Angeles City; (b) exhibiting a high level of language speaking anxiety across the three components of FLCAS; and (c) having taken an oral communication class. As aforementioned, only 76 participants met the eligibility requirements to proceed to the second phase.



Consequently, the 76 highest-scoring eligible participants were subjected for interviews until data saturation was achieved. Successful interviews totalled 9 participants, aged 16-17, comprising six females and three males.

### ***Research Instrument***

#### ***Phase 1: Quantitative Approach***

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) was used to obtain the quantitative data for this study. The instrument categorizes language learning anxiety into three types: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. These categories are further delineated through specific questionnaire items. Originally, the FLCAS contains 33 items using a five-point Likert scale, but for this study, the "neither agree nor disagree" option was eliminated to encourage more decisive responses. A higher score from the instrument indicates a higher level of FLA (Yaikhong & Usaha, 2012). The researcher adapted and modified the FLCAS to measure students' overall level of anxiety as well as their level of anxiety based on the three main FLCAS components. It was also used as a screening tool to identify students with high levels of anxiety, who eventually served as key informants in the study's second phase.

#### ***Phase 2: Qualitative Approach***

The qualitative data needed for the study was collated by utilizing a semi-structured interview. This interview consisted of five (5) open-ended questions regarding the experiences of SHS students toward LSA in face-to-face class transition. As DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) mentioned, a semi-structured interview is a qualitative data collection strategy including a short list of 'guiding' questions supplemented by follow-up and probing questions dependent on the interviewee's responses. This process can gather open-ended data, delve deeply into personal and occasionally sensitive issues, and explore interviewee's thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about a specific topic (George, 2022).

#### ***Data Gathering Procedures and Ethical Considerations***

Permission to conduct data collection for the Grade 11 HUMMS participants was acquired from the principal. However, due to the nature of the participants, records are held in strict confidentiality and solely to be used for research purposes and the attainment of the study's objectives.

Upon approval, the following procedures were carried out:

#### ***Phase 1: Quantitative Approach***

**Pilot Testing.** Cluster Sampling Technique was used to select the participants in the pilot test. Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) determined the reliability of the study with 0.91 internal consistency; higher than the required 0.7.

**Informed Consent.** Consent letters were obtained from the participants and their guardians for each of the phases. The letter included the study's purpose, emphasizing its voluntary nature and the strict confidentiality of their identities.



**Administration of Questionnaires.** Google Forms was used to perform the survey, ensuring ease of access for the participants. Data was automatically compiled into a spreadsheet automatically per submission, allowing for real-time analysis and visualization of the results.

**Phase 2: Qualitative Approach**

**Interview Process.** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the students exhibiting high LSA based on the three FLCAS components. Participants' responses were recorded with their permission and transcribed for analysis.

**Data Transcription.** Raw data from the voice recordings were transcribed into textual and tabular forms before being translated into English. To ensure that the transcribed texts corresponded to the verbatim audio recordings, each transcript was read while the audio data was played.

**Termination of Study.** Participants could withdraw consent at any moment. The information of the participants who withdrew from the study was eliminated. Additionally, the decision to end the study was available should serious concerns regarding the protection of the rights and welfare of the participants arise.

**Data Analysis**

**Phase 1: Quantitative Approach**

Table 1 presents a breakdown of language speaking anxiety levels categorized into three main levels: High, Moderate, and Low, across three specific components: Communication Apprehension, Test Anxiety, and Fear of Negative Evaluation. Each component is associated with a range of scores that correspond to each level of anxiety. Additionally, an overall score range is provided for each anxiety level, derived from the sum of the scores across all three components.

**Table 1. Levels of Language Speaking Anxiety**

Language Speaking Anxiety	Levels		
	High	Moderate	Low
Communication Apprehension	31-44	16-30	0-15
Test Anxiety	41-60	21-40	0-20
Fear of Negative Evaluation	19-28	10-18	0-9
Overall	90-132	70-89	33-69

**Phase 2: Qualitative Approach**

In this study, themes or patterns were identified, examined, and described using Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-step reflexive thematic analysis. The qualitative data were meticulously read before analysis, sorting the data to observable patterns and themes. Subsequently, the following procedures were carried:

**Data Preparation and Organization.** Audio-visual recording were transcribed utilizing Microsoft Word or Google Docs verbatim as the primary method of analysis.





Familiarization with the Collected Data. Through a tabular format, computerized data were clustered based on the categories illustrated by the interview questions.

Identification of the Unit of Analysis. Emerging and substantial content embedded in the collected data were highlighted. Their significance were examined to extract underlying and logically implied meanings which were then transformed into potential themes.

Development of Categories and a Coding Scheme. To finalize the codes, themes that emerged from each interview question were enumerated, evaluated and highlighted with the dominant features of specific themes. Categories were formulated that could represent each theme; and grouped according to their respective categories.

Evaluation of Coding Scheme. The accuracy of the results was assessed through Inter-rater Reliability (IRR) with the assistance of three licensed professional teachers specializing in English. Finally, the credibility of the results was evaluated through respondent validation, where participants received a copy of the results to review for accuracy and resonance with their actual experiences.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *Phase 1: Quantitative Approach*

The findings revealed that participants' LSA levels on the FLCAS components: communication apprehension and test anxiety, were moderate, however, they scored high in terms of fear of negative evaluation. Further details on each component of language speaking anxiety are discussed below:

**Table 2. Participants' Communication Apprehension Ratings**

Communication Apprehension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my Oral Communication class during face-to-face classes.	2.78	0.73	Agree
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the English language in Oral Communication class during face-to-face classes.	2.58	0.82	Agree
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in Oral Communication class during face-to-face classes.	3.07	0.84	Agree
14*. I would not be nervous speaking the English language with native speakers.	2.49	0.79	Disagree
15. During face-to-face classes, I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	2.52	0.80	Agree
18*. I feel confident when I speak in Oral Communication class during face-to-face classes.	2.31	0.78	Disagree
24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the English language in front of other students during face-to-face classes.	3.13	0.75	Agree



<b>27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my Oral communication class during face-to-face classes.</b>	2.77	0.84	Agree
<b>29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says during face-to-face classes.</b>	2.77	0.75	Agree
<b>30. During face-to-face classes, I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak the English language.</b>	2.80	0.73	Agree
<b>32*. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the English language.</b>	2.20	0.70	Disagree
<b>Overall mean</b>	29.41	4.83	Moderate

\*Items were reversed coded

### ***Participants' Communication Apprehension***

Table 2 show the participants' communication apprehension ratings, indicating moderate anxiety levels ( $\bar{x} = 29.41, sd = 4.83$ ). The paramount source of anxiety for the participants relate to public speaking (items 9 and 24 on the table). This anxiety is due to self-consciousness influenced by cultural and linguistic backgrounds pertaining to non-native English speakers concerned about accent, pronunciation, or cultural differences (Coppinger & Sheridan, 2022; Sokip, 2020). This constitutes to students' avoidance toward participating in speaking activities causing detrimental effects on their language proficiency at large (Chand, 2021). Educators ought to address this by fostering inclusivity in classrooms, free of judgement (Fievre, 2021). Promoting cultural and linguistic awareness is another crucial aspect, where language teachers should educate both students and themselves about cultural differences in communication styles and norms (Drobot, 2021).

One effective activity for promoting cultural diversity and language skills is the 'Storytelling Circle' (Fast, 2023). In this activity, students form a circle and collaboratively build a story, with each student contributing a sentence. This encourages participation from all students, including shy or reluctant ones, and helps them make meaningful connections between language and culture, fostering language acquisition and intercultural understanding (Deardorff, 2020; Lucarevski, 2016; McAllister-Grande, 2023).

**Table 3. Participants' Test Anxiety Ratings**

<b>Test Anxiety</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in Oral Communication class during face-to-face classes.</b>	2.80	0.83	Agree
<b>5*. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more English language classes during face-to-face.</b>	2.00	0.72	Disagree
<b>6. During face-to-face classes, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with Oral Communication class.</b>	2.45	0.80	Disagree
<b>8*. I am usually at ease during tests in my Oral Communication class during face-to-face classes.</b>	2.17	0.71	Disagree



10. I worry about the consequences of failing my Oral Communication class during face-to-face classes.	3.24	0.78	Agree
11*. I don't understand why some people get so upset over English language classes.	2.34	0.76	Agree
12. During face-to-face Oral Communication class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	2.94	0.83	Agree
16. Even if I am well prepared for Oral Communication class during face-to-face classes, I feel anxious about it.	3.05	0.78	Agree
17. I often feel like not going to my Oral Communication class during face-to-face classes.	1.73	0.77	Disagree
20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in Oral Communication class during face-to-face classes.	3.04	0.84	Agree
21. The more I study for an Oral Communication test during face-to-face classes, the more confused I get.	2.21	0.86	Disagree
22*. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for Oral Communication class during face-to-face classes.	2.46	0.75	Disagree
25. During face-to-face classes, Oral Communication class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	2.60	0.81	Agree
26. I feel more tense and nervous in my Oral communication class during face-to-face classes than in my other classes.	2.47	0.91	Disagree
28*. When I'm on my way to Oral communication class during face-to-face classes, I feel very sure and relaxed.	2.19	0.76	Disagree
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>37.67</b>	<b>6.17</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

\*Items were reversed coded

### **Participants' Test Anxiety**

Table 3 portrays test anxiety ratings, showing moderate anxiety levels ( $\bar{x} = 37.67, sd = 6.17$ ), with high anxiety levels on items 3, 10, and 20 pertaining to performance (speaking) anxiety. This is often driven by external pressures from parents, teachers, or societal expectations. Alamer and Almulhim (2021) also found that fear of failure was a significant factor in speaking anxiety.

One participant noted, "Teachers mentioning failure makes me nervous, frustrated, and unable to perform well." Statements like "my marks will determine my future" and "I will just focus on passing" suggests that some students equate their grades with their intelligence, worth, or future success, prioritizing passing over long-term language learning benefits.

Given these circumstances, teachers, students and their guardians should normalize mistakes as part of learning, emphasizing failure as part of growth. Institutions should provide academic support services, such as tutoring, counseling, or study workshops, to help students manage anxiety and develop effective coping strategies.

**Table 4. Participants' Fear of Negative Evaluation Ratings**

Fear of Negative Evaluation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
2*. I don't worry about making mistakes in Oral Communication class during face-to-face classes.	2.59	0.90	Agree
7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am during face-to-face classes.	3.08	0.86	Agree
13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my Oral Communication class during face-to-face classes.	2.72	0.89	Agree
19. During face-to-face classes, I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make in Oral Communication class.	2.47	0.90	Disagree
23. During face-to-face classes, I always feel that the other students speak the English language better than I do.	3.13	0.78	Agree
31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the English language during face-to-face classes.	3.07	0.92	Agree
33. During face-to-face classes, I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	3.16	0.77	Agree
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>20.22</b>	<b>4.10</b>	<b>High</b>

\*Items were reversed coded

#### **Participants' Fear of Negative Evaluation**

Table 4 shows fear of negative evaluation with more than half of the items with high ratings, indicating high anxiety levels ( $\bar{x} = 20.22, sd = 4.10$ ) pertaining to their inferiority complex e.g. "My peers are better than me at English". Researchers, including Laachir et al. (2022), Nasir et al. (2023), Pizarro (2018), and Sulistyorini (2018), reported identical results. Lack of preparation can lead to diffidence, and aversion, reducing engagement in speaking activities and class discussions (Asysyfa et al., 2019).

Notably, this issue preceded the pandemic accentuating a long-standing problem for language learners. Scholars should therefore conduct thorough needs assessments to identify specific linguistic concerns. This involves collecting feedback from students, teachers, and school administrators to understand the root causes of lack of preparation and its impact on language learning.

Teachers should provide positive reinforcement for students' efforts and progress to increase engagement. Recognizing and celebrating even minor improvements can foster a supportive learning environment (Agata et al., 2019; Mazidah, 2020).

**Table 5. Participants' Language Speaking Anxiety Ratings**

Language Speaking Anxiety Scales	Low		Moderate		High	
	F	%	f	%	F	%

<b>Communication Apprehension</b>	2	0.7	171	58.0	122	41.4
<b>Test Anxiety</b>	3	1.0	191	64.7	101	34.2
<b>Fear of Negative Evaluation</b>	6	2.0	139	47.1	150	50.8
<b>Overall Rating</b>	1	0.3	169	57.3	125	42.4

Table 5 denotes overall LSA ratings for the three FLCAS components. The data reveals that nearly all participants have moderate (169 or 57.3%), or high (125 or 42.4%) anxiety ratings, with only one participant (0.3%) having low anxiety levels.

The participants majorly exhibit moderate overall LSA, consistent with studies by Hwa and Peck (2017) and Neman and Ganap (2018), demonstrating that moderate anxiety levels existed even before the pandemic. Recent studies by Halimah et al. (2020), Nurhayati and Kaha (2022), and Sajjad et al. (2022) also support these findings. It can therefore be viewed that students may experience some degree of anxiety when speaking in English during face-to-face Oral Communication classes, but it may not be severe or debilitating enough to impair their ability to learn and speak.

The highest anxiety ratings were observed in fear of negative evaluation, aligning with research by Ismail et al. (2022), Manan et al. (2022), and Shi and Zhang (2023). Implying that students may practice avoidance to preclude criticisms from their teachers and peers alike, potentially leading to avoidance behaviors (Hermaniar & Azkiya, 2021; Downing et al., 2020). Cooper and Brownell (2020) suggest creating an inclusive and equitable classroom environment where students feel comfortable making mistakes to facilitate group work with familiar peers, allowing students to communicate with classmates before presenting to the class.

### ***Phase 2: Qualitative Approach***

Fueled by data collected using quantitative and qualitative approaches, in-depth descriptions of the significant findings were presented in this section.

### ***The Verbal Quandaries: Language Speaking Anxiety Challenges***

The study on LSA reveals three main subthemes: linguistic limitations, psychological barriers, and teacher-influenced challenges.

In terms of linguistic limitations, participants encountered difficulty using the English language when communicating orally. Some understood the meaning of the sentences yet were anxious about utilizing the language themselves, while others had a weak foundation in speaking the language due to lack of exposure.

It can be inferred that this issue, common during pre-pandemic years, persisted even during the crucial time of the pandemic. Significantly, this aligns with findings that students continue to struggle with linguistic issues like limited vocabulary, pronunciation errors, and lack of grammatical knowledge (Fitriani & Zulkarnain, 2019; Nisyakh, 2022).

Psychological barriers played a significant role in speaking anxiety. Self-doubt and low self-esteem, closely related and often interwoven issues, were challenging for participants when speaking English. Participants with self-



doubt questioned their abilities and competence, while those with low self-esteem had a negative self-perception and lacked confidence in their abilities and self-worth. Moreover, extreme nervousness and catastrophic thinking, where participants imagined the worst possible outcomes, further exacerbated their anxiety.

Additionally, being corrected by teachers and the prospect of classmates staring at them when they recited made participants more anxious.

The fear of negative evaluation was a significant contributor to speaking anxiety, as it heightened self-consciousness and uneasiness.

This aspect was confirmed through a number of studies where participants revealed that psychological factors like shyness, anxiety, and nervousness make it difficult to utilize the English language (Nijat et al., 2019; Noviyanti, 2022; Nur et al., 2021; Pratiwi, 2021; Qureshi, 2020).

Social anxiety, a part of psychological barriers, was prevalent as participants transitioned back to in-person classes after a year of online learning.

Unfamiliarity with teachers and classmates heightened their fear of criticism. Several participants revealed that they were afraid of possible criticism.

Teachers were also contributors to their speaking anxiety, as participants were nervous about being publicly evaluated by their teachers on the spot whenever they spoke. Thus, interpersonal communication can be a success indicator in terms of one's language development.

Moreover, teachers' delivery of instruction and assessment affected the participants' language development. Teacher-influenced challenges included participants' struggles with teachers' use of complex words and the quality of their voice during instruction.

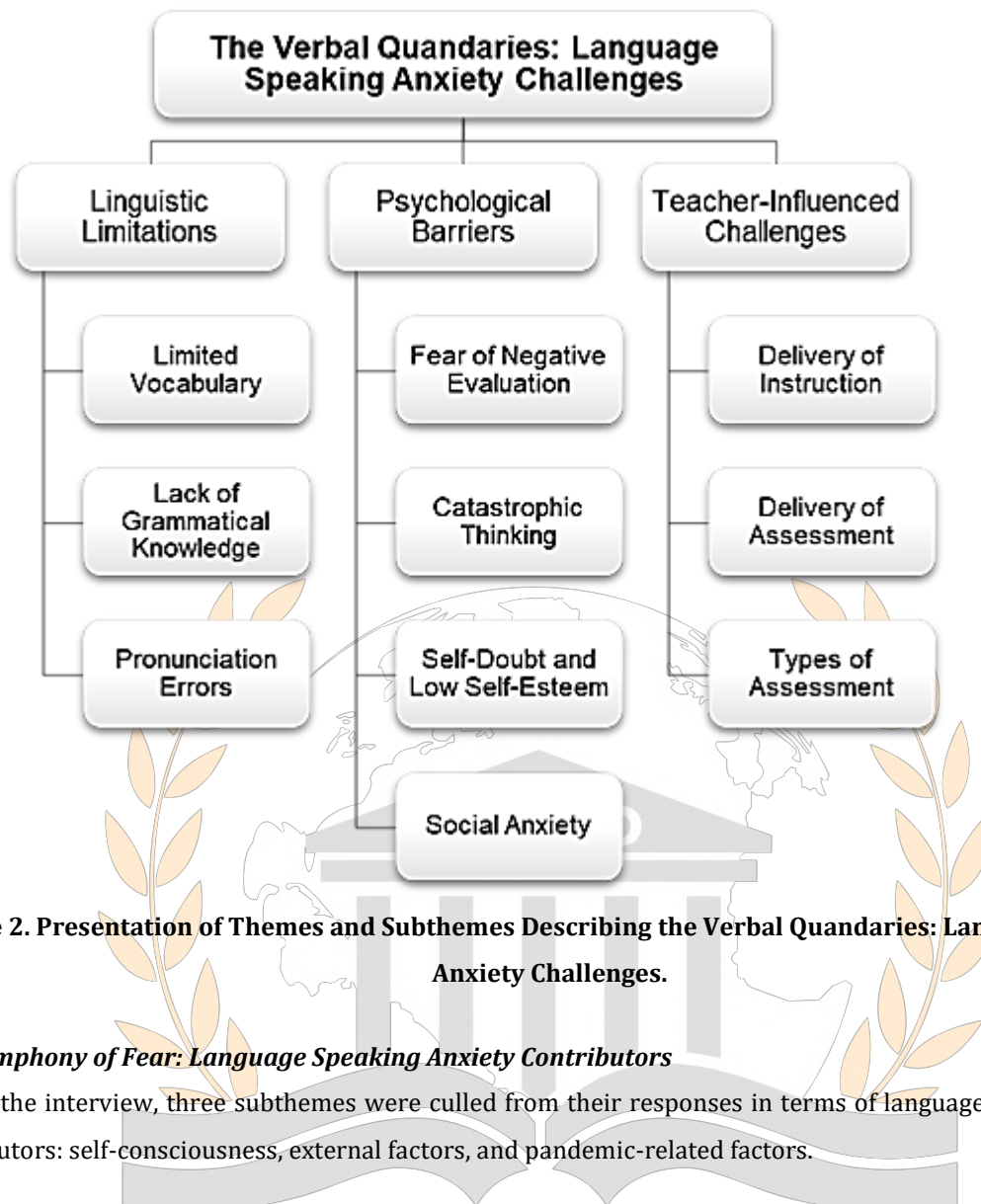
This also included teachers asking follow-up questions that made participants more anxious. Participants revealed that some teachers administered surprise quizzes after discussions, which were sometimes dictated, making it hard for participants to keep up.

The participants' struggles in language speaking were not only due to personal or peer factors but also the teachers' instructional and assessment methods.

Finally, oral recitation and public speaking, both types of assessment, were significant challenges faced by participants when called upon in class without thorough preparation.

Existing literature indicates that fear of public speaking (glossophobia) is still rampant, especially among students in a language class.

This subtheme, teacher-related challenges, was supported by findings that factors such as teacher qualities, pedagogical practices, fear of making mistakes, taking tests, and prior experiences in learning an additional language can affect foreign language anxiety (Cortez & Real, 2021; Drakulić, 2015).



**Figure 2. Presentation of Themes and Subthemes Describing the Verbal Quandaries: Language Speaking Anxiety Challenges.**

### ***The Symphony of Fear: Language Speaking Anxiety Contributors***

During the interview, three subthemes were culled from their responses in terms of language speaking anxiety contributors: self-consciousness, external factors, and pandemic-related factors.

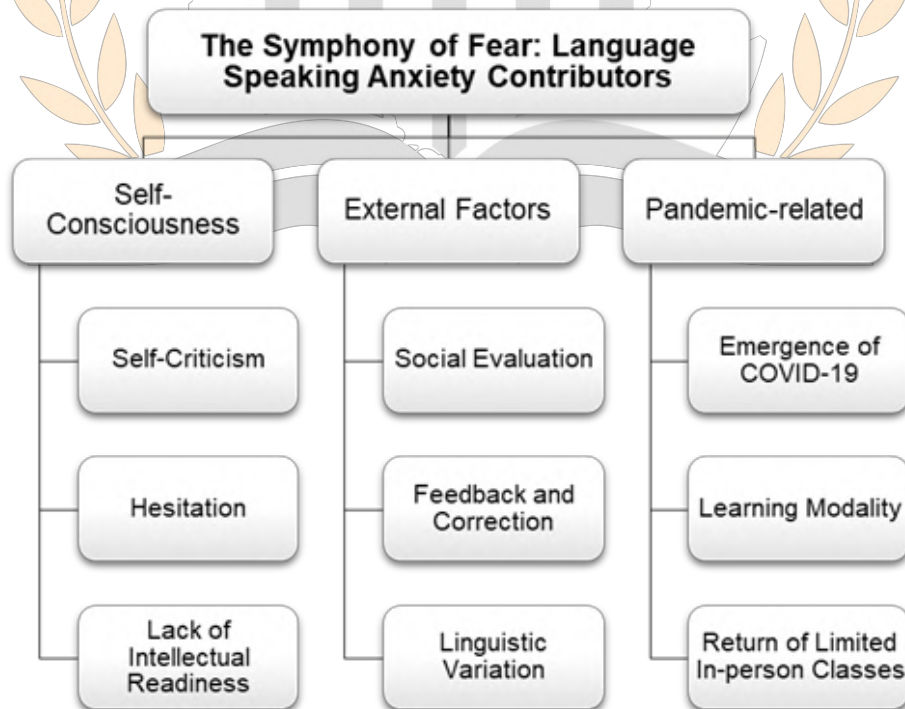
In magnifying the self-consciousness, one participant discussed that he experienced self-criticism as if considering himself to be blamed because of his classmates failing during language class. Meanwhile, other participants confessed that they also feel hesitant when speaking, especially when helping other students to perform related tasks. It is likewise vital to stress that the participants are prone to frequent 'mental blocks', highlighting the participants' lack of intellectual readiness, when asked to speak in front of a class. Therefore, it can be observed that the participants tend to lack mental readiness and flexibility when speaking the English language due to the enumerated factors. In analyzing these factors, it can be observed that inability to express ideas, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes and receiving criticism, family factor, fear of English classes, and lack of ideas are rampant among language learners (Daud et al. 2019; Hussain et al., 2021; Oad & Khan, 2020; Rajitha & Alamelu, 2019; Suparlan, 2021).

In like manner, external factors emerged under this category. Increased fear of social evaluation, eliciting intimidating reactions from classmates during recitation, and linguistic variation were found to be relevant under

this subtheme. Through the responses of the participants, it can also be observed that they were bullied due to poor grammar construction when speaking, not to mention their unique accent. On the other hand, the participants also felt discouraged when their teachers tried to humiliate them instead of helping them to improve such a skill. As a result, it can be underscored that external factors may add up to one's speaking language anxiety, not to mention the dilemmas in learning a second language. Lastly, it can be observed that delivering oral presentations is a tedious task that can stimulate anxiety among language learners (Grieve et al., 2021; Kurakan, 2021).

Unquestionably, the aftermath of the pandemic influenced the participants' language competence in their Oral Communication class. Primarily, the implementation of Online Distance Learning (ODL) affected the participants' progress in speaking the language. As an illustration, there are times when their classmates in a language class are unapproachable whenever they need clarification in terms of subject-related requirements. Consequently, this results in the participants' heightened level of anxiety.

On the flip side, the reimplementation of face-to-face classes made the participants more anxious as they were forced to interact with unfamiliar people. As a result, this stimulated social anxiety among the participants. Furthermore, the imposing of numerous quarantine protocols among the local communities caused fear and anxiety among the participants during the pandemic since most of them were separated from their families. As has been noted by the participants' lived experiences during the pandemic, it can be understood that it greatly influenced their language development—increasing the level of their anxiety, personally and academically. Due to abrupt changes in the Philippines' education system during the COVID-19, language students' anxiety was intensified (Liu & Yuan, 2021; Valizadeh, 2021; Ying et al., 2021).



**Figure 3. Presentation of Themes and Subthemes Describing The Symphony of Fear: Language Speaking Anxiety Contributors.**



## *The Toolbox: Coping Mechanisms for Language Speaking Anxiety*

The participants of the study faced several challenges in transitioning from online distance learning to in-person classes. However, they discovered several adaptive mechanisms to overcome their language speaking anxiety. Initially, they focused on improving their macro-skills-based learning such as reading for vocabulary-building, writing, note-taking, and journaling, contextual application of speech, and foreign language media exposure.

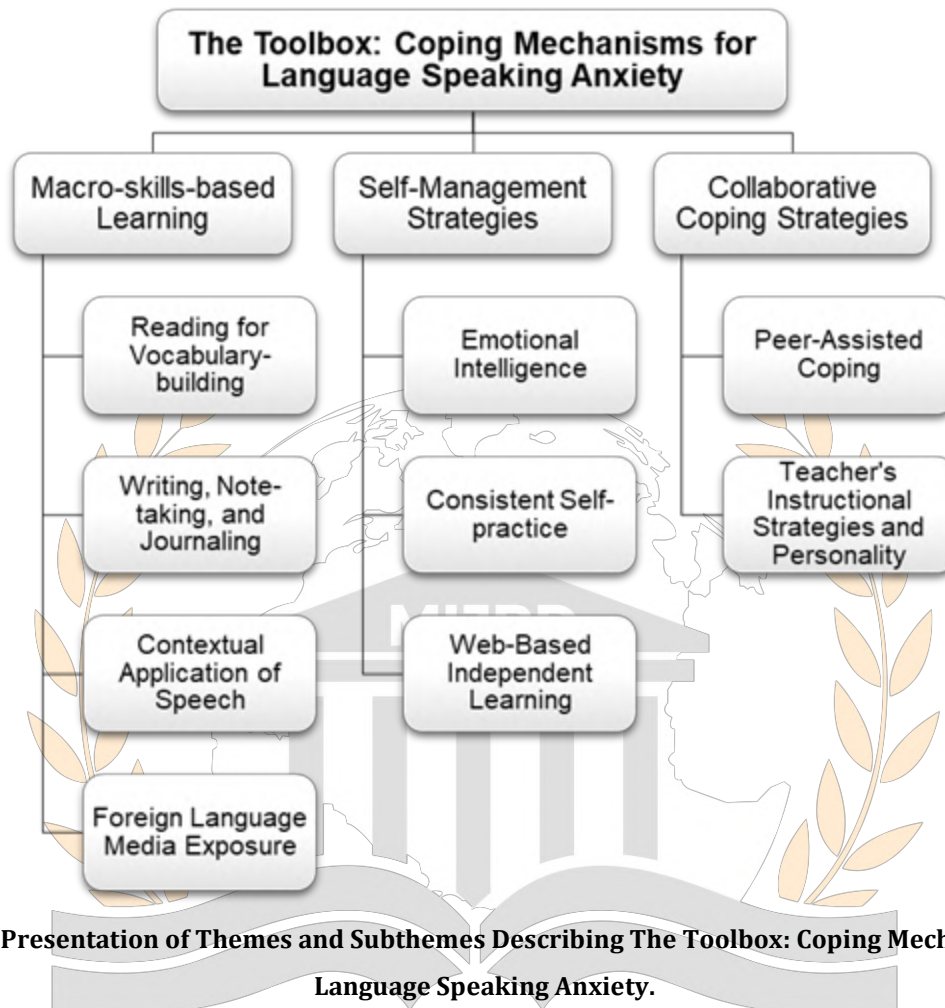
One of the participants shared that reading quotes helped expand their vocabulary knowledge. Other participants engaged in reading more books from the library and e-books from online websites to further unlock the meaning of highfalutin words. Meanwhile, another participant found note-taking and essay writing essential in building a strong foundation for vocabulary development. By and by, these skills were found to be salient and essential as the participants underwent several situations in terms of language speaking anxiety.

Furthermore, they highlighted the importance of speaking the language in real-life situations where they could communicate with native speakers. The use of audio-visual materials like foreign films and movies also helped them speak the language competitively. These coping mechanisms in terms of macro skills further honed their vocabulary skills as they utilized the language in their ways and through actual scenarios, instead of relying on shallow reading and memorization. In agreement with this, the acquisition of macro skills was underscored as a salient factor in learning a second language (Clement & Murugavel, 2018; Torrano, 2022).

Not only did the participants find assistance in speaking the language through macro-skills-based learning, but they also empowered themselves intrinsically by applying self-management strategies. They mentioned that projecting a calm posture, an indication of emotional intelligence, while being called out to recite motivated them to speak confidently (Abrar et al., 2022). Overcoming their classmates' possible judgments was also essential in speaking the language. While some participants found teachers intimidating and demotivating, one participant revealed that being taught by an encouraging teacher helped alleviate nervousness within a language class. Therefore, it can be implied that teachers' positive reinforcement significantly contributes to language learners' academic progress. Finally, they concluded that self-practice or preparing beforehand during an Oral Communication class was significantly effective. Personal motivation was also found to be salient in furthering one's skill in overcoming language speaking anxiety and uneasiness. In the same fashion, Keblawi (2020) discussed that several teacher practices encourage second language learners to speak more.

On the other hand, web-based independent learning was also identified from the participants' experiences. The participants learned to adapt to the challenges imposed by language speaking anxiety through the incorporation of technology. Online applications like Google Translate and Quillbot were the tools maximized by the participants whenever they needed to translate Filipino sentences into English or whenever they needed to paraphrase in writing. Meanwhile, other participants appreciated peer interaction in assisting them in bettering their language speaking ability. For instance, they could communicate with their classmates comfortably when they did not understand a part of a lesson. Likewise, the participants found tutoring a helpful way to learn the language themselves. This claim was testified by Restiana (2019) where it was explored that several ways employed by students fostered their competence toward speaking the second language.

Additionally, teachers' effective instructional strategies and personalities alleviated the participants' nervousness when reciting during a language class. All things considered, factors like technology, peers, and teachers were found to be crucial and beneficial for the participants as these aspects were deemed relevant and necessary to overcome their language speaking anxiety



**Figure 4. Presentation of Themes and Subthemes Describing The Toolbox: Coping Mechanisms for Language Speaking Anxiety.**

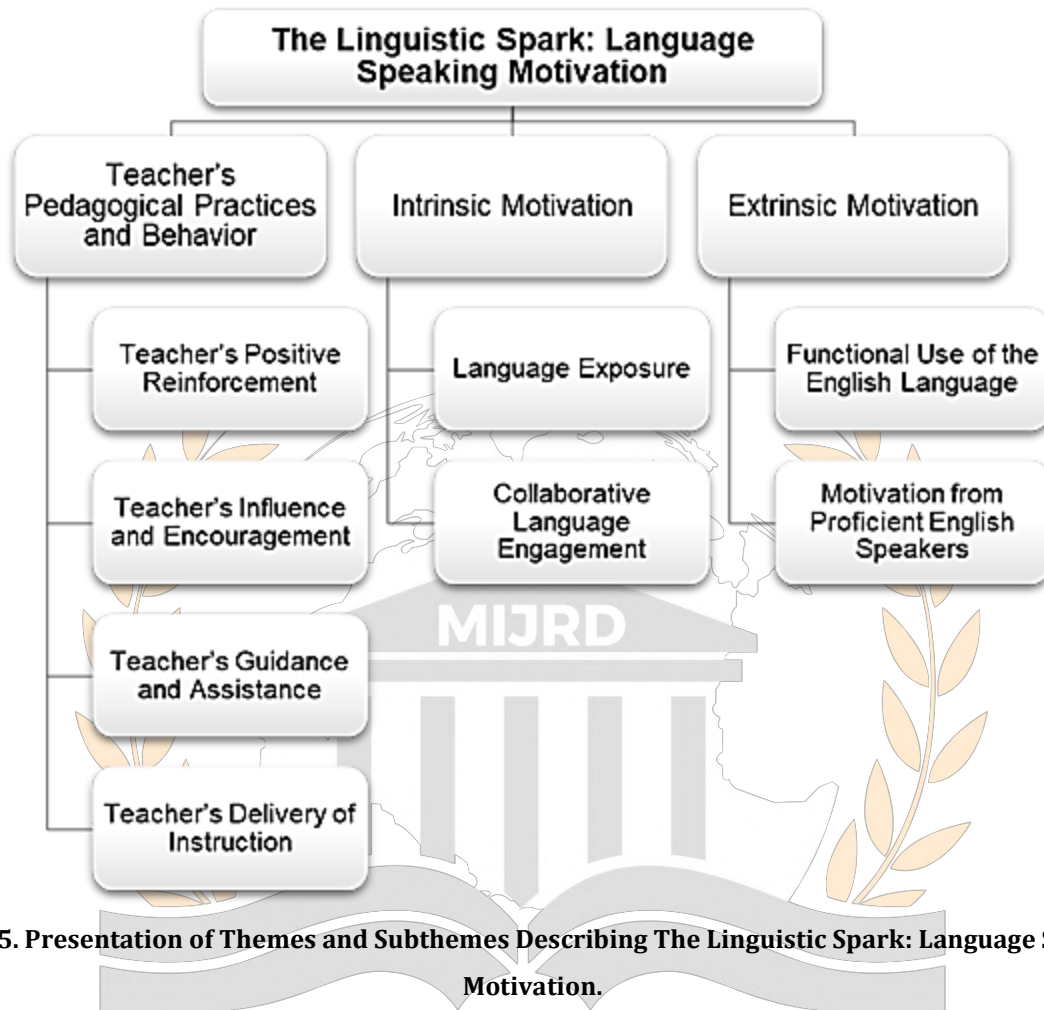
### ***The Linguistic Spark: Language Speaking Motivation***

Throughout the study, participants shared various techniques they used to manage language speaking anxiety and the motivations that propelled them forward. The research identified three distinct types of motivation: teacher's pedagogical practices and behavior, intrinsic motivation, and extrinsic motivation.

Invaluable to the students' progress, teachers played a key role in providing guidance and encouragement. Offering praise and demonstrating trust in students' abilities helped boost their confidence and language proficiency. Additionally, positive reinforcements, such as giving extra credit and incentives, motivated students to participate more frequently in class discussions (Hyseni & Lundberg, 2022; Sejati, 2019).

While some participants experienced anxiety triggered by their classmates, others found inspiration in their peers' confidence when speaking. Collaborative activities provided opportunities for intrinsic motivation, allowing

participants to feel valued when helping others (Mahdalena, 2021; Mirici & Sari, 2021). Extrinsic motivation was also present, as participants recognized the importance of English language proficiency in academic and professional settings. One participant even noted the potential benefits for future college programs (Last, 2022; Naumovych, 2023).



**Figure 5. Presentation of Themes and Subthemes Describing The Linguistic Spark: Language Speaking Motivation.**

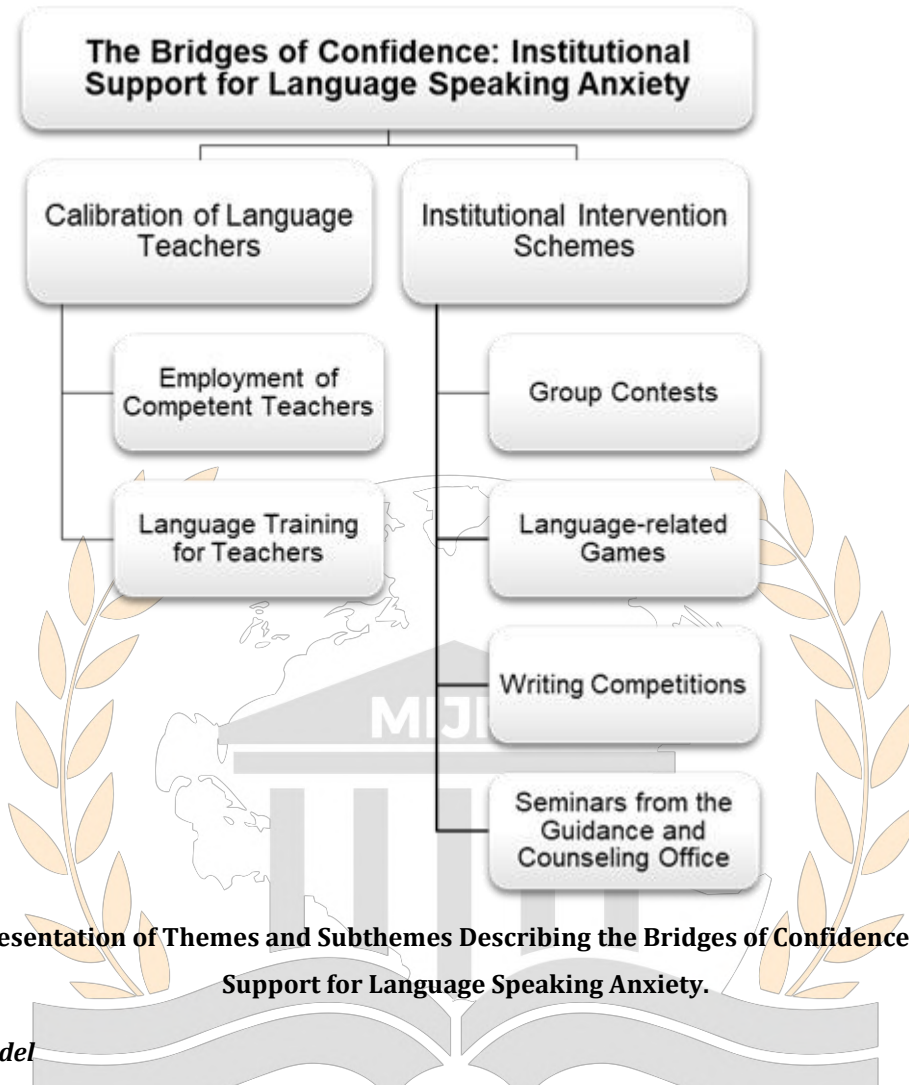
### ***Bridges of Confidence: Institutional Support for Language Speaking Anxiety***

Valuable insights emerged from the participants' responses regarding institutional support for language speaking. The data collected and analyzed revealed two subthemes: calibration of language teachers and institutional intervention schemes.

Some participants highlighted the importance of hiring competent and motivated language teachers to help students overcome their speaking anxiety. Others suggested that teachers should receive additional training to improve their language teaching skills, classroom management strategies, and ability to accommodate students' varying levels of competence and needs (Hutabarat & Simanjuntak, 2019).

In addition, the participants emphasized the significance of school support, which includes collaborative activities and competitions such as speech choir, essay writing, and quiz bees (Palupi, 2021). A seminar from the school's

Guidance and Counseling Office was also suggested as a potential means of teaching students different strategies for overcoming language speaking anxiety.



**Figure 6. Presentation of Themes and Subthemes Describing the Bridges of Confidence: Institutional Support for Language Speaking Anxiety.**

### **Conceptual Model**

This conceptual model elucidates the intricate dynamics of language speaking anxiety experienced by students as they transition from online to in-person classes. Drawing inspiration from the condensed and structured design of a honeycomb, the model delineates the interconnected components of language speaking anxiety challenges, contributors, coping mechanisms, motivation, and institutional support.

Positioned at the top, the hexagonal cells representing challenges and contributors underscore the difficulties and concerns to be prioritized and addressed, while the subsequent cells below demonstrate the structured approach of coping mechanisms, motivation, and institutional support.

Reflecting the cyclical nature of language speaking anxiety, the model emphasizes the reciprocal influence between challenges and contributors. Ultimately, akin to the strength and utility of a honeycomb, coping mechanisms, motivation, and institutional support provide students with the structure, resilience, and resources necessary to conquer language speaking anxiety and enhance their speaking skills.



**Figure 7. The Honeycomb Model: Students' Experiences toward Language Speaking Anxiety in Transitioning from Online to In-person Classes**

## CONCLUSION

According to the findings and discussions from the two phases of this study, it was revealed that students' levels of language speaking anxiety in terms of communication apprehension and test anxiety were moderate, while they experienced a high level in terms of fear of negative evaluation. Nevertheless, their overall level of language speaking anxiety was moderate.

Meanwhile, this study empirically confirmed that the pandemic did not introduce new categories and themes in the participants' experiences toward language speaking anxiety, as they were already present in the pre-pandemic years. However, the study uncovered novel insights into language speaking motivation and institutional support that might necessitate further investigation.

Moreover, the participants' language speaking anxiety was predominantly linked to the transition from online to face-to-face classes, given they had been attending virtual classes for the past year. Significantly, the analysis revealed that social anxiety was the most prevalent challenge among the participants.

While some participants attributed their apprehension to their language teachers and classmates, others considered them a source of inspiration that helped them develop their language skills.

In conclusion, the findings provide intriguing yet interesting insights into this topic. Likewise, this study fills gaps in the participants' language speaking motivation and institutional support, as they work to overcome their language speaking anxiety.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were formulated concerning issues and concerns toward second language speaking anxiety.

Firstly, a systematic Language Skill Development Plan that underscores teachers' approaches and methodologies may be considered. This may monitor language teacher's competence in terms of their instruction and assessment. Through this, a continuous seminar and workshops for teachers annually, if not monthly, may contribute to schools' vision of eliminating learners' language speaking anxiety.

Secondly, Guidance Counseling Offices (GCO) are found to be beneficial for education institutions in attending to teachers' and students' wellness. Guidance counselors and staff may conduct seminars that are interrelated not only with students' career pathways but also with their coping mechanisms in overcoming different types of anxiety, including classroom-related factors.

Thirdly, education institutions' employment teams may include language competency tests during language-teachers-applicants' pre-evaluation. Aside from the existing standardized tests that encompass grammar- and literature-based items, adding questions and prompts related to English Language Teaching (ELT) could be of great help.

Meanwhile, the emergence of technology has been a trend in education nowadays. However, some schools are still practicing conventional ways of teaching the second language. Incorporating technology-based teaching and learning through gamification can transform students from being passive to active and from being anxious to more engaged as these digital apps can be self-paced. More importantly, this may benefit language students to become autonomous and more comfortable in their learning.

Although this study focused on describing the phenomenon regarding English language speaking anxiety through a theoretical lens, a different research approach such as action research may be applied. The nature of action research such as being problem-based and solution-oriented could provide fresh perspectives and practical applications of the abovementioned recommendations.

Finally, a unique perspective from Kuchah et al. (2023) purported that the exercise of multilingualism in a language classroom helps learners to be more productive and flexible. This study found that code-switching and translation using learners' 'home language' assists them in understanding the English language more efficiently and effectively.

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