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BEING COMFORTABLE IN SPEAKING ENGLISH THROUGH THE LENS OF GRADE 10 STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The study analyzed the sources, experiences, and insights in speaking English comfortably among Grade 10 students at La Filipina National High School, Philippines. Phenomenological qualitative research design was used to gather data from 10 learner-informants. The findings revealed that students' sources of being comfortable in speaking English is influenced by a number of sources of confidence brought by parents, classmates and teachers. Students describe their experiences as being helped by teachers by providing strategies to improve English speaking skills and be comfortable with it. They also provide insights and recommendations for other students to develop speaking skills. Students identify reinforcement programs and ways how stakeholders could help them develop their speaking skills. The researcher suggests the creation and strengthening of academic programs to promote a supportive and inclusive environment, encourage a positive mindset, and provide ample practice facilities, such as speech and reading laboratories, classrooms with information technology and area for speech performances. These can help students communicate, connect with others, and succeed in various personal, academic, and professional contexts.

KEYWORDS: English speaking skills, sources, experiences, insights, recommendations, phenomenological research, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The importance of speaking English cannot be denied in this modern society since it is the language taught in many countries in the world. Recent studies on the teaching of learning methods and learner autonomy have shown that both can be effective in teaching language learning strategies to language learners and that learner autonomy, when combined with a desire for language learning, can result in good language learning outcomes (Kim, 2013). Aside from that, there should be opportunities for real communication so that their confidence will be developed. As a result, it brings students a wide range of opportunity that would benefit their personal and professional growth (Arango, 2015). Due to its importance in language setting, English learners continue to develop their speaking skill despite the challenges they encounter along the way of learning.

There are previous studies relating to students' self-confidence of Arab English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. Bensalem (2018) found that participants who were self-efficacious and felt more proficient in English were significantly less likely to suffer from foreign language anxiety. Learners with higher level of confidence experience lower anxiety levels and gained the ability to be high achievers in foreign language learning.

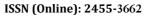
A local study by Lucas (2011) concluded that students from the several higher education institutions in Manila Philippines, have strongly benefited from vocabulary strategy and has aided them to cope with their English-speaking anxiety effectively. This means that students use some strategies to cope with their nervousness by utilizing helpful tools such as reading books in English and consulting dictionaries. Since English is valued as a second language, it has been integrated as the medium of instruction in Philippine educational system.

On the other hand, students at La Filipina National High School, specifically the Special Program in Journalism, are less likely to experience speaking anxiety in class. To validate this problem, the researcher conducted a short interview with their English teacher. She observed that students are confident speakers in second language because of their exposure on TV-Broadcasting and other journalism activities. Students are comfortable in speaking in English.

Many studies dig into language anxiety and its effect to learners' competence in speaking. However, learning to speak the language comfortably is quite under explored in the domain of second language acquisition. In line with this, the researcher found that there is a need to conduct this study to explore the sources, experiences, challenges and insights of speaking English comfortably and to craft a reinforcement program that would benefit both the students and the second-language teachers.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Speaking in English. Speaking has a significant role in people's daily lives. It is one of the methods of verbally transmitting thoughts and a message. To enable students to





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communicate, we need to apply the language of communication. Rebecca (2006) stated that speaking is the first mode in which children acquire language, it is part of the daily involvement of most people with language activities, and it is the prime motor of language change. Since speaking is one of the basic skills in learning a second language, it is not easy for the students to communicate in English. Second language learners are still reported to be uncomfortable, unmotivated, unwilling to participate, or have a low performance in their language education (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009).

Characteristic of Successful of Speaking Activities. Speaking exercise can boost students' confidence and satisfaction, and with considerate teacher guidance, you may help them to grow to learn harder. As a result, effective communication may and should be tremendously inspiring. Many speaking exercise (discussions, role-playing, problem solving, etc.) are fundamentally satisfying in and of themselves (Hammer, 2007). However, speaking is sometimes a simple task, but in some cases, it is challenging (Brown, 2000). There are instances when it is difficult for people to converse fluently. They must meet a certain criterion, such as the following, in order to carry out successful speaking, including:

Learners talk a lot. This activity does allow for student to talk to the greatest extent possible. The majority of the time is frequently spent with teacher talk or pauses, despite being evident of this.

Participant is even. Discussions in the classroom are not dominated by an observation of the active talkers. Everybody has an opportunity to speak, and contributions are fairly evenly distributed.

Motivation is high. Students are ready to talk because they are engaged in the subjects, have something fresh to say about it, or they want to help the group to complete the task.

Language is of an acceptable level. The language used by learners to express themselves is accurate to an appropriate degree, relevant, and easy for others to understand.

Teachers' Role in Speaking Activities. Teachers have significant role in teaching speaking in the classroom. They do not only prepare the activities of speaking applied in the classroom, but they are also involved in students speaking activity. Some teachers get very involved with their students during speaking activity and want to participate in the activity themselves. There is nothing wrong with teachers getting involved, of course, provided they do not start to dominate. Although, it is probably better to stand back so that you can watch and listen to what's going on.

There are 3 roles of the teacher in speaking activities (Harmer, 2007).

Prompter. Sometimes students are confused, stuck on what to say next, or lose the fluidity we anticipate from them in another way. Teachers can leave them to struggle out of such situations on their own, and indeed sometimes this maybe the best option. However, teachers may be able to help them and

the activity to progress to offering discrete suggestions.

Participants. When asking students to develop language, teacher ought to be effective animators. However, there are instances when teachers would want to take part in discussions and role-plays personally. In this manner, they are able to subtly prompt students, present fresh materials to advance in the activity, guarantee ongoing student participation, and maintain a creative environment.

Feedback Provider. When students are in the middle of a speaking activity, over correction may inhibit them and take the communicative ability out of the activity. When students have completed an activity, it is vital that we allow them to assess what they have done and that we tell them what, in our opinion, went well.

Motivation and Confidence. The teacher's job is somehow to get the students engage in activities that will result in the desired learning. This process is an essential ingredient in both instruction and discipline, and we call this process motivation. Motivation and confidence are interrelated and interact with each other (Lindsay, 2006). One can argue that learning the second language well involves a lot of time and effort on the part of the students. Because of this, students who are studying English, especially those who want to improve their speaking abilities, need to be motivated in order to advance.

OBJECTIVES

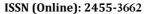
Specifically, this sought to address the following research questions:

- 1. What are the sources of comfortability in speaking English among the participants?
- 2. How do the participants describe their experiences in speaking English?
- 3. What are the insights gained by the participants on the comfortability of speaking English?
- 4. What reinforcement program can be crafted from the findings of the study?

METHOD

This study was a qualitative study employing a phenomenological approach to explore the experiences of students who are comfortable in speaking English. It focused on behavior, perceptions, motivation, and holistic actions from key informants. Purposive sampling was used to identify 10 participants for the In-Depth Interview (IDI).

The study was conducted at La Filipina National High School in Tagum City, Philippines. The school has 24 English teachers and three Master Teachers in the English Department. This study selected Grade 10 students from La Filipina National High School, who had a general weighted average (GWA) of below 90 in the previous school year 2021-2022, and an average of not more than 90 in English subject. They were chosen voluntarily for extensive and accurate data collection. Participants signed consent forms and participated in an In-Depth Interview (IDI), a qualitative method of data collection. The study aimed to gather comprehensive information about the topic under study.





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This study utilized in-depth interviews to gather information about participants' sources, challenges, insights, and coping mechanisms in speaking English. These personal, unstructured interviews allowed for direct contact and reduced non-response rates. The researcher obtained permission from the Schools Division Superintendent and principal, and participants signed a consent form. A semi-structured questionnaire guided interviews, and participants' verbatim statements were critically transcribed. The results were examined, thematized, and interpreted based on the discussions.

The collected data in this study were analyzed using thematic analysis. The researcher used Creswell's Model, specifically the identifying of the themes approach, to assess the responses of the participants from the interviews that were performed. According to Creswell (2012) themes in qualitative research are similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Confidence in Speaking English. The following gives confidence to the students; understanding the written materials, teacher's motivation, parents influence, confidence boosted by the parents, sentence construction in mind, reading of English books, being trained to speak English by journalism coach, being challenged by the family, being pushed by the teacher, being influenced by the classmates, self-motivation to speak English.

Understanding the Written Materials. Improving students' understanding of written materials can indeed boost their confidence in speaking English. Even though enhancing understanding of written materials requires time and regular effort, there is no doubt that understanding written materials can provide a significant source of comfort and confidence when it comes to speaking English. An informant expressed own ways of gaining comfort with the use of English language in speaking, through understanding the things that was written in English.

Teacher's Motivation. Teachers' external motivation can be quite effective in increasing students' comfort and confidence in their English-speaking abilities. By fostering a positive learning atmosphere, delivering helpful criticism, and offering plenty of opportunity for practice and development, teachers can foster extrinsic motivation in their students. Students can become more at ease and confident in speaking English with the assistance and support of their teachers.

Parents' Influence. The level of comfort and confidence that children have when speaking English is greatly influenced by their parents. Parents can considerably influence their children's comfort and confidence in speaking English by exposing them to the language and actively participate in their language development. An informant pointed out that parents who use English language at home greatly influence their children.

Confidence Boosted by Classmates. Classmates can indeed

play a significant role in boosting confidence and comfort when speaking English. It is important to note that classmates may have varying levels of proficiency in English, and it is essential to create an inclusive environment where everyone feels supported regardless of their current skill level. By fostering a supportive community, classmates can contribute to each other's confidence and comfort in speaking English, ultimately enhancing the overall language learning experience.

Sentence Construction in Mind. Having a solid mental construction of sentence structures allows students to formulate and organize their thoughts more efficiently. This enables them to speak more fluently with fewer pauses, giving them a sense of comfort and ease during conversations. An informant mentioned that she will not talk right away instead constructing first the message she wants to say.

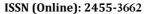
Reading of English Books. Reading English books can indeed be a valuable source of comfort when speaking English. To maximize the benefits of reading English books for speaking, it is helpful to engage in active reading. This involves taking notes on new vocabulary, paying attention to sentence structures, and practice speaking aloud by reading passages or dialogues. This active engagement strengthens the connection between reading and speaking, further enhancing the comfort and proficiency in spoken English.

Being trained to speak English by journalism coach. Working with a journalism coach to improve students English-speaking skills can be an effective source of comfort and confidence. The expertise, guidance, and tailored training of the journalism coach can help students develop the necessary skills and confidence to communicate effectively in English, particularly within the realm of journalism.

Being challenged by the family. Open communication with the family about the learning goals and support needed is crucial. By involving family members and embracing their challenges and feedback, students can create a nurturing environment that fosters to be comfortable and confident in speaking English. This was stressed out by an informant as she said that being challenged by the family gives her the confidence to speak English.

Being pushed by the teacher. Being challenged by a teacher to speak English can be a source of comfort, and it is important to note that the push from a teacher should be balanced, supportive, and tailored to your individual needs. The teacher should provide guidance and encouragement while considering your comfort level and language proficiency. Open communication with your teacher about your language learning goals and any specific area you want to work on is essential for maximizing the benefits of their push in developing their sense of being comfortable and confident in speaking English.

Being influenced by classmates. It has been proven that speaking English can be made more comfortable by peer influence, and by actively engaging with classmates, seeking opportunities for language practice, and fostering a supportive learning community, students can benefit from the influence





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of their peers in developing comfort and confidence in speaking English. Embrace the opportunity to learn from and with their classmates, and leverage their support and diverse perspectives to enhance your language skills.

Self-motivation to speak English. Motivating oneself to speak English is a powerful source of comfort and confidence. Motivation comes from within, and cultivating self-motivation is a lifelong journey. By setting clear goals, maintaining a positive mindset, celebrating achievements, and constantly engaging in English speaking practice, students can fuel their motivation and build the sense of being comfortable and confident in speaking English.

Reasons for being comfortable in speaking English

The following are the reasons of being comfortable namely: usage of English language since childhood, friend's influence, English language use at home, environment's influence, self-confidence to speak English, subject teacher's motivation, being prompt to use English, English as second language.

Usage of English language since childhood. For some students, English has been an integral part of their lives since childhood. They have been exposed to the language on a daily basis through conversations with family. This constant exposure has made English a familiar and natural language for them to speak.

Friend's influence. Having a friend who is fluent in English can inspire and motivate students to improve their own language skills. Observing their fluency and proficiency can instill a desire to reach a similar level of competence. Their success in using English effectively can serve as a role model, encouraging students to practice more and strive for greater proficiency.

English language use at home. When English is spoken at home, it creates an immersive language environment. Constant exposure to English in daily conversations with family members builds familiarity and ease with the language.

Environment's influence. Many different language backgrounds draw people to English-speaking environments. As a result of this exposure, their grasp of English is widened and their capacity to adapt is encouraged, enabling them to converse with and understand a variety of English speakers.

Self-confidence to speak English. Many experience language anxiety or fear of making mistakes when speaking English. Self-confidence helps overcome this anxiety by cultivating a positive mindset and embracing the learning process. When students have confidence in their abilities, they are more willing to take risks, try new vocabulary or sentence structures, and engage in conversations without excessive worry about making errors.

Subject teacher's motivation. A teacher who encourages and supports students English-speaking efforts creates a positive and safe environment for language practice. They provide constructive feedback, offer guidance, and create

opportunities for them to speak English comfortably. This supportive environment boosts students confidence and motivates them to improve their English-speaking skills.

Being prompt to use English. When students are in an environment where people are competitive about their English-speaking efforts, it can trigger a sense of confidence. This could be a classroom setting with students who actively engage in speaking English.

English as second language. Making English a second language could be in the form of immersing oneself in the language to develop a natural understanding of vocabulary, expressions, and cultural nuances, or watching movies or TV shows in English, listening to English music, reading English books or articles.

Strategies used to speak English comfortably

Six themes emerged as strategies including: speech preparation beforehand, simple English usage, avoidance of distractions, concentrate on the most important ideas, learn how to pronounce words, and reading English-language books.

Speech preparation beforehand. It can be a good habit to pause and collect one's thoughts before speaking to improve communication. Consider the logical flow of the response while identifying the primary points or arguments they want to make. Thinking about the main points they want to make and the examples they can use to support them.

Simple English usage. Delivering the message in a clear and efficient manner is the aim of communication. One may ensure that their thoughts are received by a larger audience by adopting simple language and paying attention to clarity, which will improve communication and engagement.

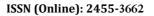
Avoidance of distractions. One can improve his focus and concentration while learning to speak English by creating a distraction-free environment. By doing this,he/she will be able to maximize his/her study time and more quickly advance in language abilities.

Concentrate on the most important ideas. One can enhance his/her learning, hone communication abilities, and develop a deeper comprehension of the subject matter by deliberately focusing on specific topics.

Learn how to pronounce words. Studying pronunciation is an important aspect of learning to speak English clearly and effectively.

Reading English-language books. An effective way to learn English is by reading. While reading primarily aims to increase reading comprehension, it also has a number of advantages for increasing spoken English ability.

Recommendations to other students to develop English speaking skills. The following are the recommendations: find time to read, watch movies, practice tongue twister, build self-





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confidence, listen to teachers, motivate self to speak English, implement program on speaking skills, and practice reguarly.

Find Time to Read. Reading is important if one desires to develop their speaking skills.

Watch Movies. Students who enjoy watching movies find it beneficial for their English-speaking skills.

Practice Tongue Twister. Activities like tongue twister can help practice students' ability to use the English language.

Build Self-confidence. Confidence is the key for Informant 5. As she shared her experience, she revealed that it helps her improve her speaking skills.

Listen to Teachers. Most importantly for Informant 5 is to always listen to the teachers. In this way, one can surely learn speak in English comfortably.

Motivate Self to Speak English. Motivating oneself is also important for Informant 7 to be able to improve one's speaking skills in English.

Implement Program on Speaking Skills. Schools may also implement and enhance reading programs that will help students speaking skills.

Practice Regularly. Constant practice will make a big difference. Informant 1 believes that through practice, one can improve their skills.

Activities to Increase Students' Comfortability in Speaking English. The suggested activities are the following: book reading during vacant periods, film viewing in the classroom, tongue twister on dear time, spelling bee contest, reading month, enhancement program for reading, public speaking activities, and usage of English language inside the classroom.

Assistance Stakeholders Provide for Students to be Comfortable in Speaking English

Stakeholders can assist through the following; provision for funds and reading materials, design a speaking-enhancement program, stimulation of speaking English, weekend enhancement programs, English communication training.

Provision for Funds and Reading Materials.

If stakeholders provide funds for reading materials, students will surely find it helpful. It is believed that there should be enough reading materials available for students.

Design a Speaking-enhancement Program. Creating a program that will encourage students in speaking is seen important for many students.

Stimulation of Speaking English. It is true that there is power in encouragement. Students need to be encouraged to speak in English in a positive way.

Weekend Speaking Enhancement Programs. Having a

special program during Saturdays and Sundays that focuses on improving student speaking skills.

English Communication Training. Conducting trainings for students as to how to communicate using the English language is needed.

Implications for Practice

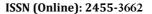
Based on the findings, the following implications for practice are offered.

On Confidence in Speaking English. It can be assumed that the research participants experience that understanding the written materials, teacher's motivation, parent's influence, confidence boosted by parents, sentence construction in mind, reading of English books, being trained to speak English by journalism coach, being challenged by family, being pushed by teacher, being influenced by classmates, self-motivation to speak English are the reasons why they were able to gain confidence in speaking the language. While all the above mentioned experience promotes, develop and enhance students confidence in speaking English it can also be an advantage if they can create a firm foundation by focusing on learning English grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence structure thoroughly.

On Reasons for being Comfortable in Speaking English. The research participants of this study find the usage of English language since childhood, friend's influence, English language use at home, environment's influence, self-confidence to speak English, subject teacher's motivation, being prompt to use English, English as second language the reasons for being comfortable in speaking English language. In this regard it is also good to note that being comfortable in speaking English offers a multitude of advantages, ranging from career opportunities and effective communication to cultural exchange and personal growth. It allows every individual to connect with the global community, access information and resources, and navigate various aspects of life with confidence and ease.

On Strategies Used to Speak English Comfortably. The strategies gathered from the research participants in speaking English comfortably are: speech preparation beforehand, simple English usage, avoidance of distractions, concentrate on the most important ideas, learn how to pronounce words, and reading English-language books. Truly, speaking English fluently requires time and practice. Students must be patient, relish their journey, and acknowledge successes. They will get more at ease and confident the more speaking opportunities and language exposure they have. Moreover, students are encouraged to request feedback from teachers or language partners to improve speaking skills. Actively listen to their suggestions and incorporate them into practice.

On Insights about Speaking English Comfortably. The student participants shared their insights about speaking the English language comfortably. This generated the following: vocabulary improvement, mistakes are part of the learning process, confidence in learning English, composure when speaking, thinking it out first matters, self-confidence in





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speaking. While all these things matter, students must also remember to develop active listening skills. Effective communication involves not only speaking but also listening. Encouraging students to actively listen to English speakers through audio recordings, videos, podcasts, or live interactions. This will help improve their comprehension, pronunciation, and overall confidence in engaging in conversations.

On Recommendations to Other Students to Develop Speaking Skills. In order to develop the students' speaking skills, the following are recommended: find time to read, watch movies, practice tongue twister, build self-confidence, listen to teachers, motivate self to speak English, implement program on speaking skills, and practice reguarly. All these mentioned experiences alone will not be enough to develop students' speaking skills. Students must be encouraged to focus on developing a solid understanding of English grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence structure. Providing them with opportunities for regular practice and reinforcement of these fundamental language skills is important, as they contribute greatly to developing their speaking skills.

On Activities to Increase Students' Sense of being comfortable in speaking English. The research participants also find the following activities to increase students' sense of being comfortable in speaking English: book reading during vacant periods, film viewing in the classroom, tongue twister on dear time, spelling bee contest, reading month, enhancement program for reading, public speaking activities, and usage of English language inside the classroom. Aside from these equally important activities, students may also actively engage in real-life conversations, discussions, and debates. Incorporate activities that simulate authentic situations such as role-plays, group discussions, and presentations to enhance confidence in using English.

CONCLUSION

Speaking English with comfort is a goal and an important aspect of learning a language and proficiency. Students are more likely to express themselves freely, participate in interesting conversations, and get through communication hurdles when they feel at ease in speaking English. It takes effort, exposure, and a supportive learning environment to become comfortable in speaking English. Focusing on gaining confidence, speaking frequently, and accepting mistakes as opportunities for learning will help students develop comfort in speaking English. They can tailor their education, immerse themselves in the language, and get assistance from peers, teachers, parents, language schools, and the larger community. Stakeholders are essential in helping learners feel comfortable and advance their English-speaking abilities by offering support, direction, and resources. Ultimately, students can gradually gain comfort with speaking English by creating a supportive and inclusive environment, encouraging a positive mindset, and offering plenty of opportunities for practice, enabling them to successfully communicate, connect with others, and succeed in various personal, academic, and professional context.

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