A SEQUENTIAL EXPLANATORY APPROACH ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL LITERACY AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AS MEDIATED BY ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the mediating effect of English speaking skills (ESS) on the relationship between social literacy (SL) and student engagement (SE) among English major education students in the private Higher Educations Institutions (HEIs) in Region XI. By which, the study used a sequential explanatory mixed methods research design having a total of 300 English major students from the different private tertiary institution in Region XI as the research respondents. For the data analysis, medgraph was employed in determining the mediating effect of ESS on the relationship between SL and SE which was found to be significant partial mediation in this study. Then, through interviews and focus group discussion with 17 participants taken from the quantitative respondents, data were integrated with the findings in the quantitative aspect of the study. The participants confirmed the relationships and the functions of the variables in the mediation model. With the confirmation, it can be gleaned that there is substantial evidence that ESS is one of the reasons why SL could influence SE among English major students in the private tertiary institutions in Region XI as demonstrated in the partial mediation model. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data unveiled the essential themes generally confirming the connecting-merging-confirmation surfaced as the nature of data integration.

KEYWORDS: *Applied linguistics, English speaking skills, students' social literacy, student engagement, English major students, Philippines.*

INTRODUCTION

Student engagement relates to the quality of education and predicts students' essential life skills. Hence, understanding student engagement is important in determining how to provide high quality teaching for students (Steinbrenner & Watson, 2020). However, due to the shift on online class meetings, student engagement has become a problem across the globe. In online class meetings, low level of engagement among students has been observed in several countries because students usually lose interest in learning. This issue was attributed to the lack of clear understanding among teachers on how students will be engaged in an online set-up (Bundick et al., 2019).

In North America, based on a poll of 3,089 students in higher education, 78% of the students mentioned that online learning is not engaging as it is not in line with their learning needs and interests. While 75% mentioned that they most opted to have in-person meetings with classmates and professors (Read, 2020). Then, a study among 97 university presidents by Higher Education (2020) showed that 81% said that COVID-19 made it difficult to retain student participation while relocating classrooms via online among universities in United States. In Saudi Arabia, Alshahrani (2021) studied student engagement and students' readiness of using e-learning. The study showed that the students were ready to shift to e-learning systems. But

the study also found that students do not effectively interact with teachers and engage in discussion during virtual classes. In Thailand, student engagement is not always easy to achieve. It necessitates a tremendous commitment on the part of the teachers. Hence, teachers must be willing to grow into thoughtful and open-minded individuals (Ginting, 2021).

In the Philippines, specifically in Misamis Occidental, the passing rate across disciplines is 17.66% and the passing rate for board exam is 36.28% which is below the average national rate. The author concluded that this statement shows level of evidence in terms of engagement among students (Enerio, 2021). Further, in Camarines Sur, the study of Delfino (2019) found that student engagement is low among college students especially that there are only few students who are participating in class. As to their behavioral engagement, only few are discussing their lessons with others or peers. As to their cognitive engagement, there are only few students who are having serious conversations with others. While as to their emotional engagement, there are only minimal conversations relating to their personal values in life.

As such, it was emphasized that the descending percentage of students' engagement in classroom activities is alarming for teachers. Family, personal, and school factors all affect student

engagement (Lloyd, 2014). Further, the study of Az-Zahra et al. (2018) pointed out some indicators for student disengagement from learning like illiteracy, motivation, bad communication with peers, low social literacy, and changes with attitudes. While according to Hurst et al, (2013), one must actively participate in social contact with others for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking to be achievable. This is also for the learners to acquire and improve their social literacy. Additionally, those who are socially adept are also active learners who pick up information when given the chance to connect with others and participate (Marx et al., 2017). Lastly, an intellectually engaged student must talk to express themselves. Their inability to communicate clearly in English prevents them from participating fully in class discussions as well as in expressing their thoughts and ideas (Hui, 2017).

From the different readings presented above, it is now in context that the researcher is interested to push through this study about student engagement as it is an evident problem in global, national, and local setting because of the sudden shift of the educational system brough by the pandemic. Hence, there is an urgent need to conduct this study to address this ongoing issue and to add to the growing body of literature related to SE in different educational context. Aside from that, despite the many studies conducted showing the bivariate relationships between SE and SL (Ngoyi et al., 2014) and SE and ESS (Binnendyk, 2020), previous researchers have not come across of studying the same variables and research design used in the present study which was published in the Philippines. On the other hand, there is a published and existing study about the effect of ESS on the relationship between SE and SL (Rulona & Bacasmot, 2023), but it was conducted using a quantitative research design in descriptive-correlational approach. Hence, it is now the present study which will add new body of knowledge using these variables in different approach. This is because the study used a mixed methods design which was conducted in the whole Region XI having the tertiary English major students as respondents and participants.

Lastly, investigating the relationship of SE and students' SL as mediated by ESS is expected to give essential data and new literature in understanding students' engagement and socialization with others needed to improve their English speaking skills. The outcomes and findings of the present study may help academic institutions work toward the utilization of the findings and results most especially in enhancing the social skills and literacy among learners and on developing the speaking skills of the students using the English language. Finally, results of this mixed-methods study will be disseminated to the college English major students, parents, educators, academic institutions, faculty, and other concerned authorities and entities like curriculum planners and developers. This will be done by giving them a copy of the results and findings of the study, a separate discussion of the results and findings in a video presentation done by the researcher will also be given, and conducting of seminar and orientation by the researcher to the different concerned authorities may be conducted. Consequently, it will be presented at the international, national, and local conference and will be transformed into a publishable article so that there will be more who will benefit from the study.

OBJECTIVES
This mixed-methods study aims to identify the level, the significant relationship, and the mediating effect of ESS on SL and SE among English major students in Region XI. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research objectives:

1. What is the level of social literacy, student engagement, and English-speaking skills among tertiary English major students in Region XI?
2. What is the significance of the mediating effect of English-speaking skills on the relationship between social literacy and student engagement among tertiary English major students in Region XI?
3. What are the standpoints of the participants on the salient points of the quantitative results?
4. How do the qualitative results explain the quantitative results of the study?

METHODS
This study used mixed methods research design in a sequential explanatory approach through mediation analysis and phenomenology. As defined by Johnson et al. (2017), mixed methods used quantitative and qualitative methods in a single or multiphase study. To be specific, the study examined the level, the significant relationship, and mediating effect between ESS on SL and SE. Also, the researcher used descriptive statistics like mean and standard deviation to describe the level of SL, SE, and ESS among students in Region XI. The researcher also used inferential statistics like Pearson-r, multiple regression, and Medgraph using Sobel Z-test. Pearson-r for determining if the relationship between variables was significant; multiple regression analysis for predicting the value of students' engagement taken from ESS and SL; and lastly, medgraph for the mediation analysis of ESS on the relationship of SL and SE. For the qualitative part, thematic analysis was used to identify emerging themes that will substantiate the findings in the quantitative part.

Additionally, the study was conducted in Region XI which is officially designated and named as the Davao Region. Specifically, this study was conducted in the different Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the said region specifically in all private academic institution. The study covers five (5) different provinces namely, Davao de Oro (Compostela Valley), Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Davao Occidental, and Davao Oriental. Two (2) HEIs were taken as locale in each province. In selecting the respondents, the researcher used stratified random sampling to recruit 300 students from the different private HEIs in Region XI who are all English major students taking Secondary Education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
Level of Social Literacy, Student Engagement, and English-Speaking Skills
Reflected in table 1 is the overall mean rating of social literacy which is 4.26 with a descriptive equivalent of very high which means it is always manifested by the students. This is based on

their responses in intellectual, social, cooperation, and social attitudes and values as indicators of the said

Table 1
Level of Social Literacy, Student Engagement, and English-Speaking Skills

Main Variables/Indicators	Standard Deviation	Mean	Descriptive Level
Social Literacy	**0.44**	**4.26**	**Very High**
Intellectual Skills	0.58	3.86	High
Social Skills	0.56	4.44	Very High
Cooperation Skills	0.65	4.18	High
Social Attitude and Values	0.50	4.55	Very High
Student Engagement	**0.44**	**4.26**	**Very High**
Cognitive Engagement	0.52	4.28	Very High
Affective Engagement	0.55	4.44	Very High
Behavioral Engagement	0.56	4.01	High
Social Engagement	0.54	4.32	Very High
English Speaking Skills	**0.49**	**3.71**	**High**

variable. While the overall mean rating of student engagement is 4.26 with a descriptive equivalent of very high which means that it is always observed by the students. This was based on their responses to the indicators of the variable including cognitive, affective, behavioral, and social engagement. Lastly, the overall mean rating of ESS is 3.71 with a descriptive equivalent of high. This means that that the level of English speaking skills among English major students in Region XI is oftentimes practiced.

These significant results relate to the findings of the study of Rulona and Bacasmot (2023) which found that the level of SL in terms of intellectual skills, social skills, cooperation skills, and social attitude and values among students in Davao Oriental is high which means that SL is oftentimes observed on many occasions. Further, Quin (2017) also found that social and behavioral engagement has an impact on student participation since both enable possibilities for developing relationships, setting of clear limits and opportunities, and opportunity of collaborating with others and with personal interaction. While

Dwivedi et al. (2019) explained that student engagement is essential as it facilitates their attentiveness towards their teachers. Hence, the acquisition of English-speaking skills is important on their active engagement in diverse learning activities.

Mediating Effect of English Speaking Skills on the Relationship Between Social Literacy and Student Engagement

Before determining the mediation model, correlation between variables was computed to determine its significance. In the case of the said three variables, the correlations are all significant as shown in Table 2. It can be depicted from the result that there is a significant relationship between SL and SE since shown in the table that the p-value is less than 0.05 for its correlation coefficient, r=.668. On the same manner, results also showed a significant relationship between SL and ESS (r=.529, p<.05). Likewise, it was found that ESS and SE have a significant relationship since the p-value is less than 0.05 for its correlation coefficient, .560.

Table 2
Correlations Among Identified Variables

Variables	Student Engagement			English Speaking Skills		
	r-value	p-value	Sig. level	r-value	p-value	Sig. level
Social Literacy	.668	.000	**Sig**	.529	0.000	**Sig**
English Speaking Skills	.560	.000	**Sig**			

The results as shown in Table 3 are classified as Steps 1, 2, 3 and 4. In Step 1 (Path C), it was found that SL significantly predicts SE (B=0.509, p<0.05). The beta coefficient implies that in every unit increase in SL, there corresponds a .509

increase in student engagement. While, in Step 2 (Path B), ESS as the mediating variable significantly predicts SE (B=0.255, p<0.05). In every unit increase in ESS, there corresponds a .255 increase in student engagement. While for Step 3 (Path A), SL

significantly predicts ESS (B = .586, *p*< .05). For every unit increase in SL, it can result to .586 increase in English speaking skills. Moreover, Step 4 revealed a total r-Square of .414, which indicates that 41.4% of the variation of SE can be attributed to the combined influence of SL and ESS. Hence, 58.6% of the variation can be inferred to be the variation which is not covered in this research. Meanwhile, the significance of the three paths warranted the use of medgraph employing Sobel z-test which is a test of mediation used in analyzing the significance of the mediation effect.

Table 3
Date Entry for the Different Paths

Independent Variable	(IV)	Social Literacy
Dependent Variable	(DV)	Student Engagement
Mediating Variable	(MV)	English Speaking Skills

STEPS

1. Path C (IV and DV)
   Student Engagement Regressed on Social Literacy

B (Unstandardized regression coefficient)	0.509
e (Standard error)	0.047
Significance	0.000

2. Path B (MV and DV)
   Student Engagement Regressed on English Speaking Skills

B (Unstandardized regression coefficient)	0.255
e (Standard error)	0.042
Significance	0.000

3. Path A (IV and MV)
   English Speaking Skills Regressed on Social Literacy

B (Unstandardized regression coefficient)	0.586
e (Standard error)	0.054
Significance	0.000

4. Combined Influence of MV and IV on DV
   Student Engagement Regressed on English Speaking Skills and Social Literacy
   English Speaking Skills:

B (Unstandardized regression coefficient)	0.255
SE (Standard error)	0.043
Beta (Standardized regression coefficient)	0.286
Part Correlation	0.718

   Social Literacy:

|	
B (Unstandardized regression coefficient)	0.509
SE (Standard error)	0.047
Beta (Standardized regression coefficient)	0.517
Part Correlation	0.687
Total r Square	**0.414**

For the triangulation of the gathered data, further mediation analysis was conducted using a medgraph involving Sobel test to assess the significance of the mediation effect. After the analysis, it showed in the model that SL influenced SE by a total of .658 with the inclusion of ESS as the mediating variable. The direct influence of SL to SE is only .509 and the remaining .149 is because of the inclusion of English speaking skills. This is an indirect influence which passes through ESS going to student engagement. This means that the influence of .658 is strong because of the help of ESS. If ESS is removed, there is still a relationship (.509) but not strong. With this observed, this means that there is a partial mediation in the result since the mediating variable is only responsible for a part of the relationship between SL and SE which is a total of 0.149.

Results

Significance of Mediation		Significant
Sobel z-value	7.6656051	p=0.000
95% Symmetrical Confidence Interval		
Lower	0.094	
Upper	0.205	
Unstandardized indirect effect		
a * b	0.148	
se	0.028	
Effect size Measures		
Standardized Coefficients		
Total:	0.658	
Direct:	0.509	
Indirect:	0.149	
Indirect to Total Ratio:	0.226	
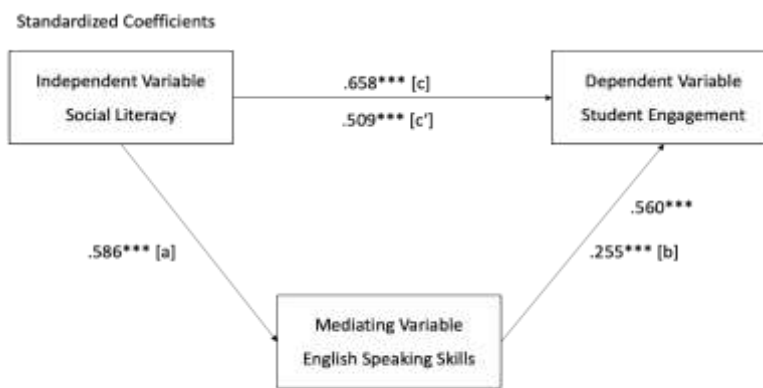
Note: The numerical values in the parentheses are beta weights taken from the second regression and the other values are zero order correlations.

These findings on the mediating effect of ESS on the relationship between SL and SE confirm the result of the study of Nemetz et al. (2017), which found that social interaction and student engagement with varied learning activities is visible and tangible in the teaching-learning process. Similarly, it was emphasized by Cole et al. (2019) that one's social literacy contributes a lot to one's success in learning through different student engagements inside the classroom. While Istiara et al. (2023) also explains that students active engagement constitutes on their fundamental knowledge of speaking using the English language. Then Etodike et al. (2020) elucidated that English speaking skill is linked to social skills as it aids individual confidence and social adjustment specifically interacting with other people using the English language.

Standpoints of the Participants on the Quantitative Results Regarding the Level of the Three Variables
Illustrated in Table 4 are the standpoints of the participants on the quantitative results regarding the students' SL, SE, and ESS. The essential themes generated are as follows: confirmed very high rating of SL, confirmed very high rating of student engagement, and confirmed high rating of English speaking skills.

Level	Essential Theme	Typical Reason
Social Literacy (Independent Variable)	**Confirmed Very High Rating of Social Literacy**	Constant communication with others.
		Interacting with other students.
		Communicating with students and cooperating teachers.
		Understanding the feelings, insights, and opinions of others.
		Understanding social issues and engaging in social media.
Student Engagement (Dependent Variable)	**Confirmed Very High Rating of Student Engagement**	Being a student leader in school.
		Participating in the different classroom activities.
		Facilitating different school activities.
		Joining in the different school activities.
		Joining National event and activities.
English Speaking Skills (Mediating Variable)	**Confirmed High Rating of English Speaking Skill**	Talking with classmates in Vernacular.
		Practicing code switching during classroom discussion/activities.
		Being not able to express oneself because of English language.
		Preparing oneself in the future in landing a job.

These findings support the proposition of Stadler et al. (2022) which explained that intellectual skill is regarded as one of the most reliable indicators of student engagement. Also, the study of Kilic and Aytar (2019) emphasized that group collaboration, social interaction, group activities, helping others, and talking strengthened social skills and collaboration among students. Meanwhile, the study of Abraham (2019) recommends that teachers and students must use varied language activities during classroom discussions to attain engagement. In which, Bond and Bergdahl (2022) emphasized that social engagement involves learners' interaction, support, and involvement with learning activities. In the classroom, a student may tell a teacher about their personal experience which teachers may relate it to the lesson.

Standpoints of the Participants on the Mediating Effect of English Speaking Skill on the Relationship between Social Literacy and Student Engagement
Shown in table 5 are the standpoints of the participants on the mediating effect of ESS on the relationship between students' SL and SE in Region XI. The table further reveals essential themes: confirmed relationship of students' SL and SE, and confirmed mediating effect of ESS on the relationship between SL and SE.

Level	Essential Theme	Typical Reason
Significant Relationship of Social Literacy (SL) and Student Engagement (SE)	**Confirmed Relationship of SL to SE**	SL is important for a student to communicate.
		Student-Teacher communication encourages classroom participation.
		Talking in vernacular enables the students to communicate.
		High level of SL allows the student to engage.
Significant Mediating Effect of ESS on the Relationship Between SL and SE	**Confirmed Mediating Effect of ESS between SL and SE**	The mediating model is credible.
		SL alone cannot fully influence SE without the help of ESS.
		SL influenced the engagement of students.
		Even without ESS, connection between SL and SE is possible.
		SL has greater contribution or effect with SE.
		SL inspires student to have engagement which will enhance their ESS.

Barua et al. (2020) highlighted that social interaction between learners affects students' efficient behaviors and engagement for learning. When students are engaged, they are enthusiastic about their schooling and show no doubt to learn. For Trowler (2022), engagement and social interaction of the students enhance their academic results as well as their skills and capabilities that reflects goods performance of the school. While Jeyagowri (2018) highlighted that social literacy is an essential skill and techniques in making the students confident in speaking the language. Hence, students will be more engaged in the teaching and learning process. Lastly, Wang and Neihart (2015) emphasized that students perceived social skill allows them to involve himself/herself in a communicative process using English language. By which, it is their social literacy that enables them in initiating the speaking process when they are engaging with other people like their peers and classmates.

Data Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results
Illustrated in table 6 is the joint display of data and information gathered for both quantitative and qualitative results or mixed methods design, specifically the explanatory sequential approach.

Research Area	Quantitative Results	Qualitative Results	Nature of Integration
1.1 Level of SL	- Descriptive level of SL is very high with an overall mean rating of 4.26. This means that SL of the respondents is always manifested. (Refer to Table 1)	- Informants and participants confirmed the very high rating of SL in the quantitative result. Based on the interviews and FGD, it could be gathered that the typical reason for the confirmation is that they have good social relationship with others. (Refer to Table 5)	Connecting-Confirmation
1.2 Level of SE	- Descriptive level of SE is very high with an overall mean rating of 4.26. This means that SE of the respondents is always observed. (Refer to Table 1)	- Informants and participants confirmed the very high rating of SE in the quantitative result. Based on the interviews and FGD, it could be gathered that the typical reason for the confirmation is that the students are engaged in the classroom and in the school in general. (Refer to Table 5)	Connecting-Confirmation
1.3 Level of ES	- Descriptive level of ESS is high with an overall mean rating of 3.71. This means that ESS of the respondents is oftentimes practiced. (Refer to Table 1)	- Informants and participants confirmed the high rating of ESS in the quantitative result. Based on the interviews and FGD, it could be gathered that the typical reason for the confirmation is that students oftentimes used the English language inside and outside the classroom to communicate with other people. (Refer to Table 5)	Connecting-Confirmation
2.1 Relationship Between SL and SE	Significant relationship ($p<0.05$) exists between SL and SE (r=.668) (Refer to Table 2 and Figure 5)	Informants and participants expressed their confirmation on the importance of SL to SE, as expressed in their statements in Table 6. (Refer to Table 6)	Connecting-Confirmation
2.2 Mediating Effect of ESS on the relationship between SL and SE	Significant partial mediating ($p<0.05$) effect of ESS on the relationship between SL and SE (z=7.665) (Refer Computation in Figure 5)	Most of the informants/ participants expressed their positive ideas on the support of ESS to SL in influencing SE. (Refer to Table 6)	Connecting-Confirmation

These finding is relative to the study of Brina and Delahunty (2021) which explained that instructors must encourage students to work together and communicate throughout the tasks inside the classroom. This is because partnerships and collaboration boost student confidence and social literacy. Also, Bernstein (2022) explained that engaged students are getting outstanding marks and doing well in school more often than those disengaged ones. Meanwhile, Nyathi and Sibanda (2022) explained that the school must prepare and give learners quality education through effective learning resources that boost students' optimum knowledge and skills. With this, students will be actively engaging in their educational pursuit. Lastly, Lastly, Jeyagowri (2018) pointed the importance of social literacy among students speaking skills in English. It was highlighted that social literacy is an essential skill and techniques in making the person confident in speaking the language.

CONCLUSION
After a thorough analysis of the data gathered in this study, conclusions were drawn in answer to the set research questions and objectives of the study.

1. The level of social literacy among English major students is very high which means that it is always manifested; the level of student engagement among English major students is very high which means that it is always observed; and the level of English speaking skills among English major students is high which means that it is oftentimes practiced.

2. There is a significant relationship between social literacy and student engagement among English major students. Also, results revealed that English speaking skills is a partial mediator on the relationship between social literacy and student engagement.

3. In the study, the quantitative results were further substantiated by the essential themes that emerged during the thematic analysis of the qualitative data. Generally, the results confirmed the quantitative aspect of the study based on the responses of the participants and informants during the interview.

4. During the integration of data from the quantitative phase and qualitative phase, it was found that the findings are connected which means that the qualitative result connected the quantitative results. The result provided an in-depth understanding on the level of the three variables under study

which are the social literacy, students engagement, and English speaking skills. Likewise, the themes identified have helped strengthen and explain the profoundness of the level of the variables under study as well as the mediating effect of the English speaking skills on the relationship between social literacy and student engagement among tertiary private schools' English major education students in Region XI.

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